In Kohlberg’s stage theory, moral development culminates in an autonomous stage at the postconventional level. Although Peters agrees with Kohlberg’s view that the culmination point of moral education is the rational autonomous person acting on a principled morality, his conception of autonomy is never an absolute one, not even at the postconventional level. Peters, as a moderate liberal, keeps at bay extreme and less intelligible versions of individualism. Autonomy, according to Peters, is a midway attitude between the two extremes of slavishly reproducing authorities and originally creating oneself. As an ideal of character, autonomy cannot be realized unless the child has first been initiated into the framework of worthwhile activities, which constitutes our shared inheritance. Autonomous choice only makes sense on the condition that a perspective on the human condition, canonically enshrined in the humanities, informs it. After being sufficiently initiated into the human heritage, one does not have to rely on authorities in the moral and existential domains to make something of one’s own life. At least with regard to the human condition and life’s predicaments—basic features of any moral life—one can develop some view of one’s own.

Steaan E. Cuypers

See also Education, Concept of; Education, Transcendental Justification of; Knowledge, Structure of; From Aristotle to Bruner and Hirst; Moral Development: Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan; Scheffler, Israel; Wittgenstein, Ludwig

Further Readings


**PHENOMENOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY**

In Continental educational discourse, the concept of pedagogy is paired with that of didactics; just as in North America, the concepts of curriculum and instruction tend to be linked. From approximately 1910 to the late 1950s in Germany and from the end of World War II to the mid-1960s in the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, several generations of educational scholars participated in an emerging form of inquiry and thinking that became known as Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik, commonly translated as “human science pedagogy.” Phenomenological pedagogy is a form of human science pedagogy that aims to start from a presupposition-less experiential perspective. Phenomenological pedagogy asks, “How are we to act and live with children, helping them create their human capabilities while realizing that we are apt to do harm?” It reflects phenomenologically on the meaning of pedagogy and, through situation analysis, tries to understand the world of the child as it is experienced by the child. Phenomenological pedagogy claims that one must begin from the phenomenon of pedagogy itself, as it is experienced, rather than from certain philosophical or theoretical concepts or preconceived educational ideas and ideals that would predispose one to see the challenge of bringing up and educating children and young people 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 the pedagogical context is experienced in the here and now.

**Origins**

The first proponents of the human science tradition in education included Wilhelm Dilthey, Herman Nohl, Wilhelm Flitner, Josef Derbolav, and Theodor Ballauf. The theoretical corpus of this group became known as the Dilthey-Nohl school and was
primarily oriented to explicating the meaning of pedagogy in human life. Pedagogy was approached on the basis of two modes of manifestation: (1) pedagogy as a primordial human phenomenon and (2) pedagogy as a cultural phenomenon.

Interest in human science pedagogy was especially motivated by the desire to be freed from the normative constraints exerted by old pedagogies. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the education and upbringing of children were strongly influenced by the norms and values of the church (Catholicism and Protestantism), denominational belief systems, and class-driven ideas. With the emergence of the human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften), the taken-for-granted beliefs and practices of historical pedagogies were increasingly questioned and philosophically interrogated. In this critical context, phenomenology and hermeneutics became strong philosophical platforms for attempts to develop new approaches to pedagogy emancipated from the normativities and habituated presumptions and prejudices of the social and ideological milieus in which they operated.

Dilthey argued that the study of pedagogy must start with an explication of the pedagogical relation between child and adult. Nohl was largely responsible for working out a pedagogical philosophy on the basis of Diltheyan starting points and formulations. Like many of his colleagues, Nohl taught a portfolio of philosophy, pedagogy, and ethics. An early phenomenological theme in Nohl’s approach was to place the phenomenon of bringing up and educating children squarely in the lifeworld of everyday thinking and acting. He resisted the common inclination to derive insights into the practice of pedagogy from theory. In keeping with Dilthey’s distinction between explanation and understanding in the human sciences, Nohl resisted using objectifying and natural scientific approaches to pedagogical questions. He was keen to relate pedagogy to emancipatory cultural developments in the service of the educated person, for which the Germans used the term Bildung. Nohl described the pedagogical relationship between adult and child as an intensely experienced one, characterized by three aspects. First, the pedagogical relation is highly personal, animated by a special quality that spontaneously emerges between adult and child and that can be neither managed or trained nor reduced to any other human interaction (e.g., friendship, being a buddy, etc.). Second, the pedagogical relation is an intentional relation, wherein the pedagogue is always oriented in a double direction: (1) caring for a child as he or she is at present and (2) caring for a child for what he or she may become. Third, the pedagogical relation is an interpretive one. The educator must constantly be able to interpret and understand the present unique situation and experiences of the child and anticipate the moments when the child in fuller self-responsibility can increasingly and meaningfully participate in the culture. This notion of the pedagogical relation between child and adult has become a central theme in the subsequent development of the field of phenomenological pedagogy.

Friedrich Schleiermacher pointed at two grounding antinomies of pedagogy: (1) the polarity of individual versus social or universal ends of pedagogical action and (2) the duality of the positive and the negative, the good and the bad, in the process of encouraging, stimulating, restraining, and disciplining the child. These distinctions gave rise to Theodor Litt’s (1949) Führen oder Wachsenlassen (Giving Guidance or Letting Be), which discusses the dialectic of giving active direction to a child’s life while being sensitive to the requirements of letting go or holding back. Human science pedagogy became characterized by a continual reflection on welding together such antinomies—the ideal versus the real, freedom versus control, dependence versus independence—to expose the need to come to terms with paradoxical polarities in everyday life situations, especially at the level of values and pedagogical thought.

The Nature of the Pedagogical Lifeworld

Concretely put, the pedagogical lifeworld is full of tensions and contradictions. The child wants to do something himself or herself, but the parent feels responsible to assist or restrain the child in order to avoid a dangerous or undesirable situation. A new parent or teacher vows never to say no to a child but finds it impossible to live up to the determination. One struggles with the tension between what one would like to be (able to do) and what one is (capable of) at present. Supper is on the table, but the child would rather eat junk food; the child wants a Facebook account, but the parent worries that she is not yet old enough. These are examples of the endless contradictions, conflicts, polarities, tensions, oppositions, and so forth that structure the reality of the pedagogical lifeworld. Most parents or teachers know by experience the challenges that these antinomies pose to everyday practical acting and
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living with children. For Litt, no theory of pedagogy can be satisfying if it does not address the inherent antinomies of daily life.

A more quotidian articulation of the human science pedagogy occurred in the approach to pedagogy of Martinus Jan Langeveld, Otto Friedrich Bollnow, Klaus Mollenhauer, Nicolaas Beets, and Ton Beekman. In fact, it may be argued that “phenomenological pedagogy” proper only truly began with the work of Langeveld, though his work was clearly rooted in the Geisteswissenschaftliche pedagogy of his predecessors. Like some of his contemporaries, Langeveld studied with Theodor Litt, and he followed lectures with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Other philosophical influences in the development of phenomenological pedagogy include phenomenologists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuelle Levinas, Georges Gusdorf, Helmuth Plessner, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In Langeveld’s widely read book *Beknopte Theoretische Pedagogiek* (Concise Theoretical Pedagogy), he shows the need to grasp the meaning of the lifeworld of the child, not only from a hermeneutic ontological perspective but also from the point of view of the child. The center of pedagogical interest must reside in a sensitive grasp of meaning as lived and experienced by the child. Langeveld suggested further that to come to an understanding of what is good for the child, what is educationally desirable, we must first be able to listen to the child in a manner that respects the child’s subjectivity—the way the child experiences and perceives things.

The question of the lived meaning of the pedagogical relation, the focus on the lifeworld, the recognition of paradoxical antinomies in everyday pedagogical situations, and the primacy of practice over theorizing may all be regarded as themes of phenomenological pedagogy. Langeveld posited the primacy of normative or ethical thought in phenomenological reflection about our living with children. He set out to show that the pedagogical situation in everyday life is from the very beginning ethical, 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. So for phenomenological pedagogy, the issue of the place and meaning of phenomenological inquiry is primarily a function of how one stands and acts in the world. Langeveld proclaimed that he was not interested in the philosophical intricacies of phenomenology but only in its method.

**Pedagogy and Phenomenological Method**

The method implicit in the writings and work of scholars like Langeveld, Beets, Bollnow, and van den Berg is characterized by two things. First, phenomenological method consists of reflecting on the fundamental aspects of pedagogy as a unique and autonomous phenomenon; essential themes of pedagogy are aspects such as pedagogical responsibility (Langeveld), pedagogical authority (Arendt), the pedagogical atmosphere (Bollnow), pedagogical diagnosis (Beets), and the pedagogical relation (Spiecker). Second, phenomenological method consists of situation analysis of specific lifeworld phenomena in the lives of children or young people and adults; topics included the experience of the secret place (Langeveld), the child’s experience of things (Langeveld), the experience of play (Vermeer), the time at school (Langeveld), and street life (Beets).

Phenomenological pedagogy is an ethical-normative practice because it distinguishes between what is good and what is not good for a child. 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. Instead, Langeveld sought to locate phenomenologically the norms of pedagogical action in the concrete experiences of everyday living with children around the home and at school.

Pedagogy is what happens in the interaction between the adult and the child, providing the interaction is based on a pedagogical intent. 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. For example, how should we understand the responsibility of children for their actions? Langeveld held that it is precisely children, or the young in general, who cannot be held responsible. They did not ask for their lives; they live initially in complete dependency. And even adults do not always appear to be able to carry the full load of the consequences of their responsibility personally.
On the one hand, the aim of pedagogy is to help young people assume independence and personal responsibility as mature adults; however, we know that even adults will never be totally independent and self-responsible. Therefore, Langeveld says that the aim of pedagogy is not just independence or self-reliance but taking and bearing complete responsibility, yet without being able to carry it individually. Obviously, some of these phenomenological reflections are open to ongoing discussion as times change, and they must be situated in a systematic understanding of historical and theoretical literature. Philosophical reflection forces one to be accountable, subjects one’s views and actions to criticism and discussion by others, and thus leads to new perspectives and self-understandings.

Therefore, to study pedagogy is to change one’s self. Parents and teachers know this all too well. Once children have entered one’s life, one changes in ways that may be difficult to explicate and yet are unmistakable. The question is how one can identify and “form” oneself in the everyday 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. To not lose oneself, two things are necessary according to 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 give meaning to one’s own experiences.

**Recent Developments**

More recently, human science has been revived and given new methodological directions—such as, among others, studies of the pedagogy of media and technology and their impacts on the pedagogical relation in classrooms and other educational settings (Adams, 2006, 2012); the orthopedagogy of seeing the abilities and disabilities of children pedagogically (Saevi, 2005) and addressing all those concerned with a problematic education situation rather than focusing on the child alone; and the phenomenological pedagogical studies of parents’ ethical experiences of their newborn infants in the context of the pedagogy of technology in neonatal care (van Manen, 2012).

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**See also** Arendt, Hannah; Bildung; Heidegger, Martin; Hermeneutics; Phenomenology; Sartre, Jean-Paul; Schleiermacher, Friedrich

**Further Readings**

Phenomenology is the name for the major philosophical orientation in continental Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries. Phenomenology is not a substantive discipline, such as psychology, biology, or sociology; rather, it is the study or inquiry into how things appear, are given, or present themselves to us in prereflective or lived experience. In this sense, phenomenology is primarily a method. It is often called a hermeneutic phenomenological method of reflecting on experience while abstaining from theoretical, polemical, suppositional, and emotional intoxications. Hermeneutic means that reflecting on experience must aim for interpretive language and sensitive linguistic devices that make the phenomenological analysis, explication, and description of lived meaning possible. This entry begins with a brief overview of the questions and challenges at the core of phenomenology and the contributions of important figures in phenomenology over the past century. It goes on to describe the five main approaches to phenomenological reflection and the rootedness of such reflection in lived experience. An exploration of phenomenology’s specific forms of engagement with education and educational theory follows, and the entry concludes with a discussion of the various ways in which the phenomenological approach has been adapted within the framework of the human sciences generally.

In the past 100 years, scores of philosophers and human science scholars (to name a few, Edith Stein, Jan Patočka, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler, Jean-Luc Marion, and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei) have been inspired to take up the phenomenological challenge of exploring where and how meaning originates, what it means to understand something, and how self and other are implicated in the ethics of presence and otherness, being and alterity (otherness of the other). In the context of the long and complex philosophical tradition of phenomenology, it should be obvious that there are various intricate descriptive and interpretative elements at work in phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenology is, in some sense, always descriptive and interpretive, linguistic and hermeneutic.

Although there are certain precursors to philosophical phenomenology, such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Georg W. F. Hegel, it is generally agreed that the founding figure of phenomenology is Edmund Husserl. His aim was to find a method for arriving at indubitable knowledge that could serve to establish a firm epistemological basis for the sciences. Husserl believed that it is possible to grasp and describe the essential meanings of intended objects as they appear in consciousness; the proper focus of phenomenology is on the way objects appear or give themselves—their transcendence. The second major figure in the development of phenomenology was Husserl’s student Martin Heidegger, who argued that the attempt to formulate indubitable knowledge was too presumptuous, since the meaning of objects as experienced is ultimately as elusive as the temporality of experience as lived. The “I” of the living present always dissolves under the objectifying and subjugating gaze of the “I” of the reflective self. Heidegger radicalized Husserl’s phenomenology by pointing out that the proper focus of phenomenology is not epistemological but ontological. To ask how a phenomenon appears in consciousness is already to assume an abstraction, namely, the idea of consciousness itself. Heidegger argued that phenomenology must aim for