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Editorial

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Welcome to the first special issue of *Phenomenology & Practice*, an issue which focuses on phenomenological methodology and the methods developed in the footsteps of phenomenology. One might argue with Heidegger (1962) that "the expression 'phenomenology' signifies primarily a *methodological conception*" (p. 50), and say that phenomenology cannot be treated as a method, but rather as an attitude—an orientation towards life and towards scholarship. Nonetheless, modern-day human science has seen a wide range of phenomenological methods or pathways develop. Whether these methods are considered pure and methodologically rigorous, or they are viewed as hybrids giving the researcher freedom to improvise, the concern in this issue is how and why phenomenological research can promote a better understanding of practice.

That a phenomenological attitude towards practice can be an eye-opener became apparent during a lecture I gave for a group of student teachers.

> *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 pre-understandings 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' ?"*
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> *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.*
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> *"Usually it is my dog that tells me when he needs to go out."*
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> *"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."*
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> *"So, how can you tell who is leading and who is following?" one of the students says.*
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> *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 life. Luijpen (1960) expressed phenomenology's orientation towards the word colourfully 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 persons? If better means more thoughtful, more willing to question the taken-for-granted, more open to others' experiences, yes, phenomenology makes us better persons and probably also better professionals, be it teachers, nurses, social workers, or psychologists (to mention a few).

No doubt, many contemporary phenomenological researchers are willing to attest to Merleau-Ponty's (1962) 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). A phenomenological philosopher and his writings can indeed evoke this feeling, but for me it was another book that made me experience a homecoming which transformed me both as a teacher and as a researcher (and perhaps also made me a better person): van Manen's book *Researching Lived Experience*. The Turkish author Orhan Pamuk (1997) beautifully expresses the feelings that van Manen's book evoked in me:

> I read a book one day and my whole life was changed … So it was that as I read my point of view was transformed by the book, and the book was transformed by my point of view. My dazzled eyes could no longer distinguish the world that existed within the book from the book that existed within the world … I began to understand that everything the book had initially whispered to me, then pounded into me, and eventually forced on me relentlessly had always been present, there, lying deep in my soul. The book had found the lost treasury that had been lying below the surface for ages and brought it up, and I felt I could appropriate for myself what I read in between the lines and the words. (p. 3-6)

Max van Manen once said that "to be a teacher, a fine teacher, for any particular student, is to be the person that student has waited to meet all his or her life." Perhaps I was that teacher—at least for one or two of my students in this particular class. If I was, it was because I, too, happened to meet the teacher I had been waiting for all my life.

The religious undertone of the question, "Do you feel like a better person, now that you have found phenomenology?" can hold mundane meaning. It can be transformative to recognize what one has been waiting for. What captured me in van Manen's book was precisely what Pamuk describes as being unable to "distinguish the world that existed within book from the book that existed in the world." Phenomenology does not compartmentalize; neither research from life nor the subjective from the objective, neither the particular from the universal nor our private life

from our professional life—our lifeworld is a whole.

What relevance, then, do these ponderings on my personal encounter with phenomenology and on a student's encounter with a fine teacher have to do with phenomenological methodology and method? Simply stated, a phenomenological attitude, or attunement, has the potential to show us what we earlier did not see or understand. Rigorous phenomenological research nurtures the budding practitioner who constantly and eagerly reflects on "who is walking the dog?"

But now let us go back to my initial observation about the many methods with phenomenological foundation. What counts as phenomenology? How do the various orientations differ from one another and what might they have in common? These are some of the questions that Linda Finlay explores in her article, "Debating Phenomenological Research Methods". In a personal manner, Finlay offers a mapping of some of the most widely used methods today. Six particular questions are raised and contested in the article: (1) How tightly or loosely should we define what counts as phenomenology? (2) Should we always aim to produce a general (normative) description of the phenomenon or is idiographic analysis a legitimate aim? (3) To what extent should interpretation be involved in our descriptions? (4) Should we attempt to set aside or to foreground researcher subjectivity? (5) Should phenomenology be more science than art? (6) Is phenomenology a modernist or post-modernist project or is it neither?

The second article, "The Metabletic Method," is written by Bertha Mok, one of the most knowledgeable scholars about van den Berg's work. The word *metabletics* is derived from the Greek verb *metaballein*, which means *to change*. Thus, the metabletic method deals with the study and the description of synchronicity in history. Bertha Mok describes metabletics as "a systematic study of the changing nature of phenomena of human life as they are lived and experienced. It addresses and explores human existence as given in relationships within a specific historical and social-cultural context." True to phenomenological methodology, one of the cornerstones of the metabletic method is that the meaning of things and events is greater than it seems at a first glance. In an interview with Peter Heij, van den Berg explains that "we need something else, a new grammar. In our modern era of successful science and technology—successful only for a certain range of problems—we lack the words to grasp and to understand the wonder of nature."

Whether we set out to describe the wonder of nature or the wonder of lived experiences, we need to reflect on the language we use. How can we remain true in our descriptions and interpretations to any lived experience, given that they are all, in a sense, prelinguistic? This is the focus of Tone Saevi and Carina Henriksson's article "An Event in Sound: A Consideration on the Ethical-Aesthetic Traits of the Hermeneutic Phenomenological Text." This article starts off with the texts written by the so-called Utrecht School, and reflects on this special orientation of phenomenology, specifically as it has been understood, developed, and advocated by Max van Manen. The authors hold that lived experiences can be understood metaphorically, as "events in sound" which have the ethical-aesthetic virtues of both truth and beauty. By means of a careful examination of the relationship between poetry, poetic writing, literature, traditional academic writing, and lived experiences, Henriksson and Saevi argue that, as phenomenological writers, we dwell in the borderland between a "poetic attitude" and a utilitarian writing style.

In their article, "Immigrant Children's Bodily Engagement in Accessing Their Lived Experiences of Immigration: Creating Polymedia Descriptive Texts", Kirova and Emme present a method that utilizes forms of expression associated with the "Fotonovela"and that also bridges hermeneutic phenomenology and arts-based research methodology. This approach was originally developed as a means to let immigrant children express their lived experiences of the first school day in their new country, through the use of photographs and basic verbal and pictorial elements.

The main question is, "What methods of inquiry can be used to access more directly the 'embodied understanding' and, in particular, the lifeworlds of immigrant children as they leave the familiar 'home world' and enter the 'alien world' of a new school?" This question is explored with the help of three theoretical notions: Gadamer's notion of understanding as the linguistic "happening" of tradition, the embodied knowing of home, body, community and meaning; Heidegger's understanding of the relationship between language and being; and Gendlin's belief that our relational and bodily understandings exceed any precisely formulated "languaged", or otherwise patterned, ways of describing it. In conclusion, Kirova and Emme argue that the fotonovela, as a collage method, offers a deeper understanding of embodied experiences and the complex relationships between body, language, and image.

The relationship between body, movement, and language is further explored in Charlotte Svendler Nielsen's article "Children's Embodied Voices: Approaching Children's Experiences Through Multi-Modal Interviewing." Building on Merleau-Ponty, Gendlin, and Mindell, Svendler Nielsen has developed a multi-modal interview method, which enables explorations of how children experience their bodies in movement and how these experiences can be expressed through language, drawings, music, and movement. Step by step, and through examples from her research, Svendler Nielsen explains the different phases of the multi-modal interviewing approach. She goes on to explain how she has created narratives from interviews and children' s log books and drawings, and how these narratives were analyzed and interpreted. Svendler Nielsen closes her article with some musings on how her multi-modal approach can be used as a pedagogical tool in education, and how awareness among teachers regarding how children experience bodily movement can affect their well-being, relationships, and quality of life.

We conclude this special issue with Ragna Adlandsvik's review-essay, "In Search of a Lost Eye: The Mythopoetic Dimension in Pedagogy," a review of *Pedagogies of the Imagination: A Mythopoetic Curriculum in Educational Practice* edited by Timothy Leonard and Peter Willis. In her essay, Adlandsvik presents and discusses the contributors' chapters before she moves on to discern several themes which hold the anthology together. These themes include: poetry as a way of knowing; soul, spirit, religion; the imaginal, the personal and the political; and the wild, unpredictable, and peculiar. For each theme, Adlandsvik engages in a dialogue; she comments, discusses, and adds her personal view to the themes. Adlandsvik also takes a closer look at the possible connection between mythopoesis and phenomenology, and argues that the two have important elements in common; namely, writing and the poetic attitude. Adlandsvik concludes her review essay by stating that this anthology has tremendous relevance and importance for pedagogy and education, since it offers images and visions of a better world and another social order.

Finally, with this special issue of *Phenomenology & Practice*, it is time for me to step back as Main Editor. It has indeed been a couple of hectic and exiting years; a lot of work but also tremendous joy. The work with starting and running a new journal has—at times—been overwhelming but when I now see how rapidly the journal has gained reputation as a high quality journal, I feel that it was worth every second of hard work. The increasing number of submissions shows that *Phenomenology & Practice* meets a long-felt desire for a journal which is attuned to phenomenology and practice—professional as well as personal. I leave the journal confident that the new Main Editor, Tone Saevi, and her editorial team will continue to expand and develop *Phenomenology & Practice* according to our original plans in the spirit of Max van Manen's former journal *Phenomenology+Pedagogy*.

Carina Henriksson, former Main Editor, Phenomenology & Practice.

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