CHAPTER 6

HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Carina Henriksson

INTRODUCTION

Ki mai koe ki a au,
he aha te mea nui tenei ao:
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

If you should ask me what is
the greatest thing in the world,
the answer would be:
It's people, it's people, it's people.
(Maori song)

The Swedish scholar, Oscar Öquist (1992), once complained that everything he loves about people – our complexity, our vagueness, our irrationality, and our insecurity,in other words, our humanness – is being persecuted and demeaned by technology's distant and logical ideals. The values we cherish today—such as efficiency, assessment, and productivity—leave no room for softer, human qualities such as intuition, emotions, imagination, and creativity. They are denigrated as feminine, childish, or immature. And yet we implicitly know how important these qualities are for human growth and development.

Schools are places where human beings, people, meet and spend a lot of time together. Does research in pedagogy mirror the conviction that people in school are "the greatest thing in the world"?

One could quite rightly question the significance that pedagogical research has for teachers and students in a classroom. Do research reports reach the schools and the teachers at all? If so, do the teachers find them useful; do they make a difference for their pedagogical practice? Teachers tend to discard academic knowledge about teaching as theoretical nonsense; it is simply of little use in the classroom. Teachers often express the opinion that theoretical knowledge does not help them cope in their every day mission. Furthermore, it seems as if the research questions that academics dwell upon have little to do with the urgent questions arise in everyday-pedagogical practice.

To be a child or a young person in school is to be situated in a world engineered and planned by adults. And these adults no doubt have ideological and political reasons for their decisions. Schools, educational policy, and curricula aim foremost at producing citizens

who are productive from a societal perspective. A lot of effort is put into designing curricula and syllabi which serve society's current political interests. Even though most general educational policy documents include some paragraphs about values and ethics, they seldom put focus on the growth of human beings. As Pinar (2006) points out, "the academic field of education is so very reluctant to abandon social engineering" (p. 109). It also seems as if teachers themselves rely too heavily on the technical-instructional side of education:

> If only we can find the right technique, the right modification of classroom organization (small groups, collaborative learning, dialogue), if only we teach according to "best practices," if only we have students self-reflect or if only we develop "standards" or conduct "scientific" research, then students will learn what we teach them. If only we test regularly, "no child" will be "left behind". (Pinar, 2006, p. 109)

At the same time, teachers know that being in a classroom with students cannot be reduced to technical or intellectual endeavor. It involves an intuitive sense of a world, a state of mind and a way of feeling and acting.

In order to make pedagogic research useful for pedagogic practice, methods which prompt a pathic, reflective understanding – rather than an objectifying, gnostic knowledge – have been developed (cf. van Manen, 1990/1997; Halling, 2008; Todres, 2007). Furthermore, research questions of great importance for pedagogic practice need to be addressed and communicated in a language accessible to everyone who has an interest in pedagogical matters. In other words: *How* we speak about pedagogy is equally important as *what* we speak of. Gadamer (2002) elucidates a fundamental aspect of the intrinsic relationship between language and life when he says:

> The word becomes binding, as it were: it binds one human being with another. This occurs whenever we speak to one another and really enter into genuine dialoge with another (p. 106).

Language discloses the world and how we co-exist and orient ourselves in this world. If the language of scientific reports does not disclose a world that teachers recognize, if it talks about things alien to pedagogical practice, are we then surprised that many teacher do not actually read them? If teachers do not feel that the words used bind them with their students or their practice, can we blame teachers for not getting any further than the first few pages of pedagogical books?

There is unquestionably a close link between language, our worldview, and our attitude towards fellow human beings; they shape and modify each other. Phenomenology is an attitude towards life, or as Merleau-Ponty (2001) puts it: "phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that existed

as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy" (p. viii). Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to elucidate lived meanings; "it attempts to describe *and* interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11, italics added). Hermeneutic phenomenology draws upon subjective experience, that is true, but the description and interpretation that are central to its method are also prerequisites in everyday communication. We regularly share stories about our experiences: Phenomenology is thus also a matter of intersubjectivity and interaction.

No doubt, many contemporary phenomenological researchers are willing to attest to Merleau-Ponty's (2001) statement that phenomenology "has given a number of present-day readers the impression on reading Husserl or Heidegger, not so much of encountering a new philosophy as of recognizing what they had been waiting for" (p. viii). It is not just the philosophers, Husserl and Heidegger, who makes us feel "at home"; we feel evocatively addressed by the writings of contemporary researchers. It is through the works of pedagogues such as Bollnow, Langeveld, van Manen, and those who build upon their works that we recognize what we had been waiting for. It is through well-written hermeneutic phenomenological texts that we learn and understand by example.

The same seems to be true for teachers and educational researchers who wish to explore and better understand pedagogical practice. Phenomenology gives us a different kind of knowledge, knowledge that is relevant for pedagogical practice and classroom interaction. It is my experience that in-service teachers, when they encounter hermeneutic phenomenology, rather immediately recognize their own practice, their classrooms, and their students. This recognition is not just a feeling of "homecoming", of recognizing their pedagogical practice. Embedded in this recognition is a feeling of relief; the world is recognizable. Perhaps most important of all: hermeneutic phenomenology takes the concrete minutiae of pedagogy and classroom interaction seriously; it acknowledges the embodied, ethical knowledge possessed by teachers, but which is rarely the subject for research. One remarkable feature of hermeneutic phenomenology is that it does not just politely affirm teachers' tacit knowledge so that they can comfortably dwell in it. Paradoxically, phenomenology is "uncomfortable" since it challenges taken-for-granted attitudes, as language makes these both visible and audible. So, Merleau-Ponty's "what they had been waiting for" holds a promise of both proximity and distance, of the familiar and the alien, the known and the not-yet known.

What is it that teachers have been waiting for? There are aspects of pedagogical practice, which teachers are confronted with on a daily basis; aspects which do not lend themselves to quantification, intellectual reasoning, or theorizing. So, what do teachers know about pedagogy and classroom interaction that educational

researchers tend to miss? Some of these aspects are discussed in this chapter.

"WALKING THE DOG"

I am halfway through my lecture on hermeneutic phenomenology. For the last ten minutes I have been talking about the reduction, how we need to bracket our preunderstandings and how phenomenology can make us question what we take for granted. While I talk, I notice that one of the students seems restless, as if she finds it hard to sit still. I expect her to raise her hand and ask something, but she does not. I keep on talking, giving examples and then, suddenly, the student says out loud, "But, oh, this sounds so tedious! Are you saying that whenever we see something, we need to think that maybe it is the other way around, that I cannot trust what I see? That things are not what they seem to be? For instance, if I see a woman walking her dog, do I think, 'Hey, maybe it is the dog walking the woman'?" I let her question hang in the air for a moment; waiting for what I hoped would come. It does not take long before another student says,
"Well, you know, it does sometimes look as if the dog is walking the person, because often the dog is the one which goes first." Suddenly the classroom is filled with comments.
"Usually it is my dog that tells me when he needs to go out."
"Yes, so does mine. And sometimes you stand there waiting for the dog to sniff something, and sometimes you yank the collar, because otherwise you'd be standing on the same spot for ages."
"So, how can you tell who is leading and who is following?" one of the students says.
We had good discussions that day, about teaching and about what it means for a teacher to lead his or her students. When the class was over, the student who raised the question about walking the dog came up and asked, "Do you feel like a better person, now that you have found phenomenology?"

"Do you feel like a better person, now that you have found phenomenology?" A question with religious nuances. But phenomenology does not look towards divinity or mysticism; it looks towards human lived experiences in the realm of the mundane, in our professional lives, in our private lives, in our social lives. Luijpen (1960) expressed phenomenology's orientation towards the world colorfully when he wrote:

> What is the meaning of speaking about the world if this world is not the world in which the girls are so sweet and the boys so manly and generous, if it is not the world in which there is a difference between a deceased and a murdered individual, in which there is a difference between the red of an apple, the red of lips, and that of blood? (p. 88)

Even though the wording bears witness to the fifty years that have passed since these thoughts were written down, I think we all understand the gist of Luijpen's statement. But does turning towards the world that Luijpen describes make us better teachers? If better means more thoughtful, more willing to question the taken-for-granted, more open to others' experiences, then yes, phenomenology makes us better persons and probably also better teachers.

Returning to the classroom and the walking of the dog, what does it mean for a teacher to lead his or her students?

> Leading means going first, and in going first you can trust me, for I have tested the ice. I have lived. I now know something of the rewards as well as the trappings of growing towards adulthood and making a world for yourself. Although my going first is no guarantee of success for you (because the world is not without risks and dangers), in the pedagogical relationship there is a more fundamental guarantee: No matter what, I am here. And you can count on me. (Van Manen, 1991/1993, p. 38)

Judging from the conversation I had with my students, being a teacher who leads is more complicated than just being the one who holds the leash. The asymmetrical and vulnerable relation between teacher and child cannot be reduced to a "leader-follower" relation. Van Manen, of course, knows this and in a thoughtful and sensuous passage he says:

> The adult who is oriented to the child's vulnerability or need may experience a strange sensation – the true authority in this encounter rests in the child and not in the adult. We might say that the child's presence becomes for the adult an experience of being confronted with a demand for his or her pedagogical responsiveness. So the child's weakness turns into a curious strength that the child has over the adult. (Van Manen, 1991/1993, p. 70)

When van Manen turns the table and suggests that it is the child who has the power over the adult, he illustrates what hermeneutic phenomenological methodology urges us to do: to suspend our taken-for-granted attitudes and ask ourselves: "What if it is the other way around?" In doing so, we move from what Husserl (1983) calls our natural attitude towards a phenomenological attitude. The word attitude has its origin in the Latin, *aptitudinem,* meaning "a posture of the body supposed to imply some mental state"(Online Etymology Dictionary, 2011). So, shifting from a natural attitude to a phenomenological attitude implies a change of mental state; we shift from one way of seeing reality to another. This alteration in attitude, the *epoché*, is often misunderstood as a suspension of reality, but Zahavi (2003) explains the concept and its relevance for methodology and research:

> We do not effect it [the *epoché*] in order to deny, doubt, neglect, abandon, or exclude reality from our research but simply in order to suspend or neutralize a certain dogmatic *attitude* toward reality, that is, in order to be able to focus more narrowly and directly on the phenomenological given – the objects just as they appear. (p. 45)

Transferred to the classroom, the *epoché* asks that teachers, for a moment, suspend the natural attitude and question the taken-for granted. This does not mean that teachers, when reflecting upon their everyday work, should deny what they see, hear, or understand, but question the explanations that might first come to mind.

Hermeneutic phenomenology has the potential to create a sense of wonder, openness, change, and readiness to reflect on pedagogical matters. It has the power to create a pedagogical attunement, bringing pedagogical research into harmony with everyday pedagogical practice. If well written or well conducted, hermeneutic phenomenology and reflection can awaken a forgotten attunement to teaching and to life itself. Hermeneutic phenomenology nurture the budding practitioner who deeply and sincerely reflects on "who is walking the dog?"

PEDAGOGICAL EYES

There is a Malay saying: "Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come.". The gist of the saying is beautifully captured in Dorit Riley's painting *For You*[i]. It depicts an asymmetric but also sensitive relationship set in a peaceful atmosphere.

When Bollnow (1989) talks about *the pedagogical atmosphere*, he takes it to mean "all those fundamental emotional conditions and sentient human qualities that exist between the educator and the child and which form the basis for every pedagogical relationship" (p. 5). Bollnow himself was a bit reluctant to use the term

atmosphere, since it conjures up an emotional and sentimental undertones. However, when he explores the notion, there is nothing sentimental about it. On the contrary, Bollnow describes basic human needs as being the prerequisites for bringing up children in a manner that is pedagogically responsible. Some of the notions he explores for instance security, trust, hope, cheerfulness, joy, love, confidence, serenity, and goodness. These are all qualities and knowledge which a teacher, as a human being, needs to possess—and radiate—in a cultivated classroom.

As teachers, we have a very special relationship to cultivate, the one between teacher and student. In the best of worlds, a classroom is a garden where children and teenagers can grow and flourish – intellectually, emotionally, and socially. In such a classroom, the teacher has special eyes, pedagogical eyes. These eyes need to see what the child has to offer, who the child is, and how the teacher can make each unique child grow. In the classroom, most of the time, the teacher interact with his or her students verbally, but behind the words hides a moral message mediated through the teacher's body language, facial expression, or simply by the teacher's look—or non-look.

> My peers are almost done with the assignments, but I am not. I cannot just dig into the examples to be worked out. I need time to think about how to solve the problems. I also want to keep my books neat and tidy, and so before I start I use the ruler to draw lines, vertical and horizontal lines. I am particular with how I write; I want the digits to look, you know, nice. I use the rubber a lot. Besides, I need time to go through, in my mind, the rules, and methods. I repeat the multiplication table. My teacher snaps at me: "Anna, stop fiddling about and get started". He thinks that I am avoiding the assignment, that I am lazy. But I am not! I am not lazy. I am not thick. I am just slow. Besides, when I ask for help my teacher ignores me. You know, it's like: "a student who needs special support in several subjects…oh, well… leave her to draw lines and digits".

How are we to understand Anna's "fiddling about"? Does she spend most of her lessons drawing lines? If that is so, one might also suspect that what was once a wish to keep her notebooks tidy, has developed into a conscious strategy to avoid facing difficult work. Nonetheless, it might be exactly what Anna says it is, her way of approaching the assignment, that she simply needs time. Regardless of how we understand Anna's behaviour, a modified outline of the pattern described by Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) seems to be in operation here. The teacher uses both verbal and non-verbal signs to comment on Anna's improper behaviour, i.e. she does not work fast enough. Anna tries but fails to comply, and accordingly she does not get her teacher's approval.

What knowledge does Anna gain during math lessons? Apparently, she does not learn much geometry or algebra. What she

does learn was that she is always behind, that she does not work and understand fast enough. That is, fast enough for the teacher's "assumption of worthwhileness" (Jackson, Boostrom & Hansen, 1993, p. 24). She also learns that she will never get a "pass" no matter how hard she tries. The crucial knowledge Anna gains is that she recognizes her position; she has been weighed and found wanting. The positioning made here, both by the teacher and Anna herself is no secret. On the contrary, it takes place in the open and is visible for all to see. Anna's peers will inevitably notice what goes on, other teachers will probably learn about Anna's failure in staff meetings, and her parents will likely also be informed, in one way or another. In fact, anyone who might have an interest in Anna's school career is welcome to have a look at her school reports.[ii] On the surface, everyone in Anna's surroundings is forming their own *understanding* of what Anna is like. Going deeper, these experiences are uniquely Anna's, for her to *live*. She learns that "slow" and "stupid" are synonyms in the teacher's mind, she learns that she is stupid and not worth the teacher's time and effort. In the eyes of the teacher, she becomes not only insignificant but also in a way invisible:

> When they approach me they see only my surroundings themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything, and anything except me. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality (Ellison, 1947/1972, p. 7).

When Piaget (1951) raises the question about children's conceptions of internal and external vision, he shares with us a childhood recollection from one of his collaborators.

> *When I was a little girl I used to wonder how it was that when two looks met they did not somewhere hit one another. I used to imagine the point to be half-way between the two people. I used also to wonder why it was one did not feel someone else's look, on the cheek for instance if they were looking at one's cheek* (p. 48).

The image of looks meeting halfway between two people is both an intriguing and a striking description of intersubjectivity, and relationality. Authentic pedagogy begins with the meeting of looks, an encounter between the eye of the teacher and the eye of the child, thus creating a place and grounding for the child's growth. When we are engaged face-to-face in what Buber (1958) calls an I-Thou-relation in which we strive for mutual understanding, a We-relationship can be said to be created. This We-relation constitutes an empathic participation in each other's lives, even if for a limited period. The meeting-point for the look of the thoughtful teacher and the anticipating child would constitute such a we-relation. At best, there are pedagogical moments when such a relation rises like a soap bubble, almost tangible, between child and teacher. In reality,

numerous children never get to experience such a We-relation with their teachers. These children feel the teacher's look as an arrow passing over or beside them.

Oddly enough, the passing look of the teacher could also be an arrow straight into the child's being. For Anna, the distressing experience during her math lessons is not simply that her teacher ignores her. The look of the teacher, which says that Anna is not worth his time and effort, goes straight into Anna's being. Indeed, the look does not remain on the surface of her cheek, it penetrates the skin. The skin becomes transparent. In fact, Anna becomes transparent, defenceless to the teacher's penetrating arrow, vulnerable to the teacher's judgement.

Hermeneutic phenomenology teaches us to reflect on students' experiences as well as our own experiences in the classroom. In that way, a hermeneutic phenomenological attitude can offer deeper understanding of our pedagogical practice. It offers knowledge, which creates teachers with "green trees" in their hearts where "singing birds" can dwell and grow.

WALKING ALONG OR LEADING?

The Dutch scholar van den Berg (1961) holds that the relationship between adults and children appears to him to be "the first and most important subject of pedagogy" (p. 20). One could, of course, argue that what van den Berg says is quite trivial in it obviousness; teacher and student are thrown into a relationship, willingly or not. However, the *nature* of that relationship needs to be examined and explored.

> *As tradition has it in Sweden, we are seated in church to celebrate graduation day. The first eight pews are reserved for our nine graders. There they are, class by class. They are unusually quiet today. Perhaps they are tired after yesterday's trip to the amusement park, or perhaps they feel like I do, that the surrounding atmosphere creates an inner stillness. After the sermon, hymns, and the headmaster's speech it is time to hand over the diplomas. In alphabetical order, the classes together with their head teachers are called to the altar rails. As they are all waiting in line, I watch my colleague, Thomas. Tall, muscular and with shaved head, a former UN soldier. He joined the teaching staff last autumn and within a year he has created stability in a class, which for several years was known as unruly. Now his last task is to hand over the diplomas and with a handshake send his students into the world. As he hands over the diplomas, Thomas smiles, tousles their hair, or simply puts his hand on their shoulder. Most of his students hug him, totally indifferent to how that intimate act is perceived by others in the church. Some of the girls sob and even the boys, who have a reputation of being wild, look decisively moved when they face Thomas. When the class and*

Thomas return to their pews, I see how Thomas bends his head and swiftly wipes his eyes.

How can we understand what happened between the teacher and his students in the church? What kind of relationship do they have and by whom has it been created? Was the students' affectionate goodbye to Thomas a sign of thankfulness for having learned the German prepositions or how to use English adverbs correctly? Obviously not: It is more likely to be about something that we have difficulties to put words to.

When Bollnow (1962) stresses the importance of mood and feeling, he follows in the steps of Heidegger (1962), who claimed that mood is the fundamental ground from which life develops. Embedded in the overall responsibilities of teaching, to carefully guide the child through childhood into adolescence and adulthood, rests the responsibility to cultivate an atmosphere of *trust*. This sense of trust and security is created, primarily, in the home. Parents are the first persons to create a sheltered domain, in which the child can safely grow. As the child gradually moves from this shelter, and reaches out for the larger world outside home, parents rely on the teachers to safeguard their child. If parents and teachers provide a safe haven, then, what was once the child's trust in one specific person will almost certainly develop into a generalized trust in life. The child's trust in the teacher – and later in the world – is, however, reciprocal. That is, the teacher must concurrently have trust in the child and his or her abilities to learn and develop. By highlighting the reciprocal relationship, Bollnow distinguishes *trust* from *confidence*. Confidence, he argues, is one-sided and relates to specific, mostly cognitive abilities. For instance the teacher – or the child – may be confident that certain assignments will be satisfyingly accomplished. Trust, on the other hand, is relational and demands a response and refers to the emotional bond between teacher and child. Both trust and confidence is crucial to the feeling of *belief*. "The belief of the educator strengthens the positive faculties which he or she presumes present in the child" (Bollnow, 1962, p. 25).

Even though, the pedagogical relationship is a reciprocal one, it is at the same time an asymmetrical relationship, in which the teacher is responsible for the student's intellectual and emotional growth. In many curricula, the notion *responsibility* has a wide denotation, from a general attitude towards pupils to more mundane and practical matters. Teachers can, indeed, learn what their responsibilities are, but to *learn about* responsibility is not equivalent to *exercising* responsibility, and it is something quite different from *living* it. To exercise and to live responsibility is to embody nurturing in such a way that each child under the teacher's care experience respecting and honoring recognition:

> Good pedagogy is mutual identification but from asymmetric, or unequal positions. Good pedagogy always indicates a movement towards suspension of these conditions, towards exceeding of

> borders. Passion and motivation do not arise in such relationships. They *are* passion and motivation (Börjeson, 2000, p. 37, *my translation*).

In an earlier study on lived experiences of school failure (Henriksson, 2008), the students showed that they were highly aware of the pedagogical relationship between themselves and their teachers. However, they did not articulate any frustration over an asymmetrical relationship. Quite the contrary; they— more or less explicitly—expressed irritation over a too symmetrical relationship. They had repeatedly encountered teachers, who tried hard to become their friends; who did not take on responsibility, and teachers, who were more lost and bewildered in the classroom than the students. But students did not want teachers to be their friends, but they *did* want them to be friendly; students did not want teachers to take care of every aspect of their lives, but they *did* want them to be caring; students did not expect teachers to understand everything, but they *did* want them to be understanding. To be friendly, caring and understanding are some of the teacher qualities which we cannot plan for the same way we plan the content of a lesson, nor can we teach it to our students as an instructional object.

Some teachers, however, seem to have an intuitive understanding for how and when to bond with students:

> *Although Tommy learned how to read and write by using the computer, his patience did not last long. He needed to move about. This particular day we were walking down a country road, which was popular among riders. As we strolled along, Tommy discovered a huge amount of dung beetles, which was busy munching on horse manure. Tommy stopped, bent down and picked up one of the beetles, while he carefully examined its bluish-black, blazing wing sheaths. Being a teacher, I took the opportunity to give Tommy a spoonful of information – biological as well as historical – about the lives of dung beetles. To Tommy, my chatting was probably like background radio music – nice company, but nothing to pay attention to. I was deep into Egyptian religion and myths when Tommy said: "Listen!" Somewhat annoyed I stopped talking and wondered what this was all about. "Listen", he said again and then by letting air out between his teeth he made a faint sigh. He held the beetle next to our faces, which by now were close together. He made a faint sigh again and waited. Suddenly the beetle answered with an almost similar sigh! Tommy sighed again and the beetle answered. Beneath its blue wing sheaths, the dung beetle moved its wings and produced the same singular sound, that Tommy had used to call to it. Time stopped, and an entrance to another life suddenly became visible. For a moment, an innate happiness and exaltation filled us. We talked to several dung beetles, and laughed at our discovery. I felt as if we were the first humans to communicate with extraterrestrials. I have often thought of this incident in relation to*

> *my pedagogical mission. There I was, trying to teach Tommy about dung beetles while the child walks next to me talking to the beetle. By coincidence, maybe due to a pure and open childlike mind, Tommy did – to my knowledge – what no one had done before him.*

"How do you find knowledge and insights? Is there a better teacher than life itself?" this teacher asks himself.

When Moustakas (1994) introduces his phenomenological orientation, called heuristic[iii] research, he says:

> It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries. (p. 17)

Moustakas illustrates the intrinsic link between pedagogical research and everyday-pedagogical practice. Not only in research do we need to take a heuristic stance to the subject of our inquiry; to an even higher degree, we need a heuristic attitude to gain a deeper understanding of pedagogical practice. To understand the nature of pedagogy and to experience self-awareness and self-knowledge means to let go of taken-for-granted attitude, to honestly see students and listen to their experiences, and to let yourself be a part of life as it unfolds.

"FROM THE OUTSIDE OR THE INSIDE?"

It is said that when the Greek god Zeus was suckled by the horn of a goat, Amalthaea, the horn broke off and instead of milk, it was filled with fruit or whatever the owner of the horn desired—riches in abundance. Some teachers *are* owners of horns of plenty, horns brimming with different fruits for each unique child. Unfortunately, there are also teachers, whose horns have gone dry; teachers who feel that neither they nor their students have anything to offer.

Although I finished my teacher training almost thirty years ago, I remember the focus on method (anything from how to make nice, multiple-layer overheads to strategies for teaching literature). I also remember our lectures on pedagogy and how they dealt exclusively with children's psychological and mental development (Piaget, Kohlberg, Maslow, etc.). On one occasion our professor retold a story from a second grade classroom: The teacher had asked the class to draw a picture of a human face. When one boy raised his hand and asked: "Should I paint it from the outside or from the inside?" he was scolded by his teacher: "Don't ask stupid questions, Marcus. From the outside, of course!" I vaguely recall that our professor thought that the boy's question was a nice example of some stage in a child's mental development. What I vividly recall is

how odd and excluded I felt when I could not join my fellow student teachers in their laughter. For me the story was not a laughing matter. To me, the boy's question posed some important pedagogical questions but it also touched the fundamentals of ontology and epistemology. "From the outside or from the inside?" Obviously, Marcus was addressed by the task to draw a face; the face being a thing "thinging" (Heidegger, 2000) – when allowed to emerge as itself before one.". The abundance of that question! How could a teacher hear this question without welcoming the world hidden within this "gift"? Why did the teacher not experience "a sense of something *happening*, something *arriving*, something starting to open up, something stirring, becoming enlivened, lively" (Jardine et al, 2006, p. 40)? How did this child encounter the task of drawing a human head? What images came before him? What space did he and the thing dwell in and what did he experience when the thing was "thinging"? In thinging, Heidegger (2001) says, "the thing stays the united four, earth and sky, divinities and mortals in the simple onefold of their self-unified fourfold (p. 175-176), "the fouring presences as the wordling of world" (p. 178). Heidegger goes on to describe that within these united four are fruits, water, rock, plant and animal; here we find the sun's path, the course of the moon, the glitter of the stars, the year's seasons, and the blue depth of the ether. For Marcus, who was addressed by the face, the thing was "thinging"; it had not been fixed, locked in, determined. It was also not reducible to a particular developmental stage or genetic epistemology. The teacher, on the other hand seems to be deaf to the "thinging" of the thing; it is already been made definite, nicely wrapped in scarcity. When the teacher sneered at Marcus" question, was he aware of the world he denied the young boy to dwell in?

While this may, for some teachers, be nothing but a nice teacher story that educators love to tell each other; it may for other teachers be an epiphany experienced as a call to act upon the question. In the hands of a sensitive pedagogue, the anecdote transgresses the boundaries of an amusing story and imposes an ethical demand, brought forward by a question from a child. We could thus argue that in pedagogical practice when teachers are unexpectedly confronted ("From the outside or the inside?") they are forced to respond to this calling on the spur of the moment. The response may be wise; it may be in the best interest of the child but it may just as well be unwise, unreflected, and – at worst – harmful. Now, on the surface, the question posed by the boy is nothing more than a question of how to draw or a way for the boy to check that he has understood the task. But there is so much more at stake here:

> By our very attitude to one another we help to shape one another's world. By our attitude to the other person we help to determine the scope and hue of his world; we make it large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure. We help to shape his world not by theories and views but by our very attitude toward him. Herein lies the unarticulated and one might say anonymous

> demand that we take care of the life which trust has placed in our hands. (Løgstrup, 1971, p.19)

By scolding the boy for asking a stupid question, his teacher did indeed make the boy's world small, drab, and dull. No space for "adventure of inquiry....rejoicing in the abundance and intricacy of the world, entering into its living questions, living debates, living inheritances" (Jardine et al, 2006, p. 101). We can only imagine how many ways of the world were left uncovered, unexplored in the teachers "Don't ask stupid questions, Marcus. From the outside, of course!"

Today's—and even more so, tomorrow's—world needs people, who are not just trained for a specific profession. We need human beings who are innovative, creative, open-minded, and caring human beings, who take responsibility for our world and see fellow human beings as equals. For that, school has no subject, teachers no curricula, governments no educational policy. The only way we can foster and educate the younger generation is for teacher education to foster and educate teachers, who are what Buber (1993) calls *whole human beings*. Whole human beings, who would love to see a head from the inside, who do not find any questions stupid, who do not make children's world small, drab, and dull, and who create space for adventures of inquiry.

As a philosophy, as well as a research orientation, hermeneutic phenomenology teaches us to open our minds to wonder; to appreciate the unexpected; to keep an open mind and to begin to cherish what is unique in every human being.

CAPS AND BREASTS

The ethical responsibility, discussed here is two-fold: First is the assumption that a teacher should think, act, and embody morally sound values. Second, that it is the teacher's task to instill values that are equally sound in his or her students. Students' possible cognitive shortcomings are hardly ever the main source for teachers' anger. What seems to ignite the teachers' anger is the students' non-compliancy to school rules and regulations. "The teacher's wrath, in other words, is more frequently triggered by violations of institutional regulations and routines, than by signs of his students' intellectual deficiencies" (Jackson 1968, p. 35). In order to maintain order in the classroom, teachers—often together with their pupils—decide on what rules to have in school. In spite of the rules agreed upon, teachers often find themselves in dilemmas:

> *I let my eyes wander up and down the rows of desks, so I can jot down who's absent.*
> *As I do so, much to my surprise, I notice that Henric, a quiet and very compliant boy has decided to break the "no-caps-in-the-classroom" rule. Although puzzled, I decide to ignore it and*

instead start the lesson. Once I have put the students to work, I go down to Henric, lean forward and quietly ask: "Why the cap, Martin? You know it's against the rules." He looks up, blushes, and quietly says: "Miss, I did not have time to wash my hair this morning". As he offers his explanation, he glances towards the desk where Molly sits. Yes, I have noticed that something is "going on" between Martin and Molly. I have a few seconds to decide what to do. As I look at Martin, I am unexpectedly transported back in time. I remember the wonderful—and painful— feeling of being a teenager in love and I simply cannot find it in my heart to force him to take off his cap. Instead I say: "Next time, get up earlier!"

From the moment he spots the cap on Martin's head, the teacher has at least two options. He can follow the rules strictly, and loudly demand: "Take off your cap, Martin!" Or he can simply ignore it. But instead he seems to "choose" a middle road. Regardless of which road he takes, his action gives rise to a plethora of ethical questions about what is appropriate for Martin, for the class, and for his own goals as a teacher. For now, I will leave these questions open, with the hope that this anecdote will be food for thought.

Sometimes, school rules seem to have less to do with the students' moral growth than with adults' own interests. They are often "meant to make daily decisions easier for the teacher by regulating how issues are to be solved to maintain order" (Colnerud, 1995, p. 126). Rules, which pervade and surround the classroom, are also likely to be general or even self-evident: "Raise your hand, if you want to speak", "Do not scribble on the white board" "No talking when the teacher talks", etc. However, I have yet to encounter a classroom rule which says: "Do not grab girls' breasts":

Our ward is mixed; we have both girls and boys, who are at a point in life when hormones take over common sense. Lucas— charming and witty but hyperactive boy— often has mood swings which are difficult to predict. He also moves very quickly and he has no impulse control whatsoever. One day while we were visiting the public library, his emotions got the better of him and he sneaked up behind one of the girls and grabbed her breasts. I was so surprised that I could not even react. The girl, however, found the incident rather pleasant. Once I had recovered and managed to get him off the girl, I took him aside and told him that what he just did was completely unacceptable. I tried to explain how disrespectful his behavior was and that he could not treat girls like that. He did not listen, just kept wandering about in the library. Back at the institution, I informed the staff of the incident. Their first question was: "How much did you deduct?" The policy on our ward is to deduct money from their allowance when they behave badly; for instance five dollars forswearing, ten dollars for getting up late, etc. I was so surprised at the response that I could hardly believe what I heard. The question: "How much did you

> *deduct?" translates: "How much does it cost to grab a girl's breasts?"My answer was that I did not deduct anything. Frankly, I did not know the going rate for grabbing girls' breasts! I did not dare put a price on his action. What if he thinks that it is worth it?*

Lucas gives the notion *worthwhileness* a somewhat new twist. While Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) refers to *worthwhileness* as teachers' and students' deliberation on whether something is worth learning or not, Lucas might, as his teacher fears, ponder whether he can afford to grab a girl's breasts. How much is it worth in money and effort?

Would a written rule forbidding boys (or girls, for that matter) from grabbing girls' breasts have stopped Lucas? I seriously doubt it. Will the teacher's verbal correction stop him from repeating his action? That too, I doubt.

Dewey (1909/1975) argues that training

> is pathological when stress is laid upon correcting wrong-doing instead of upon forming habits of positive service. Too often the teacher's concern with the moral life of pupils takes the form of alertness for failures to conform to school rules and routines. (p. 15)

Would agreeing with Dewey's argument help the teacher to stop Lucas from grabbing girls' breasts? Again, I doubt it. So, how, then, can teachers guide their students into desired and accepted ethical behaviour—without simply relying on allowance deductions, on written rules, or on the direct application of theoretical knowledge?

Buber (1993) holds that it is a fatal mistake for a teacher to *teach* morality, since the student perceives what the teacher says as a sort of marketable knowledge currency. Morality would then be treated as a commodity, subject to the laws of commerce, and as such impossible as a foundation for character building.

> The single thing that may influence the student as a whole being is the teacher himself or herself as a whole being. The pedagogue does not have to be a moral genius to foster character but he has to communicate with his fellow beings in a direct way; his vitality beams towards them and has its strongest and purest influence precisely when he is not explicitly thinking about influencing them. (Buber, 1993, p. 108, my translation)

We often assume that teachers act in morally appropriate ways, that teachers recognize that they stand in relations of influence to the children they teach, that teachers act in the best interests of the child. But teachers do not automatically become noble moral models just because they work with children. When discussing man as moral being, Kant (2000) brings into play the notions *value*, *price* and *dignity*. Speaking exclusively in terms of value and price, every individual has a basic value. Accordingly, and depending on the

utility of a person's skills and abilities, one person could be said to have a higher value than another. And this value can change according to the demand for his or her skills and abilities. A person thus becomes a commodity, useful for a certain purpose, and of greater or lesser value depending on the market. However, Kant says:

> /…/ a human being regarded as a *person*, that is, as the subject of a morally practical reason, is exalted above any price; for as a person (*homo noumenon*) he is not to be valued merely as a means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but as an end in himself, that is, he possesses a *dignity* (an absolute inner worth) by which he exacts *respect* for himself from all other rational beings in the world (p. 186).

Hansen (1986) draws a pedagogical parallel from Kant's definition of man as a moral being. Education may have a price, a pure instrumental value, based on utilitarian principles, and as such it serves one or another externally defined end. Through the demands that society imposes on their citizens, and consequently school on their students, this utilitarian approach has become dominant: Education is seen as adding value to human capital (i.e. students), and this value is then realized, assessed, and revalued according to market conditions. This results, in turn in a discourse of consequences, which judge moral worth or moral action based on consequences. In this sense, "teaching becomes a moral endeavour solely with respect to its consequences" (p. 830). But education, Hansen continues, is more than an end since it is "a moral practice that partakes in the idea of dignity" (p. 830).

Not all morally inappropriate behaviour is as blatant as Lucas'. Much of what goes on in classrooms is subtle, invisible, inaudible and often not even intended—escaping the attention of the teacher. If actions do not receive the teacher's attention, the students' lived experiences are bound to remain silent.

The narrative about Lucas in the library was the result of an assignment that I gave to a group of teachers at juvenile institutions in Sweden. My specific request was: "Write a story about one moment when you experienced an ethical dilemma".

Did the teacher who shared her experience think, act, and embody moral soundness? I think we can agree that she did. Did she also instill equally sound values in Lucas? That we do not know. Judging from the narrative, we have good reason to doubt it. What I do know, is that the teacher, by sharing her experience with her colleagues initiated a pedagogical discussion of what it means for a teacher to be a moral model. I also know that the question of ethics and what is morally good had been a subject of reflection and discussion among the teachers in this school for a long period. Hermeneutic phenomenology had given them the tools and the language to do so.

It is time to address what I hope we have been waiting for: [A felt sense of?] the connection between hermeneutic phenomenology as research method and pedagogical practice.

Hermeneutic phenomenology could be described as a "reality check". It gives us the tools to discover what goes on, moment-by-moment, in different corners of the classroom. As Dewey (1964) says:

> It is sometimes supposed that it is the business of the philosophy of education to tell what education *should* be. But the only way of deciding what education should be, at least, the only way which does not lead us into the clouds, is discovery of what actually takes place when education really occurs. (p. 3)

Hermeneutic phenomenology is interested in lived experiences; it takes human experiences seriously; it takes a bottom-up perspective on pedagogical issues and as such is a democratic way of doing research. Simultaneously, a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective on pedagogy can promote ethical action in the classroom.

Hermeneutic phenomenology can also be described as the "missing link" between theory and practice, between governmental edicts and their demands for results on the one hand, and every-day classroom interaction on the other. Long before teachers are forced—by curricula and school bureaucracy —to reduce students and their action to theoretical concepts and medical diagnoses, they see and encounter children and teenagers in different circumstances, with different needs, dreams, problems. Hermeneutic phenomenology lets researchers and teachers alike see the unique person as a living, breathing subject. The student, who wonders who is walking the dog; the teenager, who talks with dung beetles; the child, who wants to paint the head from the inside; even the impulsive pubescent, grabbing the breasts of a nearby girl. They all teach us to think, feel and act with circumspection in the duration of the moment.

Hermeneutic phenomenology works against compartmentalizing: It is neither simply subjective nor objective, it does not seek to derive the particular from the universal nor does it work to isolate our private life from our professional life. Its interest is in our lifeworld is a whole. Its ideal, as Galvin and Todres (2007) says, "a seamless way of being" (p. 33), in which the head (thinking), hand (doing), and heart (feeling) come together in harmony. Teachers, who are asked to embody this seamless way of being, most probably also agree with the Maori song, that people are "the greatest thing in the world".

Hermeneutic phenomenology advocates a language which is expressive and which resembles the language we use. Language, simultaneously, needs to be innovative and lead us back to forgotten

meanings. Language (even) in academic articles – hermeneutic phenomenological or otherwise – needs to have *verve*, i.e. it must show energy and enthusiasm in its expression of ideas; it has to show vitality and liveliness; it needs to have a sparkle.

In hermeneutic phenomenology students' and teachers' lived experience descriptions—if well written— inevitably invoke a feeling of "rightness"; they give us a sense of recognition that is not a matter of one-to-one correspondence, but that involves a kind of transposition of the mind. However, experiential accounts do not "prove" anything, no matter how much *verve* they have. They do not *point out* the right method, the best technique, the most desirable ethics— or *the* truth, but they *point to*[iv] something. "The real phenomenologist must make it a point to be systematically modest" (Bachelard, 1994, p. xxv).

The Jain[v] wisdom of *Anekant* or Many-Sidedness is a complex idea, which avers that truth has multiple facets, and depends on the position of the seeker and their assumptions and world-views, explicit or implicit. This is not the same as relativism, where there is no objective truth, but neither is it purely rational, or purely spiritual or purely emotional. The Jains allow all these perspectives to cohere and in their philosophy of "maybe-ism," *Syadvada*, show that truth can be tentative but that it must be sincere, non-violent, and respectful of all living beings and their rights to co-exist.

It can be transformative to recognize what one has been waiting for. A phenomenological attitude or attunement has the potential to show us what we earlier did not see or understand. Jenner (2000) uses a metaphor to describe how life can be brought to a sudden standstill, when the unforeseen happens:

> A man who lives by a waterfall does not "hear" the fall; it is such a familiar sound that it goes unnoticed. Yet, he notices the cry of the wild geese in the sky above when they fly through the autumn night. But let's say that the waterfall should freeze to ice over night – then he notices the difference in an instant (p. 38, my translation).

"Low key" as it is, hermeneutic phenomenology has the potential of being a "freezer of waterfalls" It can silence the rush and roar in our everyday environment, and allow us to suddenly see our students and ourselves with new eyes, or perhaps just see and start to question what we take for granted.

REFERENCES

Bachelard, G. (1994). *The poetics of space. The classic look at how we experience intimate places.* (M. Jolas, Trans.) Boston, MA: Beacon Press. (Original work published 1958).

Bollnow, O. F. (1989). Preliminary exploration of the notion of a pedagogical atmosphere. (M. van Manen and P. Mueller,

Trans.).*Phenomenology + Pedagogy, 7,* 5-63. (Original work published 1962).
Buber, M. (1958). *I and thou*. (W. Kaufman, Trans.). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. (Original work published 1923).
Buber, M. (1993). *Om uppfostran.* (Lars W. Freij, Trans.) Ludvika: Dualis. (Original work published 1953).
Börjeson, B. (2000). *Om lusten och viljan att lära – några reflektioner*. SOU 2000:19.
Colnerud. G. (1995). *Etik och praktik i läraryrket. En empirisk studie av lärares yrkesetiska konflikter i grundskolan*. Stockholm: HLS.
Dewey, J. (1909/1975). *Moral principles in education.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
Dewey, J. (1964). The need for a philosophy of education. In Archambault, R. (1974). *John Dewey on education.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Ellison, R. (1947/1972). *Invisible man.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Gadamer, H.-G. (2002). *The relevance of the beautiful and other essays*. (N. Walker, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1977).
Galvin, K. and Todres, L. (2007). The Creativity of 'Unspecialization:' A Contemplative Direction for Integrative Scholarly Practice. In *Phenomenology & Practice*, Volume 1, (2007), No. 1, pp. 31 – 46.
Hansen, D. T. (1986). Teaching as a moral activity. In Richardson, V. (1986). (Ed.). *Handbook of research on teaching.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.
Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time.* (J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Trans.) New York: Harper and Row. (Original work published 1926).
Heidegger, M. (2001). *Poetry, language, thought*. (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1971).
Heidegger, M. (2000). *Introduction to metaphysics*. (R. Manheim, Trans.). New Haven & London: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1953).
Henriksson, C. (2008). *Living away from blessings. School failure as lived experience.* London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.
Halling, S. (2008). *Intimacy, transcendence, and psychology: closeness and openness in everyday life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy. First book* (F. Kersten, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1913).
Jackson, P. W. (1990). *Life in classrooms.* New York: Teachers College Press.
Jackson, P. W., Boostrom, R. E. & Hansen, D. T. (1993). *The moral life of schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Jardine, D.W., Friesen, S. and Clifford, P. (2006). *Curriculum in abundance*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Jenner, H. (2000). *Se oss i berättelsen*. Vaxholm: Bjurner & Bruno.

Kant, E. (2000). *The metaphysics of morals*. (M. Gregor, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1785)
Luijpen, W. A. (1960). *Existential phenomenology*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
Løgstrup, K. E. (1971). *The ethical demand*. (T. I. Jensen, Trans.). Philadelphia: Fortress Press (Original work published 1969).
Merleau-Ponty, M. (2001). *Phenomenology of perception*. (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1962).
Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. London: Sage
Online Etymology Dictionary (2011). www.etymonline.com
Piaget, J. (1951). *The child's conception of the world*. (J. and A. Tomlinson, Trans.). Lanham, MD: Littlefield Adams. (Original work published 1927)
Pinar, W.F. (2006). *The synoptic text today and other essays. Curriculum development after the reconceptualization*. New York: Peter Lang.
Todres, L. (2007). *Embodied enquiry: phenomenological touchstones for research, psychotherapy and spirituality*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
Van den Berg, J. H. (1961). *The changing nature of man. Introduction to a historical psychology.* (H. F. Croes, Trans.). New York: Dell Publishing. (Original work published 1956).
Van Manen, M. (1990/1997). *Researching lived experience. Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* Ontario: Althouse Press.
Van Manen, M. (1991/1993). *The tact of teaching*. Ontario: Althouse Press.
Zahavi, D. (2003). *Husserl's phenomenology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Öquist, O. (1992). *Tyst erfarenhet.* Stockholm: Carlssons.

ENDNOTES

[i] The painting was not made to illustrate the Malay saying but when I saw it the first time, I immediately thought of the pedagogical relation between teacher and student – and the Malay saying. For more paintings by Dorit Riley, go to: www.doritriley.com

[ii] In Sweden, school reports are public documents.

[iii] From the Greek word *heuriskein* meaning to discover or to find.

[iv] *Point out* and *point to* are notions, which Gadamer (xxxx) employs to differentiate between interpretation and understanding.

[v] Jainism, is ancient religious tradition from India teaches us *Syadvada*, i.e. that all viewpoints are partial and we should therefore begin all sentences with a "maybe"; "maybe this is the way it is…".