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## **Phenomenological Pedagogy and the Question of Meaning**

### **Phenomenological Pedagogy**

'Phenomenological pedagogy' is the name for a unique phase in West European educational thought of the period from roughly 1940-1970. The Dutch tradition of phenomenological pedagogy is associated primarily with the names of Langeveld, Beets, Vermeer, Perquin, and Strasser--they were unofficial members of the so-called Utrecht School. About Beets I will say more shortly. Vermeer was especially known for her phenomenological study of play in understanding children, and Perquin was a Catholic scholar at the University of Nijmegen, whose work echoes much of Langeveld's insightful pedagogical writings. Strasser's writings (1963) stood somewhat outside of this circle since he employed a more analytical philosophical style.

Since 1970, Langeveld's successor, Beekman, has been instrumental in developing a more participatory phenomenological method at the University of Utrecht. Beekman's students, Bleeker and Mulderij, have published exemplary phenomenological research about children's experience of play space and the experience of being handicapped in wheelchairs. In Germany, Lippitz has furthered the thoughts of Langeveld. Meyer-Drawe and Loch have pursued a more hermeneutic approach to phenomenology.

There is no doubt that by far the most important figure of the school of phenomenological pedagogy is Langeveld. He began his career as a high school teacher but later became a clinical child psychologist and professor and chair of pedagogy at the university where he was co-founder of the so-called Utrecht School of phenomenological studies. His university position was splintered into several other chairs. Langeveld died in 1980. Beekman has been the most active successor of Langeveld in keeping alive a phenomenological tradition in the Netherlands.

The earlier German Geisteswissenschaftliche tradition (beginning with Schleiermacher and Dilthey) has been more hermeneutical and speculative in its approach to educational and psychological issues. One exception is perhaps the work by Bollnow (1989) who published, among many other educational and philosophical writings (1972, 1982a, 1982b), the now classical piece 'The Pedagogical Atmosphere.' Another is Mollenhauer (1991) who more recently wrote a fine phenomenological text 'Fingerplay.' This is not the place to mention

all phenomenologically oriented figures who contributed directly or indirectly to the pedagogical tradition in the Netherlands and Germany.

Since the 1970s, there have been various initiatives to build a phenomenological research tradition in North America. In education these efforts were limited. The work of Greene (1973, 1985) and Vandenberg (1969, 1971, 1974) (not to be confused with the earlier mentioned namesake) stand out. Sometimes the influential and popular work of humanistic psychology, such as Rogers and Maslow, has been compared to phenomenology, although, from the other (European) side, one has expressed reservations about these comparisons. More scientific American variations of phenomenological psychology also met some success (for example, the early work by Giorgi 1970 and the more recent text by Moustakas 1994). In education, in the last decade, there has been a virtual explosion of studies that purport phenomenological and hermeneutical affiliations, but often these writings bear little resemblance to the insightful interpretive texts of the original phenomenological tradition. For the present I leave out of consideration also the many forms of inquiry that seem propelled by different aims: ethnography, narrative inquiry, (auto)biographic writing, feminist programs, action research, deconstructive analysis, speculative hermeneutics, forms of postmodern critique, and so forth. So rather than comment on these manifold contemporary developments (and at the risk of being called Euro-centric) I will orient to the practice of phenomenology as it grew out of the West European school of phenomenological pedagogy and psychology.

Selected pedagogical writings by Langeveld (1983a, 1983b, 1967, 1971, 1984, 1987), Buytendijk (1988), Bollnow (1989), Mollenhauer (1991), Beekman (1983), Hellemans (1984, 1990), Levering (1992), Meyer-Drawe (1986), Lippitz (1983, 1986), Loch (1986), Bleeker and Mulderij (1993) have been translated and published in *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*. A few translations have been published in journals such as *Universitas* and *Education*. Recently, another score of articles has appeared in the volume *Phenomenological Psychology: The Dutch School*, edited and translated by Kockelmans (1987). For the person interested in pedagogical concerns it may seem unfortunate that the selections in Kockelmans' text are mostly limited to the field of psychology. However, there are several reasons that make phenomenological psychology of interest to educators, child psychologists, teacher educators, counselors, and others who are pedagogically involved with children.

First, the phrase 'phenomenological psychology' functioned in the Dutch and German context as a label to indicate a general phenomenological approach to the lifeworld. The phenomenological movement has been developed by representatives from fields as diverse as education, medicine, counseling, psychiatry, psychology, theology, philosophy, and philosophical anthropology. Its proponents promoted a practical empirical concept of phenomenology guided by a method and attitude designed to better understand the other person from his or her lived world. Moreover, the work of these existential phenomenologists was

strongly drawn by a normative ethic. Educators such as Langeveld (1972), Beets (1975), and Perquin (1964) frequently criticized the attempts of trying to separate pedagogical thought and concrete pedagogical activities from their normative ingredients.

Second, much of the work by the Dutch and German phenomenologists was driven by pedagogical and andragogical values. After the Second World War there existed a general concern with examining human values that would restore a sense of meaningfulness, personal relationship, and at homeness in a world that was felt to be adrift on social currents of massification, nihilism, and alienation (see Weijers 1991). While there exist certain incompatible differences in the views of phenomenology as expressed in the work of, for example, Buytendijk, Bollnow, and Strasser, they seem to agree on an epistemology of practice that is fed by the formative pedagogical process of *Bildung* or formative education.

The collection by Kockelmans takes some of its material from the original text *Person and World*, edited by the psychiatrist van den Berg and the psychologist Linschoten (1953). *Person and World* contains Langeveld's classical pedagogical text 'The Secret Place in the Life of the Child,' which is not included in Kockelmans. The volume *Person and World* was dedicated to Buytendijk, one of the co-founders of the group at the University of Utrecht. The latter started his career in medicine, but soon took an academic position (first at the University of Groningen and then at Utrecht) where he applied his phenomenological scholarship to the broad area of biology, physiology, psychology, and child-psychology (1973, 1974).

Kockelmans describes how the phenomenological tradition of Western Europe had undergone certain transformations away from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology toward an existential (experiential) approach as exemplified in the philosophical writings by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Husserl had wanted to arrive at something genuinely unquestionable and indubitable and he tried to locate this foundation in transcendental subjectivity. However, transcendental subjectivity operates in the sphere of the transcendental ego that is abstracted from the concrete lives of real human beings. 'Husserl's transcendental subjectivity as the ultimate source of all meaning is as such without world,' said Kockelmans (1987: 26). For this reason, hermeneutic and existential phenomenologists could not accept Husserl's striving for a purely eidetic presuppositionless form of inquiry. Husserl's transcendental ego was a philosophical abstraction that prevents one from remaining connected with the world as we live it. It is no accident, therefore, that Langeveld termed the work of the Utrecht School a 'home, kitchen, street' approach to phenomenological inquiry. He was interested in doing practical phenomenology and not in philosophical questions about indubitable knowledge and the condition of phenomenological understanding. This interest in mundane everyday concerns is

evident also in the topics of Kockelmans' collection: 'The Hotel Room,' 'The Body in Sexual Encounter,' 'Driving a Car,' 'The Sickbed,' 'Falling Asleep.'

### **3 Langeveld's Pedagogy**

If there is a single thought that characterizes the program of phenomenology as practiced by Langeveld, Buytendijk, van den Berg, Linschoten, Beets, and others, it is that they diminish the importance of the role of abstract theory in understanding human experience. Langeveld suggested that bringing up and educating children must be brought to reflective awareness 'without becoming alienated from reality by making this bringing to consciousness too theoretically charged with abstract nonsense' and thus getting alienated from the world in which we all must live. He thought that there was already too much theorizing in teacher education. In Langeveld's words:

So this is the important, pedagogically fundamental question: how can I help bring a child to humanness in a world which has alienated itself from children--a world which upon entering is an alienating world. (Taped personal communication 1978. My translation)

Langeveld thought that it could be shown phenomenologically that it is impossible to act as educator while ignoring the pre-theoretic relevancies of the lifeworld.

Those relevancies belong to the structure of the lifeworld implicitly, while they can be made explicit by the pedagogue who reflects on them. This means that when a child is born we bear responsibility, and that is a value concept. When I feed the child and keep it alive then this is the immediate reality of the lifeworld. But why do I sustain the child? How do I have to make decisions about the life of this child? If at birth, I would let the child starve, everyone would say, 'you are a murderer, that is intolerable.' But when you keep the child alive--what are you then?

The point is, of course, that pedagogy is from the very beginning a moral act. (Taped personal communication 1978. My translation)

The phenomenological usage of the terms 'theory' and 'science' is often somewhat ironic. The phenomenological attitude must attempt to maintain a precarious balance between reflection (at the risk of alienating ourselves from the world as lived) and an immediate grasping of meaning as experienced in everyday living. Merleau-Ponty expressed this well in his often-quoted articulation of the phenomenological reflection:

Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice. (1962: xiii)

In making experience phenomenologically transparent one cannot avoid a certain degree of abstraction, theorizing, that is involved in all reflective writing. And yet, as Merleau-Ponty points out, the phenomenological text must aim at constantly evoking experience as lived in the attempt to maintain a reflective grasp of it: 'the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness' (1962: xv).

### **3.1 The Normative Context**

In addition to acknowledging a nontheoretical thrust to phenomenological pedagogical work, Langeveld also posited the primacy of normative or ethical thought in phenomenological reflection about our living with children. Langeveld (1979) set out to show that the pedagogical situation in everyday life is from the very first normative, finding its origin in the relation of parent and child or teacher and student. Pedagogy does not just want to know how things are; pedagogical inquiry always has an inherent practical intent because sooner or later this knowledge figures in how one must act (Langeveld 1979: 1). So, for Langeveld the issue of the place and meaning of phenomenological inquiry is primarily a function of how one stands and acts in the world. During his own student years Langeveld had followed lectures by Husserl, and he explicitly accepted phenomenological method while rejecting philosophical aims: 'We use the term 'phenomenology' after Husserl. With Husserl the term 'phenomenology' occurs in two meaning contexts: to signify a method and to signify a philosophy. We use the term exclusively to refer to the method and remain completely impartial to Husserl's development of a phenomenological philosophy' (1972: 105. My translation). And, argues Langeveld,

[pedagogy] is a science of experience, it is a human science, indeed it is a normative human science which is followed or studied with practical intent [it] is a science of experience because it finds its object (the pedagogical situation) in the world of lived experience. It is a human science because the pedagogical situation rests on human intent It is normative because it distinguishes between what is good and what is not good for a child It is practical because all this is brought to bear in the practical process of education and childrearing. (1979: 178. My translation)

Langeveld often repeated that there exists no closed or universally acceptable rational system to tell us how we should behave with children in our everyday actions and how we should rationally justify our pedagogical approaches and methods. What is reasonable to one person may appear unreasonable to another person, said Langeveld. Instead he sought to locate phenomenologically the norms of pedagogical acting in the concrete experiences of everyday living with children around the home and at school.

### **3.2 The Relation between Theory and Practice**

Langeveld begins his pedagogical primer with the reminder that pedagogy is a practical science that does not merely study its subject for the sake of knowing how things are but rather to know how in the short or long term one should *act* (1979: 1). And yet, there is a difference between acting and reflecting. The pedagogue needs theoretical and historical understanding since it is important to know that the educational problems we face are typical of our time and that pedagogical concerns change over time. Historical and theoretical pedagogy should provide us with a systematic (ordered) understanding of the historical and theoretical literature. Langeveld quotes Gunning: 'Theory without practice is for geniuses, practice without theory is for fools and rogues, but for the majority of educators the intimate and unbreakable union of both is necessary' (1979: 17). But then he adds that Gunning puts it actually too sharply. And Langeveld continues: 'we are all sometimes fools and rogues' (1979: 17, my translation). Theoretical reflection forces one to be accountable, subjects one's views and actions to the criticism and discussion by others, and thus leads to new perspectives and self-understandings. Therefore, to study pedagogy, says Langeveld, is to change one's self.

Pedagogical knowledge does not aim for control of pedagogical situations by rational theory. This kind of control-relation between theory and practice, says Langeveld, belongs to the dominion of the technocrat. One can only speak of control in the human sciences in so far that one can identify and 'form' oneself in the lived experience of the pedagogical encounter, in other words in the life of the child. But this is only possible if one does not lose oneself in this identification but, in spite of, and even thanks to this identification, remains oneself and at the same time empathically lives in the situation of the other--the child (1979: 14) . In order not to lose oneself two things are necessary says Langeveld: (1) one must know who one is, and (2) one must become aware of the complex values and forms of knowledge that ultimately reflect, shape, and orient one's life and gives meaning to one's own experiences. Thus the need for self-reflectivity on the part of educators.

Langeveld approaches the problem of pedagogy (child rearing and education) first phenomenologically and only afterwards from a more engaged or situated philosophy. In other words, Langeveld claims that he wants to start from the phenomenon of pedagogy itself, as it is experienced, rather than from certain concepts or preconceived educational ideas and ideals that would predispose one to see the challenge of pedagogy in foreclosed ways. This does not mean that one can free oneself from one's cultural and historical context, but it does mean that one can orient to the way in which this context is experienced in the here and now.

### **3.3 The Pedagogical Relation**

Langeveld notes that one of the first things that one can learn from reflectively examining one's lived experience with children is that there exists a 'relation of

influence' and that the intent of this influence is from the adult to the child. Naturally, children influence adults but the intent of pedagogical influence is charged with a certain responsibility: we are there primarily to serve the child, the child is there not primarily to serve us. Only gradually does the child grow into responsibilities. Indeed, one of the decisive signs of increased adult maturity for Langeveld is that one can assume responsibility for children.

From a present-day postmodern view it could certainly be argued that Langeveld's work is beset with modernist understandings of maturity and self-responsibility. But it should not be forgotten that Langeveld's pedagogy was a pedagogy fitting the particularities of his time, his culture, and his social sphere. It is quite likely that individuals in our present postmodern age do not experience their relation to their children as filled with responsibility. If he were still alive Langeveld would probably say that the postmodern condition may have eroded for many individuals the possibility of experiencing life pedagogically altogether. And there is little doubt in my mind that Langeveld would be a severe critic of various fashionable strands of postmodern thought in education.

In his own time, and on the basis of his clinical work with children Langeveld (1979) proposed that there are certain pedagogical values that emerge from our lives with children. In particular, he has suggested that security, reliability, and continuity, are fundamental values: children need to experience the world as secure, they need to be able to depend on certain adults as being reliable, and they need to experience a sense of continuity in their relations with those who care for them. How does Langeveld arrive at these ethical values? This, too, is one of the controversial aspects of his pedagogical work. He claimed that these values can be located in our personal experiences with children (relative to our historical context). Children who lack security, who cannot depend on at least one person in their life, who are not permitted to establish long-term relationships with an adult, will become a pedagogical concern, claimed Langeveld.

Langeveld has been criticized by those who want to base educational research and theorizing on more solid rationalistic foundations (either because they wanted to make the field of pedagogy and educational policy making more scientific and subject to management control, or because they distrusted, on political grounds, the pedagogical values that Langeveld articulated). My interest here is not to get involved in arguments that have been waged over whether Langeveld was a captive of a particular social class, a particular culture, or even a somewhat 'idealistic' form of phenomenology. I assume that nobody (not even the happy critic of Langeveld) can escape some form of ideological captivity. We tend to read into the texts of others those preoccupations and tendencies that arise from our own societal contexts and histories.

Langeveld argued that pedagogically one must often place ethical over rational sense: 'de zede over de rede.' Rational theorizing by itself is therefore of limited value for pedagogy. In our living with children we must constantly act, and what

we do (or not do) is more a matter of appropriateness than a matter of reasoned ground. So, Langeveld repeatedly proposed that in our everyday dealing with children our decisions about how to educate children, and more concretely what to say or do, first of all involve normative (ethical or moral) considerations and only secondarily, rational ones. And while these normative considerations are always relative to our own cultural and social contexts, nevertheless adults somehow must always act in ways that are 'becoming' for this or that particular child. And so, a definition of pedagogy would include this active distinguishing between what is appropriate from what is inappropriate, better from worse, right from wrong in our daily dealings with our children or students.

### 3.4 Langeveld's Texts

Langeveld was a brilliant author and his pedagogical texts about clinical child psychology and about teaching and parenting children are often persuasive. Especially in those writings that possess a strong phenomenological sensibility, such as *Scholen Maken Mensen* (Schools Make People) he can give the reader a 'feeling understanding' of how it is that young children may experience their world, and what challenges these understandings pose to us (1967). If one wants to test Langeveld's claim how the normative is always embedded in our understanding of children's experiences it is worthwhile to read his 'The Secret Place in the Life of the Child.' It is considered one of his most exemplary phenomenological writings.

In this text Langeveld gives the reader a resonating understanding of the 'felt meaning' of that special place that young children at times seem to seek out. The 'secret place' is the place where the child withdraws from the presence of others. Langeveld sensitively describes what it is like for a child to quietly sit in this place where the adult does not pay attention. This special space experience does not involve the child in activities such as hide and seek, spying on others, doing mischief, or playing with toys. Rather, what we see is that the child just sits there, while perhaps gazing dreamingly into the distance. What is going on here? Langeveld describes this space experience as a place of growth.

The child may find such space experience perhaps under a table, behind a heavy curtain, inside a box, or wherever there is a corner where he or she can withdraw. This is where the child may come to 'self-understanding,' as it were. Langeveld's intention is to show the formative pedagogical value of the experience of the secret place for the growing child. He describes it as 'normally an unthreatening place for the young child to withdraw.' Langeveld says things like: 'the actual experience of the secret place is always grounded in a mood of tranquillity, peacefulness: It is a place where we can feel sheltered, safe, and close to that with which we are intimate and deeply familiar' (1983a: 13). He portrays the various modalities in terms of which the secret place may be experienced. Sometimes the child experiences space as something uncomfortable, as looming danger.

The phenomenological analysis of the secret place of the child shows us that the distinctions between the outer and inner world melt into a single, unique, personal world. Space, emptiness, and also darkness reside in the same realm where the soul dwells. They unfold in this realm and give form and sense to it by bringing this domain to life. But sometimes this space around us looks at us with hollow eyes of disappointment; here we experience the dialogue with nothingness; we are sucked into the spell of emptiness, and we experience the loss of a sense of self. This is also where we experience fear and anxiety. The mysterious stillness of the curtain, the enigmatic body of the closed door, the deep blackness of the grotto, the stairway, and the spying window which is placed too high to look through, all these lead to the experience of anxiety. They may seem to guard or cover an entry-way or passage. The endless stairway, the curtains which move by themselves, the door which is suspiciously ajar, or the door which slowly opens, the strange silhouette at the windows are all symbols of fear. In them we discover the humanness of our fears. (1983a: 16)

But during the fourth and fifth year of life the 'I' gradually begins to assert itself against the world, the anxieties disappear in degrees. These are the beginnings of the initial developments of a unique human personality in which the first opposition between world and 'I' becomes conscious and in which the world is experienced as 'other,' says Langeveld. Now the secret space becomes invitational:

the indeterminate place speaks to us, as it were. In a sense, it makes itself available to us. It offers itself, in that it opens itself. It looks at us in spite of the fact and because of the fact that it is empty. This call and this offering of availability are an appeal to the abilities of the child to make the impersonal space into his very own, very special place. And the secrecy of this place is first of all experienced as the secrecy of 'my-own-ness.' Thus in this void, in this availability, the child encounters the 'world.' Such an encounter the child may have experienced before in different situations. But this time it encounters the world in a more addressable form-- everything which can occur in this openness and in this availability, the child must actively fashion or at least actively allow as a possibility. (1983a: 17)

In spite of my borrowing of these phrases and quotes from Langeveld, it is quite impossible to summarize or paraphrase Langeveld's text since it is precisely the quality of the entire text that leads one to recognize reflectively what the experience may be like for a child. Over the years, I have used this text with hundreds of adults as an illustrative example of phenomenological writing and almost without exception people appear surprised to 'recognize' Langeveld's description as something that they remember from their own childhood. Indeed, I have often been told that this kind of experience remains an aspect of adult life as well, when people feel the need to withdraw to be by themselves.

In 'The Secret Place in the Life of the Child' we can also observe how Langeveld locates the normative in the phenomenological account of the experience of the secret place. He shows not only what the experience is like he also shows how it is a pedagogically appropriate experience for the child:

In the secret place the child can find solitude. This is also a good pedagogical reason to permit the child his secret place... something positive grows out of the secret place as well, something which springs from the inner spiritual life of the child. That is why the child may actively long for the secret place.

During all the stages leading to adulthood, the secret place remains an asylum in which the personality can mature; this self-creating process of this standing apart from others, this experiment, this growing self-awareness, this creative peace and absolute intimacy demand it--for they are only possible in alone-ness.

(1983a: 17)

Langeveld argued that it is inevitable to see how the normative is intimately linked to our understanding of children's experiences since we are always confronted with real life situations wherein we must act: we must always do what is appropriate in our interactions with children. To reiterate, this is the very definition of pedagogy: to distinguish actively and ongoingly between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in dealing with our children, whether as parent, teacher, psychologist, etc. Langeveld argued repeatedly and adamantly that it is impossible to reduce pedagogical thinking and acting to mere rational grounds. In fact, often, we must be guided by 'felt' rather than rational considerations.

#### **4 Phenomenological Inquiry**

Now I like to turn to the methodological question of what makes the writings by van den Berg, Langeveld, Beets, Bollnow, and others so phenomenologically compelling. I am interested in the evidential quality of these texts that permits us to recognize reflectively, as it were, a certain human experience--that may indeed be relative to certain historical contexts, life conditions, and circumstances but that only ask to be understood as 'possible human experience.' Some critical commentators unfairly see all variations of phenomenological inquiry as contaminated by the idealist philosophy of essentialism. Essentialism states that everything in nature has a nature, an immutable essence. Essentialists assume that once we know the eidos or true being of things then we can give a moral assessment to what extent something falls short of its unrealized potential. In other words, an accurate determination of the essence of childhood, womanhood, or manhood would tell us what is proper to a child, a woman, a man. It is easy to guess why essentialist assumptions may lead to dangerous dogmas. But, in my conceptualization phenomenology does not produce dogmas or even 'theories' in a strong sense of the term. Phenomenology merely shows us what various ranges of human experiences are possible, what worlds people inhabit, how these experiences may be described, and how language (if we give

it its full value) has powers to disclose the worlds in which we dwell as fathers, mothers, teachers, students, and so forth. Of course, we can choose not to value these experiences. The point is, however, that we may enrich our lives by the recognition that these possible experiences could be or become our own actual experiences.

I could give examples of how the phenomenological approach to the lifeworld has yielded texts that are culturally and historically contextualized and therefore not completely fitting to contemporary life. Should we therefore reject the works by phenomenologists like Langeveld as inadequate? I have some difficulty unreservedly criticizing one generation of human science from the epistemological perspective of a succeeding generation. To expect that the text of yesteryear should speak in the same voice for every year thereafter is itself a modernist mistake. Deconstructionist and related critical movements had not yet appeared on the scene of dominant social science of the fifties. The work of phenomenologists such as Langeveld, Beets, van den Berg precede the contemporary critical work of postmodern thought. Yet, in my view, authors like Langeveld heeded already a certain antifoundationalist caution. They warned that human life is always more complex than depicted by even our most subtly reflective portrayals. For example, Langeveld could provocatively question whether, after all these years of researching and theorizing about learning we really know what it is like for even a single child to have a learning experience. His question seems still provocative. The first pedagogical question should be: What is it like for the child to experience a situation like this?

So, from a sympathetic point of view one would want to say that Langeveld's phenomenological studies of children give us insights into some of the ways that children may experience their world. But we should also be aware that there are other ways of experiencing the world. For example, Beets (1964) has written phenomenological pedagogical studies of the ways that children experience the streets and play spaces in their neighbourhoods. But from our presentday perspective we would also want to say that there are other (less benign) ways that children may experience urban street life--experiences that were perhaps less prevalent and obvious to Dutch society of the early fifties.

The lesson to be learned from the above is that phenomenological inquiry does not yield indubitable knowledge. If we realize that every phenomenological text is only one interpretation of a possible experience then the texts by Langeveld and colleagues remain rich and compelling. They offer us sensitive descriptions and interpretations of possible life experiences (however tentative or localized these accounts may be). Thus the ambition of interpretive phenomenology is quite modest and yet important for everyday life: it aims to explore the many possible ways that we may experience and meaningfully understand our world and our relations with others; hopefully these efforts contribute to a more reflective living.

There are certain features that the proponents of phenomenological pedagogy share with those working in the areas of psychology, psychiatry, and medical science: (1) the focus on common everyday life experiences rather than on weighty epistemological, ontological, or metaphysical issues; (2) a normative orientation rather than trying to hold on to a value free ideal of social science; (3) the inclination to push off abstract theory in favor of reflecting on concrete experiences; and (4) an implicit agreement that phenomenological inquiry requires a reflective scholarship as well as a developed talent for writing insightful texts.

One striking attribute of the relatively small circle that comprised the Dutch school is that there were a significant number of medically trained phenomenologists among its most prominent and productive members. I mention especially Buytendijk, van den Berg, and Beets, all medical doctors. Pedagogically sensitive works by Buytendijk include 'The First Smile of the Child' (1988). Van den Berg has written on topics such as maternal affection (1972b), the changing nature of childhood (1975), and more recently he has published a book on hooliganism (1989). But among these three medically trained authors, Beets was probably the most interested in pedagogy as a way of thinking and acting; he produced several phenomenological studies about the Dutch child in the fifties. I will sketch how Beets tries to describe what is unique about pedagogical thinking and pedagogical observation. My intent is to show that Beets does not only present an argument but that he also lets us 'feel' what pedagogical thinking and seeing is like. Following the pedagogical discussion by Beets I will examine how meaning is methodologically embedded in language so that this text may 'speak' to us cognitively and noncognitively.

## **5 Beets and Pedagogical Thinking**

In a 1952 text that examines the relation between medical and pedagogical thought, Beets provides a discussion about the question of why teachers and other adults, who play a professional pedagogical part in the lives of children, should refrain from turning primarily to diagnostic theories and therapeutic models in trying to understand children and in deciding how to deal with difficulties and problems experienced by these young people and their guardians. It is worth briefly retracing his discussion since Beets tries to make clear what is characteristic about phenomenological pedagogy as a mode of thought that differs from psychological and medical ways of thinking.

When Beets compares the approach of the medical practitioner with the pedagogical approach, he provides extensive examples from his own pediatric practice. The children he describes had been referred to him because they had experienced traumas, abuse, or they seemed to display seemingly disturbed behavior at home or at school. In dealing with these young people, Beets found that often a diagnostic (medical or psycho-therapeutic) approach was quite inadequate for understanding and helping these children. In fact, it is the

diagnostic way of thinking that he considered to be in conflict with the pedagogical attitude and with pedagogical work with young people. So, in order to create clarity about the difference between medical-therapeutic thinking and pedagogical thinking he examines the two approaches, by setting them side by side, in their pure form.

Beets shows that medical diagnostic thinking first of all searches for symptomatic clues and causal factors. One looks for developmental patterns, for difficulties surrounding the birth, psychological, physical, and genetic abnormalities in parents, grand-parents and other close family members. He points out that psychological clinical thought operates in a similar manner: one does psychological analyses, administers diagnostic instruments, and applies intelligence tests, personality inventories, and other measuring devices. One searches for disease patterns by looking back into personal and family histories.

Thus, the medical mode of thinking leads to a certain idea of the meaning of therapy: to locate the pathology and then to 'cut out' the intrusion that has been festering there for days, weeks, or even years. Just as one frees someone from his or her appendix, so one searches for and removes the 'problem' by 'cutting it out' of people's lives. Therapy means to liberate someone from a piece of the past, a pathology, that hinders present unencumbered 'normal' living. Implicit in the diagnostic idea of pathology is the (almost moral) idea of the (statistical) average or normal pattern. Developmental and stage models of psychological counseling also tends to work on this basic assumption. For example, grief-counseling is aimed at assisting the client to engage in 'grief-work' (working through stages of grief) in order to rid oneself eventually of the source of pain and remove the obstacle to make possible more 'normal' activities and feelings.

In child psychology too, the main effort of diagnostic thinking is aimed at forming an interpretive picture, an explanatory representation of the child, by looking back, says Beets. He provides several concrete examples of young children who he has encountered and who have been under medical-psychological treatment. Often, says Beets, when a diagnostic judgement is made, medication is prescribed and expert advice is given to the parent, the teacher, the school principal, or school counselor; then the child is sent home and people are left to do whatever they think is best. Beets admits that he paints the picture of a 'pure' diagnostic approach but, in his days (the 1950s) this was not an unusual medical-therapeutic routine in dealing with 'problem children.' It may not be unusual for our time either (see van Manen 1986).

How then does medical thinking differ from pedagogical thinking? The difference is this: pedagogical thinking turns itself immediately and directly to the child himself or herself in his or her particular situation at home, at school, and in the way that the child spends his or her time and relates to others in everyday life. The pedagogue wants to meet this concrete child without reducing him or her to

a diagnostic picture, a psychological type, a set of factors on a scale, or a theoretical category.

What is pedagogically much more compelling, Beets says, is the way in which any particular child fails to match preconceived theoretical distinctions, how a particular child constantly refuses to fit explanatory formulations and definitions, how this child defies diagnostic judgement, how this child is always different from our assessment.

This constant 'defying difference' is what makes the child who he or she is--which is never the same as the diagnostic portrait that the expert constructs. The human being always falls 'outside' of the dossier, the diagnosis, the description; instead, the child is 'inside' relations with others. For example there is Hans, a child who has been diagnosed as schizophrenic amongst other things. Beets describes how his first encounter with the boy left him worried, how he could not help but see the picture of schizophrenia in the child's strange behavior. But soon, and for a period of regular visits, Beets was able to reach the child, Hans, himself, with all his personal idiosyncrasies and life circumstances. Beets says:

Hans is who he is in his daily interactions with his parents, friends, teachers, and me. That is first of all who he is. Further--but that is the 'marginal sphere' or 'background' for me--it is possible that Hans might fit the category of schizophrenia, but my fear with regards to that diagnosis diminishes in my continued interaction and relation with him. (1975: 61)

Thus, Beets makes a strong distinction between diagnostic psychotherapy and pedagogical help. He does not deny that therapy and pedagogy can flow into each other. But to the extent that the therapist orients to preconceived interpretive patterns or to causal relations between diagnosis and treatment, the expert remains stuck in a medical way of thinking; and to this extent it is impossible to maintain a genuine pedagogical relation with the child.

Again, Beets, does not just argue his case abstractly. He continuously gives examples of the manner that children are treated or dealt with in different settings: pediatrics, psycho-therapy, and pedagogy. He shows how, within a medical model (whether as therapist or pediatrician), an adequate treatment can only be started or recommended once a diagnosis has been made--to think in terms of diagnosis and treatment means that therapy logically flows from a diagnosis. Of course, this usually works excellently in medicine. In contrast, the pedagogical encounter is always personal, particular, concrete, tentative, and open towards an uncertain future.

## **6 Meaning and Text**

In his introduction to the work by the Dutch school, Kockelmans draws the reader's attention to how much of this work makes use of poetry and literature. In accounting for this poetic feature of the phenomenological texts he says:

often an appeal to poetry and literature is almost unavoidable in that poetic language with its use of symbolism is able to refer beyond the realm of what can be said 'clearly and distinctly.' In other words in human reality there are certain phenomena which reach so deeply into a man's life and the world in which he lives that poetic language is the only adequate way through which to point to and to make present a meaning which we are unable to express clearly in any other way. (1987: ix)

Kockelmans adds, however, that poems and literature cannot function as a substitute; because 'poems and novels do not 'prove' anything' (1987: ix). He places the term 'prove' in quotation marks, as if to indicate that we should not take this idea too literally. But he does not further elaborate his point, and so it leaves us with the interesting question: What then constitutes this peculiar feature of phenomenological method that requires the special language of novels and poetry to do its work?

It may be important to note that the use of poetic language in phenomenological work is not unique to the 'practical' writings of the Dutch and German phenomenologists who are represented in Kockelmans' book. It is not difficult to see that also the phenomenological philosophers in the European tradition demonstrate great sensitivity to the poetic power of language in their own writing. Philosophers such as Heidegger (1971, 1977), Gadamer (1975, 1986), and Merleau-Ponty (1964) ascribe a decisive role to the poetizing function of language in phenomenological thought and understanding. For example, Heidegger (1971) relates art, and especially poetry to the disclosure of truth and Being. The poetic language of the poem does not just speak of things, rather the poem lets something be 'heard' or 'seen.' It is possible to speak much but to say little. In the act of 'saying' the poetic text produces meaning that shows or points to something. Meaning then is that aspect that makes something 'understood.' Or, as Kockelmans put it in an earlier essay: meaning is 'the intentional correlate of the disclosedness which necessarily belongs to our original understanding' (1972: 17).

However, neither in his 1972 text nor in his 1987 introduction does Kockelmans clarify the use of poetic and literary sources in phenomenological texts. He primarily seems to want to assuage his readers that they should not be amazed at seeing so much literary material employed in the applied existential studies by these West European psychologists, educators, and psychiatrists. The epistemological significance of this poetic language is that the structure of phenomenological text helps to communicate forms of meaning that are unique to phenomenological understanding and that are impossible to mobilize in texts in any other way. We may go a step further and suggest that poetic language is a

necessary dimension of phenomenological inquiry; it contributes to the evocation of a special evidential quality of cognitive and noncognitive meaning in phenomenological text.

The writings of phenomenologists such as Heidegger (1971, 1977), Merleau-Ponty (1964, 1968, 1973), Bachelard (1964), Marcel (1949), display 'styles' that seem very personal and at the same time universal: their texts are able to communicate existential meanings that normally fall out of the range of analytical philosophy or ordinary social science. In Sartre's writings this intellectual-experiential tension is most peculiarly demonstrated. Sartre, too, gives evidence that he felt that the relation between text and understanding requires a special treatment. That is how we may see the strange split in his publications: often difficult philosophical texts on the one hand and very readable novels and plays on the other. It appears that Sartre usually worked, in the two methodological genres--the cognitive and the noncognitive dimensions of phenomenological understanding--more or less side by side. For example, in *Being and Nothingness* he discusses at a cognitive or intellectual level the notion of bad faith (to deceive or lie to oneself) while at a noncognitive level of lived meaning some of his plays, such as *The Dice Are Cast*, evoke an experiential understanding of bad faith. But it is also true that at times, in his philosophical treatise, the cognitive and the noncognitive are closely interwoven; this happens, for example, in the famous description of how we may experience our body under the objectifying look of an observer (Sartre 1956: 252-302).

So, in the works of these phenomenologists we see that meaning is closely tied into the structure of the text. For example, it was said of Heidegger that he was most sensitive to the effect of his lecture texts on his audiences. He would prepare carefully for his lectures by marking, with different colors, selected words, phrases, and sentences that needed a special tone, pause, emphasis, or repetition. His lectures were described as extraordinarily spellbinding, evocative, and stirring.

The logical structure of phenomenological text is, no doubt, as complex as most human science text: it contains argument, analysis, inference, synthesis and various rhetorical devices such as metaphor, case, and example, that aim at procuring, producing, clarifying and presenting meaning. And yet, there is a difference in reading phenomenological text. The epistemology of phenomenology is, that it primarily 'shows' meaning rather than argue a point or develop theory. Of course, argument (forming reasons, discussing, making clear, persuading, concluding) also occurs in phenomenological discourse (interestingly, the term 'argue' derives from *arguere* which means 'to make as clear as silver'). However, the quality of rational argument or scientific proof is subservient to the phenomenological intent of 'showing' and having us 'see' something. And for this purpose, poetic language plays a special role.

Of course, the concept and method of 'phenomenological seeing' originates with Husserl; and Heidegger refers to his early studies with Husserl as exercises in phenomenological seeing. But Heidegger later redefined 'seeing.' He turned his attention away from the cogito or consciousness as such, towards elucidating the meaning of things as we live them in everyday life. Rather than be preoccupied with the issue of indubitable knowledge and with the condition and possibility of phenomenological understanding, Heidegger and like-minded existential phenomenologists turned towards a phenomenological examination of 'ordinary' life experiences. What makes the work of Dutch and German phenomenologists significant is, that it aims to be more 'ordinary' than Heidegger.

Many West European phenomenologists were inspired by the program that Merleau-Ponty articulated in his reading of Husserl's texts. He describes phenomenological 'seeing' as getting in touch with our pre-reflexive experience:

[phenomenology is] 'concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world[to offer] an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking into account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide.' (1962: xv)

In his own writing, Merleau-Ponty makes extensive use of poetic language. It is no accident that, in his famous discussion of phenomenological method (The Preface) he concludes by comparing the sensitivity and sensibility of phenomenological inquiry to the artistic process: 'it is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry or Cézanne--by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world' (1962: xxi).

## **7 Phenomenological Meaning**

What is it about phenomenological meaning that distinguishes it from other forms of meaning in social inquiry? It would be inappropriate to conceive of phenomenological meaning as parallel to biological, zoological, sociological, or theological meaning. As Heidegger points out: 'Taken superficially, the term "phenomenology" is formed like "theology", "biology", "sociology" (1962: 50). However, phenomenological meaning differs in important respects. Whereas *logos* in sociology means the science or inquiry into the domain of the social, *logos* in phenomenology does not primarily mean inquiry into the domain of the phenomenon. Heidegger argues that this would be a shallow understanding of phenomenology: 'Thus the term "phenomenology" is quite different in its meaning from expressions such as "theology" and the like. Those terms designate the objects of their respective sciences according to the subject-matter they comprise at the time' (1962: 58). The term phenomenology is differently composed. Phenomenology neither designates the object of its inquiry, nor characterizes the domain of subject-matter to which it refers. 'The word merely

informs us of the "how" with which what is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled' (1962: 59). The phenomena that are to be disclosed by phenomenology are entities that require a thoughtful reflectiveness and a mindful attunement for which the poetizing word is especially suited. So when Heidegger says, 'These entities must likewise show themselves with the kind of access which genuinely belongs to them' (1962: 61) we may take him to mean that we must be extremely heedful of the way that language can 'address us' in phenomenological texts so that grasping (intuiting) the meaning of prereflective experience is indeed original and discerning.

It appears then that the appropriate comparison for phenomenology is not sociology or zoology. Phenomenological meaning is unlike the meaning of other disciplines, just as poetic meaning is unlike prosaic or ordinary discursive meaning that we find in common sources which merely want to inform. Therefore, I will contrast the meaning that inheres in the language of poetry with the meaning that inheres in the language of informational prose. On the one hand, the aim of this contrast is illustrative since poetry differs from prose in the same manner that phenomenological text differs from other, related, though different discourses. To reiterate a point made earlier: this is not to say, of course, that doing poetry is the same as doing phenomenology. On the other hand, the aim is methodological since we have seen (with van den Berg) that poetic thought plays a certain role in generating phenomenological meaning. In other words, to the extent that phenomenological discourse makes use of poetic language it can benefit from an examination of how poetic discourse (whether in poetry, story, novels, or drama) is structured differently from ordinary narrative prose and scientific discourse (including informational listing, conceptual classification, logical forms of reasoning, theoretical inference, and empirical proof).

The best way to make an immediate distinction between poetic and ordinary narrative is to observe how both an ordinary account and a poem can be paraphrased, restated, or retold, but not in the same manner. We often recount a newspaper article, tell what a report is about, retell an account, summarize a scientific experiment, or reiterate an argument. A poem too can be paraphrased. Just like with a journalistic report, we can tell what a certain poem contains or what a novel is about. In both cases (the informational and the literary text) we end up with a recapitulated narrative about a certain topic. In fact, the topic may be the same. For example, both the paraphrased report and the paraphrased poem may deal with travel in a foreign land. While a paraphrased report may leave out certain detail, it need not do injustice to the original version. But the same is not true for the paraphrased poem or a good novel. This is especially clear when we try briefly to retell or summarize a poem. It simply cannot be done without doing essential violence to the poem. Therefore, Vestdijk (1991) points out that something is bound to happen in the rephrasing of the poem: something essential disappears. The special meaning that renders the poem its evocative

'feeling or thought' nearly or completely vanishes in the narrative restatement or paraphrasing.

Few readers of poetry will contest this claim: the 'precious idea' or 'special meaning' contained in a poem cannot really be paraphrased. For the same reason, Gadamer (1986) observes that translating poetry from one language into another is a hazardous exercise. Robert Frost even defined poetry as precisely that which is lost in the translation. Indeed, many readers will notice that the original meaning can never be quite captured--the best that any translator can hope for is to come up with an other poem that iconically points in the same direction as the first one.

Moreover, it would be wrong to suppose that, in the case of poetry, the evocative, poetic dimensions of meaning are only the sentimental effect or emotional content of language. To understand what is evoked by a poem, a piece of music, an image, or a gesture is in some sense no different from understanding words and sentences. Similarly it is wrong to suppose that the meaning of a poem or evocative text is too complex, too rich, or too deep to be grasped by means of language. It is not that language falls short of reaching directly the iconic meaning of poetic texts but rather that this indirectness, this iconicity, belongs to the structure of poetic meaning. The fact that we cannot unambiguously summarise evoked meaning is both a function of the nature of meaning that is being expressed in phenomenological qualitative research as well as a function of the way in which meaning is embodied in the text.

Phenomenological meaning inheres in texts that exhibit a tensional relation between content and form which has consequences for the textual experience of meaning--between conceptual and evocative, cognitive and noncognitive meaning. In his 'Lecture on Ethics' Wittgenstein (1965) speaks of the experience of noncognitive wonder as a type of questioning that is not so much a problem that can be posed or solved, but rather an awareness of a fundamental question that seems to stop in wonder. Non-cognitive wonder can be understood as the awareness of an unbreachable contingency. Sometimes we may feel overcome with the strange or amazing realization that this face in the mirror is 'me.' We may wonder why it is that we exist; or that the world, or anything at all, exists. Or we may wonder why it is that our life is lived in this particular period of time, in this place.

Cognitive meaning corresponds to ordinary communicative understanding. Much, if not most, social science aspires to express itself in language that is clear, expository, relatively unambiguous. In other words, scientific discourses aim to describe, explain, and analyze human phenomena in a manner that makes social understanding possible and that facilitates effective social policy and action. But what is noncognitive meaning? Noncognitive meaning does not simply evoke understanding that lies outside the purely intellectual faculties. Rather it refers to the experience of meaning that is evoked by language but that also goes beyond

language, transcends language. However, there is nothing other-worldly or strangely mystical to noncognitive, transcendent meaning.

## 7.1 Bollnow

I will give an example from Bollnow's classic text *The Pedagogical Atmosphere*. When, in translating this text, I used the term 'concept' to refer to some of his distinctions, Bollnow was quick to point out (in written communication) that he disliked the term 'concept,' since he felt that he was not making conceptual distinctions. Instead, Bollnow aims to appeal to our intuitive sensibility to gain a reflective understanding of the felt meaning of the distinctive experience of pedagogical atmosphere, trust, morningness, serenity, and so forth.

The term [pedagogical atmosphere] is perhaps a little unfortunate, and I use it hesitatingly for want of a better phrase. The term atmosphere usually makes one think of fleeting and delicate air hovering over the solid ground, somewhat like a shifting breath of wind or a guileful surface glare which covers and distorts the true relationships underneath. When one talks about a pedagogical atmosphere, an emotional and sentimental undertone often arises which threatens to cloak all educational events in a fuzzy sentimentality. That is not what I want to do in the following explorations. I want to be careful and stay clear of these kinds of references

What we are most concerned with here is examining and describing those affective conditions and qualities which are necessary for the raising or educating of children to be possible or successful. (1989: 5)

Bollnow carefully examines the meaning of several pedagogical qualities. One of these is the experience of security and trust. Like many educators Bollnow feels that security (but risk too) is an important condition for a child's development. Moreover, he describes at length wherein the quality of trust consists, and how it gives meaning to the experience of security. It is not necessary in these pages to try follow Bollnow in detail, except to observe how he too integrates anecdotal, literary and poetic material in his texts; he engages the words of many poets and novelists such as Goethe, Rilke, Hesse as well as Heidegger, Nietzsche, Marcel and others. For example, he employs a fragment of a poem by Rilke (from his 'Third Elegy') to evoke in the reader an implicit understanding how trust in the mother can provide the child with the needed sense of security to be able to deal with such childlike anxieties as fear of the dark:

Mother ... you arched the friendly world  
over his new eyes and shut out the strange one ...  
You hid so much from him this way  
rendering harmless the room that grew suspicious at night  
and from the full sanctuary of your heart  
you mixed something human into this nightspace. (1989: 13)

Bollnow suggests that it is the mother who humanizes that which is strange in the darkness of the night-room and who can remove the threatening invasion of what is unfamiliar. She makes harmless what can be experienced as threatening, says Bollnow.

## 7.2 Cognitive and Noncognitive Meaning

My purpose of presenting selected writings by Langeveld, Beets, and Bollnow is to show that we need to be attentive to the way that different forms of meaning are embedded in texts in a manner that provides these texts with phenomenological sensibility. Thus, we must be willing to make a (perhaps uneasy) distinction between, on the one hand, designative, informational, conceptual, expository, cognitive meaning, and, on the other hand, expressive, transcendent, evocative, poetic, noncognitive meaning. Cognitive or expository meaning refers to the semantic significations that words and discourses have in speech and writing. Noncognitive meaning refers more to the expressive quality of texts that is akin to (but not the same as) musical sense. In his wonderfully subtle text *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard employs the phenomenon of 'poetic image' that effects in us, the reader, a phenomenological reverberation (1964: xxiii). The formative power of phenomenological texts lies precisely in this resonance that the poetic word can effect: 'The reverberations bring about a change of being,' says Bachelard (1964: xviii).

the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface. And this is also true of a simple experience of reading. The image offered us by reading the poem now becomes really our own. It takes roots in us. It has been given us by another, but we begin to have the impression that we could have created it, that we should have created it. It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being. (1964: xix)

Bachelard speaks of the necessity of poetry in his writing when he introduces his phenomenological study of the human experience of spaces: dwellings, universes, nests, corners, drawers, chests, wardrobes, and intimate immensities. Indeed, he even references the quoted remarks by the Dutch psychiatrist van den Berg, that 'poets and painters are born phenomenologists' (Bachelard 1964: xxiv). In Bachelard's phenomenology, space is not just an objective datum of the physical world. His space is not primarily dimensional space, it is human space; the same space that may endow Langeveld's child with the experience of secrecy, indeterminacy, peacefulness, inwardness; the same space that may render the strangeness of the nightroom for Bollnow's child its trusted quality in the presence of the mother.

Poetic language makes intelligible in a 'feelingly understanding' manner the space that we inhabit, encounter, and in which we dwell. In phenomenologically

interpreted space, the human being recognizes, creates, and imagines forms of being, significations of humanness. This means that phenomenology does not only explain conceptually what space is, it also explores poetically what space can mean by offering possible space experiences: space that humans can create in humanizing their world. Conceptual theoretical language by itself falls short of the phenomenological project. The atomistic tendencies of conceptual language demands abstractions for generalization, reasons for fixation, criteria for designation, and measures for referentiality.

Ihde too has suggested that while 'phenomenology, particularly in its Husserlian form, may be seen to reciprocate with the analytic philosophies of language with respect to reference, its deeper concern lies with the other tendency [of] expression' (1983: 167). The difference between designative, referential, semantic functions of language and the expressive, transcendent, poetic functions of a text is not simply an issue of interpretability. Both designative and expressive meaning involve interpretation, though in a different manner and to a different degree. I reiterate again that the language of designative and expressive meaning is not an either-or distinction. Phenomenological discourse must have cognitive meaning: argument, logic, conceptual, intellectual, and moral intelligibility. What I am arguing is that this is not enough. Phenomenological text without expressive or transcendent meaning is like a poem without poetic meaning. In these distinctions lie the challenge of phenomenological inquiry and writing. (For earlier explorations of these themes see texts cited in references by van Manen.)

### **7.3 Reading and Writing Phenomenological Text**

So, the phenomenological researcher-author needs to remain aware that noncognitive meaning refers to the special meaning that the phenomenological text evokes when it touches, addresses, intrigues, fascinates, or speaks to us--when it overflows the ordinary more literal linguistic meaning as it were. This is a challenge of writing as well as reading. Indeed, it may happen that we understand, for example, the literal meaning of a poem and yet we do not feel addressed by it. Of course, when this poem does not touch, stir, or speak to us then the question is whether we really understand its meaning at all (assuming, of course, that the text is indeed endowed with poetic value).

But the same is true for phenomenological text. We can be blind to a phenomenological description as we can be blind to a poem. By way of illustration, let us listen once more to the way that Langeveld's introduces us to that special space experience of young children. There is little doubt that Langeveld's text may speak more strongly to some readers than to other readers. He follows the child up to the attic or down into the basement of the house where things are stored:

There are places to crawl into and hide; there are huts and havens, places of refuge, retreats, sanctuaries, dens, caves, holes, and narrow passes to travel through. Every object assumes a meaning which best fits it and makes it a part of this landscape. Except for that familiar storage cupboard over there which we know as the 'apple keeper.' This cupboard is a stranger to the scene just because of its definite identity and significance. It shows an inscrutable and even disagreeable face. We don't want to bother with it because it obviously refuses to 'play along.' We don't expect anything from this cupboard. It will remain merely itself. Just look at it. How it stands there: heavy, dense, unmovable. And because of this immutable familiarity, it forfeits its worth and significance. It is precisely the fixed and 'everyday' character of this common cupboard which robs it of any possibilities of expression in a world where every object secures a voice of its own. Let us listen to the language spoken by these things. In listening to this language, we may gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the secret place in the world of the young child. (1983b: 183)

Will every reader find reverberation in Langeveld's text? Of course, it is possible that the very experience of the secret place is foreign to some people and therefore difficult to 'read.' But is it possible also that some of us are insensitive or blind to the expressive modality of phenomenological writing? Is a person who cannot 'read' phenomenological text able to 'write' phenomenological text? And in the case of Langeveld's text, can phenomenological blindness imply pedagogical blindness? Is someone, who is blind to phenomenological meaning inherent in 'The Secret Place in the Life of the Child' also blind to the pedagogical understanding that can be gleaned from it?

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