Seeing Disability Pedagogically
The Lived Experience of Disability in the Pedagogical Encounter

by

Tone Saevi

For my parents
Acknowledgements

All that has been read in order to write these texts has been read and re-read with pleasure and enthusiasm. I have mainly read authors that write in a way that I wish I could write. The more I read, the more I admire the skill and insight that characterize phenomenological writing. It is from my heart and with all my strength that I have strived to become as good a phenomenological writer as I possibly could. My humblest attempt to write phenomenology may not have come to fulfilment yet, but what I know for sure is that all I have read and all that I have written deeply concerns me. In the same way that Bachelard (1994) writes about reading poetry, is true of me reading phenomenological literature, "The poetic image is an emergence from language, it is always a little above the language of signification. By living in the poems we read, we have then the salutary experience of emerging" (ibid: xxiii).

Through the reading and writing of phenomenology, my understanding of the nature of pedagogy and disability has been revealed, as well an emerging sense of myself as a pedagogue. This statement may sound somewhat trivial, but it is not. Accomplishing this work has truly changed my view of life in general and of pedagogy in particular.

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Chapter 1. The experience of disability in pedagogy – the question, the intention and the structure of the study

It is difficult to find the beginning. Or better: it is difficult to begin with the beginning. And not try to go further back (Wittgenstein 1969: 62e).

The question

How does seeing disability, disable/enable seeing pedagogically? This question anchors and substantiates this study and constitutes the basis for the empirical data collection and hermeneutical phenomenological descriptions and interpretations. The notion of ‘seeing disability’ involves both the experience of seeing students with disability as well as the experience of being seen as students with disability. The term ‘seeing’ indicates the pre-reflective condition that unconsciously shapes our perception in general and particularly in the situation of the pedagogical encounter. In this sense, seeing also encompasses the deliberate understanding, knowing and experiencing of disability and pedagogy. The phenomenological approach of this study is an ontological as well as a methodological one, which will deepen the experiential pedagogical significance of the phenomenon of ‘seeing disability pedagogically’. The focus of the research question considers the tension between the notions of ‘seeing disability’ and ‘seeing pedagogically’. From this tension within the educational every day life of teachers and students of adapted education, several significant questions emerge, which will be addressed in this study.

The following sub-questions will guide and structure the various parts of this dissertation: What is the phenomenology of seeing and being seen? How is ‘seeing’ students a way of understanding and experiencing them? What is the difference between ‘pedagogical seeing’ and other forms of seeing young students? How do teachers see disability and how do students with disability see themselves? Does disability somehow make a difference in pedagogical seeing? Is it possible to describe pedagogical ways of seeing disability? In short, what is the significance of disability in the encounter between student and teacher?
Seeing students

In order to show rather than simply explain what ‘seeing’ students may be like in the context of the pedagogical encounter, some anecdotes will be presented in order to help the reader experience the significance of seeing disability in pedagogical encounters. The anecdotes below have in common the often-unnoticed phenomenon in pedagogical practice of the experience of ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’ during the pedagogical encounter. The brief moments of seeing and being seen, represent the core of pedagogy, in as much as they constitute the personal and moral encounter between teacher and student. Van Manen said this in the following way, “Because we are what we can see (know, feel, understand), seeing is already a form of praxis – seeing the significance in a situation places us in the event, makes us part of the event” (1997a: 130). Teachers ‘see’ students in various ways and attribute different meanings to the word. Students as well, experience the ways teachers see them, differently. Hence, even if the context of the teachers’ seeing is always from within the pedagogical encounter, the ways teachers ‘see’ will differ considerably. Some kinds of seeing seem to support good pedagogical practice while other ways of seeing can be pedagogically destructive. Here we are called to wonder how seeing students is a way of meeting them, as well as asking what profound pedagogical questions are reflected in the teachers’ ways of seeing, understanding and experiencing the students of adapted education. How does disability impact on pedagogical practice in terms of how the student is seen and met pedagogically? The following anecdotes reveal different dimensions of the experience of being seen in various adapted classrooms.

Birgitte is one who knows the experience of exclusion:

“I had to leave the other students of my class every day, to be taught math or English in a group room, wall to wall with them. The walls were not very good, so I could hear very well what was going on in there. I listened to their laughter, and wondered what was so funny. I was so curious I could neither read nor write. My ears somehow were glued to the wall, I so strongly wanted to be with them and share their experience. Even more since I had to be in this particular room and they were together in the other. Their laughter was not the kind of laughter they used to have when they teased me. This kind of laughter made me feel sorry for not being there with them. My teacher was not at all interested in what happened in there. I don’t even think he saw how badly I
wanted to get out of this room and join them. He just kept on asking me stupid questions and told me to concentrate, as if the other students did not exist.”

Here a teacher worries about her 17year old learning disabled student,

“Hanne may need another school year to improve her self-confidence and belief in other students as well as teachers. She has not yet had the opportunity to discover friendship and joy and all the good things that may belong to school-life. She has too many painful experiences of exclusion, torment and unconcerned teachers from the past, and she uses lots of time trying to sort out her feelings about this. But somehow this absorbedness with her difficult past, takes up too much space from her present. Some weeks ago we had one of our frequent conversations after school. Concluding, I said seriously that her past might have become an energy-thief in her life. She seemed to like that allegory. A few days later she came to my office before class and told me she had decided not to let the energy-thief rule her life. “All of a sudden I saw that there is a bigger world than mine,” she said. “I should give other people a second chance to get to know me.” I once again was reminded of the strength of the trust that young students have in future possibilities”.

Here, a teacher sees his student Niklas in a certain way.

Niklas impatiently rocks his chair. He has not yet removed the workbook from his school bag. The class is told to copy the sentences written at the blackboard, to their workbooks. Stein, the teacher, moves among them in order to give necessary assistance. “Good, your letters are beautiful,” he encourages Synne. Sofia shouts for help and he turns to her for a moment. After a while, the teacher, who has kept an eye on Niklas, goes up and bends over the student, as he says in an annoyed voice: “I told you to start immediately!” He pulls the book out from Niklas’ knapsack, opens it with an impatient gesture and puts the pencil between the student’s fingers. “So, go ahead!” He turns to Sofia again. Niklas looks at his teacher’s back, and puts the pencil down in front of him at the desk.

Lisa a young student struggles to make pizza

Lisa sighs, and looks around helplessly. She struggles with a sticky uncooperating pizza dough, trying to work in the appropriate amount of flour, but without success. The school kitchen is like a busy anthill at this time of the day. Everybody accomplishes his or her particular job, in order to fill the sales counter of the canteen before the school’s main break. The teacher, that a moment ago promoted Frida to chop onion professionally with the heavy kitchen knife, catches Lisa’s despairing gestures and heads towards her. “Do you need a hand, girl?” Lisa gives her an affirming, but dejected glance and offers her space beside her by the kitchen machine.
A teacher tries to see her student without making him feel as if he was being looked after:

“Victor does not talk much, but he has very expressive eyes. He used to obey other persons in everything and was really profoundly insecure. In this class we let the students act more deliberately, in order to support their confidence and prepare them for adult work situations. We do not want them to be obedient as soldiers, but we let them experience that doing things wrongly is no need to fear. By simply letting him do things without too much teacher interference, we have seen that Victor’s experience of self-esteem has grown. Putting this on an evaluation card is hard, but we see what he is able to do in the kitchen; how he has the overview, and how he does all the small things that no one else wants to do. “I’ll do it,” he says, and quickly he figures out things without any request. He does not need to be told, he simply just acts on it. He really strives with theory, for instance when he has to measure or weight something. But the practical part of the work he really copes with. “I just can’t believe he sees this by himself,” one of the girls said today when he surprisingly had cleaned the oven. Some of the other students were so grateful, because they had expected it to be their duty”.

Seeing as metaphor and structural device

These anecdotes all hold deep phenomenological meanings that need to be excavated in order to bring to light their essential ‘isness’ or ‘whatness’. The significance of how we are seen and how we see others is dealt with both in philosophy, phenomenology and pedagogy.¹ Available sources then are many, but there remain many areas of interest that remain unexplored. Among these would be the question of how disability, and in particular what we call learning disability, is seen pedagogically. The fact that we are often not fully aware of how we are seen by others nor do we realize the impact created by our glance makes the phenomenon of seeing, an important source of pedagogical insight. When approaching an investigation of how disability is seen pedagogically, there are various aspects of pedagogical ‘seeing’ that need to be thematized. One significant aspect is the relation between the ‘social look’ and the experience of seeing. Modes of pedagogical seeing, like seeing in general, are characterized by such complexity that any phenomenological inquiry must confine itself to specific aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. The intention of this work is to gain an understanding of the important ethical and pedagogical challenges in the encounter

of disability and pedagogy. As much as disability can be understood from political, social, sociological, psychological and medical perspectives. These are subordinate to this study. The concern here, is how young persons with disability are seen, understood, sensed and experienced in pedagogical situations, as well as the way they are seen from within pedagogic, ethical and social practices. When I emphasise practice, and not theory, it is not to leave out theory, but rather to let significant theoretical aspects emerge as deeply influential of pedagogical practices and the concrete encounter between the young person and the adult.

Experiencing something, is not synonymous with reflective knowing. The lived experience of seeing a student in the pedagogical encounter is thus not the same as having knowledge about students, pedagogy or teaching. Even though most teachers do have a great deal of professional and personal knowledge in regards to students, subjects and pedagogical practice, cognitive knowledge is secondary to the experience of actually seeing students. Seeing and being seen, in the pedagogical encounter are experiential phenomena that help us understand the meaning of the relationship between teacher and student. Teachers’ seeing, is an immediate, sensed and embodied lived experience, that is prior to reflective knowledge. While knowing students is a cognitive and conscious area of the teacher’s professional practice, experiencing the students, is related to sensing and understanding them in a more profound and pre-reflective way. Thus ‘seeing’ is not first noticing that there is a person to see, and then deciding to see him or her. In fact, the opposite is true; the sensing eye discovers the person and then we become consciously aware of the fact that we are seeing him or her. ‘Seeing,’ is instantly and intuitively sensing the other person or things in our surroundings. Seeing is a response to the world, which is always already there to be seen. I know the world as a place where my sense of seeing is aimed at discovering the people and objects within it. One might say that I see the world through my realization of self, and as such, I am constantly interpreting the world through my senses. Seeing is a way of knowing the world, yet not primarily in terms of cognitive information, but rather as an embodied and sensed knowledge, that unconsciously ties me to the world. Thus the experience of seeing and being seen are ontological rather than epistemological terms.
Every way of being in the world is a way of knowing the world. I know the world from my personal perspective. I know what it is like for me to be the particular person that I am, meeting other persons, things in the world and the world itself. This fact brings forth some important questions: How can I as a teacher, possibly know students and understand their experiences? How can I understand human conditions and experiences that are different from my own? Of course teachers cannot understand students the way they understand themselves. It is particularly hard for teachers to understand students with very different experiences and perspectives from their own, as is the case with students with disability. Being a disabled student, is a way of knowing the world from the particular personal perspective of disability. It is a way of knowing the world from a different perspective than other students do, which might make it harder for the teacher to understand. Still, a teacher constantly has to strive to encounter every individual student, in ways that develop their self-understanding and support their personal growth towards adulthood. The way teachers encounter the students pedagogically, is in the way they see and experience them. And the reverse is true, the way teachers see students is vital to how they experience and understand themselves in the pedagogical encounter. In the portraits above, the students as well as the teachers disclose something significant about who they are through their speaking and acting. Their words, perspectives, angles and positions, are according to Hannah Arendt (1958) representing their identity from which we all always speak and act. Therefore what is seen when we see other persons as well as ourselves creates traces of identity and ‘self’ in the most profound way.

The phenomenological approach

The phenomenological approach is taken in this work and will be described in depth in part two, the methodology section. Yet, there are a few phenomenological devices that need to be addressed up front as they might confuse the reader at the start. First, the use of ‘we’ and ‘I’ is common in phenomenology when referring to our common experience, not to any group or profession in particular. The ‘we’ in phenomenology includes the writer and the readers. The 'I' in phenomenology is part of the same function. The use of 'I' and 'we' connect the writer and the readers in a common world of possible experience. This comes from the fact that phenomenology is not a social realistic science, but rather it is written on another level, which is more
universally reflective of the human experience. Second, the term anecdote is a frequently used notion of the edited lived experience description (LED) that constitutes the ground for phenomenological analyses. An anecdote is a special kind of story or narrative that in the human science is used as a methodological device that attempt to capture experiences that easily elude us. Anecdotes have a pragmatic value as concrete connected insightful descriptions of particular pedagogical events. The good anecdote possesses particular qualities of sensitive insight, pre-reflective meaning and even wisdom, and as such provides a certain counterweight to theoretical and abstract knowledge. Hence, the anecdote may help bridge and connect our understanding of life to relevant theoretical and conceptual perspectives. Van Manen points to this fundamental quality of the anecdote when he writes, “The paradoxical thing about anecdotal narrative is that it tells something particular while really addressing the general or the universal (1997a: 120). Third, it is important to be aware of the fact that phenomenological inquiries are of a methodological nature that do not necessarily need a particular social context, in which to situate the interviews or observations. As in applied research in general, the phenomenologist collects material from lived life, in the form of lived human experiences. However, the fictional and universal character of the material removes the social realistic nature of the particular interview or observational text as soon as it is shaped into phenomenological anecdotes. Human science research as such renders the material confidential and anonymous as a result of this exclusive focus on the phenomenon. Phenomenology does not look for ‘realistic data’, meaning data that includes details of whose stories are told or when and where the data was collected. In this study, due to the nature of the research question, it is of importance to mention that the lived experience material is from interviews with students and teachers at an adapted education high school as well as being from participatory close observations of the encounters between them. This information is significant here because 'seeing disability pedagogically' would otherwise not be possible as a research intention. As such, this particular point is presented appropriately, even if additional realistic data usually related to social research, will not be given much attention.

A short presentation of the social/political setting of the study
The choice of participants for the study relates to the research question, which is to explore how disability is seen pedagogically. The ‘special student’ belongs to a group of students that has various labels attached to it. In spite of the attempt at political and educational inclusion and the equalitarian attitude of our culture, there is no doubt that there still exists a difference, when it comes to certain students and groups of students within pedagogical practice. (Tøssebro 1998; Haug 1999). Over the last two decades, people with different kinds of disability have been influenced by changing circumstances in Scandinavia. Several reforms, social as well as educational, during the 1990’s, have influenced various basic areas of life such as housing, leisure, work and education as well as attitudes, civil rights and the idea of inclusion in society in general (Haug 1999; Tøssebro 1998). The most significant reforms in regards to this study are the so-called Reform 94 and the HVPU-reform. Reform 94 succeeded in the restructuring of the nations’ special schools. With Reform 94, all students between 16 and 19 obtained equal right to three to five years of secondary education. Also the HVPU reform in the beginning of the 90’s, known as the great de-institutionalisation reform, where persons with intellectual disability were officially given common citizen rights, has had a great impact on questions of education. The pedagogical climate, like the attitude of the rest of society in general, has been challenged by this new group of students and has raised extensive pedagogical issues. These changing circumstances, as well as the call for more equal human conditions, have raised many essential human and ethical questions, some of them new and some old, but simply forgotten. One of the main issues seems to be the dilemma of paternalism and the distribution of power (Løgstrup 1956/1991, 1971; Foucault 1998; Martinsen 2000). Another crucial question is related to the uniqueness of the person and the right to identify oneself freely and independently, conceptually known as empowerment (Askheim 1998, 2003a). These human values of equality seem to permeate our society, not as the only values of our culture, but as democratic and strong cultural ideals that we want to build our welfare state upon (Foucault 1998). However these democratic ideals are more strongly challenged in relation to those who find themselves outside the mainstream of society. The closer to the borders of society, in the deserted areas, are the places of where minorities have a different experience of life. What makes this a difficult and challenging inquiry,

2 HVPU means, Helsevern for Psykisk Utviklingshemmede. HVPU was the governmental determined institutional, medical and social care for persons with intellectual disability up to the reform in the early 1990’s.
is the attempt that must be made to see the experiences of the students and the teachers through the phenomenological perspective, and to somehow explore their lived ‘here and now experience’ of the pedagogical relation. This also makes the inquiry different from, and hopefully additional to other educational perspectives.

The status of special education research

In Norway, pedagogy and special pedagogy are seen as two different departments, which includes having different contents, areas of action and partly different institutions of education and research (Haug 1999). This as well seems to be the situation for other comparable countries (Skrtic 1991; Skidmore 1996). Accordingly, studies including special students are usually effected from within a special pedagogical research frame and not a pedagogical one. Haug (1999) asserts that the quantity of research relevant to special education is undertaken by special pedagogy itself. The research mainly emphasizes the individual problems of the students and the problem of disability, more so than pedagogy and education as such. And he concludes: “There is a great need for pedagogical contributions to this research field” (ibid: 39). The 1990’s methodological approach to special pedagogical research is to be found in “the intersection between administration and pedagogical methods on the one hand and individual qualifications and effects on the other. The research is also oriented toward behavioural issues more than to relational, individual and cultural shaping (Bildung). The research is more instrumental than conceptual and has a stronger character of regulated than of oppositional approaches” (Aasen & Teien 1999: 109). The predominant methodical approach is quantitative, a tendency also found internationally (Haug 1999: 33; Skrtic 1991: 27ff).

Therefore the status of research in the traditional area of special education clearly demands the need for qualitative pedagogical research in the field traditionally related to special pedagogy. This work then will contribute as both a methodological and an interdisciplinary exception from mainstream pedagogical inquiries referred to above. The effort of contributing a somewhat non-specialized pedagogical approach to practice and research is related to a different interpretation of the intention and consequence of a ‘general pedagogy’. The profound meaning of educational equality, which is expressed in political and pedagogical intentions of the Unity School of
Norway, also in a certain understanding presupposes this interpretation (St. meld. Nr.23 1997-98; Haug 1999: 39; Tøssebro 1999: 274; Askheim 2003a).

**Pedagogy is to be rather than to have**

**Practicing the pedagogical good**

Van Manen (1991) distinguishes between three related, but different pedagogical phenomena, by which the pedagogical experience or the pedagogical encounter can take place. The first is the pedagogical situation, as pedagogy is always situated and belongs to a specific context. We are always in situations in life, yet what distinguishes the pedagogical situation from situations in general, is the pedagogical intention of the teacher and the way the teacher is directed toward the student in the situation. A teacher sees the situation in a pedagogical way that differs from the way other adults may see the situation. The pedagogical relation evolves from the pedagogic situation and inherits certain qualities different from those in other human relations. The main quality of the pedagogical relation that creates its particular pedagogic characteristic is that the teacher’s attention is directed toward the student’s being and becoming, where the teacher intends to see what is developmentally good for the student. To become a true relationship, the student should respond to the teacher’s intentions (ibid: 76). The pedagogical relation between teacher and student is triadic, as the student and the teacher together concentrate on a particular subject matter and the world where this matter is to be realized. Still, the teacher-student relationship has a personal quality. Van Manen asserts, “the teacher does not just pass on a body of knowledge to the students, he or she embodies what is taught in a personal way. In some sense the teacher is what he or she teaches” (ibid: 77). The teacher is expected to act when an action is required in the pedagogical situation between teacher and the student. How the teacher is and acts, will or will not support the creation of a pedagogical moment.

For the pedagogical situation to bear a pedagogical moment, the adult must do something pedagogically right in his or her relation with some child or children. In other words, in each situation the adult must show in action what is good (and exclude what is not good) for this young person (ibid: 40).
Thus the pedagogical moment, is extremely important within the pedagogical encounter of student and teacher. ‘Seeing pedagogically’ means to understand and experience the student according to certain qualities of pedagogical and ethical standards. Seeing a student pedagogically means to serve the good (van Manen 1982a), to “orient toward understanding the pedagogical goodness of one’s own or others’ past actions with respect to the lives of these children” (van Manen 1991: 41). The effort to see pedagogically is the teacher’s main challenge. Yet, in a certain way, seeing pedagogically always will be unattainable as a standard of quality, because of the complexity and unpredictability of the pedagogical relation. Yet, seeing the student with pedagogical eyes means to practice pedagogy as a way of being and acting towards this particular adolescent, which will intentionally help him or her to attain personal and educational growth.

**Pedagogical practice is togetherness**

As one might have recognized from the choice of opening portraits and the proceeding presentation of the research interest, this study reflects pedagogy understood as a personal, normative, asymmetric and responsible encounter between teacher and student. Pedagogy is seen as a form of ‘togetherness’ between teacher and student, facilitating the ‘coming into being’ of the human and educational potential and possibilities of the student. Still, the teacher is not a teacher without being authorized by the students. The responsibility of practising pedagogy has to be recalled by the teachers when encountering each student and through every new pedagogical situation. As van Manen says,

> Pedagogy is not something that can be “had”, “possessed” in a way that we can say that a person “has” or “possesses” a set of specific skills or performative competences. Rather, pedagogy is something that a parent or teacher continuously must redeem, retrieve, regain, recapture in the sense of recalling (1997a: 149).

Thus, the pedagogical community needs the atmosphere of an attentive and comprehensive relationship. The pedagogical encounter in schools is the condition and situation of educational teaching and learning, yet the particular educational aspects of the pedagogical encounter, are not the focus of this work. The focus is rather on what presupposes teaching and learning. It is the encounter itself, as the
teachers and students experience it that is explored. This lived experience, as it is phenomenologically understood in this work, is basically pre-reflective and cannot be fully captured in research. Still, it is described and can be understood as pedagogically meaningful by careful interpretation of the phenomenological experiential portraits of lived experiences, provided by the teachers and the students.

**The pedagogical encounter is meaningful in itself**

Even though the notion of pedagogy originates in Ancient Greece (*paid* – child, and *agogos* – responsible adult, originally a slave) and thus has a long tradition in Europe, the meaning of pedagogy has constantly undergone changes because of contrasting and conflicting interpretations of the term. In this study however, pedagogy is understood according to the original Greek meaning of responsible, personal and enduring care for children or young persons in home or school. Pedagogical practice in school (from kindergarten to high school) is understood as a practice of ‘in loco parentis’, as long as the adolescent is a minor. According to the Greek tradition and subsequent pedagogical practice and theory in Europe, the encounter between student and teacher in the pedagogical relation has in itself a significant pedagogical meaning. The meaning of the pedagogical relation goes deeper and lasts longer than the education itself. Education, as a learning process as well as being a social and cultural aspect of growing up, is only part of pedagogy as a whole. The human quality of the pedagogical relation is characterized by its personal, responsible and lasting nature. Its existential character is meaningful to student and teacher as a life experience and has lifelong significance for one’s identity and self. Yet, the significance of the pedagogical encounter for the student, due in part to his or her age and phase of life is usually considered more impactful to his or her identity formation than for that of the teacher. “Our relation to a real teacher,” says Herman Nohl, “is to a person in whose presence we experience a heightened sense of self and a real growth and the formation of personal identity” (van Manen 1991: 12). The significance of a real teacher may be recognized in some of the portraits above, as well as what a teacher is not supposed to be. In the case of special students, and in particular students with intellectual disability, with the lengthened time spent in secondary high school of up to five years as well as the extent of individual support, guidance and personal follow up required, presumably increases the importance of
the pedagogical relationship and makes it even more significant for the formation of identity and self.

**Pedagogical practice as exemplary**

As the selected perspectives in the portraits above may show, the pedagogical relationship is less focused on skills and particular knowledge and more on the personal and moral experience of how a possible life is to be lived (Mollenhauer 1983; van Manen 1991). The teacher represents and embodies certain ways of living through his or her pedagogical practice, such as how care is to be understood and practiced, how joy and enthusiasm may help overcome practical problems and how having trust and confidence in adolescents may help reveal the person’s true self. The teacher in the encounter with the student provides an example of how life is seen and understood and what are possible ways of living within the pedagogical moment. The way the teacher embodies ways of living in his or her pedagogical practice represents an understanding of who the student is and what the meaning of pedagogy is. Therefore, pedagogy is not simply a teaching practice, but a significant relationality that explicitly embodies the moral and personal meaning of teaching.

The teacher is responsible for his or her modes of being and doing, as well as for the pedagogical content and educational outcomes of the relationship. The pedagogical encounter invokes the moral, personal, relational, emotional and professional qualities of the teacher. According to Bollnow (1968/1989), the pedagogical atmosphere of the encounter between teacher and student is based on the mutual experience of love, reliability, openness and trust. Yet, these qualities are first and foremost expected from the teacher, less from the student, even if the mutual presence facilitates the pedagogical situation. In pedagogical encounters where these qualities are lacking, the teacher needs to actively care about developing these. Thus pedagogy is to be understood as a relational term that explicitly refers to the personal and moral dimensions of teaching (van Manen 1991) and is considered the basis of teaching and education.

**Pedagogical practice as ontological**
Van Manen (1982b) asserts that pedagogy must be found, not in the outcome of building an abstract political philosophy or value theory of education, but right here in the lived world where the pedagogical encounter finds place. “Pedagogy is not found in philosophy, but like love and friendship it is to be found in the experience of its presence – that is in concrete, real life situations” (ibid: 284). The experiential aspect of pedagogy makes it hard to catch in theoretical definitions without reducing it into principles or norms. Yet, the characteristic norms of pedagogy are according to Langeveld, to be found in the concrete situation between teacher and student. Consequently, the significant practical nature of pedagogy creates the basic relationship between pedagogical norms and ontology. “The meaning and significance of [pedagogical] principals are immanent to its very ontology” (ibid: 284). The ontological nature of pedagogy, its closeness to our being, in school and education, may profoundly bring into question certain pedagogical terms, like the pedagogical relationship and pedagogical activity as such. Rather than being a relation or a situation, “pedagogy is something that lets an encounter, a relationship, a situation, or a doing be pedagogic” (ibid: 285). The immediate orientation of the teacher towards the student, their ‘being together’ is therefore what has to be investigated in order to understand the ‘pedagogy of seeing’.

**An ontological view of disability**

The way teachers see students, also includes how they see them as students with disability. Expertise in regards to cognitive and physical disability as well as having the knowledge of how to teach students with these kinds of disabilities is not necessarily the same thing as seeing and understanding students with disability. In a certain way then, ‘seeing’ in the pedagogical sense is always intentional because our profession as well as the intention of the pedagogical encounter, must guide the way we see as teachers. Still, in the concrete relationship between student and teacher, the way teachers see can be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional. But even if the experience of seeing, in the same way as the experience of being seen, is mainly unconscious and intuitive, the meaning of the glance is *sensed* pre-reflectively and has significance to the ‘self’ of the student at some level. The human glance somehow has a certain transparency that we cannot completely hide or hide
from. Seeing as an ontological notion is a way of being in the world; an embodied perception of persons and situations that somehow reveals not only what we see, but also how we see. With the glance the teacher intentionally or not, tells the student something significant about how he or she sees disability.

**Being disabled or having a disability**

How then is the relation between the student and his or her disability to be understood?

Traditionally, comparative social studies have shown that seeing disability depends on which culture it occurs in (Ingstad & Whyte 1995; Foucault 1998). In various cultures disability has been understood as being brought about by disease, accident, imperfect genes, as a punishment for wrongdoings or has even been attributed to supernatural forces. In all such cases, disability has been understood as something negative, something one would try to avoid, something unnatural; an accident of nature. Disability was understood as something that was attached to the person, something extra that for some reason happened to a person. “Traditionally disability has been understood as a phenomenon that has a tremendous effect (usually a negative one) on a person’s life, but is not related to identity; to whom the person essentially is”, (Michalko 2002: 5). Thus, persons with disability often are viewed, and probably also see themselves, as persons with a disability. We recognize this in the language we use when describing disability. We say that a person has a learning disability, or has a visual impairment or that a student suffers from cerebral palsy. In order to make the disability seem more palatable for all involved we have changed the language to these more ‘acceptable’ terms, rather than saying as we used to that the person is retarded or slow or that she is blind or paralyzed. How we might ask, are these glossed over ways of speaking, which have developed in our post-modern, multicultural society something other than simple expressions that intend to positively support integration and inclusion? How do such a view as well as the political language which surrounds it, reflect our understanding of what disability is? Disability understood as something attached to a person, implies that the person comes before the disability. The person is the essential and the disability is something that unfortunately and negatively happens and becomes attached to the person for the rest of his or her life. Nobody wants to be disabled, but still some persons unluckily
are or become so. As the mainstream is not disabled, it seems our duty to help those who happen to be to adjust and adapt to what is considered common ways of being. The educational terms we use in our daily language represent this view, even if political and pedagogical ideals intentionally and continuously work towards a change of language. Terms like ‘mainstream’ student, ‘special’ student and ‘adapted education’ are but some examples. The more medical term ‘rehabilitation’ is another. The effort of the society to support the disabled person’s adaptation, if not cure, is obvious in the way we see persons with disability and speak of them. This understanding of disability includes an avoidance of any kind of philosophical or pedagogical perspective on the question. Questions like, ‘What could be important aspects of identity for students with disability?’ or ‘What is the experience of ‘self’ for persons with intellectual and physical disability?’ are placed outside the reach of investigation.

The difference that disability makes

Shildrick and Price (1996: 93) see disability as a “set of conditions”, marked by the feature of fluidity. Fluidity? How can disability be in any way changeable, flexible, and variable? Would not disability rather be one of the most settled conditions among human situations? As a fluid and shifting set of conditions, Michalko sees that “disability cannot be categorically defined, but permits us to experience the ‘manyness’ of disability” (2002: 116). How can we understand this ‘manyness’ of disability? Is there a possible way to come to an understanding of disability as a changeable condition that somehow also possesses some kind of ‘multifariousness’? Persons with a disability most likely do not consider their condition either unsettled or diversified. Their disability has come to stay with them, whether it be a physical disability, an intellectual restriction or a sense deficiency. You cannot simply become ‘non-disabled’. But could it be that the ‘set of conditions’ of disability somehow are experienced as fluid and unsettled by the person him or herself, rather than being changeable in the diagnostic sense of the word? Could it be that the ‘fluid conditions of disability’, its ‘manyness’ as Michalko writes, is somehow related to the various experiences of the ‘self’? How could the ‘self’ for that matter be anything but experienced? Michalko, being blind since boyhood, maintains that his sighted self, the self he presents to the world is not staged in the Goffmansque sense that
provides for the possibility of disingenuousness (2002: 119). In the same way the
selves of the students are genuinely existing in ways that can be seen in how they
'live in their abilities' through their speech and actions. Their diagnosed learning and
physical disability, does not seem to be their 'only real self', but rather something that
exists in, and as an integrated part of their multilayered selves, experienced
differently in various relational situations.

Thus, disability might make a difference to the 'self'. The students might sense the
expectations of adjustment and adaptation from the society in which they live as
something that they do not initially have. They might feel this lack of 'something' that
everybody else seems to possess, and that they should make an effort to achieve or
at least act 'as if' they can achieve it. The students in this inquiry express in various
ways their experience of 'self' according to the expectations of their surroundings, in
particular those of their teachers and schoolmates. They articulate their experience of
'self' as disabled persons, in various modes of speakings, verbal as well as
embodied. Heidegger (1926/1962) offers an even stronger and more precise
expression for the wholeness of the individual person, his body and mind - before the
distinction between them were made, with his term 'Befindlichkeit'. 'Befindlichkeit'
reflects the way we find ourselves in the world, the mood by which we express our
inward and outward being in the encounter with other persons and the world. Thus,
even if the 'self' has various ways of presenting and representing itself, the
experience of self seems to be coherent and complete. Every time we act and speak,
we are asking and answering the question of 'Who am I', Hannah Arendt (1958)
writes. Our identity is somehow hidden in our speech and actions, and represents
itself every time we interact relationally. Although usually we take our identity for
granted and simply live unreflectively, not actually analysing our selves under the
objectifying glance of others. Most times it is only when our world is disrupted, that
we are challenged to ask ourselves questions pertaining to identity.
Chapter 2. Interpretive review of selected perspectives on disability and pedagogy

As a search for possible ways of seeing and experiencing disability, this study takes the shape of a pedagogical phenomenological investigation of how disability is experienced by teachers and students at an adapted education in high school. Here I also explain why such an alternative view is necessary. At the present time, we can basically divide research in the field of intellectually disabled students into three main perspectives. These three, with their various theories and assumptions represent at the same time, relatively distinguishable research traditions. First, there is what I choose to call the ‘diagnostic perspective’ of disability, where the students are understood in terms of their special condition or diagnosis, where the intention is to correct in as much as possible, this condition by avoiding deviations from the norm. This view meets the definition of the term normalization based in ideas of separation and differentiation. Second, there is the ‘social perspective’ of disability, in which phenomena in education are seen as social problems. Here the underlying intention is to influence and change society’s attitude towards disability. This view meets the definition of rehabilitation, where ideas of equality and symmetry between all citizens are key. Third, there is the ‘individual perspective’ to disability, where personal desires and needs are paramount in education as well as in life in general. This view reflects ideas of empowerment, personal rights, user-control, free choice and self-determination. Although I have presented these three perspectives as chronological and historical views of disability, these also exist as parallel and contemporary perspectives.

A brief view of these three perspectives will be helpful in establishing a fourth perspective, the ‘phenomenological approach’ to seeing disability pedagogically. One might argue that there are obvious contradictions between ideological theories and pedagogical practices. There have been efforts to overcome such abstractions, by mediating between ideology and action but there are still those who question the connection and possible relevance of such efforts. The above-mentioned approaches reflect the belief that there is basically an ontological and epistemological
correspondence between the Social Care reforms of the Scandinavian welfare states and the reforms of special education. Thus the question at stake is whether there are onto-epistemological aspects (Burch 1991) that characterize the three different perspectives whereby the phenomenological pedagogical approach espoused in the existing study is relevant to the question of seeing disability in education. The intention in the coming pages, is to introduce the three above-mentioned perspectives, undertake a brief analysis of each and ultimately recommend an additional methodology to researching disability; the hermeneutical phenomenological approach.

The diagnostic perspective

The development of the Scandinavian welfare states, is usually regarded a post-war phenomenon, yet its roots and origin are traced to more than a century back (Hansen, Sandvin & Søder 1996). Overall in Western Europe a new orientation to social policy and welfare organization, has been identified as a consequence of the various consequences of globalisation and internationalisation, apparent within financial markets, world trade and European political integration (Abrahamson 1997).

What most distinguishes the Scandinavian welfare societies from the rest of modern societies is their emphasis on personal social services delivered by the public sector (ibid: 156). Consequently, in Norway for example, the welfare state principles are basically developed from below, actually from the local municipalities, which take responsibility for the less advantaged citizens, without the support of national coordinators (Hansen, Sandvin & Søder 1996). It is said that the most interesting Nordic experience in comparison to other western countries, is the impact of the so-called Scandinavian or Nordic welfare state model on disability politics and services (Gustavsson, Tøssebro & Dyrendahl 1996). The idea of normalization of the disabled and in particular the intellectually disabled, was formulated by the Dane Niels Erik Bank-Mikkelsen in 1959, in Norway in a White Paper from 1967, and eventually at

3 Stated in the Danish Law text of 1959 with the formulation that the goal is that intellectually disabled persons should have the opportunity to “live a life as close to normal as possible”.

an international level by the Swede Bengt Nirje in 1969\(^5\). W. Wolfensberger (1995) speaks of the Scandinavian countries as, “the only example of societies, which have really committed themselves to the principle of normalization” (Hansen, Sandvin & Søder 1996: 19).

The idea of normalization has its origin in the realisation that some groups of citizens were not reached by the good fortune of the developing welfare state. Invisible groups, often hidden in institutions, inhabiting the ‘backyards’ of the welfare state, were exposed by radical journalists and researchers in the mid 1970’s, and drew our attention to them. Among those who fared the worst, were the intellectually disabled people. The expansion of economic growth and the goal of an equal distribution of material goods did not seem to have favoured them. Through a modernisation of the public sector in the 1980’s, a certain de-differentiation process had taken place as a response to the complexity of the welfare organisation and the unavailability of its benefits to all citizens. (Hansen, Sandvin & Søder 1996). A decentralisation of responsibility from the central government to the local municipalities was effected based on the desire to create some local qualities such as nearness to the individual citizen and informal care of persons in need. Decentralisation also became a process of de-institutionalisation, which meant that the institutions that had been the home of most intellectually disabled people during the first decades of the established welfare state, were closed and replaced by ordinary housing or smaller residential homes in the community in accordance with the new normalization principle of integration (ibid: 40).

The changing patterns of care for the intellectually disabled in the Scandinavian countries can be understood as a growing commitment to the principle of normalization and integration. It can also be seen as a commitment to a movement of improving everyday life conditions for marginalized groups that lacked access to the benefits of the welfare state. (Tøssebro, Aalto & Brusén 1996). This growing commitment paralleled equalitarian ideals of the developing society, as well as an increasing belief in the intellectually disabled person’s ability to learn and in the

possibilities of new and better pedagogical methods. A decent level of living for these people included education for all, active care and rehabilitation as well as striving for a more normal childhood and adolescence by being integrated into the local school and society. Historically, during the first period of the development of the welfare state, which was called the ‘Golden Age’ of total institutions (ibid: 47), where segregated long-residential institutions including schools and nursing homes or special schools, often boarding schools, were the preferred alternative of the state and were usually the one option for intellectually disabled persons and their parents. Here then, home, institution, or school, the system’s idea of ‘care’ allowed for only one option to the around- the- clock needs of these people, whether education was included or not. This day and night ‘segregated’ care, was how the intellectually disabled were marginalized from ordinary society. Although, there were several distinctions made from within this one group, for instance according to age, gender and severity of disability, the most important distinction was drawn pedagogically between those who supposedly could profit from an education and those who could not (ibid: 49).

But with the normalisation movement, we see a gradual development towards physical integration. In Sweden in 1954, an act was proposed where education and care for the ‘intellectually left-behind’ stated that special education should be provided locally and generally, not in boarding schools (ibid: 50). This governmental decision led to the physical integration of special education students, labelled as mild to moderate intellectually disabled. Persons with severe intellectual disability however, were seen as needing to be cared for in the institutions and not in ordinary schools and kindergartens, until well into the 1960’s throughout Scandinavia as a whole. Children were allowed to live in the institutions in this entire early de-institutionalisation period and were not removed from these until the 1970’s and 1980’s in any of the Nordic countries (Tøssebro, Aalto, Brusèn 1996).

As the potential for learning of persons with intellectual disability was reconsidered by professionals and scientists in the 1960’s, total institutional care as a positive and developing learning environment was questioned. So were the segregated learning and educational conditions that were in place at the time. Segregation and protection were no longer synonymous but on the contrary, now the term segregation became
associated with exclusion. In 1967 in Sweden and 1970 in Norway, the category of ‘uneducatable persons’ ceased to exist. From that moment on, everyone had the right to an education (White Paper from 1975\(^6\)). According to the new law on education starting in 1975\(^7\), special schools were seen as a necessary but as an undesirable option. The preferred choice was to physically integrate special education into ordinary local schools. The new way then became to care for children and adolescents in day programmes, which included all educational levels including kindergarten. Here it was considered that the younger and more able the person, the more integrated the service would be. Therefore, individual integration was more common in kindergarten and less so in high school, as remains the case today. (Tøssebro, Aalto & Brusèn 1996).

During the 1980’s then, in Norway, the development of local services began alongside the dismantling of institutions, and eventually the responsibility for all citizens of the community was directed by the local municipality. This same trend happened in special education, as boarding schools were rarely seen anymore and the responsibility for special education was placed with the same authorities as those responsible for all other areas of education. Special education legally and administratively became a part of regular education, as an individually adapted education (ibid: 61). And yet, integration as constituted by law, does not necessarily equate real integration or inclusion. A Norwegian study indicates that in school aged students (seven to twenty years old) only about 30% are individually integrated; approximately 50% of these are in special classes in regular schools, whereas about 20% are at schools that serve only disabled students (Tøssebro & Spilker 1995).

In the area of research, whether in the Norwegian context or in the international one, special education research from the early 1960’s on, has been represented by the medical, psychological approach (Haug 1999). The main representative of the categorical, pathological and compensatory research paradigm in Norway is, Hans Jørgen Gjessing (Gjessing 1958, 1972, 1974, 1977). This research explains learning disabilities in terms of biological, psychological and social conditions to which the underlying pathological problems relate. Most of these studies are focused on the

\(^7\) St.meld. 98, 1976 – 77.
individual special education student and thereby lack the perspective of learning and teaching processes (Stukát 1966; Stangvik 1970; Haug 1999). Whether the diagnostic perspective is cognitively or behaviourally focused, the epistemological assumption is the same, the understanding of human reality is ‘out there’, independent of the individual. This view is based on the conviction that it is possible to find objective forms of value free knowledge upon which we can build theories that would meet the criteria of measurability, replicability and predictability. Guba & Lincoln argue that axiology\(^8\) is a part of the basic foundational philosophical dimensions of the paradigm proposal (Guba & Lincoln 2000: 169). Thus the watershed between the positivistic perspectives and the various social constructivist views is drawn with the exclusion and inclusion of values and ethics in research (ibid: 170). In special education, the positivistic attitude or what Skrtic (1991) calls ‘logic empirism in pedagogy’, the underlying assumption is that the relation between knowledge and action is pragmatic and instrumental in nature. The aim is to gain useful and applicable knowledge in order to predict and control the pedagogical situation. According to Skrtic this research can be called ‘naïve pragmatism’ due to its orientation toward consensus, harmony, positivism, reality and nomotetics (ibid: 27). In much the same way, Habermas (1968) categorizes three forms of knowledge: the empirical-analytic, the historic-hermeneutic and the critical-social. The empirical-analytic sciences he describes as follows,

In the empirical–analytic sciences the frame of reference that prejudices the meaning of possible statements establish rules both for the construction of theories and for their critical testing. Theories comprise hypothetic-deductive connections or propositions, which permit the deduction of lawlike hypothesis with empirical content. The latter can be interpreted as statements about the covariance of observable events; given a set of initial conditions, they make predictive knowledge. However, the meaning of such prediction, that is, their technical exploitability, is established only by the rules according to which we apply theories to reality (ibid: 306).

Thus, the epistemological position is characterized by the accumulation of knowledge by building ‘knowledge blocks’ and cause-effect linkages, which scientifically may become verified and generalized as truths.

\(^8\) Axiology is the branch of philosophy that deals with ethics, aesthetics and religion.
Questioning the diagnostic perspective

There are some assumptions made by the diagnostic perspective in the research on disability and pedagogy, which I feel need to be questioned. First, in these studies the focus is on certain aspects or functions of the human being, such as motivation (Eikeseth & Svartdal 2003) attention where one looks at selective attention, attention span etc., (Dowdy 1998, Barkley 2001), memory processing as in short and long term memory retrieval and function etc., (Norman 1976, Bradford & Velichkovsky 1999), communication skills, (Hallahan & Kaufman 1991; Snell & Brown 2000) and so forth. A study may then select one of these aspects and try to show how some children are different or deficient in relation to the performance of children in the control group, that is, the non-handicapped children. This scientific approach attempts to understand the individual with the help of psychological developmental prescriptive patterns including the understanding of children’s lives based on predictive and developmental generalizations. Pre-eminent researchers within psychology and education, who build their theories on positivistic assumptions, are numerous. Ways in which we understand pedagogical practices within a scientific approach are based then in differentiation, separation and segregation of children and young persons according to age, skill level, ability, character, and levels of development as well as genetic predisposition factors.

Some questions may be raised in regards to this practice of differentiation. Dealing with one aspect of the person assumes that we are able to control all other aspects. For instance when testing the memory processing of a student, the assumption has been that the student is motivated to perform and/or that the student understands the meaning of the test therefore consequently performs to the best of his abilities on this test. But could we not say that measuring the student’s memory has little or nothing to do with human intention such as is the case with motivation, performance or will and that therefore we are perhaps simply imposing the diagnosed symptoms or the observed behaviour onto the student. Would there not be a difference if one considered memory as part of the student as a whole and therefore undividable from the person? Isn’t it more likely that a person remembering something, is in fact remembering ‘because’ they are relating to an experience, which holds meaning for
them, rather than it being a simple mechanistic repetition of meaningless words or connections? The context in which we retain information adds the experiential meaning to that which we seek to remember and relates the memory meaningfully to us as persons. For example, would it not be easier for a child to remember the address of a beloved grandmother than to simply memorize an array of incidental words with no personal meaning attached to them? The significance of ‘meaning’, may well serve as an illustration of the phenomenological difference between the terms ‘memorizing’ and ‘learning by heart’.

Second, in order to limit the number of variables impacting on observation and analysis, efforts are made to conduct experiments in controlled settings, usually far from the natural situations in which children typically live and act. This is done in order to produce findings that may be taken as replicable, predictable and valid. Yet, even if diagnostic research is conducted in so called natural settings, such as in classrooms or kindergartens, in order to investigate for instance communication skills or interpersonal relations, items often are set up in advance and are categorized according to ready-made classifications in regards to utterances, acts and behaviours. However, how can we know what is really going on in relationships by simply analysing, for example, the frequency of interactions or patterns of attention? Can we understand what is experienced in a relationship between teachers and students by identifying patterns of interaction or frequency of contact? Do we not need to first ask, “What is interaction? Is it not that interaction can be understood differently by different persons, in different settings, at different times and depending on the different moods or atmospheres surrounding those involved? This leads to a third point, which is, positivistic sciences’ tendency to ignore human uniqueness by negating personal experience at the expense of validity and predictability. Within diagnostic research on disability, the focus was and still is on differentiation and diagnostics. The idea of differentiation is to label. To label someone with a disability, is to point out deviance from the norm. From a traditional point of view, to understand disability, is to stress the lack of something that normally is related to being human. The use of labels is often justified by the need for relevant medical, psychological and pedagogical specialised treatments. However, even if the efficiency of treatment and methods are obvious and necessary, there still remain questions concerning the
process of diagnosing as well as the significance of labelling procedures. Differentiation and labelling practices are precisely what researchers related to the social approach to disability research focus on, which includes the sociological and psychological perspectives, who question societal response to the labelling of deviance. One such perspective within the sociology of disability is the dialectic between the mechanisms of tolerance for deviancy in society and the deviant behaviour or the diagnosed disability as such (Stiker 1982/1999; Foucault 1998).

**The social perspective**

According to the French historian, Henri-Jacques Stiker (1982/1999) when dealing with the question of equality, one must use the term ‘rehabilitation’. He argues that rehabilitation is co-extensive with disabilities and their quality of permanence. He shows that

the ideas of compensation, collective responsibility, state involvement, normalization based on the perception of the average and social insurance had their origins in work-related accidents [in the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century] (ibid: 125).

The term ‘rehabilitation’, which is reflective of current terms like ‘readjustment’ or ‘retraining’, which refer to an action, which ideally should bring the rehabilitated person back to a previous non-disabled condition, developed from charity towards the victims of World War I. What started with those disabled in war, continued on with the vocationally disabled, and the chronically ill and eventually reached the intellectually disabled. Main questions for Stiker are how disability concerns us; how
we speak of disability as well as how views of disabilities from earlier periods relate to our present society (ibid: 121). As a historian, he is concerned with certain collective or social mentalities. His contributions raise the basic, but simple question of what we actually do, practically and symbolically with the disabled in Western society.

The tyranny of generality

According to Stiker (1982/1999), the way disability is understood in a society provides a certain cultural diagnosis. The way marginal citizens of a society are seen, is symptomatic of the basic human attitudes in the society as a whole. This particularly strong position towards equality and equal rights, especially in Norway, exposes our practices to Stiker's concern. Stiker's intention is to trace the basic patterns of thought in regards to how diversity is seen and accepted in a society throughout its history. Diversity, more than social identity, which he seems to see more as a totalitarian term, is significant to the sound, human society. As a consequence of the experience of the disabled as having lacked of a place to exist, the solution then, is assimilation into the society. Star (2000) asserts that persons that somehow stand out because of different needs, experience being at the outside and the inside at the same time. “They experience being citizens of two cultures” (2000: 150). Lacking a place to live then, is more debilitating than the lack of an organ, which in the case of the wounded war veteran can be re-placed by prosthesis. The problem of being different or ‘other,’ where one does not quite fit within normal standards, was solved by the attempt at rehabilitation, whereby one attempts to bring the person back to the conformed standard. “Disabled persons are programmed to vanish” (Star 2000:146). Or as Stiker says:

Rehabilitation marks the appearance of a culture that attempts to complete the act of identification, of making identical. This act will cause the disabled to disappear and with them all that is lacking, in order to assimilate them, drown them, dissolve them in the greater and single social world (1982/1999: 128).

Stiker claims that society becomes increasingly rigid, by negating difference and otherness in the name of social equality. The contrast between Habermas’ empirical-analytical sciences and the critical social sciences is to harmonize the difference

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9 See also texts on cultural diagnosis and diversity/difference by Mollenhauer & Uhlendorff 1992; Schmidt 1999.
between the differentiation paradigm and the social equalitarian paradigm of
disability. However, the social perspective obviously shares the same epistemological
assumptions as the diagnostic differentiation paradigm. The social equalitarian
paradigm is derived from the sociology of deviance, developed on the basis of the
historical experience of disability analysed by among others Stiker (1982/1999). The
idea here is that the problem of deviance is not connected to the individual seen as
deviant. Deviance is understood as a norm, which is imposed on certain persons by
other members of the group to which these individuals belong. Deviant people are
labelled in the same way that we apply rules and sanctions to an offender. Thus
deviance cannot be understood as a physical or intellectual characteristic or even the
act that a person commits, but rather as the level of tolerance a society has for
deviance as well as its social mechanisms for dealing with the deviance by use of the
labelling process. Studies of ‘deviance research’ include mental illness, racial
discrimination, feminist issues, homosexuality and various kinds of disability. (See for
example Lane 1997; Mitchell 1997; Traustadottir 2000; Solvang 2002). The social
perspective of researching intellectual disability could be understood as basically an
application of the labelling theory perspective. How then does the social equality
paradigm still imply an objectifying and explanatory epistemological perspective?
Even if there is this sharp shift between the positivistic and the post-positivistic on the
hand and critical theory, social constructivism and participatory inquiry on the other
(Lincoln & Cuba 2000), the sharpest shift is between the constructivist and the
participatory phenomenological models, where we have gone a step beyond
interpretation and ‘Verstehen’, or understanding, toward social action,[this then] is
probably one of the most conceptually interesting shifts (ibid: 174). Does this step
beyond understanding, mean that the perspective of deviance or disability is seen at
least partly, as a personal question of identity for those being disabled or in some
way deviant? Unfortunately, the social perspective sees intellectual disability as a
product of the social system as well as understanding the individual as occupying the
state of intellectual disability, or of playing the role of the intellectually disabled
(Mercer 1973). Hence, who is defined as intellectually disabled, depends on who is
doing the defining and upon the procedures and norms, which are used. Studies
conducted within a sociological framework are usually built upon the relativistic norms
defined by the society in regards to what is considered deviant and what is
considered normal, and see disability as a social concept rather than as an individual
experience. Nevertheless, the social approach to special education has raised critical issues regarding intellectual disability. It has called into question the very notion of intellectual disability as deviance and urges us to reflect on fundamental questions, which might otherwise have been left unexplored. “The focus changed from changing them to changing us; (or changing our thinking so there was no longer [a] ‘them’ and ‘us’)” (Bogdan 1996: 13). As Sarason and Doris emphasize, the issue in fact was not: “to label or not to label. It is the failure to recognise the arbitrary feature of labels and to assume uncritically that labels are more revealing of the labelled than of the labeller that leads to problems” (1979: 12).

It is claimed that the services for persons with intellectual disability have been undergoing substantial changes during the 1990’s (Sandvin & Søder 1996). This view that radical changes are the result of an increasing will to include all citizens, as well as the intellectually disabled, within the welfare state, on the basis of the idea of normalisation and equality, may be challenged by other views. Accordingly, Søder (1992) and Sandvin (1996) assert that the radical changes in regards to marginal groups, rather, are the result of a change in values in response to harsh criticism of the social equalitarian and engineering structures of the welfare paradigm. The early welfare state aimed at identifying social and political problems in order to handle them effectively. According to Sandvin and Søder, “defining, isolating and naming the problem were the central elements in the differentiation process that led to the provision of special services, such as institutions defined for specially defined groups of people” (Sandvin & Søder 1996: 108). This idea of egalitarianism and solidarity, prompted questions in regards to the individual human being and his or her particular needs as well as his or her multilayered personal wishes. Claims were made for a non-labelling practice at the local level, where human beings were treated personally, not as objects, supported by professionals close to them. Individualism became the underscored value and was what demanded for a change of direction, towards individual choice and personal freedom (Sandvin & Søder 1996).

Thus the marked mechanisms […] and the idea of the perfect marked – with its sensitivity to individual preferences and capability of coordinating those into an ordered and balanced system – emerges as the perfect arena for realising the ambitions inherent in much of the criticism of the traditional welfare state (ibid: 109).
This marked change towards the empowerment of the individual has had strong but somehow paradoxal ideological support in Norway. Yet, unlike Sweden, we have not considered special rights legislation to be the ideologically reasonable way to direct our common rights. Intellectually disabled persons, like all other vulnerable groups, are and should be subjugated to the same legislation that regulates the rights of all citizens. As such, the principle of normalisation like the value of equality, are exceptionally strong in Norway. This has also had a marked influence on the ‘unity school’ (‘enhetsskolen’), which has been and still is the mainstream school structure that ideologically reflects our common egalitarian educational intentions. Yet, what might be the consequences of a social and political mentality of a certain normal and equal standard, to which all persons should adjust? Does this attitude bring forth possible undesirable side effects to the egalitarian society? Do citizens become equal by the political intent of being made equal by law?

**Questioning the social perspective**

Although social researchers claim that their basic assumptions are different from those of traditional researchers, e.g. the positivistic paradigm, these differences may be questioned epistemologically. Researchers have put forth certain hypotheses related to the fact that members of society impose the label of deviance on the disabled person. For instance, they argue that being neighbours to intellectually disabled persons may change attitudes and resist labelling, because personal knowledge through daily contact and friendship, work against prejudice and social labelling. After proposing this type of hypothesis, interviews are conducted, using standardized scales in order to examine the validity of the proposition. The results then are considered in light of the hypothesis in order to evaluate and correct it and the connection between the hypothesis and the results is examined with a view to consistency, reliability and validity. Here the main concern is the validity or in-validity of the hypothesized theory rather than a concern for the persons interviewed. Labelled persons are reduced to anonymous subjects for the sake of objectivity and validity. Thus the implicit research paradigm of the social perspective shares the same basic epistemology as that of the diagnostic differentiation paradigm.
The emphasis of the social approach on surrounding conditions and social attitudes and norms of disability has had a strong influence on pedagogical methods. Therefore, in the same way as the aim of the diagnostic perspective is to provide individual adapted training to the student in order to correct or decrease disability, the aim of the social perspective is to contribute to a certain elimination or invisibility of disability, by influencing social norms and ‘rehabilitating’ disability with the help of effective pedagogical methods. While the individual diagnostic paradigm means to differentiate and segregate, the social generalisation approach seeks equality through social assimilation and commonality. Methods supporting egalitarian assumptions are recognisable for instance by the plethora of inclusive approaches in student-centred pedagogy. Examples of this pedagogy, as well as its underlying ideology come from the literature of critical pedagogy (Freire 1970, 1972, 1985; Mollenhauer 1968, 1974, 1983). Within these methods underlies a critique of the existing state of society, where one of the main focuses is on the true democratisation of society. Here the intention is to involve or perhaps even assimilate all students by creating inclusive attitudes and environments and is said to happen through a variety of methods stressing the pedagogical possibilities of offering resistance to the power of the socially constructed conditions of society. Here we find methods emphasizing for instance deliberation and awakening of the self of suppressed groups like illiterates, intellectually disabled and ethnic and sexual minorities (Freire 1970; Hooks 1994, McLaren 1998; Roberts 2000; Scott 2000). Other pedagogical directions stress learning processes and the teaching of student cooperation through social approval and the democracy of the classroom (Nissen 1980; Foros 1982; Ziehe & Stubenrauch 1983; Apple & Beane 1999), inclusion of all students by arranging for activities suitable for everybody (Hørlych 1988; Ringsted & Froda 2001) as well as becoming conscious of the social significance of personal, cognitive, social or practical limitation (Bay 1982; Grahn 1998; Larsen 2001). What is common to all of these even though they represent different pedagogical methodologies is their perspective of society, culture and history as the main approach to understanding disability and deviance.

This tendency to want to dissolve differences becomes even more apparent when one focuses on the particular person within a labelled group, for instance the intellectual disabled or the “persons we label as intellectually disabled” (Bogdan
The personal experience of being intellectually disabled then may be seen as playing a role named intellectually disabled. Thus, from within the social perspective, personal life experience is reduced to a social act. Even though the intellectually disabled person might play a role as defined by society, he or she at the same is intellectually disabled. It seems undeniable that being disabled is a part of one’s self and that the experience of one’s self also embraces the experience of one’s disability as such. Strictly speaking, the experience of oneself as an intellectual disabled person cannot be separated from one’s experience of ‘self’ as a person living within a particular society. Therefore we need to resist this denial of individual difference in the social perspective, as well as the tendency within the diagnostic perspective to understand disability as a basic lack that needs to be diagnosed and corrected.

The individual perspective

Normalisation has various meanings (Kristiansen 1993; Solum 1993; Askheim 1998) although in the literature on normalisation, the main distinction is between the Scandinavian interpretation and the North American one of ‘Social Role Valorization’ (Wolfensberger 1972,1980; Wolfensberger and Tullman 1982; Kristiansen 1993). Specifically, the Scandinavian model has over the course of time, increasingly emphasized individual rights and self-determination by making ones own choices according to personal preferences. (Perrin and Nirje 1989). Askheim (1998) sees this emphasis on personal rights and choice as illustrative of a certain ‘cultural or moral conformity’ (Sandvin 1992a). Wolfensberger’s object is to reintegrate the marginalized or stigmatized person into the society, by changing his or her devalued characteristics by applying strategies of compensation and development or change of personal competence, to meet the social standards of the society. ‘Social Role Valorization’ (Wolfensberger 1982), includes strategies directed towards the change of social symbols and images, in order to elevate the status of persons, activities and social areas. This means for instance that non-deviant persons should surround deviant people as much as possible and deviant persons should reside in socially accepted places, participating in socially valued activities. Nirje’s main critique is directed towards Wolfensberger’s idea of normalisation as the effort of the intellectually disabled person to adapt to specific patterns of ‘so-called’ normal
behaviours and standards. According to Nirje, normalisation should represent the right to self-autonomy and free choice and there should be a social tolerance that welcomes the presence of distinctive characteristics and personal deviance (Askheim 1998).

In general then, we can say that the political objectives in Norway are rooted in the traditions of normalisation and empowerment (ibid: 11). Not unlike the idea of normalization, the Empowerment Movement is a multifaceted tradition, which has undergone developmental changes in the process of application to practice. However, because the idea of empowerment also sees itself as having the task of differentiating normal from ‘not’ normal, the presentation of this will be relatively simple in this study. What I simplistically call the empowerment tradition, is known for it’s emphasising on personal rights, ‘user-control’ (‘brukerstyring’), or with a more moderate concept, ‘use-involvement’ (‘brukermedvirkning’), free choice and self-determination. Askheim makes a distinction here between empowerment and the two adjoining emancipation movements. On the one hand, he distinguishes empowerment from the Independent Living Tradition and on the other from the Social Theory of Disablement (ibid: 94). The Independent Living Tradition strongly stands against rehabilitation as the social solution to the problem of disability. In the European definition of Independent Living, coming out of the Institute of Independent Living in Stockholm, the aspects of unequal power and second-class citizenship are particularly stressed.

Disability is not a medical problem, but a problem of unequal power. We are an under privileged political minority whose second class citizenship standing can only be improved through political power and far-reaching systemic changes (IILS 1996:1).

The Social Theory of Disablement criticizes the established understanding of disability understood as a personal restriction or lack that prevents the person from what is considered normal human activity or behaviour. Rather they suggest a definition, which stresses the social and practical barriers that prevent some citizens from taking part in the common society on an equal level with others (Askheim 1998: 104). Regarding the intellectually disabled, Askheim refers to Miller and Keys (1996), who understand ‘self-advocacy’ as the main entrance to empowerment for this group.
Typically, these self-advocacy groups tend to use labels like ‘People First’, which indicate that they primarily want to be considered as human beings and not as disabled. Here it would seem that what is at stake is a question of identity and of which ‘part’ of the person should constitute identity, the disabled or the non-disabled?

The strong emphasis on the individual in terms of freedom of choice and self-determination, also highlights the question of the person’s responsibility for his or her own life and being as a whole. Researchers admit that the ideals of empowerment favour fortunate persons and persons with full cognitive ability (Askheim 1998). Intellectually disabled persons may experience less empowerment or might experience only ‘feint empowerment’. Yet, we also must not overlook the fact that the stress on a strong and self-determined individual, may also devaluate children and young persons in general as well as young vulnerable people belonging to marginal groups other than that of the intellectually disabled (Qvortrup 1996; Henriksson 2004). The claim for self-determination and the expectation of responsibility for one’s own future might in fact be an unbearable burden for some.

As to the connection between the social and political ideologies and pedagogical practices in schools, underlying notions of empowerment may be recognizable by an increased emphasis on individual rights mirrored for instance in ‘individual teaching plans’ (‘individuelle læreplaner’), or the possibility of personal choice in regards to attending integrated or segregated classes as well as the increased stress on responsibility for one’s own learning in special education (Telhaug 1997; Haug 1999; Tangen 1999; Telhaug & Aasen 1999; Haug & Schwandt 2001). The trend in schools in general, is to increase the focus on the student’s learning processes rather than on the teaching as such which includes the relational process between teacher and student (Telhaug 2002; Dunne 2003). This distinct change in values in regards to both parties involved in the pedagogical relation highlights the shift towards individuality more so than solidarity and choice of commodity rather than interpersonal pedagogical commitment. In public social care for instance, the terms have changed from ‘client’ to ‘user’ (‘bruker’), as well as ‘customer’ or the latest ‘citizen’. The terminology in schools has tended to move from traditional terms of ‘pupil’ or ‘student’ to more pedagogical egalitarian terms like ‘co-worker’ or ‘collaborator.’ In regards to the ‘teacher,’ terms like ‘supervisor’ or ‘guide’ indicate a
change in terminology, as well as in the roles and tasks of the profession. One may presume that changes in terminology illustrate a change to free choice and self-determination in regards to both parties that earlier belonged to the asymmetric, personally committed pedagogical relationship. Although, the individual approach has many facets and practices, it still basically stresses the possibility of practicing personal freedom and responsibility. What is not sufficiently taken into consideration then is the actual experience of the individual in regards to these personal opportunities.

To some, self-determination and freedom may be experienced as unmanageable in regards to particular social or personal demands, or casts a burden of expectations that are simply too heavy for the person to carry. While the diagnostic formulation of disability seeks to understand the particular characteristics that make one different, as the only criterion of identification, the social view pushes particularity, as a part of what it means to be disabled, into commonality, while the individual perspective insists on a personal coping with the disability. Here, an empowered intellectually disabled person is expected to manage and master his or her own life. Somehow, they are expected to be professional experts in regards to their own needs, possibilities and desires. It is understood that this personal mastery may need support by a personal assistant whose supportive actions are ruled by the disabled person (Askheim 2000b, 2003a) to be necessary or adequate. The personal assistant somehow becomes a tool for the disabled person enabling him or her to enjoy personal freedom.

The fundamental issue then in all of this seems to be the notion of difference and the various ways that we decide to deal with this idea of being different. Whether we admit or not, that this difference exists, or whether we value the notion of coping with or mastering this difference, are not the same thing as asking the question of how to address difference. While the former may be important issues, what is to be reflected on in this study, is what might be the meaning of experiencing difference. How is difference, regardless of medical diagnoses, psychological explanations or sociological structures, experienced by the person him or herself, and how are we to understand different identities as they are expressed personally, pre-reflectively and pre-conceptually?
Questioning the individual perspective

Interestingly, seeing difference as part of a person’s identity, rather than as a whole, may be understood as a separation between person and disability in a way that also calls into question the notion of identity, itself. How can a person’s identity not include the person as a whole? What does it mean to see disability as not being a part of the person as a whole? What, we might ask then, is disability? Is it a diagnosis? A social construction? A political notion? What do social and political reforms really reveal about the possible ways of understanding intellectual disability? Gustavsson (1996) deals with the question of disability and identity in his inquiry. Here he looks at how the very term ‘intellectual disabled’ imposed a disabling label to the first generation of social reform adolescents and challenged them to truly cope with who they were and what others thought of them. Here, Gustavsson asserts that persons with intellectual disability themselves, as well as those who care for them such as parents, social workers, teachers and researchers, “make use of the reform, first of all, as a way to find an acceptable definition of intellectual disability” (Gustavsson 1996: 216). The personal significance of what intellectual disability means, as well as how one is supposed to understand oneself as intellectually disabled is obviously of a concern phenomenologically also. Yet, how intellectual disability is seen and accepted in society is not the same as how it is experienced personally as an existentially lived experience. Actually, the way intellectual disability is understood in the integration reforms might or might not become a personal life-project and suggests a particular understanding of the personal life-world. The Husserlian phenomenon, ‘life-world’ may be understood as the personal version of the socially created meaningfulness of everything we encounter in life; persons, objects and events. With Heidegger, more so even than with Husserl, there is a profound phenomenological dive into the ontology of the lifeworld, which is an amplified and deepened investigation of the meaning of ‘being’ as such. Both of these works deepen our personal experiential understanding of the complexity of the human lifeworld most especially with regards to the interpretation of the human experience of ‘Befindlichkeit’ or ‘sich finden,’ of finding oneself. (Heidegger 1926/1962; Gendlin 1988).
‘Sich finden’ has three allusions: The reflexivity of finding oneself; feeling, and being situated. All three are caught in the ordinary phrase, “How are you?” That refers to how you feel but also to how things are going for you and what sort of situation you find yourself in. To answer the question you must find yourself, find how you already are. And when you do, you find yourself amidst the circumstances of your living (Gendlin 1988: 44).

For Heidegger humans are their living in the world with others. Human beings always live-in and live-with. In a certain sense, we are intermingled with other persons and cannot separate our individual lives from living as a whole. The meaning of the term ‘Befindlichkeit’ somehow “precedes and eliminates the distinction between inside and outside, as well as between self and others. Similarly, it alters affective/cognitive” (ibid: 47) [dichotomies]. Thus defining intellectual disability as an abstract social construction might have little to do with experiencing what it is to be intellectually disabled. Heidegger thinks ontologically. He is not so much concerned with conceptualising situations but rather with the experience of being itself. Socially constructed understandings of difference are therefore different from finding oneself in a certain state of experiencing difference and of being different.

Thus, even if the conditions of the intellectually disabled have improved in general, on material, social, educational and personal levels, there definitely remain those areas that continually need to be questioned. Sandvin & Søder (1996) point to the contradiction that the empowerment process, which promotes the strengthening of personal freedom and choice as well as the ideal of an independent life, somehow has ideologically removed the terms ‘weak’ and ‘needy’ from social and pedagogical vocabulary. In this sense it believes that nobody need be weak and needy. “Does ‘weakness’ not still exist, or was it just a creation of a well-meaning but paternalistic welfare state?” Sandvin & Søder ask (1996: 116). And, what if some still are weak, even though ideally they should not be? Are weakness and suffering not personal experiences rather than concepts, which define particular persons or groups? Can the experience of human vulnerability cease to exist simply by the effectuation of social and educational reforms? Or are weakness, vulnerability and dependence phenomena that are humanly experienced, irrespective of supportive political constructions and improved social possibilities? Stiker’s questioning seems to intrigue the progress-optimistic traits of social reforms. Personal human experiences,
regardless of political and/or social ideological ‘directedness’ will not cease to exist, but will simply expose themselves as socially expressed ‘as ifs’ (Stiker 1982/1999). The diversity of human conditions cannot be severed from personal experience but will eventually take various hidden social forms. Standards and constructions seem to insist on extinguishing our personal experiences. However, experiences like weakness, suffering and vulnerability cannot be standardized, even if “some [still seems to] believe standardized knowledge to be the only reality existing (Star 2000: 147).

An alternative phenomenological approach

What do all these changes and reform efforts actually mean in terms of epistemology? Do they shape a new view of knowledge and meaning? Do researchers see the participants in the inquiry as unique and irreplaceable subjects, or are they, as in individual-oriented research, somehow reduced to valid and reliable statistics? Are there significant epistemological nuances, not only between qualitative and quantitative paradigms, but within the qualitative paradigm as well? And more so, is this actually a strict epistemological question or is it also an ontological one, like Heidegger insists? Burch (1991) asserts that products of human research are basically onto-epistemological questions (ibid: 216). Human knowledge is grounded in existential themes of being and leads us to question, “What does it mean to be an intellectually disabled person” or “what does it mean to be a special education teacher?” Rather than, “how should one come to know disability” or “how is it to have a disability”. These questions basically indicate neither a diagnostic problem nor a social attitude, and neither do they speak to the issue of empowering the individual. It is not firstly, a technical or scientific problem, but a pedagogic one (Baldrursson 1989, cited in Skogen 2004: 4).

These proposed onto-epistemological differences strongly support the argument for a phenomenological method as a necessary supplement to research in this area. The work of Schwandt (2002), also supports this, as he investigates three epistemological stances for qualitative research; interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructivism. Schwandt then proceeds to compare these three epistemological
stances to the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and Taylor inspired by Heidegger (ibid: 194). Here, I argue the importance of this alternative hermeneutic phenomenological approach. I see this approach as a possible way of nuancing the individual qualitative approach with a hermeneutic phenomenology. The aim of the following passage, is to explore Schwandt’s three stances in order to sharpen the significance of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

**Epistemological distinctions within the interpretive (meaning) paradigms**

Interpretive paradigms reject a foundationalist epistemology to research as well as the pure theoretical attitude of the observer of the human lifeworld, instrumental cause and effect reasoning and the distant cognitive style of the disinterested external researcher (Schutz 1932/1972, Outhwaite 1975). The Diltherian ‘Geisteswissenschaftliches’ key term *Verstehen* in contrast to the ‘Naturwissenschaftliches’ term *Erklären*, conserves the original meaning of the human process of understanding the complexity of meanings in one’s own and others’ lives, as well as the method of understanding in contemporary research. In this way, interpretive paradigms are hermeneutic and draw upon the meaning of the ‘hermeneutic helix’, as they emphasize that one must grasp the situation in which human actions make or give meaning, in order to say one has grasped an understanding of a particular action. In the ethnographer Geertz’ words, the hermeneutic helix as concept is,

> a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously… Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualise it and the parts conceived through the whole which motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion into explication of one another (1979: 239).

This quote explicates that the hermeneutic move is basically an intellectual activity and that understanding is an “intellectual process whereby a knower (the inquirer as subject) gains knowledge about an object (the meaning of human action)” (Schwandt 2000: 194). No particular reference is made to the interpreter as a person interpreting
and understanding the hermeneutic process. Here the abilities to patiently reflect, think and/or imagine are somehow stressed, as if these processes were independent of the personal action of the person. Therefore, it can be said that the above-mentioned quote clearly ‘de-personalizes’ the research activity by reducing the hermeneutic interpretation to a pure cognitive act.

Thus in the interpretive traditions, the interpreter objectifies (i.e., stands over and against) that which is to be interpreted. And, in that sense, the interpreter remains unaffected by and external to the interpretive process (ibid: 194).

The three different perspectives highlight a further distinction between qualitative research paradigms in general, and the hermeneutic phenomenological approach. All of these perspectives are related in one way or another to the notion of ‘understanding’ although one focuses on the interpretive nature of understanding, the other on the experiential nature of understanding and the last on the ‘interwoveness’ of understanding from within our common human condition. The first perspective claims that understanding is not primarily an intellectual, systematic, grasping of sense. We always understand something as something. Thus, understanding is interpretation. Gadamer asserts:

Understanding is not an isolated activity of human beings but a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something as something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate (1970: 87).

The basic human way of meeting the world is by an interpretive understanding or the quest for meaning, of the things and events of the lifeworld. Thus, we meet the world with our whole being, which includes personal experience, history, prejudice and pre-understandings of which there is no possibility of freeing ourselves. The scientific claim or striving to rid ourselves of any subjective pre-understandings or biases is, according to hermeneutic phenomenology, a futile effort. History, tradition and pre-understanding are not external things from which we can free or distance ourselves (Gadamer 1960/1975). One could say then that it is our personal and traditional experiences that are “conditioning our interpretations” (Gallagher 1992: 91). Yet,
being aware of the subjective element in research as well as to investigate one’s pre-understandings and biased views, is part of the research effort when searching for the true meaning of the chosen phenomenon. Encountering dialogically what is not understood, what is unknown or alien, is to put one’s prejudices and personal pre-understandings at risk, exposing one to the possibility of personally challenging and changing these (Gadamer 1960/1975). In fact, the dialogical encounter should investigate what is not understood, more so than simply being an analysis of what is sought to understand. Moreover, the meaning that may ‘come into being’ in the dialogical encounter, is always temporally connected to the specific situation from which it arose. Therefore, the encounter between researcher and phenomenon under investigation, is always personal, process-oriented, based in participation and negotiation.

The term ‘negotiate’ in Schwandt’s words is “a matter of coming to terms” (Schwandt 2000: 195). This statement constitutes the second perspective whereby a distinction is made between qualitative paradigms and hermeneutic phenomenology. By an effort of ‘coming to terms’ with the phenomenon, the researcher tries to see the phenomenon from different perspectives, investigate its various meanings and question all possible aspects. To understand, is always to understand differently (Gadamer 1960/1975). This means that the particular experience is dependent on the changing horizons of personal and cultural history and tradition. In hermeneutic phenomenology, understanding thus has an open and creative character, rather than an inner meaning, independent of the interpreter and his or her particular conditions of life. Hermeneutic phenomenology aims at negotiating or creating meaning in dialogue with the phenomenon, rather than to re-cover or re-produce some immanent or static meaning. Meaning thus is dialogically created rather than scientifically discovered.

Third, hermeneutic phenomenology or the human science methodology (van Manen 1997a) is a philosophical hermeneutic approach to the human lifeworld. The method requires that we systematically reflect upon the essence or meaning of ‘lived meaning’ or ‘experienced meaning’. Questions of meaning in human science research, emerge from wonder, and are given a particular shape through thoughtful reflection. Over time, the researcher intends to gain personal embodied knowledge
about the human phenomenon under investigation. The deep personal and embodied intentionality of hermeneutic phenomenological method, requires a choice be made by the researcher in regards to how to live his or her life, as a human science researcher, rather than relating to pragmatic choices between distance or nearness, affectedness or not, and personal experiential moral versus practical moral decisions. Understanding in hermeneutic phenomenology is inseparably interwoven in life and experience. To understand is to experience existence. The way the researcher understands the phenomenon under investigation is not simply, pragmatically applied to the phenomenon, but is a kind of practical experience of the world and of him or herself in the world or in Heidegger’s terms it is ‘how we find ourselves’. Understanding, is basically a question of personal lived and experienced existence.

Understanding, like action, always remains a risk and never leaves room for the simple application of a general knowledge, of rules to the statements or texts to be understood. Furthermore, where it is successful, understanding means a growth in inner awareness, which as a new experience enters into the texture of our own mental experience. Understanding is an adventure and like any other adventure is dangerous… But…[it] is capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon, for everything understanding mediates is mediated along with ourselves (Gadamer 1981: 109).

Understanding, as the human existential experience of oneself, the world and the things of the world, is what most characterizes the encounter between the researcher and the phenomenon in this hermeneutic phenomenology, rather than the procedural efforts of applying the knowledge of social science. The hermeneutic phenomenological project is to approach a philosophical understanding of what is involved in the process of understanding itself.

**Taking an onto-epistemological perspective to establish an alternative phenomenological approach to ‘seeing disability pedagogically’**

Rather than attempting to address the issue of intellectual disability in the pedagogical encounter through theoretical analysis, or *telling* how one may
understand disability pedagogically, I will attempt to understand disability through the
students’ and teachers’ lived experience, in the pedagogical context. A deeper
hermeneutic understanding is sought through the structuring and thematizing of
anecdotal portraits that depict what disability means in the pedagogical context of the
persons concerned. A phenomenological investigation based in a narrative
description of lived experience, is one way of coming to understanding the complexity
of disability and pedagogy. Hermeneutic phenomenological understanding,
distinguishes itself from traditional qualitative understandings by its ontological
nature, which presupposes the inseparability of human understanding from the
human being him or herself. In accord with Gadamer’s claim that understanding is
interpretation, understanding is to understand differently and understanding is
personally embodied (Gadamer 1960/1975); the notion of a scientific understanding,
like understanding in general, cannot be seen as a strictly epistemological question.
According to Burch (1991) the question of understanding is more ‘onto-
epistemological’, as all knowledge is grounded in existential themes of being, and
leads to questions in terms of being rather than questions of having or producing
knowledge (Skogen 2004: 4). At a pedagogic level, which is the context of this study,
we also must take into account when dealing with human beings, students and
teachers that their actions point to certain underlying meanings as well as values and
beliefs. “In order to understand these outward acts, one must look to what lies
beneath at an ontological bodily-sensed level (ibid: 4).

The onto-epistemological level can neither see disability as different nor can it resist
the fact that there is a difference. It cannot simply see difference as a socially
constructed problem or as an individual challenge. Without either overemphasizing
being intellectually disabled or underestimating the meaning of disability, we have to
look for a perspective which enables us to see being intellectually disabled as a
condition which forms a part of one’s self, one’s being.

Speaking as if he were a blind person, Blum once said: “I am not
‘special’. I am not ‘normal’ I am blind”. In putting it this way, Blum
expresses the difference of being blind and, at the same time, the
particularity of that difference. It is this self-awareness, which enables
one who is suffering from being different to understand oneself as a
‘pariah’ who accepts the fate of exclusion, not as a social disadvantage
but as an essential feature of the kind of person he is and what his life
means in all of its essence; it is what gives meaning to his life (Blum 1982: 79, cited in Fujita 1989: 37).

How is this ‘essential feature’ of the self to be understood, other than through listening to the personal stories of persons experiencing the condition? And how can these stories be expressed in other terms than through lifeworld sensitive ‘lived experiences’? In other words, how can lived experience be investigated but by an attempt to capture the personal, pre-conceptual, pre-theoretic experience of a moment of existential meaningfulness?

If we want to gain insight into another person, his condition, nature, habits or disturbances, we should not inquire first about his introspectively accessible, subjective account of his observation…. We get an impression of a person’s character, of his subjectivity, of his nature and his condition when we ask him to describe objects, which he calls his own; in other words, when we inquire about his world. Not the world as it appears to be ‘on second thought’, but the world as he sees it in his direct, day-to-day observation (van den Berg 1972: 39).

To attempt to understand the meaning of another person’s experiences through the person telling about his or her world, one needs to attend closely to how the person sees and interacts with others and the things of the world. The world here, is not a world, which exists independently of the person but rather is the lifeworld in which the person inhabits with his whole being and with which he or she is profoundly interconnected. It is the homely world, the subjectively experienced world, which is closely related to one’s own being. In this subjectively experienced world of existence, we show ourselves as we really are and reveal our ‘self’ in the situated personal encounter with other persons, events and things.
Chapter 3. Modes of seeing

My father once said that the seeing of God is not like the seeing of man. Man sees only *between* the blinks of his eyes. He does not know what the world is like *during* the blinks. He sees the world in pieces, in fragments (Potok 1990: 97).

“Shut your eyes mama, and guess what I have!” My five-year-old daughter comes skipping into my workroom with her hands carefully held together in front of her. I shut my eyes smilingly, and try to imagine what it possibly could be. “Is it candy? Or may be some coloured pencils?” I imagine her eager little face and hear her shaking her head negatively. “You may touch with your finger,” she offers. I raise my left hand and touch the soft knuckles of her hands. She opens up a little, and with the tip of my finger between her stubby fingers, I feel the warm fur and throbbing heart of something living. I open my eyes and see a little hamster in her hands and the excited look on her face.

“Oh, I see,” I say, looking at the text in front of me. My supervisor leans back and smiles encouragingly. I really feel that I see the question more clearly now, but still there are questions to figure out and perspectives that need to be seen again with new eyes. “You should try and write some pages on different ways of seeing this,” he advises me. “One tends to see one’s own thoughts more clearly through writing.”

From the New Testament we learn about Thomas the Doubter. He was not present when Jesus manifested himself to the disciples on the evening of Easter Day. When they told him they had seen the Lord, he answered, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (John 20.25.)

What is this seeing? My friend Rune, who became blind three years ago through an illness, often tells me that he sees. He laughs as he uses the word ‘see’, but says that he still sees from his inner eye, that which he saw physiologically. He even claims to see certain things more clearly now that his eyes are no longer able to see. He sees with his fingertips as well as his other senses and constructs the world with the help of his imagination. “My inner eye lingers with the images and is not so short-lived and superficial as my eyes used to be,” he tells me. “Now I see things in a way that I wish I had the insight to see when my eyes worked.”

Driving my rented car up the main street of Cala Millor, I vainly try to figure out if this street is a main throughway in relation to the innumerable smaller and larger streets leading up to it. My glance scrutinizes the roadsides for any recognisable traffic sign indicating if this is a main road or not, as I simultaneously check to my right for traffic.

An artistic neighbour of mine calls into being the most graceful Gothic texts, while the letters leap into each other across the page as if they were alive. On his desk there are always piles of paper, nicely cut and shaped, for his writings. My relation to him
has taught me that paper can be seen very differently. He looks at a sheet of paper with the eye of a ‘connoisseur’ and distinguishes its thickness, surface and writing quality with a mere glance.

Expressions of ‘seeing’ are used in various contexts of human every-day life. The small word ‘see’, which we anatomically relate to the eye of living creatures, nevertheless has a multitude of meanings and intentions and is used to express a diversity of human conditions. We see things and persons, nature and art, signs and symbols with our physiological eye, as well as by listening, touching and moving. But we also, in a certain way, seem to ‘see’ thoughts, reflections, ideas, memories, imaginations and dreams. Experience shows that there are modes of seeing that are not simply of a physiological character, even if some of them may presuppose a particular sense of seeing. How may the different modes of seeing the world contribute significant meaning to what the notion of seeing really is?

**Modes of seeing**

Presenting some examples of modes of seeing, like the ones provided above, may enlighten the fact that there are many ways, where ‘seeing’ other human beings or the things of the world can be meaningfully experienced. The diversity of physiological, mental, literal, metaphorical, concrete and tangible ways of seeing, are well known to our experiential and imaginative being. Yet, the phenomenon of ‘seeing’ needs to be considered for its possibly “concealed” meanings. One may for example ask what makes the experience of seeing uniquely different from other related experiences. For example hearing or touching. What makes these experiences different, in spite that they also are interrelated as senses? Phenomenological inquiry is concerned with ‘possible’ human experiences, not by experiences that are presumed to be universal or shared by all human beings, irrespective of culture, time and gender or other human variations. Moreover, the phenomenological determination of meaning is in itself always indeterminate, tentative, incomplete and inclined to question assumptions, by returning over and over again to the lived experience.

Seeing with one's imagination and with one's hands is a common experiential way of seeing in daily life. Even when our eyes are open, we can create imaginary pictures
of things and events. And we often feel the urge to touch things while looking at them. We do this also as adults. Just think of how tempting it is to touch beautiful things when we are shopping. We feel we haven’t really seen the objects if we haven’t touched them or lifted them up. And try to remember the last time you saw a newborn infant; how you wanted to touch the little soft cheek with your fingertips, or put your finger in the little open hand and feel the baby’s reflexive grip. Or think of the way new lovers seem to have to touch each other constantly. This wish of exploring things, like we used to do as children, or of touching persons or things we like or feel attracted to, seems to be a human predisposition to life. But what kind of ‘seeing’ is seeing through touch? Does ‘seeing’ kinesthetically imply ‘seeing’ differently, and if so, how? And how does ‘seeing’ imaginatively differ from seeing with our eyes? Could it be that imagination sometimes ‘sees’ more clearly than the visual eye? What is ‘seen’ then, when we see something imaginatively?

Seeing something seems to be related to understanding something. In everyday language, the notion of ‘seeing’ can be understood as a way of grasping a thought or an idea, to indicate that one understands it more clearly than before. When I tell my supervisor that I ‘see’, I do not mean that I am seeing as a physiological act, or as a perceptive experience, but I mean that I ‘see’ with my mind. I ‘see’ what he means, or what is meant and as such, hopefully have added new insight to my experience. Therefore saying ‘I see’, may inevitably be used unconsciously and without true meaning. One does not really have to ‘see’ meaning or understand something, when one says the words, “I see”. The words may have become something of an empty social phrase, used to conventionally prevent further involvement. But phenomenologically, one can ask the question what is actually ‘seen’ when one becomes enlightened and gains a sudden understanding.

Seeing, makes us believe in what we see. We believe that the things we see with our own eyes are real and trustworthy. And in contrast, we may distrust what we do not see and feel, as Thomas the Doubter, unsure of its validity. We certainly believe in all the daily things we see around us, but at the same time we also believe in phenomena that we cannot see. Most of us would agree for instance that there is something like love and faithfulness, even if we are not able to see these human qualities. We see them in other ways than directly, as acts and relations between
persons. I also may believe in God, or have a certain political conviction, even if none of them are visible to my physiological eye. Is there then another ‘eye’ with which I see? Or put another way, is the act of seeing as an inner activity, perhaps even more complex than the complexity of the human physiological eye?

How do blind persons see the world? We know from science that the sense of sight in the human being accounts for ninety percent of his or her entire sensing of the world. A sighted person mainly uses the visual sense to orient to his or her surroundings as well as to other persons, even when all other senses are well functioning. The blind person has to orient differently. To most blind persons, the hearing sense is essential, and we have learned that hearing is likely to take over as the main sense when one is blind. Still, there is a natural tendency to speak unnecessarily loud to blind persons, as if they were deaf as well. Being blind then, would mean having to orient to the world differently, namely by the help of one’s other senses. Blind persons have to hear, feel and smell the world instead of seeing it. However, in a dark room the blind would likely navigate better than the seeing person, as seeing physiologically would have no bearing on his or her ability to adjust to the environment. Yet, strangely enough, even if blind persons orient toward the world by their fingers and their hearing, they still at times may experience the pain of tiredness in their eyes (Van den Berg 1977: 8). How could this be? How can one’s eyes hurt as if they are strained and fatigued, when they are not being used to see? Is it possible that blindness might nevertheless be a way of seeing with the eyes? How can the tiredness from using blind eyes be understood? How do blind persons use their non-seeing eyes? And how in contrast, do seeing persons use their seeing eyes?

Seeing also seems to be culturally dependent. Sight, in the human being is shaped by one’s surroundings, education, interest, and the time one takes to ‘see’. What I see as a polite greeting may go unrecognized by another who sees nothing relevant in the gesture. It is likely that to the Laps at the mountain plateau of Finnmark, snow means something other than it does to the average resident of Bergen. Snow is seen as a variety of conditions, of which the Laps are dependent for their living.
With the eidetic reduction in mind, the phenomenological challenge is to work out that which is invariable to the phenomenon of seeing. In addition, the significance of ‘seeing’ to the ‘pedagogy of disability’ needs to be continually developed. Modes of ‘seeing’ need to be unearthed and revealed as phenomenological themes displaying possible meaningful variations of ‘seeing’ as well as careful analyses of the relevant themes of these experiential variations.
Aspects of seeing

The intention of seeing is different from the sense of seeing.

The Dutch psychologist van den Berg (1977), relates the sense of seeing to the notion of explaining and seeing as intention to the notion of understanding. He shows through examples how the distinction between ‘explaining,’ (verklaren in Dutch and erklären in German) and ‘understanding,’ (begrijpen in Dutch and Verstehen in German) is to be understood. One of his examples goes like this: A father and his child are walking through a city. The day is hot, they have walked a long distance, and the child is complaining of thirst. They see a café and intend to buy a coke, when the father checks his watch and finds it is time to go home. The child cries and protests. Van den Berg then asks, “Where do the tears come from”? To understand the tears one has to see the situation as a whole; the father and the child, thirst, finding a café, promise, refusal, which as a human experience makes the combination of disappointment and tears fairly understandable and self evident. As a story, the whole situation is being interpreted hermeneutically. During the act of understanding, the entirety is important, and the whole insight is kept, as the way of telling the story determines the quality of the insight. Understanding a story assumes a storyteller that is able to construe the story appropriately (van den Berg 1977: 12). To explain the tears, it is necessary to find the physiological causal reason for the flow of tears. While understanding the tears, assumes a synthesis of hermeneutical elements. To become reliable, the explanation of the tears needs to synthesize physiological elements. When understanding a human phenomenon, one starts with the whole of human life and tries to understand every form that is shown in the details of the lived situation (ibid: 13). Explaining a phenomenon is different and related to the sciences of nature, for instance anatomy and physiology.

Seeing, as a physiological activity, is to a certain extent explainable. But physiological seeing is also an act of understanding, and as such it is an interpretive act. When the eye observes an object of the world, this observation is not merely a physiological process. It is most of all a receptive action. The seeing person sees receptively and seems to seek meaningfulness from what is seen. This receptive seeking of meaning may not necessarily be intentional and conscious, but is simply
the human way of being in the world. Even if our senses receive a multitude of impressions every second, we seem to be able to single out what is receptively received, and moreover what should be intentionally reflected on.

**Seeing there or here**

I raise my head from the computer screen and look at my living room where I am working. My eyes swipe across the objects in the room; the sofa, the table, the television, the bookshelves. All of them so well known to me. I just brush over them with my eyes without really looking at them. I know them from having seen them hundreds of times, used them, felt their shape and fabric under my fingers and body. Still, I recognize by looking at these objects that they are furniture and have a certain purpose in my home, one that is different from the carpet and the lamps for instance. On the walls there are selected posters, motifs and impressions chosen with thoughtfulness to enhance our experience of feeling good at home. They all are meaningful to me, even if their artistic meaning no longer has the same effect on me as when I picked them out in the poster gallery. But one of the motifs stands out. The motif depicts two persons. They do not relate to each other. Still, I have the feeling that they once did but that something somehow has separated them. The man leans his head on the wall, his side and back toward us and to the mummy-like person wrapped like a cocoon, left in her own room. This room with the 'cocoon woman' in it, is narrower than that of the man’s, and is divided by a dark line, separating the room of the loving, rejected, despairing, grieving man from it. The way the picture affects me emotionally, is a deep receptive recognition. The receptivity is also interpretive and directs my glance from the motif of the poster, to the recognition of my self. The meaning of the poster is taken in through the opening of my eyes and then receptively understood. Moreover, not just understood as the meaning of the poster, but as a particular meaning for me.

Van den Berg shows that every human observation also implies receptivity and intentionality (ibid: 25). All that one sees is receptively interpreted as some-thing. Observing the world is intentional. The observation finds place not in the eye but in what is seen; observing is not happening here, but *there* where the meaning of the seeing lies. It is obvious that meaning is not related to the physiological eye, but then
where is it to be found? Could it be in the recognition or in the memories of that which is 'seen,' evokes in me? In other words, could it be in my pre-reflective experience of the thing that is seen?

**Seeing is common and personal**

Seeing something as some-thing, seems to be a common human experience (interdependence). When I see an object, I interpret the object from the fact that I am a member of a certain culture, society, people or community of people. I am part of a particular world that turns my intentional seeing in a certain direction. Seeing the world always is an inter-human as well as an intra-cultural act that implies a certain apprehension of what is being seen. As individuals we see the world through the glasses of our cultural belonging. And yet, seeing is also to see differently. Seeing is evidence of dissimilarity (ibid: 54), as we are differently attentive, as well as differently interpretive. The Danish psychotherapist Jette Fog illustrates these cultural similarities as well as individual variations, by drawing the shape of a camel: you and I have our own individual hunch, in which we see experientially uniquely. But in addition there is a common interpretative intra-cultural ‘body’ of culture (the entire “camel”) that allows us to communicate understandingly of the phenomena of our world (Fog 2000).

**Seeing is different from thinking of what and how to see**

“To see is to hear. To hear is to see” and “all the senses are connected”, van den Berg says (1977: 61 and 64). How could this statement be true? Could the seeing “I” possibly by his or her lived experience, be an example of this statement? Human life is sensing the world. I am not able to shut off my remaining senses in order to allow one single sense to work alone. I use them in concert; still the various senses are not necessarily consciously ‘playing’ all the time. My senses sense without my thinking of how to ‘use’ them. Let us say that I am in front of my window, watching the passing traffic on the street next to my garden. My eyes follow the cars in the two opposite lanes, as I turn my head slightly. My body is turned toward the traffic or I would not be able to see it. Yet, were my back to be against the traffic, I would still be able to ‘see’ it, by hearing it. I could even see and hear the noise of traffic in my imagination or in my dreams. In the real situation however, my ears hear the distant noise of the traffic,
when all of a sudden two cars crash with a loud bang. I freeze; becoming totally still for a few seconds. My body is 'seeing' the event; it is leaned forward, stiff; my senses on alert. I open the window and hear the silence in the street. The noisy crash has rendered the world silent, attentively waiting, suspended for a few seconds. I see people approaching the two cars. I sense the smell of gas and the burning rubber of brakes. My whole being is attentive to the event, sensing, thinking, and feeling. 'I' as the experiencing self, is inseparable from my senses, thoughts and emotions. I experience the car crash with my entire self. The event seems to reinforce Merleau-Ponty's statement that, "perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them" (1945/2002: xi).

Seeing is to sense interpretively

In the movie ‘My Life as a Dog’ (Hallstrøm 1985), we see the main character, twelve-year-old Ingemar, trying to shut out the screams and scoldings of his frustrated mother, by squeezing his eyes together, pressing his fingers to his ears and loudly mumuring meaningless words. He somehow manages to protect himself from the sounds and sights, but he cannot escape from his knowing and understanding of what is going on. By attempting to shut down his senses the experience is weakened but his consciousness is still working. The vulnerable nature and exposure of his senses to the world, call for protection. The strong impact of the sight and the sounds of his beloved mother, and the emotional stress of the situation seem to force him to defend himself from his senses. The Danish philosopher, Wolf describes the profound openness of the senses like this,

The sense organs of the human being are fundamentally seen not as instruments, but as openings. The eye is not a projector, but an opening. Through this opening the world overwhelmingly appears to us. So the initiative is merely the worlds (Wolf 1997:65, cited in Martinsen 2000: 22).  

It seems as though our senses are integrated into our body. Sensing is encountering the world, on the conditions of the world. One may say that sensing is living, and

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living is sensing. I can protect myself from a specific sight by closing my eyes, or shut out certain sounds by holding my ears. Yet, these protective gestures do not shut down my understanding of what the event, neither seen nor heard, may mean. To protect myself from seeing or hearing, I have to be aware of the thing, which I protect myself from. This awareness is enough for me to consciously try to protect myself but the protection seems to exclude the consciousness itself. Even infants, sensibly interpret structures of situations they are not supposed to understand, even though responsible adults actively try to shield them from the events. Mollenhauer (1983), cites a lived experience of ‘Buffalo Child Long Lance,’ from the Indian’s self-biography, describing how Long Lance himself as an infant finds himself in the middle of the cruelty of an instant skirmish between tribes. He feels the fright and senses the war; the sounds of screams, the glimpse of cruelty and the atmosphere of violence, even though his mother caringly hands him over to an aunt in order to remove him from the tumults (Mollenhauer 1983: 33ff). Still his body knows of what is going on, and his senses interpret the atmosphere of fright and evil. This moment that Mollenhauer calls ‘decelerate reality’\textsuperscript{11} (ibid: 33), stays with Long Lance all his life.

**Looking at an object or an animal is different from looking at another human being**

What do I see when I look at an object or a thing of the world? Do I see something else than when I look into the eyes of an animal? Can one say there is any difference between looking at an object or an animal in contrast to looking into the eyes of another human being?

I look at my black fountain pen. I cannot see it without also seeing my hand with the fingers holding it, the bright pine table, which lays out the background for the pen between my fingers, and I even see parts of the room that I am in. The fountain pen is black and slim with a silver part on the top of it upon which is a silver clip. The cap that covers the pen’s nib has tooth marks. The marks bring back memories of the times when I couldn’t figure out what to write, and impatiently or pensively bit the cap of the pen. My pen is glossy except for the worn part where I hold my thumb and

\textsuperscript{11} In German: Gebremste Wirklichkeit. In Norwegian: Bremset virkelighet.
index finger and lean it toward my middle finger. I now try to hold the pen this way, to verify that the faded surface comes from my fingers holding it. I can feel the worn surface under my fingers. The change between the glossy part and the faded part of the black is quite perceptible under my fingers. Then I see that in addition to the matt, worn part there also are several notches in the surface of the pen. I examine the pen closely, count the notches and try to figure out what might have made them. They are too big to be tooth marks and too deep to be abrasions made by my fingers. Where can they possibly come from? I realise that observing my pen is a ‘one-way seeing’, because the pen does not look back at me. On the other hand, looking at my cherished pen brings back memories of good friends and events that relate in one way or another to this particular pen.

When I look at my cat and see into her intense almond-shaped eyes, I sense a certain recognition. Her glance seems familiar to me. I feel myself relating to her. I have feelings for this cat that are different from the emotions that I have for my pen. I love this cat and care for her. She is a living animal who depends on me. Although I feel related to and responsible for this cat as another living creature, still it is not on a human level. This is probably why I recognize something familiar in her glance, for she is able to look back at me where the pen can’t. But I know the glance of my cat is not a special glance given to me. She looks in the same way at all other creatures and things. Her glance may cause a mouse to freeze from fright. She looks at me with this same glance. I may attribute meanings to my cat’s glance, but these are most likely my own thoughts and emotions being mirrored, not hers. Or at least I cannot know her thoughts and emotions, if she has any at all. She is an animal and looks at me “across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension,” like I look at her, the animal “across an abyss of ignorance” (Berger 1980: 3). She is a speechless animal that may hide secrets, which I as a human being cannot unmask. But we have something in common, which the pen and I have not; we can look at each other – we both have the sense of seeing.

When I look into my son’s eyes, we immediately connect. We may talk or not, the encounter may be positive or negative, but we are somehow consciously connected, simply by looking into each other’s eyes. When “looking into the eyes of another human being, the abyss between us is bridged with language”, Berger says (ibid: 6).
Even if the encounter is hostile and we do not say a word to each other, even if we do not share the same language, the very fact that language exists, allows us to be confirmed by each other. The experience of this potential contact, mediated by the glance itself, gestures, mimics, movements or verbal language, provides the glance with intentionality. Seeing into the eyes of another human being could be the beginning of something; a relation, a meaningful conversation, a memory.

Psychological experiments show that adults looking at each other in our culture, usually feel the urge to move their glance away after a few seconds, in order not to break the social code of behaviour between adults. The glance then is quite powerful. The strength of the human glance can at times also be experienced as lasting and even fixed. Lovers that cannot stop looking at each other, aggressive persons staring into each others’ eyes before a fight, or adults looking into the eyes of an infant in order to establish and confirm contact, are all examples of this type of fixed look. The glance indeed is a powerful and interpretive human experience. But on an even deeper level we can ask, “What is the meaning of this confirmation I get by looking into the eyes of another human being”? Is it simply a social confirmation of being a similar human being, or does the confirmation imply more existential and personal considerations? What does it mean to be confirmed? Is recognition part of the confirmation? Is the confirmation as a human being charged with value, such that it may be experienced for instance as appreciation or rejection? How can being confirmed by another not be an existential and personal experience? The term ‘confirm’ comes from Latin: ‘confirmäre’ where the prefix ‘con’ intenzifies the main term ‘firmäre’, strengthen. The human glance has the power to strengthen, fortify and verify the existence of other human beings, therefore it is at the deepest levels an existential and personal experience of living in the world alongside others.

One need only think of the experience of having a conversation with someone who avoids looking into our eyes. The power of the eyes may in fact require a momentary escape, as many times we alternate between looking into the person’s eyes and averting one’s eyes; looking into the air or far ahead into the distance. The more intense the conversation, the more we seem to look into the other person’s eyes. Then we are absorbed in the conversation or the subject of the conversation, and may be less aware of conventional appropriateness. Yet, in the middle of a heated conversation one also in a certain meaning feels closer related to the other person,
irrespective of the previous or subsequent emotional climate between us. We are attached in the experience of the intense relation. On the other hand, if the person I relate to in the conversation escapes my eyes systematically, I may feel less related to him or her. I then do not get the experience of confirmation and cannot mutually confirm him or her. Even the words uttered may become indifferent to me, as they are not confirmed by the openness of the glance. It is said that the ‘eyes are the glance of the human soul’. And literally I think they are. Yet, stronger than the words of a person disclose his or her intentions, the eyes do. I am likely to trust a person who looks openly into my eyes. Also nature healers trust in people’s eyes. Scrutinizing the iris gives a reliable indication of the status of the brain condition and has a certain transparency of the entire body. The eye is an opening, through which the world rushingly encounters us, as Wolf says. But the opening of the eye may also reveal secrets of the body and of human existential condition.

**Time makes a difference to seeing**

However, what might be happening when one sees into the eyes of another human being and confirms their being? Do I confirm myself as well as the other person? Do I have to see in a certain way or with a certain quality, in order to experience the confirmation? Or would the confirmation be there, independent of me being aware of it? When I look into the eyes of a person I love, we confirm the relation between us by the look. We exchange secret glances, loving glances, implicitly meaningful glances. These looks mutually confirm us as lovers. Fading love, as well is sensed in the look. Emotional relations, regardless of the kind of emotion, can create mutual confirmation, the same way as the loving relation does.

New Zealand researcher Colwyn Trevarthen (in Bråten 1998), did a well-known psychological experiment on the bonding between mothers and newborn infants, and shows the importance of synchronization between the glance and language, included body language of mother and child. She found that when the mother and her baby were face-to-face, looking into each other’s eyes, the baby responded by smiling and wriggling to mother’s vivid facial expressions. Trevarthen then presented the child with a recording of the mother’s response on a television screen. The infant initially smiled and wriggled as before when seeing the familiar face of the mother, but the
confirming smile and prattle of the recorded mother was not as immediate or natural to the reactions of the child. The moment the child sensed this, it became insecure and starts crying. The asynchrony of the child and the mother’s responses resulted in an unrelatedness, which confused and frightened the child. Thus, human confirmation needs to be simultaneous with no time delay, when experiencing being seen and responded to.

The recognition of confirmation between two persons seems to create simultaneity in a generative way; both in the relation to the other person and in the relation to ‘self’. Seeing into another person’s eyes is to relate to this person, but also to relate to myself. Confirmation by the other’s look is also a confirmation of me as self. In the verification of a possible language the two human beings are equal; in the encounter the ‘I’ meet with another ‘I’.

The seer and the seen, a unit but still different

The German anthropologist Helmuth Plessner (1981) has conducted an extensive and scrupulous analysis of the ways of being of plants, animals and human beings. His intention in exploring the anthropology of the human world also includes a closer examination of the human ‘self’, as the driving power of cultures. He ponders the unanswerable questions: How does one imagine the source, from which the human self extracts its activity? What is this ‘I’, of whom I say ‘I am’? How can I observe others and myself from the position of the ‘I’? Plessner, with his basis in the anthropology of the ‘created,’ suggests that the human characteristic way of encountering the world, is from the outside: “Exzentrizität ist die für den Menschen charakteristische Form seiner frontalen Gestelltheit gegen das Umfeld” (Plessner 1981, cited in Mollenhauer 1983: 29). What might this possibly mean? Do we not as human beings, rather experience life from the inside and out? Plessner states that we, as human beings, are given to ourselves in three ways: As living body, as living in the body and as talking self. The conscious and talking ‘self’ can ‘look at’ the body and what is in the body. The conscious ‘self’ can say: “I have a body,” and “I have a soul”. ‘I’ am, to a certain degree able to describe the experience of my body and my inner life. But from where do I experience my body and my soul? Where is this ‘I’, that can say, “this body is mine,” or “these thoughts and emotions are felt by me”?
Plessner suggests that the ‘I’ has to be a position outside the body and the soul, from where they both may be experienced, looked at and contemplated. The experience of the ‘self’ as an ‘I’ that may observe his or her ‘self,’ and also tell other humans of this experience, could therefore possibly be seen as, “‘I’ as a point of view” (ibid: 30). The eccentric position of the ‘I’ also applies to other ‘I’ s of the world. We all see others and ourselves from our ‘point of view’, which is our ‘self’. All the ‘I’ s of the world, whose bodies and inner lives are different from each other have this in common: that they are ‘points of view’. This position gives the opportunity to see us as ‘we’. Mollenhauer puts it like this, “Die Sphäre des ‘Wir’ ist die Sphäre der gemeinsamen exzentrischen Positionen des Ich; es ist, wie Plessner sagt, die Sphäre des Geistes” (ibid: 30).

So according to Plessner and Mollenhauer, there is a connection between the different ‘I’s’ of the world, in their experience of being a ‘we’. This ‘we’ can see both the self and others from the point of view of the ‘I’. Plessner creates a certain unit between the ‘seer’ and the ‘seen’. This way of seeing the ‘I’ seems to go well with our human experience of self and others. Still, the Danish theologian Jacob Wolf (1997) sees this human sensing of self and other, as something that happens out there in the world, where the things and the human beings of the world are present.

According to him, the human eye is an opening towards the world, and the receptivity is directed from within, not from the outside. This may seem like the opposite of Plessner’s idea of the ‘I’ seeing from the outside. And it is. While Wolf seems to talk about seeing as perception and receptiveness, Plessner deals with seeing as consciousness and cognition. Nevertheless, the sense of seeing, similar to the other human senses, is omnipresent. While the body, where the senses are located, is bound to be at one place at a time, the senses are somehow all-pervading. Essential to the senses then, is as Wolf emphasizes, “that in the sensation there is unity between the person who senses and the sensed Other” (1997: 70).

The seeing ‘I’ makes a difference

What do I see when I look at the other person? Do I see the other, do I see myself, or do I see us both? It seems to depend on how concentrated my seeing is, and to what extent I am absorbed in the seeing. At times, I might fade away as a self-seeing. If I
am not totally occupied in the act of seeing I may not be aware of my own body seeing, my eyes, my hands, my face. I may see the other person as well as myself seeing him or her. Seeing somebody or something always seems to be seeing the person or the object receptively and intentionally. We see in a certain way, and we see different persons and objects differently. Our seeing reflects our way of being in the world. The person I am, my form of life and experienced lifeworld, the way I understand my self and others and the world, gives meaning to what I see.

Seeing then, is possibly more a question of how and who is seeing, than of where and what one sees. The person I am in the lifeworld shapes the way I see, more than what I see and where the seeing takes place. The way I interpret what I see may be of more interest than what the object truly is. In this case, what is seen is interpreted from how it is understood, not from what it really is. Who knows what it really is? Who has the conclusive look to determine and decide? The way persons see, is the way the worlds appear to them and the background of their acting upon the world.

**The experiential difference of nearness and distance**

What Bachelard (1958/1994) states in his essay on ‘the phenomenology of roundness’, about poetic examples of ‘round’ experiences, might also be true for seeing as a phenomenological experience,

It [the phenomenological problem of roundness] should be solved by enriching it with further examples to which we should add other data, taking care to conserve their nature of intimate data, independent of all knowledge of the outside of the world (ibid: 232).

Thus, dealing with the experience of seeing in the same way as Bachelard deals with the experience of roundness, would be to attempt to examine it from within the essential experience of ‘seeing’, rather than trying to cover its epistemological or conceptual meanings. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke in his *Poèmes Français* (cited in Bachelard 1958/1994: 239-240), describes a tree as roundness. The poem provides an example that might also apply to the phenomenon of seeing. Here the poem depicts a tree as it is seen.

Tree always in the centre
Of all that surrounds it
Tree feasting upon
Heavens great dome.

One day it will see God
And so, to be sure
It develops its being in roundness
And holds out ripe arms to Him.

A thing becomes round when it is isolated and seen from a distance. Bachelard suggests that when a thing becomes isolated and looks round, it constitutes “a being that is concentrated upon itself” (ibid: 239). When reading the poem we imagine the solitary tree there far away, drawn in relief against the bright sky. The tree becomes the centre of the world, and the horizon of the sky frames the tree roundly. Also the tree itself is seen as a round shape when seen isolated, and at a certain distance. The point in referring to Rilke’s poem as well as to Bachelard’s analysis of roundness, is to point out that ‘seeing’ may well differ also according to whether we see the single individual or the group, intimately or at a distance. Bachelard continues by saying that ‘becoming’ takes innumerable forms, and being as well, is manifold and shifting. Being, moreover illustrates durability and wholeness.

[…] becoming has countless forms, countless leaves, but being is subject to no dispersion: if I could ever succeed in grouping together all the images of being, all the multiple, changing images that, in spite of everything, illustrates permanence of being, Rilke’s tree would open an important chapter in my album of concrete metaphysics (ibid: 241).

In phenomenological pedagogy, a significant challenge is to recognize the inestimable variation in who students are presently, and who in the future they will grow to be. The young person’s ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ is part of the teachers’ intuitive and reflective practice. In addition, the pedagogical teacher will understand the tension between the stable and dynamic nature of their students. The pedagogical paradox lies precisely in seeing both perspectives at the same time, and by practicing them in concert. The instantaneousness as well as the duration of pedagogy are two aspects of the same; yet they are pedagogical practices of seeing the student closely and at a distance, individually and as socially interrelated.
**The difference that ‘seeing pedagogically’ makes**

Children and adults meet, build relationships, communicate, and interact all the time in homes, kindergartens, schools, leisure activities, hospitals and several other private and public contexts of daily life. Every encounter is unique, unrepeatable and is called into being by the persons creating it, for specific purposes and within the context that frames it. Still, these kinds of encounters also have something in common. Usually the encounter between child and adult is asymmetric, and as such the power and the responsibility for the relationship are distributed unequally. The relationship between child and adult also generally includes an element of care offered by or included in the actions of the adult. The quality and mode of caring vary greatly, related to among others, the purpose of the encounter, the adult’s ability to care, the experienced need for care and the age of the child. Moreover, the encounter often has some kind of purpose, such as upbringing or teaching, guiding or supervising. When being part of relations with children, or by observing encounters between children and adults, one realizes that these relationships are immensely complex, and may not be at all as caring or educational as we intend them to be. But even if the encounter between child and adult is not always what we want it to be, and sometimes fails to reach the appropriate level of caring or meeting the educational targets of our intentions, it may still have valuable pedagogical qualities.

A significant pedagogical aspect of the encounter between child and adult is the challenge of ‘seeing’ the child. How is this adult-seeing of a child? What does the adult see when she or he looks at the child? As seeing is more than a pure physiological neutral kind of seeing, this is a relevant question. Van Manen reminds us of the important detail, “How and what we see depends on who and how we are in the world. How and what we see in a child is dependant on our relationship with that child” (2002a: 23). For example, will the eye of a parent ‘see’ the child differently from a stranger’s eye? And will the teacher ‘see’ the child differently than the doctor that provides a medical examination, or a therapist or a social worker? And what does to ‘see’ really mean? Van Manen (2002a) warns us against thinking professionally about children, thereby making them into a therapeutic case or an abstract concept.
The theoretical language of child “science” so easily makes us look past each child’s uniqueness toward common characteristics that allow us to group, sort, sift, measure, manage, and respond to children in preconceived ways (ibid: 25).

This tendency may be even more evident when we as pedagogues deal with children or young persons with some kind of learning difficulties or those who are often labelled with certain diagnoses. It might then be hard to look behind the label and all the particularities, and see the exceptional as well as the ordinary person. Yet, the notion of ‘seeing’ seems to possess a deep meaningfulness as a metaphor of the pedagogical encounter. There is a certain way of ‘seeing’ the young person in the pedagogical relation that distinguishes the essential pedagogic from the non-pedagogic. In order to investigate the ‘action of seeing’ as a pedagogical phenomenon, and distinguish the pedagogical ‘seeing’ from the non-pedagogical seeing, it seems useful to introduce some fictional descriptions of asymmetric encounters. To hopefully gain a deeper understanding of what ‘seeing pedagogically’ means, we should keep our focus on the phenomenon, rather than on the fact that persons practicing pedagogy, might do so in a good or less good manner. In Chaim Potok’s novel The Chosen (1969), ‘pedagogical seeing or non-seeing’ is credibly and vividly described, without trying to justify or criticize the adults interpretively. Rather, the mindfulness of the descriptions make the texts speak to us in a way that reveals significant essential aspects of pedagogical seeing in an experiential way. The decision to use exactly these anecdotal paragraphs, is based on their capacity to show in a concrete, pre-reflective and non-conceptual way what ‘seeing pedagogically’ might mean.

In the following situations, fifteen-year-old Reuven has been brought to the eye ward in hospital after a baseball accident. In the vivid ‘in medias res’ description of Reuven with the injured eye, the question is whether or not his sight will be impaired. At the eye ward, Reuven meets adults that are in some way or another responsible for him and care for him. For the purposes here we will concentrate on four of the adults, a nurse, his adult roommate, his gym instructor and finally, his father. All of them are concerned about the boy’s situation and attempt to help him in various ways. The perspective is Reuven’s in the following passages. The perspective is important since pedagogical seeing always needs to be understood from the perspective of the child.
or young person. In this instance, the question of interest is, “Are any of the adults around Reuven seeing him pedagogically?” Or better yet, “how is pedagogical seeing revealed in the following passages that describe the encounter between Reuven and those adults who care for him?” Here we see how Reuven experiences an encounter with his primary nurse,

I opened my right eye. A nurse in a white uniform said: “Well, how are we doing, young man?” and for a long moment I stared up at her and didn’t know what was happening. Then I remembered everything – and I couldn’t say a word.

I saw the nurse standing over my bed and smiling down at me. She was heavily built and had a round, fleshy face and short, dark hair.

“Well, now, let’s see,” she said. “Move your head a little, just a little, and tell me how it feels”.

I moved my head from side to side on the pillow.

“It feels fine,” I said.

“That’s good. Are you at all hungry?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“That’s very good.” She smiled. “You won’t need this now.”

She pushed aside the curtain that enclosed the bed. I blinked in the sudden sunlight.

“Isn’t this better?”

“Yes, ma’am. Thank you. Is my father here?”

“He’ll be in shortly. You lie still now and rest. They’ll be bringing supper in soon. You’re going to be just fine.”

She went away. (Potok 1969: 43)

How does the nurse see the boy during this conversation? The nurse is thoughtful and caring to the boy, is attentive to his well-being and his appetite, and informs him kindly about his father’s visit. Her concern is mainly directed towards his health, food and rest, which all reminds us of the fact that she is a nurse who is supposed to care for people’s health and comfort. She seems to be a good nurse and she acts professionally. She certainly sees the boy with a caring eye and observes his condition appropriately. But is her seeing the boy a pedagogical ‘seeing’? Or is the seeing, even if it is kind and caring, somewhat too distant to be personal? Does not the look have a certain evaluative quality, aimed at diagnosing and evaluating the boy’s condition? Reuven seems to experience the nurse’s look as professional, rather than personal. This, of course is not at all surprising, as Reuven has not met this nurse before. Yet, does the nurse’s professional look see the entire boy, or does she merely focus on his injured eye, the part that has brought him to the hospital?
Does her professional evaluative eye ‘see’ his fright at losing his sight, or his sense of being alone in foreign surroundings? The nurse sees Reuven with a professional nurse’s eyes and focuses on his health and comfort. She then sees him differently than a pedagogical eye would see.

In the bed next to Reuven, is Mr. Savo, a thirty-year-old ex-prize fighter. This is how Potok describes the first encounter between the young boy and his grown roommate:

“Hello, there,” he said, smiling. “How’s the old punching bag?”
I didn’t understand what he meant.
“The old noggin. The head”
“Oh. It feels good.”
“Lucky boy. A clop in the head is a rough business. I went four once and got clopped in the head, and it took me a month to get off my back. Lucky boy.”
He held a card in his hands and looked down on the rows of cards on the blanket. “Ah, so I cheat a little. So what?” He tucked the card into a row. “I hit the canvas so hard I rattled my toenails. That was some clop.” He drew another card and inspected it. “Caught me with that right and clopped me real good. A whole month on my back.” He was looking at the rows of cards on the blanket. “Here we go,” he smiled broadly, and added a card to one of the rows.
I couldn’t understand most of what he was talking about, but I didn’t want to be disrespectful and turn away, so I kept my head turned toward him. I looked at the black patch on his right eye. It covered his eye as well as the upper part of his cheekbone, and it was held in place by a black band that went diagonally under his right ear, around his head and across his forehead. After a few minutes of looking at him, I realized he had completely forgotten about me, and I turned my head slowly from him and to the right (ibid: 45).

Mr. Savo is a nice fellow, and a lively dialogue partner for Reuven. Still, in a way he seems to be too engaged in his own matters to really be able to see the boy and his possible needs. He tries to comfort Reuven by sharing with him his own experiences of being hurt and clopped in the head. But in his mode of being with the boy is he not only half present to their conversation? And eventually does he not totally forget about the young boy, as he becomes more of a self-centred and somewhat of a bragging friend rather than being a caring adult? Is he not too busy with himself to really see the sick boy?

Reuven’s gym teacher and the instructor of his baseball team, Mr. Galanter, accompanies him in the taxi to the emergency ward after the game, is by his side
while the doctors examine his left eye, and calls his father to inform him about what
has happened. It is interesting to note how the young boy worries about his father
getting the unexpected message of his accident,

I thought of my father receiving the phone call from Mr. Galanter, and
rushing over to the hospital, and I had to hold myself back from crying. He
was probably sitting at his desk, writing. The call would frighten him terribly. I
found I could not keep back my tears, and I blinked a few times and winched
with the pain (ibid: 41).

The day after this is World War II D-day, Mr. Galanter as the responsible teacher that
he is, comes up to see how Reuven is doing. Reuven and his roommate, ten-year-
old Billy, who is blind from a car accident, have been listening to the war news on the
radio all day.

“Came up to say hello, soldier. I’m between schools, so I’ve only got a few
minutes. Couldn’t’ve seen you otherwise today. How are we doing?”
“I’m a lot better, Mr. Galanter.” I was happy and proud that he came to see me.
“My head doesn’t hurt at all, and the wrist is a lot less sore.”
“That’s good news, trooper. Great news. This is some day, isn’t it? One of the
greatest days in history. Fantastic undertaking.”
“Yes, sir. I’ve been listening to it on the radio.”
“We can begin to imagine what’s going on, trooper. That’s the incredible part.
Probably have to land more than a hundred thousand troops tomorrow, and
thousand and thousands of tanks, artillery pieces, jeeps, bulldozers,
everything, and all on those beaches. It staggers the mind!”
“I told little Billy here that they were using the big bombing planes an awful lot.
His uncle is a bomber pilot. He’s probably flying his plane right now.”
Mr. Galanter looked at Billy, who had turned his head in our direction, and I
saw Mr. Galanter notice immediately that he was blind.
“How are you, young feller?” Mr. Galanter said, his voice sounding suddenly a
lot less excited.
“My uncle flies a big plane that drops bombs,” Billy said. “Are you a flier?”
I saw Mr. Galanter’s face go tight.
“Mr. Galanter is my gym teacher in high school, “ I told Billy.
“My uncle’s been a pilot for a long time now. My father says they have to fly an
awful lot before they can come home. Were you wounded or something, Mr.
Galanter, sir, that you’re home now?”
I saw Mr. Galanter stare at the boy. His mouth was open, and he ran his
tongue over his lips. He looked uncomfortable.
“Couldn’t make it as a soldier,” he said, looking at Billy. “I’ve got a bad –“He
stopped. “Tried to make it but couldn’t.”
“I am sorry to hear that, sir.”
“Yeah,” Mr. Galanter said.
I was feeling embarrassed. Mr. Galanter’s excitement had disappeared, and now he stood there, staring at Billy and looking deflated. I felt sorry for him, and I regretted having mentioned Billy’s uncle.

“I wish your uncle all the luck in the world,” Mr. Galanter said quietly to Billy. “Thank you, sir,” Billy said.

Mr. Galanter turned to me. “They did quite a job getting that piece of glass out of your eye, trooper.” He was trying to sound cheerful, but wasn’t succeeding too well. “How soon will you be out?”

“My father said in a few days.”

“Well, that’s great. You’re a lucky boy. It could’ve been a lot worse.”

“Yes, sir.”

[...] 

“Well, I got to go teach a class, trooper. Take care of yourself and get out of here soon.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you for everything, and for coming to see me.”

“Anything for one of my troopers,” he said.

I watched him walk slowly up the aisle (Potok 1969: 64-65).

Mr. Galanter seems to be a caring and responsible teacher who understands the significance of cheerfulness and humour in motivating the young injured boy. He calls Reuven ‘soldier’ and ‘trooper’, and his roommate Billy, ‘feller’. He adds a jolly and easygoing tone to their conversation. Yet, when the conversation hits upon his personal Achilles’ heel, he gets uncomfortable. The boys touch on vulnerable areas of his life and he struggles to keep up appearances. The description reveals a man trying to keep up a façade of bravery and jollity that is neither deep nor genuine, and the boys see through him.

Reuven’s father comes in the evening after a university meeting. Earlier that afternoon Danny Saunders, the boy who threw the fatal baseball hitting Reuven’s eye, came to visit him. Danny came to tell him how sorry he is for what he did. But Reuven will not accept his apology and Danny has to leave without being forgiven.

My father came in a few minutes after supper, looking pale and worn. When I told him about my conversation with Danny Saunders, his eyes became angry behind the glasses.

“You did a foolish thing, Reuven,” he told me sternly. “You remember what the Talmud says. If a person comes to apologize for having hurt you, you must listen and forgive him.

“I couldn't help it, abba.”

“You hate him so much you could say those things to him?”

“I'm sorry,” I said, feeling miserable.

He looked at me and I saw his eyes were suddenly sad. “I did not intend to scold you,” he said.
“You weren’t scolding,” I defended him.
“What I tried to tell you, Reuven, is that when a person comes to talk to you, you should be patient and listen. Especially if he has hurt you in any way. Now we would not talk anymore tonight about Reb Saunders’ son. This is an important day in the history of the world. It is the beginning of the end for Hitler and his madmen. Did you hear the announcer on the boat describing the invasion?”
We talked a while about the invasion. Finally my father left, and I lay back in my bed, feeling depressed and angry with myself over what I had said to Danny Saunders (ibid: 68).

This passage is intended to call attention to some aspects that are exposed in a pedagogical situation. In fact this situation appears to reflect what van Manen (1991) calls a pedagogical moment, in that his father helps Reuven reach a deeper understanding of what friendship is, and how affliction can lead to insight. However, let’s have a closer look at the pedagogical aspects of the relation between Reuven and his father. Even though the passage is short and the surroundings miserable as well as there being the difficult topic of conversation, the ‘pedagogiality’ of the encounter is convincing.

There is a basic trust between Reuven and his father that allows the boy to open up and let his father know about his relentless arguing with Danny Sanders. Trust grows from attachment in a lasting relationship that has proved itself to be reliable and caring. Thus, the way Reuven and his father talk about Reuven’s attitude and behaviour toward his same age rival, reveals that their relationship is of a lasting, caring and reliable character. Also, the way his father immediately tells him to put aside his own anger and listen to the other by forgiving him what he asks to be forgiven, reveals a fatherly authority as well as a strong moral intuition for what will be positive to Reuven in the future. Finally, the father approaches Reuven’s situation in a way that opens up the boy. The acknowledgement does not come easily for the boy, and his father is somewhat uncompromising in his moral attitude, but the short conversation brings about a change of mind in Reuven. The father is not too judging and they soon turn to other issues, and leave their discussion somewhat unsolved. This can happen because the father trusts Reuven’s moral and reasoned ability to respond to the challenge. Thus, the father has the advantage of being able to see much more of Reuven than most adults could see, as he has known his son for a long time, and sees him with a personal and pedagogical look. Van Manen denotes
parents and teachers ‘child-watchers,’ (2002a: 26), as they are ‘more’ than other adults in that they guard in a caring way, and see the total existence of the child.
Chapter 4. Hermeneutic phenomenological methodology

But I have found very little compared to all that can be found. I have a few small crumbs of all the splendour in which we live (van den Berg 1970: 129).

A short retrospect of phenomenology

The phenomenological movement historically can be grouped into three phases (Spiegelberg 1960, Cohen 1987, Cohen et al. 2000). The first phase, the preparatory phase, was initiated by Franz Brentano (1838-1917) and his student Carl Stumpf (1848-1936). The idea at this time was to reform philosophy in order to render it a descriptive and clarifying science before undertaking casual studies (Cohen 1987).

He [Brentano] was the first to discuss the value of inner perception: awareness of our own psychic phenomena, as opposed to unreliable introspection. He also was the first to discuss intentionality, a concept basic to all later phenomenological analysis (ibid: 32).

The second phase, the German phase, was dominated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Husserl, Brentano’s student, was involved in the pre-phenomenological phase in the last decade of the 19th century. At the Universities of Göttingen and Freiburg, from 1901 to 1929, when he retired, Husserl developed a radical, transcendental and subjective phenomenology. Cohen asserts that, “Husserl’s philosophic radicalism was an important constant in his philosophy. Radicalism for Husserl was going to the “roots” or “beginnings” of all knowledge – to its ultimate foundations” (ibid: 32). Two vital aspects of phenomenology for Husserl (1913/1982), were its characteristics, of ‘essence’ and ‘reduction.’ Husserl called for our ‘going to the things themselves,’ and as such, believed that philosophy must begin with the phenomenon itself and make studies of theories and concepts secondary. While ‘essence’ to Husserl moved toward the idea of describing ideal types, today’s various phenomenological directions understand the term ‘essence’ in different ways. In his book Researching lived experience (1997a), which is the prime
method book of this study, van Manen explains it in this way, "'Essence' is that what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is); that what makes a thing what it is, rather than its being or becoming something else" (ibid: 177).

The third and last phase of the phenomenological development is the French phase. Phenomenology moved from Germany to France prior to the Second World War, and has since then been the dominant philosophy in France (Cohen 1987: 33). Two of the key persons of this phase, Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) are examples of the less scholarly and science oriented approach to phenomenology in France, in contrast to Germany. The third central person, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), was far more scholarly and concerned with science. With his main book, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2002), he intended to show that the phenomenological method possesses all necessary scientific qualities. He, in fact, with this book, "was the first French author to publish a work with 'phenomenology' in the title" (Cohen 1987: 34). For the most part, what distinguished German phenomenology from the French, was the strong link between phenomenology and philosophy, in contrast to literature and politics in France.

The Phenomenological Movement (Cohen 1987) also included the 'Daseinanalyse', an existential–analytic movement among clinical therapists in different parts of Europe. A phenomenologically based approach was successfully used in psychology and psychiatry, and was documented by famous clinical therapists. Here the starting point was the patient's own lived experience of the situation, rather than the therapist applying his theoretical knowledge to the patient's condition. (Cohen 1987).

The various historical philosophical views on phenomenology were the basis for the development of different phenomenological research traditions in a variety of disciplines, including education. In her guide for nursing researchers, Cohen sees phenomenology within different professions and makes a prefigurative distinction between hermeneutical phenomenology and other qualitative methods.

Hermeneutic or interpretive research has become a method used by a number of different disciplines, including sociologists such as Denzin,
educators such as van Manen and anthropologists such as Geertz. What sets hermeneutic phenomenology apart from these other hermeneutic approaches is the tradition of looking at a phenomenon, as a single kind of human experience, rather than as a social process or structure or culture. [...] Phenomenology is different from grounded theory and ethnography. Whereas phenomenologists focus on questions of the meaning of the experience, grounded theorists study social processes, and ethnographers are interested in understanding cultures and traditions (Cohen et al. 2000: 8).

Today there is a variety of phenomenological directions, some sharing quite similar, while others, so different as to render impossible a singular definition. Perhaps the most pronounced difference is between the Duquesne School of phenomenology, which focuses on eidetic description, while researchers using Heideggerian hermeneutics focus on interpretation, and the hermeneutical phenomenological approach, which combines features of descriptive and interpretive phenomenology (Cohen 1987). Influential researchers belonging to the Husserlian descriptive school are Amedeo Giorgi and William F. Fischer. The Heideggerian interpretive school includes for instance Patricia Benner. The Utrecht School, which is the tradition upon which this particular study is based, has scholars such as Martinius Langeveld, J. H. van den Berg, Jan Linschoten, Bas Levering and Max van Manen representing it.

**The amalgamation of the German and the Dutch traditions**

Pedagogical questions, which are aimed at the human ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, are different from questions of nature and of things in the world. The German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey was the first to make a distinction between the two by naming the human sciences ‘Die Geistes-wissenschaften’, and the sciences of nature ‘Die Naturwissenschaften’. The human sciences have their origin in the intentional life of human beings and therefore have an intentional meaning that requires interpretation and understanding while in contrast the nature and the things of the world require human beings to explore and explain it. Martin Heidegger and Hans–Georg Gadamer brought the distinction between the two different approaches to the human world closer to the question of method in the human sciences (van Manen 1997a), as the

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former concentrated on the ontological question of the pre-reflective being in the world as the significance of the human being (Heidegger 1926/1962). Gadamer (1960/1975) showed that the truth of the questions of the human lifeworld could not be reduced to a question of a positivistic evidential method. Actually, he argued that the preoccupation with objective method or technique is really antithetical to the spirit of human science scholarship (van Manen 1997a: 3). Both Heidegger and Gadamer understood the method of the human science as basically descriptive and interpretive, though Gadamer attached a special importance to the necessity of interpretation. The focus on the lived experience of the human being is the phenomenological aspect, while the inherent act of interpretation of human intention, is the hermeneutical aspect.

In the 1960s, hermeneutics, the German version of the human sciences, met the challenges from the phenomenological philosophy of the practical sciences, pedagogy, psychiatry and medicine, developed by the Utrecht School in the Netherlands, between and after the Second World War (Van Manen 1979a, 1997a). As well, Dutch phenomenology had strong influences from France. Even though Husserl’s and Heidegger’s influences were important, it was especially the French existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Levinas and in particular Maurice Merleau-Ponty, that dominated the philosophy in the Netherlands and in Flanders. The main interest in Dutch phenomenology was anthropological, a concern which actually resonated more with the French phenomenologists, than with the more epistemological and methodological concerns of Husserl and the German hermeneutists (Levering & van Manen 2002). However, on this backdrop of Continental philosophy, a fertile mutual deepening of the human sciences has since then developed into the traditional European human science. The hermeneutical phenomenological direction is represented by philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger, Martinius Langeveld and Otto F. Bollnow, as well as the contemporary philosophers Wilfried Lippitz and Käthe Meyer-Drawe in Germany, alongside J. H. van den Berg, Bas Levering and Max van Manen from the Netherlands. Contemporary hermeneutical phenomenological research in education has thus been influenced by sources in Germany and France, but perhaps what has been most fruitful for pedagogy, is the amalgamation of the Dutch Utrecht School of phenomenological practitioners and the German scholars of
hermeneutics. The particular phenomenologists and existentialists whose work has
guided this particular educational research, is the Dutch and German scholars, the
French phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Levinas, Bachelard, and the
Danish philosopher Knud E. Løgstrup.

**Characteristics of hermeneutic phenomenology**

The hermeneutical phenomenological approach implies a rejection of all techniques
and objective methods, but implies rather an affirmation of the human lifeworld. The
human lifeworld is essentially to be understood as intentional and as such can best
be investigated through the lived experience of human beings, interpreted through
the medium of language and art. Van Manen (2003), reminds us of the fact that the
concept of ‘lived experience’ (translated from the German *Erlebnis*) possesses
special methodological significance that is different from the term ‘human
experience’, the main epistemological basis for qualitative research. In fact, *Erlebnis*,
contains the term ‘life’ or ‘to live’ and the verb *erleben* literally means ‘living through
something.’ While the corresponding English term ‘experience’ has none of these
meanings, but rather equates to terms such as trial, evidence and experiment.

The notion of ‘lived experience’ as used in the works of Dilthey (1985),
Husserl (1970), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and their contemporary exponents,
announces the intent to explore directly the originary or prereflective

The term ‘lived experience’ is the basic notion of phenomenology, and highlights the
aim of phenomenological researchers to provide concrete insight into human life
phenomena. Lived experience is thus the starting point of phenomenological
investigation, description, interpretation and writing.

Phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experience,
hermeneutics describes how one interprets the ‘texts’ of life, and semiotics is
used […] to develop a practical writing or linguistic approach to the method
of phenomenology and hermeneutics (van Manen 1997a: 4).
The inseparability of research and writing is characteristic to hermeneutic phenomenology, as well as it is the attempt to capture the meaning and significance of daily life experience in pedagogical research. In fact, hermeneutic phenomenology is a form of writing, since the object of the research process is to create a phenomenological text. Thus, the writing activity does not merely enter the research process to create the final product but is in fact what phenomenology is all about. Moreover, phenomenology is not the process of writing communicative texts that become objects for the dissemination of scientific information. The phenomenological text aims rather at achieving coherence between the textual quality and the content of the text, and in reality cannot be separated.

**Studying experience**

Phenomenology is the study of essences…the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness […]. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their “facticity” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: vii).

While Husserl’s phenomenology is oriented toward transcendental essences, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is existential; oriented to ‘the lived experience’ of the concrete human being in the concrete world. The purpose of phenomenological analysis is the re-achieving of a direct and primitive contact with the world as it is experienced. Thus, phenomenology does not gather new information or create thus far unknown knowledge. Rather, phenomenology describes and interprets a meaning that already is implicit to lived experience as its essence or truth. The inseparable relation to lived experience is the core meaning of phenomenology.

[…] Phenomenology does not simply iterate what is already given and understood in lived experience in the way that it is given and understood. It seeks a transcending theoretical understanding that goes beyond lived experience to situate it, to judge it, to comprehend it, endowing lived experience with new meaning (Burch 1989: 4).

The transcendental character of phenomenological knowledge necessitates phenomenology as a scientific mediator between practical and theoretical
understanding of the human lifeworld. Here, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the tension between the methodological bracketing of pre-cognition and the fact that the phenomenological world is always present as the horizon of human life.

[Phenomenology] is a transcendental philosophy, which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always ‘already there’ before reflection begins…as inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: vii).

Consequently, Merleau-Ponty refers to phenomenological method as something like an attitude: “phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner and a style of thinking (ibid: vii). Phenomenology has to be understood and practised in the taking up of a certain attitude and attentiveness to the things of the world as we live them, rather than as we conceptualise or theorize them. The term ‘natural attitude’ refers to the taken for grantedness of that which we experience as things, situations, persons and facts of everyday life. A distinction is made between the basic natural attitude, with which we start off facing the world and the ‘phenomenological attitude’, which is an attitude we have to move into. The phenomenological attitude is not our natural attitude where we are caught up in our everyday living, and where we experience surrounding phenomena directly as they are. “The phenomenological attitude […] is the focus we have when we reflect upon the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it” (Sokolowski 2000: 42). In phenomenology, the world is ‘already there’ and the ‘I’, who is the person experiencing it, always is considered as “the dative of manifestation” (ibid: 44). In other words, phenomenology is founded in the European traditional view of the human being, as both an intentional subject adherent to and created by cosmic basic relations, and as an experiencing subject, who affects and interprets the given world. This view resists the understanding of the human being as the creative infinitive of the world, like is assumed for instance, in constructivism. Here the fundamental belief is that the world is the horizon of all things and the ‘I’ is part of the world and the one that intentionally possesses the world. This particular view of the ‘natural world’ is and has to be understood from the point of view of a phenomenological perspective. Anything else would be impossible, as the natural attitude “remains cushioned by our underlying world belief” (ibid: 47), and can only be actively practiced without the ability to reflect
on itself. Yet, the natural attitude includes varying possible attitudes. For example, might the attitude of a mother of a sick child be different from the attitude of a doctor; the attitude of a teacher be different from that of a businessman, where aspects of ‘learning’ are the issue. These shifts in viewpoint and focus are nevertheless within the domain of the natural attitude, but differ from the phenomenological attitude, in that they are unable to bring distance to the immediate experience and to reflect on it. The phenomenological attitude aims at focusing in a reflective way, on everything in our natural attitude, including things, concepts and situations, where the underlying belief of the world is the human horizon. The intention of radical reflection is to see at the things instead of seeing through them. The method is a systematic reflection on lived experience, or, in other words, phenomenology is the human science of lived meaning, or experienced meaning.

And yet, phenomenology is a method and ‘a rigorous science’ (Husserl 1910-11, Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002), which is accessible only through the practice of the phenomenological method. However, the method is more like an attitude towards human life and experience, than what is generally understood by the term ‘method’.

Merleau-Ponty connects the phenomenological methodological reflection with the lifeworld and the encounter with the other. With the strive to establish a reconnected contact with the origin of human experience, to what actually appears to us beyond the taken for granted assumptions and the casual explanations, the method aims to search for detailed and exact experiential descriptions. The experiential descriptions of lived meaning are basically pre-verbal, pre-reflective, pre-conceptual and pre-theoretic. What phenomenology intends to capture is the living moment or the ‘now’, which paradoxically is always too late for consciousness to grasp in the moment. The paradox here is that the strive of phenomenology to see the world as it is immediately experienced, can only be grasped retrospectively by reflecting on the already passed (past) experience. Paradoxically then, the awareness of the lived experience is to try to grasp an experience, which is unaware of itself. This unawareness, Dilthey calls ‘a breath of meaning’: an instantaneous, yet elusive sense of a deeper understanding.
that somehow seems to escape cognition. The possibility of meaning is somehow, always inscribed in the transcendence of the lived experience. In fact, Heidegger asserts, “Higher than actuality, stands possibility” (Heidegger 1926/1962: 63) and in one form or another, this principle is true for phenomenology. Thus, turning to the lived experience, is to listen to the speaking of the things of the world in order to investigate their possibilities. As such, experience can be evoked and illuminated, but not pinned down in a closed system of concepts. The move is in this respect profoundly different from turning to scientific empirical facts in order to explain and generalize them. Phenomenology is a narrative approach that aims at making the world understandable and intelligible, cognitively and non-cognitively. In regards to the use of scientific knowledge, scientists have traditionally insisted on asking the question, “What can I use this knowledge for?” Heidegger turned the question upside down and by asking: “What does phenomenology do with me (and you)?”

To return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematisation is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: ix-x).

The notion of ‘return’ is related to the lived experience of the lifeworld, the world that precedes all reflection, science or philosophy. Therefore, phenomenological perceptiveness to the concrete ‘knowledge of the world,’ is more like a certain sensitive attitude than a technical research skill. The intention is to come to a closer understanding of experiences through the effort of describing them rather than explaining or analysing them. In Merleau-Ponty’s words, our knowledge is always subjectively captured from direct contact with the world.

All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second order expression (1945/2002: ix).

The effort of relearning to look at the world and reawakening the basic human experience of things, is to pose the question of what a phenomenon ‘is’ or ‘means’, in other words, to concentrate on the ‘is-ness’ of things. All human beings perform
reflective philosophical thinking from time to time, without really being aware of the big difference between this philosophical glimpse of the real shape of things, and the natural world they habitually see without questioning it. To attain a phenomenological attitude demands that we make a clear and explicit distinction between the two worlds, not simply in order to move between them, but rather to perform this shift consciously (Sokolowski 2000). To turn to this phenomenological attitude reflects the Husserlian notion of the phenomenological ‘reduction’ or ‘epoche’.

**Examining assumptions and pre-understandings**

Max van Manen (1997a) has said that the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much.

Our “common sense” pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question (ibid: 46).

In a fundamental sense, lived experience always already assumes a certain shape or meaning for us, which constantly covers the ground of our being and prompts us to believe that we already understand the experience. In Kirk and Raven’s words, phenomenology thinks the experience twice in order to recollect fundamental meaning that may have been forgotten in the rush of things.

[Phenomenology] is the systematic search for the integral meaning of experience; it is “bethinking”, not as a mere bringing to consciousness, but as a careful, englobing recollection of a fundamental meaning implicit to experience, though forgotten in the rush of things; and it is “of ‘truth’”, not as a sum of correct assertions, but as the “intelligibility” (gnome) by which all things are steered through all things (Kirk & Raven 1957: 204, cited in Burch 1989: 11).

Phenomenological reduction or bracketing keeps brushing away pre-understandings, in order to come closer to the fundamental meaning implicit to experience, and as such re-establishes the primitive contact with the matter of interest. But it is not only this clearing away or bracketing of mediated knowledge. If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already know, the presuppositions most likely will become ‘shadow knowledge’ to our investigation. Thus it is better to make explicit our understandings,
beliefs, biases, assumptions and theories by coming to terms with them, by not
forgetting them, but keeping them consciously at bay.

[…] One has to confront the traditions, assumptions, languages, evocations,
and cognitions in order to understand how the existential “facticities” of
everyday lived experience are actually constituted through these assumptions
and effects (van Manen 1997a: 47).

Human science phenomena are like Marcel (1950) would have said it, not problems
in need of solutions. Rather, they are in a certain sense mysteries in need of
evocative and thoughtful comprehension. This does not mean that the phenomena
are mysterious in the meaning, less realistic or less substantious. Rather, the human
phenomena of investigation need to be re-achieved contact with, so that they in a
certain way may recapture their primordial reality.

The purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try and grasp the essential meaning
of something. On one level, detaching meaning is simple. We easily extract meaning
out of the things that surround us in our everyday lives, for instance the purpose of
the computer I am using right now. The computer is an invaluable tool allowing me to
write this chapter, as one of its purposes is to help me organise texts and store
information that can be displayed by the touch of a key. I understand the meaning of
my computer, at least to the extent of my present ability. But if I intend to reflect on
what the pedagogical significance is of the computer for the relationship between
teacher and student, or how the computer may affect the experience of the ‘self’ of
the child, the effort of formulating meanings is no longer so simple. Hence the
simplistic notion of the computer’s purpose becomes complex and intriguing once
one really tries to reflectively ponder it. Phenomenological reflection aims at
explicating the essence of things, and does so by striving to come in direct contact
with these as lived experiences. The meaning or essence of a phenomenon is never
one-dimensional or one-layered. It is always complex and manifold, involving at once
ambiguity and indistinctness, which must be carefully differentiated, examined and
pointed out. As such, all phenomena are, on a certain level knowable and simple,
and yet on another, utterly mysterious. Thus the project of phenomenology is not to
reduce the primordial phenomenon into clearly defined concepts and neat theories in
order to disclose its mystery, but rather the object is to bring the mystery more fully
into our presence (Marcel 1950).
All scientific disciplines tend to take certain kinds of data as objective and fundamental for their specific area. Reductionism, or the tendency to deal with the most complex phenomena by reducing them to simple abstract formulations and models, is all encompassing with its wish to provide a solid foundation for scientific knowledge. Phenomenology, basically questions as inauthentic, any single basis for understanding the world and the human being. Here the legitimacy and importance of the various scientific disciplines are not in question. However, phenomenology doubts the “total and autocratic claims that are sometimes made for them” (Lawrence & O’Connor 1967: 6). All phenomena of the natural world as well as that of human action and intentionality in the world are according to phenomenology, manifold and multi-faceted. Therefore, the first principle of any phenomenological inquiry is simply to attend to all possible phenomena within the area of investigation. This includes the rejection of any division between real and illusive phenomena. As such, phenomenology deals with whatever presents itself in relation to the investigated phenomenon, be they feelings, sensations, cognitions, imaginations, memories and so on. The phenomenological approach explores all human conditions and intentionalities in order to attain a deeper understanding of the human lifeworld. Phenomenology also intends to go beyond all theoretical and metaphysical knowledge, in order to get to the essence of phenomena associated with human life. The phenomenological epoche or reduction, makes an effort to bracket all assumptions of a phenomenon in order to preserve its manifold of appearances and experiential richness. In this sense, the meaning of the reduction is the complete opposite of reductionism. That is to say, phenomenology opens up for the diversity and uniqueness of phenomena, rather than simplifying and generalizing them. By striving toward the richest and most manifold understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, the phenomenologist hopes to approach its essence or intentional meaning. We approach the essence or the intentionality of a phenomenon by gaining “insight into meaning or structures of meaning” (ibid: 9). Such insight is not only available to phenomenologists and is not specifically related to certain psychological skills, nor to any rare or mysterious contact with hidden levels of human life. Insight into the meaning of phenomena is attainable both in natural life and within scientific research. “It is originally an activity of reflection based upon or
founded on a particular perceptual experience, though it tends to become habitual or unreflective” (ibid: 9).

Making life meaning explicit

Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards a unity if 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; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxal (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: xv).

Phenomenological reflection, the conscious stepping back that permits us to discover what Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) calls “the spontaneous surge of the lifeworld”, is meant to bring the aspects of meaning that belong to the phenomena into nearness. Like ‘sparks from a fire’ the direct and primitive contact with the world, of which Merleau-Ponty speaks, is perhaps experienced as moments of understanding of lived meaning or meaningfulness. Firstly, it is necessary to understand that in this sense nothing is simply ‘given’, as human rationality always already disposes a certain imperative in the way we perceive things e.g. logically, orderly, consistently, conceptually, clearly etc.

“Reduction, with the Latin root re-ducere, is a leading back, a withholding or a withdrawal” (Sokolowski 2000: 49). However, the discovery of the pre-reflective lifeworld by means of the reduction always transcends the lifeworld. The method of the reduction aims to bring into focus the uniqueness of the particular phenomenon, to which we are oriented. Thus the reduction, in a certain sense, is a withdrawal from the natural taken-for-granted intentionality of our concern and an entering into a restricted viewpoint to explore the phenomenon. This withdrawal however, is not a certain kind of procedure that we apply to the phenomenon that is being researched. On the contrary, reduction refers to a certain thoughtful attentiveness that the researcher tries to practice to come to an understanding of the unique meaning and significance of something. “The best formulation of the reduction is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl’s assistant, when he spoke of “‘wonder’ in the face of the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: xv). One may say that ‘wonder’ is the basis for
reduction, as out of wonder questions are born; questions that always have to do with the true meaning of things.

Wittgenstein (1982-1992) speaks of the astonishment that sometimes strikes us when we recognize that everything exists. The ‘thatness’ of the things of the world, makes us wonder and surprises us with its pure existence. Wittgenstein calls this response to the world, as well as our relationality to all that surrounds us, a “feeling that we are dependant on an alien will. In a certain sense, dependent and that on which we depend, we can call God” (Wittgenstein 1982-1992: 32). Wood (2002) goes further, and sees the astonishment that anything exists as not just any experience. It is rather one of the fundamental philosophical experiences. One might see this philosophical astonishment and wonder of the ‘thatness’ of the world, as gratefulness to God or to faith or destiny, in that there is always a wondering gratefulness to something that is outside the human being. As Wood says: “The world of the grateful man lights up in ways that the ungrateful man’s does not; think of the significance of grace at mealtimes” (ibid: 24). The point to this ethical response is the willingness to stay with the experience. “If phenomenology has an ethical dimension, it is not its alleged foundationalism or its search for essential intuition, it is this patience with experience” (ibid: 24). Dealing with phenomenology thus presupposes time and patience.

The term ‘reduction’ can be misleading since reduction is ironically a protest against reductionism, if it is understood as abstracting, codifying or shortening. The phenomenological reduction, is supposed to support a certain accomplishment of phenomenological meaning and pre-reflective experience through language and the process of writing. The intent of writing is to produce narratives that resonate and make penetrable the kind of meaning that we seem to recognise in life as we live it. Thus, textual reduction intends as far as possible to free the phenomenon from habitual intentionality. The term ‘epoche’, which is taken from Greek scepticism, and means “the refrain from judging until the evidence is clear” (Sokolowski 2000: 49), underlines the contemplative effort of putting into brackets or suspending our natural belief of the thing. This however, is not to change it to an idea or illusion, or any sort of subjective impression. Reduction or epoche, which has a similar interpretation in phenomenology, is a serious examination of all possible subjective and objective
aspects of the phenomenon, in order to come to an understanding of all the manifold appearances, in which the phenomenon shows itself. Yet, the phenomenological reduction has its limits. “The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: xv). We can never exhaust the possibilities of the world’s meanings, as every description and interpretation is iconic and is as incomplete as a copy is from its original. The meaning structures of reflective experience can never fully imitate the lived experience from which they were reduced. Nevertheless, the phenomenological reflection, which creates themes for the reduction, aims to bring about a condition of phenomenological understanding that is as much an experience of meaningfulness, as it is a form of knowledge.

The intention of reduction is to develop an attentive and sensitive reflection, which must be practiced in order for the phenomenological understanding to occur. Thus, reduction is not only a method but also a particular attitude that has to be adopted by anyone who wants to work phenomenologically.

Phenomenological methodology in particular, is challenging since it can be argued that its method of inquiry constantly has to be invented anew and cannot be reduced to a general set of strategies or research techniques. Methodologically speaking, every notion has to be examined in terms of its assumptions, even the idea of method itself (van Manen 2001: 3).

Orienting to the phenomenon

As already stated, the term ‘essence’ should not be understood as some kind of mysterious discovery of an inner core of something, but rather as a description of a phenomenon. A good description is constructed such that the structures of the lived experience are displayed in a fashion that enable us to see the nature and meaning of the experience in a new way. Orienting to a particular phenomenon has to be strong and personal, urged by a strong interest. The challenge is to choose a topic for investigation that reflects our deepest interest. Only then can the orientation to the question get the necessary impulse to keep up the interest required for a phenomenological reduction. That is to say, it is impossible to practice phenomenological method without understanding the meaning and significance of the reduction. Van Manen (2002d) seems to see both the reflective method prior to the
The reflective methods of reduction

The heuristic reduction is the most basic level of reduction that consists of the attitude or mood of profound wonder. The wonder “in the face of the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: xv), makes the ordinary strange, and shatters the taken for grantedness of our everyday reality. “Wonder is the unwilled willingness to meet what is utterly strange in what is most familiar” (van Manen 2002d). By wondering, we passively step back and let the things speak to us. The receptivity of wonder let the things of the world present themselves in their own terms to our senses. When struck by wonder, our preoccupations seem somehow to have momentarily evaporated, and our minds clear to meet the phenomenon, speechless and assumptionless. Thinking of method as *methodos*, the path or way to go, may make it less strange to accept wonder as a method. The way to knowledge and understanding begins in wonder. Facing a phenomenon with wonder, may create a situation where a question can emerge that addresses us and is addressed by us. Marcel’s suggestion of the phenomenon as profoundly mysterious (Marcel 1950), and Wittgenstein’s sense of alienation to the “thatness” of things, is basically addressing the qualities of the heuristic wonder in the researcher. Making ordinary things strange may provoke a questioning, more so than an answering at this stage of reduction. In phenomenological inquiry, the challenge of the researcher is to be receptive and awakened to this gift of wonder, and to write in such a way that the reader of the

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15 As above.

phenomenological text is similarly stirred by the same sense of wondering interest and thoughtfulness.

The hermeneutic reduction aims at bracketing all interpretations and assumptions, and reflectively explicates whatever question needs attention, in order to be open to the phenomenon of investigation. Reflecting on one’s own pre-understandings, biases and political, psychological ideological frameworks, is a search for a genuine openness to the phenomenon. The examination of one’s subjective private feelings or preferences, is an attempt to practice a critical self-awareness and yet not to arrive at some kind of pure vantage point. It is that the various dimensions of lived meaning of the selected human experience is investigated for its various layers of meaning rather than having it overlaid with a particular frame of meaning.

The phenomenological reduction is focused on the act of being concrete, bracketing all knowledge, theory or belief, and evoking nearness and lived meaning. The avoidance of abstraction and generalization includes the examination of available theories and the discussion of the body of knowledge around the topic. Seeing the phenomenon in a non-abstracting manner is not to ignore the theoretical meaning, but to look closely at these in order to extract phenomenological sensibilities. Theories however, tend to conceptualise and somehow gloss or conceal the experiential reality upon which they ultimately are based. The phenomenological reduction makes an effort to understand how the topic is actually experienced, since the lived experience is generally the hidden origin of the phenomenon.

The eidetic reduction brackets all incidentals or variable meanings, in order to discover the essence of something by exploring what are possible ‘invariations’ of the experience. The different meanings of the experience are held in tension in order to circle in the phenomenon. The uniqueness of the experience is explored by singling out what the experience is not, through the systematic comparison to other selected experiences. The eidetic reduction demands the seeing through and past the particularity of the lived experience towards the iconic universal, essence or eidos that lies on the other side of the concreteness of the lived meaning. Universal, refers to the concern of phenomenology, the ‘possible’ human experience, not to
experiences that are presumed to be universal, irrespective of time, culture, gender or other circumstances. Moreover, the phenomenological determination of meaning is always tentative, incomplete, always inclined to questions and always returning to the lived experience itself, which is the beginning and the end of the phenomenological inquiry. Eidetic reduction is “the variation of imagination” (van Manen 1997a: 122), the ‘technique’ being to compare the phenomenon with other related phenomena, and through this process to let patterns of meaning emerge. These patterns are considered themes for further investigation but do not belong to existing theories, paradigms, philosophies or conceptual frameworks. The eidetic reduction differs from concept analysis in that the reduction does not claim to linguistically clarify the boundaries of a phenomenon, nor how a concept is being used in various contexts. The reduction offers iconic images of the phenomenon in order to let the phenomenon emerge concretely in a way that is meaningful and comprehensible to us. So the eidetic reduction is not a simplification or concentration into concepts, but rather the opposite: “it makes the world appear as it precedes every cognitive construction, in its full ambiguity, irreducibility, contingency, mystery and ultimate indeterminacy” (van Manen 2002d).

The methodological reduction brackets all established methods and techniques, and seeks to invent the most appropriate ‘method’ for the particular phenomenological topic of interest. The challenge of the reduction is to make your own method a cognitive and non-cognitive investigation, which requires a flexible rationality. How should one investigate a phenomenon in order to return with enriched and deepened understanding? Inventing this customized method implies an effort of trying out different forms of writing and different ways of organizing the texts, in order to arrive at a strong phenomenological text. Paradoxically, in the phenomenological sense, a strong text is fragile and vulnerable to carelessness and unconcern. The process of creating the strong phenomenological text demands sensitive knowledge and analysis of the text of other phenomenologists to become aware of the potential effects of the text on different readers.

The ontological reduction confronts the text with the ‘self’ of the researcher, and challenges him or her as a human being. The reduction questions what recommendations for human action or social ethics one should suggest. In Heideggerian terms, phenomenology asks the question of the meaning of ‘being’. But ultimately one has to suspend ‘being’ itself in order to radicalise the question. One has to somehow transcend ‘being’ and with Levinas, suspend assumptions of moral and ethical theories, and positively search for the otherness of the other in the phenomenon.

**Writing as research**

Phenomenological complexity and the ambiguous nature of the things of the world necessitate the phenomenological writing; a certain kind of writing and rewriting of the texts, in order to relate oneself in a profoundly reflective way to the phenomenon investigated. Reflecting and writing are indissolubly related activities in phenomenology, as each of them is impossible without the other. Phenomenology “can only be communicated textually – by way of organized narrative or prose” (van Manen 1997a: 78). The reflective activity is textual labour and the textual creation is reflective effort. To do phenomenological inquiry, is to let oneself become involved in crafting reflectively qualitative texts.

In the process of practicing the phenomenological method, one has to develop the ability of being sensitive to how language speaks of the phenomena under investigation. Language describes the subjective lifeworld of which we are inhabitants, yet, often we are so accustomed to the sound of language that we barely hear what is really said. Therefore to be able to hear the subtle undertones of the language that describes the materialized world surrounding us, we have the become listeners, not only to what speaks but also to how it speaks, in order to overcome the immediate familiarity of the world. We tend to become mentally deaf and blind to the meaning of our habituated everyday world, and lose the sensitivity and thoughtful reflection that creates the questioning attitude characterizing children’s encounter with life. “[…] Nothing is so silent as that which is taken for granted or self-evident” (Van Manen 1997a: 112). Phenomenology is the attempt to re-establish the
openness towards the things of the world, and basically listen to the meaning of the language adhered to them. In language there is room for the silence of the unsaid. The phenomenological text aims for a certain linguistic effect in order to initiate the reader (and the writer) into its deeper meaning, and thus the silence of spaces is as important as that of the words. Van Manen in particular, mentions what he calls the ‘epistemological silence’, which is the kind of silence we are confronted with when we face the unspeakable (ibid: 113). In some situations in life, such as facing birth or death, we often experience a shortage of language. The failure of words in the encounter with the ‘great domain of the unspeakable’, points to levels of language that cannot easily be reached with our linguistic competence.

To phenomenology, the understanding of the world as partly beyond the direct availability of the language is a cornerstone, creating the significance of the method, and making human science as such, possible and necessary. Phenomenology sees human life experience including research, as the interrelatedness of knowing the world and of being in the world. This interrelatedness provides an attached directedness to life and helps us to more fully understand it. As such, knowing something, cannot be a purely cognitive act, rather it is a way of intentional relating to what is experienced as meaningful.

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching - questioning - theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world to become more fully a part of it, or better to become the world (van Manen 1997a: 5).

But our intentional act to attach ourselves and ‘become’ the world, is always unfulfilled and incomplete, simply because our language fails to cover what is actually experienced. Like pedagogy, phenomenology never succeeds in the attempt to fully capture the essence of life. Words and language have evasive characters that only insufficiently possess the ability to describe the complexity of human experience.

A common rhetorical device in phenomenological writing is the use of stories, often called anecdotes or portraits. The story is depicted in narrative form and is characteristic in human science as providing a certain narrative quality to the method.
Yet the phenomenological story, anecdote or portrait, have a specific story form. In phenomenology, the narrative functions as device to “making comprehensible the phenomenon in focus, into a conversational relation which every human being maintains with his or her world” (ibid: 116). Thus, the anecdote used in phenomenology is not to be understood as mere illustrations to make more easily digestible a difficult or boring text, but is a methodological device that makes comprehensible some notion that easily eludes us (ibid: 116). Empirical generalisation from anecdotes is not the aim of phenomenology, in so far as the anecdote is to be valued for something other than factual or empirical reasons. Rather, the good anecdote is like a poetic story, describing a universal truth that may have various functions in the phenomenological text. For instance, the phenomenological anecdote is a concrete counterweight to abstract thought, as it lets penetrating layers of meaning hidden in theory, shine through everyday lived experience. Moreover, the anecdote is pragmatic in that it shows the relation between practice and theory, living and thinking, and may succeed in showing us a human truth whose sensitive evasiveness escapes other forms of writing. “The paradoxical thing about anecdotal narrative is that it tells something particular while really addressing the general and universal” (ibid: 120).

In phenomenology, the practice of writing is considered the centre of the research process. Writing and reflection are indistinguishable and interdependent practices, of which the phenomenological text emerges through a kind of self-making or forming of self. Van Manen correctly claims that, “to write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one’s own depths” (ibid: 121). The constant strive in writing is to make external what is internal, allowing us to make the text our own. Yet, the effort of expressing in language is always unfulfilled and insufficient, since language also somehow simultaneously intellectualises and simplifies the manifold vividness of the original internal intention. Crucial to phenomenology is the written text, which tries to show rather than to explain something, and consequently requires a responsive reading. The attentive reader, who is prepared to read what is said in and through the words, might discover the close connection between form and content in the phenomenological text.
Phenomenology is heedful of our propensity to mistake what we say (our words) for what we talk about (the logos). Phenomenological writing is not found in the colourful words of the story-teller, nor in the fanciful phrases of the person with a flair for writing. The worlds are not the thing. And yet, it is to our words, language, that we must apply all our phenomenological skill and talents, because it is in and through the words that the shining through (the invisible) becomes visible (ibid: 130).

Meaning, is many times better expressed through how one writes than through what one writes. Phenomenological writing aims at being attentive to form as well as to content, where in fact the two are inseparable in the evocative phenomenological text.

Above all, writing phenomenology is writing and rewriting. The cultivation process of re-thinking, re-flecting and re-cognizing that characterizes this textual labour along with the phenomenological questioning and rigorous interrogation of the phenomenon, may be understood as the core of phenomenology. The dialectical going back and forth among the levels of questioning, in order to do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of the phenomenon, turns writing into a process of continuous editing, not unlike the artistic activity of creating art. Montgomery-Whicher (1998) claims that human sciences, particularly those of a phenomenological nature, have suffered from some of the same misperceptions that have plagued the visual arts. When well done, phenomenological writing, like drawing or painting, may look deceivingly easy.

The years of consistent effort, the dozens of drafts that have ended in the wastebasket or the computer trash are all invisible in the published paper. So the naïve reader may think that to do phenomenological research, one must either possess a rare and mysterious talent, or that phenomenology are not really serious activities, which anyone can learn to do with little or no preparation. What the naïve reader does not see is that phenomenological research is practice (ibid: 44).

Like artistic practices, for instance painting or poetry, phenomenology is the scrupulous attempt to grasp meaning from lived experience, by the effort of systematically bracketing all predetermined suppositions, in order to disclose and give shape to the essential structures of the phenomenon.
Seeing pedagogy phenomenologically

Due to the character of the study, it was of great importance to find a method that supported the nature and intention of the pedagogical encounter, and at the same time somehow disclosed the meaning of disability as a personal and pedagogical phenomenon. Like most qualitative researchers, I aimed at the highest possible coherence between methodology and content. When meeting the students of adapted education and their teachers, the richness of their common lifeworld amazed me. Even more, when they shared their everyday lived experiences with me I became aware of the depth of their experiences. I realized that seemingly simple stories might hold great phenomenological and pedagogical significance. From the first moment, I was struck by wonder by the ‘real’ meaning of the lived experience descriptions from the students and teachers of adapted education, and my search for an appropriate method began.

The Dutch phenomenologist Buytendijk expresses the programmatic interpretation of the phenomenological orientation as following,

"We want to understand people from the experiential reality of their world; that is, from the meaningful ground structure of that totality of situations, events, and cultural values, to which individuals orient themselves, about which they have consciousness, and to which their actions, thoughts and feelings are related. This is the world in which a person fits and which one encounters in the course of one’s personal history. This is also the world that is shaped by the person through the meanings he or she assigns to everything. A person is not merely an "object" with characteristics, but an initiative of relationships toward a world this person chooses and by which this person is chosen (Buystendijk in van den Berg & Linschoten 1953: i).

‘The experiential reality of the world’ or ‘the meaningful ground structure’ refers to the direct experience of the immediate events gained by a person from his or her personal point of view. This means that we as human beings always are attached to the world and are consciously seeking meaning of the ways in which the world shows itself to us. Our intentional consciousness attaches us to the ‘intentionalities’ of the world. This is the only way we can possibly encounter the world. This is the way we fit into the world and are able to experience it. The personal subjective perspective is thus the first and most immediate perspective of the human world."
The ways questions of interest are articulated in research often have something to do with the research method that one tends to identify with. There is a certain dialectic between the question and the method. The method usually is and should be more than a pragmatic choice, but rather it should correspond to the deeper interest that made one ask the research question in the first place. Van Manen (1991), asserts that there is a profound relation between pedagogy and phenomenology, established in their shared closeness to the lived experience and interpretation of life, and in their basic orientation to language.

Pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience (children’s realities and lifeworlds). Pedagogy requires a hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations and relations of living with children. And pedagogy requires a way with language in order to allow the research process of textual reflection to contribute to one’s pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact (ibid: 2).

Pedagogy should be tactfully practiced through phenomenological sensitivity, hermeneutic meaningful interpretation and semiotic reflection. This profound orientation to practice is an aspect that pedagogy and phenomenology have in common. Both are dependent on a concrete form of expression as a lived experience description, in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. Mollenhauer (1983) even considers the significance of the concrete, thorough description of what really happened in the pedagogical relation between student and teacher, the only possible starting point of any professional pedagogical discourse. The basic experience of situations and relations, the ‘return to the things themselves,’ excludes analytical reflection and scientific explanations as first hand procedures. The world already always is there as unreflective and pre-conscious experience, before any analytic explanations can happen. Reflecting on the short pedagogical situations below may help illustrate the significance of this attentiveness to the concrete moment in the pedagogical encounter.

A student experiences the teacher’s critical glance as he is doing the dishes in the school kitchen, and immediately senses the awkwardness of his own movements.

The teacher watches her students walk the catwalk at the school’s yearly fashion show, drawing the audience’s attention to their new laundry work clothes. All of a sudden the teacher’s eyes fill with tears of pride.
Supported by the teacher’s caring glance, a student finds the courage to go and see her classmates at the lunch break.

Worried, the teacher listens to the girl’s first experiences of living with her boyfriend. She silently wonders how the experience will affect her young student’s education and life as a whole, and endeavours to support the girl’s potential for independence and responsibility.

What these pedagogical ‘snapshots’ have in common, is that they are moments of lived experience; quickly going forth into new moments of experience. From experience we know that pedagogical practice typically consists of short moments of seeing, encountering, communicating, understanding, listening, supporting, encouraging, and worrying over those we are called to care for. Pedagogy has in common with life itself, this complex immediateness of sensing and practising. In the lifeworld of students and teachers, pedagogy is meaningful, precisely as a personal, intuitive and multiplicity interrelated ‘togetherness’, compounded of small moments, that nevertheless in a certain understanding, holds a lasting quality. (Langeveld 1975, Bollnow 1968/1989, van Manen 1991). The nature of pedagogy is the experienced relationality between adult and child or young person, the ‘togetherness,’ of which the being and becoming of humanity, is the deepest concern. With Marcel (1950), the ongoing human pedagogical presence and future ‘transformation,’ which essentially contains one of the mysteries of human life, can only be profoundly understood from within its own depths. The true meaning of pedagogy is sensible and intelligible only through the lived experience of the pedagogical encounter. Thus, pedagogy and phenomenology both point to the somewhat evasive and elusive lived experience and seek to understand its inner significance. In fact, Van Manen compares doing phenomenology to the creative work of an artist.

When a phenomenologist asks for the essence of a phenomenon – a lived experience- then the phenomenological inquiry is not unlike an artistic endeavour, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life in a linguistic description that is both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive (van Manen 1997a: 39).

Also Merleau-Ponty sees this close relation and writes that the phenomenologist and the artist “share the will to seize the meaning of the world [or of history] as that meaning comes into being” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: xxiv). Their common endeavour demands sensitive awareness, as well as attentiveness and wonder to the
mysteries of the world. Pedagogy is neither an art nor a science (van Manen 1991) but due to its practical nature, pedagogy is attuned to children and young persons’ lifeworlds, and demands a similar attentiveness and thoughtfulness to practice, as does the phenomenological endeavour. Addressing the mysteriousness of the world and being attentive to its secrets and miracles, is in a certain way a passive action. The phenomenologist brings nothing into being that is not, in a sense, already there. The attentive awareness of the phenomenologist, allows for an encounter of what is already there, not as a pre-existing truth for him or her to reflect on, but like in art, as a way to bring truth into being by making the mystery visible. The same is true for pedagogy. Pedagogy discloses the unseen and unknown potential of the being and becoming of the child. The intention of pedagogy is precisely to bring to life the indefinite nature of the child. Rousseau used the word ‘perfectibilité’, a term related to the “possibility to improve oneself and by help of the circumstances, successively develop all other [skills] and with us [the human species, which] is to be found in the species as well as the individual” (Rousseau 1993:103, my translation from Norwegian). Benner relates the human skills of learning and ‘perfectibilité’ to the idea of the undetermined nature of the human being” (Benner 1999: 320). The unfinished nature and atmosphere of incompleteness that characterizes pedagogy and phenomenology, is precisely so, because our relation to ourselves and the world, in a certain sense is and always will be, unfinished. The term ‘incompleteness’ should not be confused with an understanding of the child as an insufficient human being, or childhood as an unfinished or second-rate condition of life, like some of the representatives for the hierarchical privative view of children and childhood have claimed (Dunne 2003). In contrast to this privative, teleological view, where the successive achievement of humanhood makes being a child a condition of deficiency, the pedagogical is to be understood in its possibilities as a common human potential. Rather than a lack of skills that must accord to a set standard of what a human being should be, ‘perfectibilité’ should be understood as the mystery of human potential. In pedagogy, as in phenomenology, the mysteries of the human being and of the world

18 The Norwegian translation is: "evnen til å fullkommengjøre seg; en evne som med omstendighetenes hjelp, suksessivt utvikler alle andre [evner] og som hos oss finnes både i arten og individet” (Rousseau 1993:103).

19 The human beings’ ambivalent and altogether undetermined skills as Rousseau describes as the principle of the human ‘perfectibilité’ is by Benner conducted to the German ‘Bildungstheoretische’ tradition corresponding to the term ‘Bildsamkeit’. A consequence of the understanding of the undetermined nature and the gradual shaping of the human being by the support of own and other involvement in the pedagogical process, is the decisiveness of the pedagogical relation.
as such, may be brought into visible existence by attentively listening to how the phenomena speak, rather than by the scientific attempts to control or conceive them into completeness.

Pedagogy, like phenomenology, intends to understand human beings and their lifeworlds, from the starting point of the concrete lived experience of situations and relations. The situations of life are already there, in pedagogy and in phenomenology, before we are aware of them and can consciously reflect on them. The pre-reflective and pre-conceptual immediacy of pedagogical situations is precisely what van Manen (1997a) means when he asserts that pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience. These are situations in life that we cannot simply meet with a distanced interest, as if they were merely objects of research. As humans we already are closely involved with them with our whole being. The common lifeworld, with which we all are involved and interdependently entangled, is the field of phenomenology. Yet, hermeneutic phenomenology is also a philosophy of action and is especially so in regards to pedagogy. As van Manen asserts, phenomenology is a critical philosophy of action, not merely a descriptive or interpretive methodology.

Human science is concerned with action in that hermeneutic phenomenological reflection deepens thought and therefore radicalises thinking and the acting that flows from it. All serious and original thinking is ultimately revolutionary – revolutionary in a broader than political sense (ibid: 154).

What phenomenology offers pedagogical practice and the pedagogue is a certain knowledge of the uniqueness of the child in the pedagogical situatedness that provides the possibility for a more sensitive pedagogical action. This particular sensitivity of action, this attentive practice of being with children and young persons in life and education, van Manen (1991,1997a, 2002a) calls “pedagogical thoughtfulness” or “pedagogical tact”.

**Doing phenomenology**

“Phenomenology is accessible only through the phenomenological method”, Merleau-Ponty writes in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2002: viii). Then his entire text thoroughly illustrates the effort of the phenomenological method in
describing a phenomenon, rather than explaining or analysing it. The starting point of the phenomenological method is strictly practical and related to the world we already think we know thoroughly. To practice phenomenology is to attentively see the phenomena of the world as they present themselves to our consciousness, and reflectively contemplate their meaning by thoroughly writing and rewriting in order to let the phenomenon speak for itself. According to Merleau-Ponty, this practice means, “the real has to be described, not constructed or formed. Which means that I cannot put perception into the same category as the synthesis represented by judgements, acts or predications” (ibid: xi). To know the world we live in as human beings, we need to perceive the world in a certain way. We know the world from our experience of what it is like to be human beings and thus the act of researching certain phenomena is a way of getting closer to the world as it is. The phenomenological method profoundly questions the way we experience the world and investigates its very intentionality, in order to come closer to what it means to be human. In a sense, doing phenomenology makes the world more human, as it attempts to learn the meaningful secrets and intimacies of the human experience. Phenomenology as such, is the attempt to make explicit the possible immanent meaning of a phenomenon. Describing a phenomenon phenomenologically, in this case, the phenomenon of ‘seeing disability pedagogically’, by the practice of observing it from the outside in order to see it in its context, would be meaningful, but phenomenologically insufficient. The phenomenological approach demands that the phenomenon be described from the inside, from the lived experience. Yet, what does it mean to describe a phenomenon from the inside of its own depths? And by which efforts should the goal of the phenomenological method be realized?

Facing my deepest pedagogical interest as educator and researcher, the question of how ‘seeing disability possibly enables/disables pedagogical seeing’, I actively oriented my attention to qualitative methods that might help me to understand the lived experience of disability in pedagogy. Over time, I became even more conscious of the profound impact the experience of learning and/or physical disability necessarily had to make to the experience of ‘self’. Arriving at this conclusion, I realized the impossibility of coming to an understanding of my pedagogical interest via methods primarily concerned with the factuality of human meaning and experience. My concern was more complex than these methods allowed for. I was
interested in what it was like for teachers to see disability as well for the students to be seen as disabled student in the context of the pedagogical encounter. I was not interested in psychological theories of self and selfhood or in why students eventually experienced school life in a certain way. Nor was I concerned about sociological theories of empowerment, inclusion or politically correct attitudes or in learning theories or pedagogical methods in special education. My focus was the embodied, partly unspeakable experience of being together as disabled student and teacher in the pedagogical encounter. The entire European tradition of pedagogy has written innumerable books, dissertations and articles on the pedagogical encounter. Yet, few, very few are oriented to what might be the significance of learning disability to the pedagogical encounter between student and teacher. My interest was to search the very core of pedagogy in an attempt to challenge the ethical and pedagogical qualities of the pedagogical encounter, by confronting it with disability. I wanted to explore how disability might be seen pedagogically, and seriously searched for an appropriate method.

The route of this inquiry formed as six practices

First practice: Preparing the study

Proposal
Writing the proposal is not the first step of a study. Yet, we tend to believe it is. In fact, the steps carried out in a study are not at all as orderly as we might think. The background necessary to write my proposal, as well as the impetus to apply for internal and external funding and the acceptance to a doctoral program at the university, came from my lasting interest for and knowledge of learning disabled students in pedagogical settings. First, as a social worker and pedagogical consultant, and later as a teacher at both high school and University College, I experienced first hand, the significant challenge of bringing up, caring for and teaching children and young persons with learning disability. I also came to know other pedagogues’ experiences and concerns. Seeing pedagogy first of all as a relational ‘togetherness’ between child and adult, student and teacher, I was intrigued by how this encounter could be described and interpreted in a deeper and more
systematic way. I have always been particularly aware of the ethical responsibility of being a teacher and even more so when the pedagogical relation between teacher and student is extensively and lastingly asymmetrical as it is with disabled students. Thus, the initial ideas for a doctoral proposal were conceived long before the writing started. In fact, writing the proposal was for me, the preliminary reflective process of gathering and strengthening some of the basic concerns of my personal and pedagogical life. The proposal that was accepted at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen in fall 1999, led to a four-year research scholarship from the University College of Bergen, and has meant several amendments during the research process. Most qualitative proposals, at least when they are written very early in the research process, as mine was, undergo considerable changes when facing the real challenges of the research practice. Yet, in the case of my proposal, the temporary aspect of the term ‘propose’ has been particularly illustrative, in that the original draft has changed substantially in three areas. First, the methodological design has been altered from ‘fieldwork, analyzed hermeneutically on the basis of phenomenological sources’, to ‘a hermeneutical –phenomenological approach including interview and participatory observation’. Second, as a consequence of acceding to hermeneutical phenomenology, the research question has been phenomenologically strengthened and focused\(^{20}\). Third, the language of the dissertation was changed from Norwegian to English. The change of method and language is directly related to my stay at University of Alberta in the academic year 2002/2003, where my purpose was to learn hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry and writing from professor Max van Manen\(^{21}\). The yearly ‘report of advance’ to the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, for 2003 document the changes described above.

‘REK’ and ‘NSD’
Regional Etisk Komite, REK, is the regional committee that reviews the ethical aspects of a research project. This project was accepted by the ‘Regional Komite for Medisinsk Forskning’ Helseregion II, University of Bergen, Faculty of Medicine, January 27, 2000\(^{22}\).

\(^{20}\) The process of focusing the research question is described in Fifth Practice: Turning to the lived experience.
\(^{21}\) The stay at University of Alberta, Canada is accounted for in Third Practice: Getting into scruples.
\(^{22}\) Appendix 1.
From the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, NSD, there was a concession to the establishment of a register of persons according to the frame concession for the University College of Bergen, November 02.1999.\(^\text{23}\)

**Project Finance**

On the basis of the application and proposal, the dissertation project was provided a four-year funding from October 1\(^{st}\) 1999 to October 1\(^{st}\) 2003. The contract agreed on 75 % research and 25 % teaching at the University of Bergen/ the University College of Bergen during this four-year period.

**The doctoral study programme**

On basis of application and proposal, I was accepted as a doctoral student attending the doctoral study programme at the Faculty of Psychology University of Bergen, fall 1999.

**Second practice: The data collection**

**Selecting the schools of the inquiry**

The criteria for selecting schools were worked out previously to the selection process\(^\text{24}\). In Bergen and the surrounding area there were fifteen secondary high schools that had students that were accepted on ‘separate basis’ (elever tatt inn på særskilt grunnlag) at the start of the inquiry. At all schools, students with various kinds of disability had their education in ordinary large classes, yet, my focus of the pedagogical encounter made the students and teachers in separated groups (at adapted education) more appropriate.\(^\text{25}\) Among the fifteen, there were seven schools that had different groups of students with learning disability and in addition an amount of students were allowed for at each school. To select the schools for the inquiry, two schools were picked from a hat from among the seven possible schools.

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\(^{23}\) Appendix 2.

\(^{24}\) Appendix 3.

\(^{25}\) See appendix 3.
Contacting the schools.
For a researcher to obtain access to schools, the headmaster together with the employee representative, had to give their permission. After having chosen two appropriate schools, I sent an application to the headmasters of the two schools asking them to inform the employee representative and inform the relevant teachers / teacher groups, of their potential participation. The request included a substantial description of the study in general, the inquiry in particular, method, and methodological/ethical implications for the informants.\textsuperscript{26} The two schools that were contacted both responded positively to the application and thus became the two high schools chosen for the inquiry.

Meeting the teachers - getting teacher participants
The headmasters of the two schools forwarded my request to the teachers by distributing my written information in regards to the project, putting the letter on the bulletin board of the teachers lunch room and finally arranging for a meeting between all the interested teachers and myself. This meeting was held at each of the schools as part of the regular staff meetings. I was given one hour to inform the teachers of my project; the intention and the planned accomplishment of the inquiry (collecting of data), methods of data collecting, what would be expected from the participants and the criteria I wanted my teacher participants to fill.\textsuperscript{27} After my presentation some of the teachers had questions in regards to the project. For instance they wanted to know if the project was authorized by NSD and REK, which I could confirm. The meeting at the first school concluded with four teachers, three women and one man, signing up as participants in the project. At the second school, three teachers, two women and one man, agreed to participate.

Access to the classes
With four teachers belonging to three different classes at the first school, and three teachers of one class at the second, the teacher response was beyond expectation. The possibility of getting access to classes and students was through their teachers,

\footnote{26}{Appendix 4.}
\footnote{27}{Appendix 5.}
yet every class was given the opportunity to refuse my presence as a researcher. After having informed the classes the first day, I asked them if they had any objections to letting me as a researcher follow the classes and their teachers. As some of the students might need more time to understand the significance of having an unfamiliar person in the class, I was in the class for a trial period of one week. According to an agreement with the teachers, any negative or dubious answers or attitudes from the students in response to my presence during this first week would mean that I dropped this class. In one class, one of the students was explicitly reserved toward me. I decided to back off, when the form master of the class told me that she wanted me to give the student a little more time, as she had in the past been quite sceptical of newcomers. I followed her advice and the student eventually accepted me. Yet, I chose not to ask this student to be one of the participants. As their reading skills varied considerably, the students were given thorough oral information and the opportunity to ask questions as well as have the information repeated in different words and so on. In addition, all of them got a written information sheet. They also received a sheet of information to take home to their parents /guardians. The get-to-know process in the class was quite long so as to support the students' understanding of why I was there, what I was looking for, how they could help me and so on. In fact, I spent at least two weeks in each class before I asked any of the students to be one of the participants.

In short, I had four classes, which included seven teachers and I hoped for six students all together as my informants. During one year of data collection, I planned to spend as much time as possible in these classes and in particular with the thirteen participants. I started out in one class at the time and took into account the time the students of each class required for reconciling themselves to the meaning of being part of an inquiry. The first and last class needed the most time, while the second and third easily got the idea of why I was there and how they could help me and so on. Therefore after two weeks in class 2, I decided to start in class 3 as well, due to practical arrangements for travel as well as to have the time needed to transcribe the interviews closely after they were done.

28 Appendix 6
29 Appendix 7
Getting to know the students and requesting participants
The students in the four classes were between the ages of 16 and 21 with a mix of boys and girls. My hope was to get six student participants. Because of the practical issues around doing the interviews, I wanted two student participants in class 1, one in class 2 and 3, and two in class 4. The process of informing the students sufficiently to allow them to sign the informed consent was individually organized.30 There was a need for extended consideration in regards to how the individual student participants would best be able to grasp the meaning of the research project, the meaning of being interviewed and observed, the possibility to reject and drop out at any time during the process inquiry, as well as their right to refuse questions and situations related to the research. Thus, to gain good representation of student participants, included the meticulous effort of requesting students of both genders, with various attitudes to school, various interests, personalities and feelings towards the research project and then to support them in the process of understanding what this was all about. The paper, ‘Processual consent – one way to a valid consent’31, was an attempt to try to describe and evaluate the process of informed consent with the six students who suffered various degrees of learning disability. The student informants that were invited all agreed. Those who were 18 year or older, this being three students, signed the informed consent32 while their parents/ guardians were informed of their participation. Those students who were under age, this being three students, brought the signed consents from their parents. The student participants were two boys and four girls. Out of consideration for their anonymity, each student, as well as each teacher’s contribution in the dissertation will be introduced under several different names. Otherwise the characteristics of each person might become recognizable, especially in a small city were people know each other. This aspect will be accounted for under the Fourth Practice: Ethical foci.

Personal life story interviews
In hermeneutical phenomenology, the interview serves two particular purposes. First it is used to explore and gather experiential narrative material to develop a stronger and deeper understanding of the human phenomenon under investigation. Second,

30 Appendix 8
31 This paper was presented at the Nordic Network of Disability Research NNDR in Malmö, Sweden in September 2000. It is further referred to as Sævi 2000 in the text and the reference list.
32 Appendix 9.
the interview might be used to build up a conversational relationship with the informant (Van Manen 1997a). There were two to four interviews with the teacher informants and two or three interviews with the student informants. The interviews take the shape of conversations and are focused on the informants lived experience descriptions (LED).

To realize both of the purposes of the interviews, the fundamental research question had to be held on to. Van Manen (1997a) warns against letting method rule the interview and says, “one needs to guard against the temptation to let method rule the question, rather than the research question determining what kind of method is most appropriate for its immanent direction” (ibid: 66). To keep the focus on the participants’ lived experiences of the particular phenomenon that prompted the research, was difficult especially early on in the interview process. I found that getting to know the participants in the atmosphere of the everyday life of the class was a good starting point. The basis of the interviews thus became the concrete pedagogical situations of everyday experience, situations where the student and the teacher somehow encountered each other during their daily school routines. Relevant episodes varied depending on which class the student or teacher belonged to. Some of the student/teacher episodes related to ordinary school subjects such as writing, calculating and physical education and were quite frequent, while for others, the relevant episodes were preparing food, doing the dishes, practicing at the library, doing computer work, folding towels or cleaning a dryer, to only mention a few. For all of them, there were innumerable informal situations of student/teacher encounters, like lunch breaks, school events, field trips and the small moments in between all the intentional school activities. All these situations and others were the subjects of the lived experience descriptions of the participants. Being together with the students and teachers, sharing their experiences and witnessing their daily lives in class, I also often had to focus our conversations around the episodes that I considered important to my study. By doing this I had the opportunity to know the experience of the same event, from the student, as well as from the teacher’s perspective.

Yet, the difficulty in phenomenology is getting participants to tell a concrete and vividly experienced story, rather than simply telling about the episode. The first category is good material for phenomenological analyses when it relates to a single
concrete incident, includes concrete details and quotes, and has a point that the teller stresses. Telling *about* an incident, as is often the case in interviews, may be interesting as expressions of opinions but hard to analyse in terms of pre-reflective or hidden meaning, as is always the focus in phenomenology. Van Manen (1997a) describes what might be the result of interviews that miss a strong experiential focus.

Interview material that is skimpy and lacks sufficient concreteness in the form of stories, anecdotes, examples of experiences, etc., may be quite useless, tempting the researcher to indulge in over-interpretations, speculations, or an over-reliance on personal opinions and personal experience (ibid: 67).

For the participants to provide good experiential stories, the researcher should help them focus on a particular incident and go into this incident, retrospectively re-creating the situation as detailed and vividly as possible. The most frequent questions in a phenomenological interview then are, “what was that experience like?” “Could you describe this experience?”

The personal life story interviews of my inquiry were all taped. This practice served several purposes. First, taping the interviews allowed me as a researcher to stay close to the experiences during the conversation, asking concrete questions to bring forth the experience as vividly as possible. Second, the different levels of writing skills of most of the student participants, made talking easier than writing. This leads me to the third purpose, the fact that when talking of a personal experience it is easier to stay close to experience as lived, in contrast to written material that tends to be more reflective (van Manen 1997a). Fourth, taping the interviews was a proper method to organize the extensive material before transcribing it and selecting the best and most useful experiential anecdotes.

Prior to the inquiry, an interview guide was written for approval by REK and NDS. Although, as a device for the personal life story interviews, this guide was not useful as it was much too complex and lacked the strong focus on the phenomenon of investigation. The interview guide was replaced by flexible day-to-day journal writing, where concrete incidents with lived experience potential were written down as preparation for the upcoming interviews. The incidents were individually relevant and resulted in a personal approach to the lived experience situations of each interviewed person. My interest in gaining concrete descriptions of every day pedagogical
encounters helped me as I gradually gained competence in sticking to a good
description, helping the informant develop his or her own description by asking
questions and getting details. In fact, my guiding rule became to help the participant
go into his or her story until I literally was able to sense the lived genuineness of the
experience. It might be useful to look at examples of interview texts of lived
experience quality therefore I have attached two typical texts from the raw material,
one from a student and one from a teacher.33

Close observation and log writing
The research design demands equally close observation and personal life story
interviews, in order to strengthen the quality of the experiential material of the study.
To get to know the participants, it is not necessarily sufficient to simply talk with them.
The human being has various ways of speaking and the most expressive of them
may not always be oral language. Thus, understanding how students and teachers
speak to each other through various modes is a main interest of the study. The
pedagogical encounter, the ‘togetherness’ of teacher and student framed by the
pedagogical situation, is manifold and complex, so seeing it from different angles
fortifies the variations of understandings. Thus, the work of collecting data includes
being attentive to relational situations and pedagogical encounters of any kind, which
might somehow illuminate the significance of disability to the pedagogical practice.
Doing this, I did not follow a particular recipe for observation. In fact, what I practiced
was what van Manen (1997a) calls ‘close’ observation, which in a way might be
considered a variation of participant observation.

Close observation involves an attitude of assuming a relation that is as close
as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to situations that allows
us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations. It is
similar to the attitude of the author who is always on the look-out for stories
to tell, incidents to remember. The method of close observation requires that
one be a participant and an observer at the same time, that one maintain a
certain orientation of reflectivity while guarding against the more
manipulative and artificial attitude that a reflective attitude tends to insert in a
social situation and relation (ibid: 69).

33 Appendix 10 and 11.
What I was gathering when being a close observer were anecdotes or lived experience descriptions. My attention and efforts were directed toward reflectively seeing and writing down incidents, comments, conversations, even aspects of climate and atmosphere that in some way or another puzzled or surprised me. This method of seemingly incidental noticing and writing down may not be the most common in research, but when it comes to phenomenology it works well. What you get when you write down the things and episodes that make you wonder is the experientially interesting and often unseen and unreflected aspects of the pedagogical practice. In fact, the close observation material documented in the log was used in three ways. First, as the basis for the interviews, second as contributing material to the lived experience descriptions from the interviews, and finally as the observational data which included useful anecdotal material in itself.

**Third Practice: Getting into scruples**

**The Search for a method**

My investigation can be divided into two different periods of time. The time before, and the time after which, I truly realized the significant applicability of the hermeneutical phenomenological method to the meaning of disability in the pedagogical encounter. The prepared and partly accomplished, yet rather diffuse ethnological field investigation, with which I had started out, at a certain point appeared to me to be not quite right, even though there was a strong element of hermeneutics in the planned analysis of the material as well as a dash of phenomenological methodological considerations beyond the supporting idea. It was an episode that took place in one of the classes shortly into the inquiry that all of a sudden convinced me of the significant shortcoming of my methodological strategy. I was not immediately able to see what exactly was missing, but confusion and uncertainty made me see that something was not yet there as it should be. The brief glimpse that brought forth the as yet vague recognition of ‘something’ missing, was the following episode between Niklas and his teacher. Niklas thought he was going to play computer games in the last class.

“Let’s take a walk in the nice weather,” the teacher says, introducing the last class. Everybody, except Niklas, seems happy with an easy ending of the day,
and welcomes the suggestion warmly. Niklas however, stubbornly glues himself to the chair and places his elbows on the desk in front of him. “I don’t want to go anywhere. You promised me to play computer games this last class.” “Well, now we go out instead,” the teacher replies, “and you better come with us without any further discussion, or you will not have your Coke at lunch tomorrow.” Niklas grumbles silently. The Coke at lunch on Wednesdays is the climax of the week for him.

Witnessing this experience totally floored me. I made an attempt to write it down as I had attended it, but I could not find the right words. Sitting at the bus stop that afternoon on my way home, I gave the event the shape of a poem. The poetic language felt closer to an appropriate form than the social-realistic narrative. Yet, I worried about how I was supposed to imply a poetic approach to the data material. Moreover, I questioned why I felt that the poetic form was right and not the descriptive ‘scientific’ observation? What was this impression that somehow overpowered me? This teacher seemed to determine the value of her student in a pedagogical situation where respect, obligation and dignity, were suspended. A promise was broken and replaced by a powerful menace that degraded the young student and kept him silent.

Eventually, I came to an understanding of this event. Somehow it demonstrated the deep human challenge that may be the core of pedagogy, the experience that pedagogy should thoughtfully protect human dignity and never ever expose the students’ vulnerability and defencelessness. Subsequently, I was reminded of a panoply of similar episodes, displaying the deep meaning of pedagogy as a personal, moral, asymmetric and responsible togetherness between persons, in the original meaning of the term ‘person’. However, these reflections provided me with troublesome questions of how to find a method that somehow had the capacity of going beyond the obvious critic-worthy event, and transcend the flat reproving words one may be tempted to direct at teachers who are not acting appropriately toward students. Moreover, how was one supposed to penetrate the huge, high-flown concepts pasted on as ideal descriptions of the pedagogical encounter and its human qualities, such as dignity, respect or responsibility? How could the deeper significance of seemingly insignificant everyday pedagogical situations become visible linguistically, in a way that made us see ‘pathically’ how pedagogy is
experienced by students and teachers? I realized now that it was not sufficient to tell about such events of pedagogical ‘(un) togetherness’ from a distant perspective, and interpreting them within the critical realistic frame of traditional qualitative methods. I wondered then how a researcher might possibly reach the ‘core of the experience’, and somehow approach an understanding from the starting point of the present ‘now’ of the pedagogical encounter. I did not have the slightest idea of how to go about resolving these difficult questions. What I did do however, was to search through my memory, my research journal and the few interview tapes to give it all a renewed look, scrutinizing all available sources for anecdotal or rudimentary anecdotal material that somehow might contain traces of ontological and existential experiences.

Gradually I came to a deeper understanding of my project through these new methodological insights. Still, the understanding did simultaneously possess a quality of somehow hiding its real significance. I didn’t know then that this sensed evasiveness, the experience of thinking you have grasped something important, just as it quickly slips away, is a main characteristic of phenomenological insight. In a sense, it was like the moment a flower opens up, changing from bud to flower, that my insight developed from touching on the surface of pedagogy to realizing there were things to understand beneath a so-called realistic, situational pedagogy. Yet, between these moments of insight, I found myself in the dark, only seeing glimpses of what might be there, underneath. I was reminded of Heidegger’s distinction between the two notions of ‘truth’: veritas and aletheia. Veritas, the Roman term for truth is based on the idea of correspondence between truth and evidence, and clearly distinguishing true from false. In contrast, the ancient Greek term aletheia means disclosure, unconcealment, withdrawal and openness. Aletheia, the truth, in Greek literally meaning “unconcealedness” (Heidegger 1982/1998: 11), reveals its presence to us as something that simultaneously withdraws itself. Due to the nature of aletheia, there is interplay between what hides and what shows. Here we are reminded that the more we understand things, the more things seem to hide themselves. In this sense then, aletheia, or the truth as a disclosure, is not just something opening up, so that we can see it, like the contents of a box. In Heidegger’s words,
Disclosure or disconcealment does not mean the mere removal and elimination of concealment. We must think dis-closure exactly the way we think of dis-charging (igniting) or dis-playing (unfolding). Discharging means to release the charge; displaying means to let play out the folds of the manifold of their multiplicity (ibid: 133).

I sensed then, and later realized that phenomenology was exactly this kind of experience; always only showing glimpses of moments, not claiming correspondence and certainty, but rather accepting that the human world can only ever be seen partially.

The search for an appropriate method with the help of my own intuition, as much as with methodological knowledge, guided me to a closer investigation of hermeneutics and phenomenology. Although, I felt I wanted to use these ideas, I did not know exactly how to do any of them. So far they remained simply philosophical theories to me, not yet methods, to which I could apply the vulnerable and heterogeneous stories of the disabled students and their teachers. I finally decided to explore three versions of hermeneutics and phenomenology, in order to make a scientifically valid choice of method. The selected methods I investigated, were the hermeneutic method developed by Anders Gustavsson\textsuperscript{34}, based on the psychological hermeneutic model of Arne Trankell, the phenomenological method described by Amedeo Giorgi\textsuperscript{35} in his text ‘Sketch of a Psychological Phenomenological Method’, interpreted in the doctoral work of Eva Gjengedal,\textsuperscript{36} and finally the hermeneutic phenomenological method presented by Max van Manen in his book \textit{Researching Lived Experience}\textsuperscript{37}.

Additionally, I read all I could find on qualitative methodologies and volumes of overviews of qualitative research in order to be sure that I made the right choice.

\textbf{Selecting a method}

Subsequently, I closely inhabited the worlds of hermeneutic and phenomenological methodologies. The wonder that had crept into my consciousness by the intuitive sensation of something missing from the particular experience with Niklas and his teacher, for a time continued to somehow hide itself. Evasively, it escaped my grasp.

\textsuperscript{34} Tolkning och tolkningsteori 1 & 2. Stockholm: Pedagogiska Institutionen, Stockholms Universitet. 2000.
\textsuperscript{36} Understanding a world of Critical Illness. Institutt for sykepleievitenskap. Universitetet i Bergen. 2001.
time and again. I experientially sensed the difference between non-conceptual wondering and reaching the clarity of being able to set a question and I grasped the meaning of what Wittgenstein meant about true wonder not yet being a question. Looking back, I realize that what I had touched in myself, even if this became a “pure methodological issue,” was an event that to me preceded consciousness. The experience of not being capable of describing the episode between Niklas and his teacher in plain scientific words, but rather being forced into a kind of artistic language, to somehow grasp its meaning before it was actually thought, was even harder to comprehend, than the meaning of the pedagogical situation as itself. I had tried to capture an image that to me was not yet a form of knowledge in the usual sense. I simply sensed there was something else, there was another possibility that I could not quite see. I asked whether or not I was touching some kind of otherness, the alienated other or true other? Could pedagogical situations sometimes create wonder of what is truly other? Or events, where the ‘real’ is not yet made into the ‘same’? (Levinas 1987). I wondered moreover, if there was a methodology that possessed such a profound openness to the world of pre-questions and pre-comprehension while simultaneously providing a pragmatic method to investigate this particular world that initially had started in speechless wonder?

With this type of questioning, and the close examination of these three closely tied methods, I eventually reached methodological clarification. Not merely did I read the above-mentioned texts thoroughly, attempting to understand their conceptual structures and evaluating their qualities with regards to scientific criteria, ethical considerations and pragmatic usefulness for my intent but I also undertook analyses and interpretation of the analyses, in order to test the fitness of each method directly to my material. In fact, I acquired three methods in order to possibly find the one I was searching for. The investigation resulted in the choice of Max van Manen’s hermeneutical phenomenological methodology, interpreted in the frame of European Human Sciences and extensively described and discussed in his book: Researching Lived Experience. Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy (1997a). Later I should get to know the phenomenological pedagogue behind the text that addressed me so strongly, and become one of the students he carefully supervised towards a deeper sensitivity of life and writing, while I reflectively read the whole of his literary work.
Meeting phenomenology ‘in person’

In October 2001, I attended the Doctoral Workshop called ‘Hermeneutical Phenomenological Inquiry and Writing’ at Lunds University in Sweden, and had the opportunity of meeting professor Max van Manen, who was giving this week long course. Having arranged for a personal encounter with him beforehand by e-mail, I had brought some of my dissertation material, as well as a published text I had written in English for him to read. Subsequent to the workshop in Lund, van Manen invited me to the University of Alberta as a visiting scholar, to attend the yearlong doctoral course in phenomenological writing, given at this university, and to receive weekly supervision from him on my dissertation work. In short, the academic year 2002/2003 my 14-year-old son and I spent in Edmonton, he in a Canadian junior high school and I learning phenomenological inquiry and writing at the University of Alberta.

Fourth Practice: Ethical foci

Research responsibility

Scientific responsibility is the ethical category of scientific action and consideration, which demands that actions be moral in order to maintain ethical standards. In so far as science concerns the human being and the human lifeworld, which it always does in some way or another, the question of responsibility is relevant to science. Yet, a science cannot be responsible, only human beings can be that. Danner (1986) asserts that human science researchers are responsible in at least three different ways in relation to this term. First, the researcher is responsible for doing a competent job by sincerely giving his or her individual moral reasoning and conscience the authority in research. Second, the researcher has to see that human behaviour and actions in research include and express meaning, and that the approaches he or she uses are adequate and meaningful to the persons concerned. At this level, the reason for and consciousness of the applied methodology comes into focus so that the human dignity of the persons concerned is highlighted by what it means to be human in this particular context, must all carefully be accounted for. Finally, the researcher’s responsibility is existential in that it encompasses personal decisions and actions for the persons concerned, including the researcher him or
herself. Existential responsibility knows that the person is always prior to the researcher’s knowledge of him or her. “I am responsible for him or her before I can assume responsibility; I am caught in my being responsible,” Danner says with Levinas (ibid: 5).

When considered phenomenologically, all human action including science, is founded in the lifeworld. The space of this particular inquiry, the classrooms of adapted education, is the significant area of the lifeworld for the students and teachers inhabiting them. Due to the moral and normative character of the lifeworld in general and the pedagogical practice in particular, the inquiry as a whole is the object of a responsible ethical research practice. While this is true, there still remain some ethical concerns, which stand out and therefore need to be addressed. In this inquiry, there are four such matters that I draw the reader’s attention to.

**Processual consent**
Considerations concerning the process of consent of the students are documented in an early text, presented as a paper at the Nordic Network of Disability Research NNDR in 2000. The quality of the English translation of the text is not good and I do not feel comfortable with the idea of letting this text become a part of the dissertation simply because of its poor quality as well as its length. Still, the text is reflective and reliable for the period when it was written, and authentic to the questions concerning how to make consent as valid as possible to students unable directly and cognitively to understand the meaning of the various aspects of such consent. Rather, their decision-making was a relational process for example including the students discussing the information they got with significant others and with the researcher, in an ongoing process toward self-determination of consent. The text, called ‘Processual consent – one way to a valid consent’ (Sævi 2000), was written on the basis of reflections on experience, and is theoretically mainly related to Norwegian consent literature. Still, reading international literature on consent and learning disability in research, confirms the relevance of the reflections developed in the preliminary research text mentioned above. Thus, the next passage will describe in short the main perspectives taken in relation to consent as an ethical dilemma in my text as well as in the current research.
It is commonly agreed that consent can only be considered valid when four conditions are met. First it requires that the researcher fully discloses any information that would somehow influence the participants' decision-making. Second, that the participants understand the information presented, and third that they make a voluntary decision to participate. Finally, that the participants are competent to make the decision (Faden and Beauchamp 1986). In a recent article in *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* (2004/32), the capacity to consent in research, concerning persons with supposed limited cognitive ability, is discussed (Dye et al 2004). Their basic critique to the current concept of consent, which also is the essential starting point of my text, is that the concept upholds and emphasizes the dichotomous categorization that an individual either has or does not have the capacity of consent (ibid: 145). In my text, I stress the tendency in literature to group persons (e.g. young persons) according to competence and vulnerability. Those who are vulnerable or belong to a group considered vulnerable, are not competent to consent and are thus excluded as ‘in valid’ decision makers, in contrast to groups that are considered competent and whose vulnerability is usually not questioned at all (Sævi 2000: 4).

Therefore, without cognitive and communicative adjustment to the consent process, persons with intellectual disability typically are expected to prove their capacity to consent merely based on rational decision-making. Yet, as Dye et al. (2004) assert, “Members of the general population, however, are rarely asked to prove their capacity to consent and are presumed to be competent” (ibid: 146). Research demonstrates that persons with learning disabilities have a limited capacity of consent, when obtaining consent as a one-time event as well as in an ongoing process, if all aspects of the consent are regarded as equal (Dye et al.2004). Yet, if one considers some aspects, such as “understanding that the participation in research is voluntary, [as] more important than others, for example understanding the exact protocol details” (ibid: 146), within the frame of a participatory research, and regarding the informants as co-researchers, the person with a cognitive disability might “precede the development of comprehensive understanding of a given research process” (ibid: 146). In fact, the students’ process of progressively understanding the inquiry in focus, was the main concern of my text. For this reason, I thoroughly describe the entire process that the students and I went through, in order
to support the students’ understanding into the meaning and significance of being a research participant (Sævi 2000).

The tendency of researchers to inform too much, to use a too complicated written and oral language and to allow the participants too little time to read/understand the content of the consent, is described in the recent literature on consent (Hines, Badzek & Moss 1997, Hochhauser 1999). For example, concerning chronically ill elderly persons, Hines et al. refer to “results [that] suggest that obtaining fully informed consent [...] requires both a modification of doctors’ communication practices and greater adaptation to the cognitive capacity, education, and communication practices of the patient” (1997: 151). These studies support the need of a personal adaptation and modification of the main aspects of consent, in particular the aspects of voluntary and autonomous participation and the potential risks involved. Hochhauser even (1999) suggests the practice of writing personalized consent forms for ordinary patients and research participants, in order to support their voluntary decision-making. Re-writing consent forms as well as presenting the content of the form in person, may turn informed consent into more than a rite (ibid: 17).

Dye et al. (2004) conclude by sketching a recontextualization of capacity to consent, by introducing an alternative to the dichotomous categorization as to the matrix of decision making in consent. Their point is that an “assessment of capacity is of limited value in and of itself in minimizing a person’s vulnerability when participating in research” (ibid: 149). They recommend that the judgment of capacity should rather be evaluated in the context of risk and benefits to the participant, and that the entire process of decision-making should be assessed competent, rather than the individual. The method of supported, processual decision-making, avoiding the one-sided rationalization of consent, including consultation of significant others, providing the needed time to digest the research particulars and finally the responsibility of the researcher to accompany the intellectually disabled students in this process, is described in my approach of assessing a consent as valid in as much as this is possible. The conceptualisation of the method provided, what I have called ‘processual consent’, is developed during the first part of my inquiry and introduced in
my description of the methodical approach to consensual decision-making (Sævi 2000).

**Anonymity and confidentiality**

A significant part of the consent agreement between the participants and myself, was that the data would be presented and published in a way that preserved their anonymity and confidentiality. The endeavours in research to properly take charge of the participants’ integrity and personal interests are claimed in formal research guidelines, and put into action by the morally practiced consideration and respect of the individual researcher. This inquiry has been thorough in its effort to comply with the general research ethics on anonymity and confidentiality, as well as being in line with the ethical guidelines of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). One part of these guidelines was to individually code the interviews and other collected information on the computer for each of the participants. At the end of the project, the data material was anonymized and the list with the participants’ names was obliterated.

Sometimes the demands of confidentiality may be difficult to accomplish, as one might have to weight these against the wish or need to present detailed information and truthful descriptions. For this inquiry however, questions of anonymity and confidentiality are closely related to the very phenomenological character of the data collecting, in at least three ways. The aspects I will address are connected to the process of borrowing, honing and in this study also translating, the lived experience material. Van Manen describes the focus of phenomenological data collecting like this,

> In phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience. The point of phenomenological research is to borrow other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience (1997a: 62).

Phenomenologists are interested in other persons’ lived experience descriptions and reflections and ‘collect’ them by interviews, participatory observations, written
responses etc., in order to better understand the meaning of a particular human phenomenon. This intention is not unlike other qualitative methodological outlines, yet there are some important differences.

From a phenomenological point of view we are not primarily interested in the subjective experiences of our so-called subjects or informants, for the sake of being able to report on how something is seen from their particular view, perspective or vantage point. [...] However, the deeper goal, which is always the thrust of phenomenological research, remains oriented to asking the question of what is the nature of this phenomenon as an essentially human experience (ibid: 62).

The orientation to the phenomenon described in the lived experience, rather than its social-realistic content, such as the informant’s opinions or viewpoints, is relevant to the phenomenological inquiry. The fact that phenomenology is not an empirical analytical science of facts and generalizations, makes phenomenology a ‘non-inductive’ science. This means, “phenomenology goes beyond an interest in “mere” particularity” (ibid: 22). Phenomenology takes its starting point from lived experience as its empirical data, and interprets this by uncovering the hidden or veiled meanings of these data. The phenomenological focus on the phenomenon rather than on the subject or participant helps to conceal the identity of the participants.

Second there is the process of working up the LED material to anecdotes. There is a profound difference between phenomenology and other so-called qualitative research approaches (such as ethnography, ethno-methodology, symbolic interactionism, conceptual analysis, biography, etc.) that perhaps is best understood by turning to the particular way that the phenomenological research question is focused. No matter how a teacher relates to the student or how the encounter between them is, the phenomenologist always wants to know what is the experience of this or that situation. In this particular study for instance, relevant experiential questions are, “What is the experience of disability in this encounter? Is this what it is like to see a student with disability? Is this what it is like to be seen as a disabled student? What is the encounter between the teacher and the student like? Is this how the student experiences him or herself in the encounter?” Because phenomenology is less concerned with psychology, sociology or the particular cultural setting of the inquiry, but rather is interested in the examples of lived experience of the phenomenon, the
participants of the study stand back as potentially identifiable subjects as soon as the
data material is collected. When the empirical material is transformed into written text,
the focus is only on the phenomenon of interest, described in the LEDs of the
participants. The lived experience descriptions, the examples describing the various
aspects of the investigated phenomenon then are worked up, edited and shaped to
become focused and strong anecdotes. In this editing process, the lived experience
description undergoes a certain fictionalisation or ‘iconization’ by which the original
proprietor of the experience is considered secondary. The prior is the phenomenon,
of which the anecdote constitutes an example.

Third, the fact that parts of the study originally were written in Norwegian, and the
data as well was collected in Norway among Norwegian-speaking students and
teachers, has significance for the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.
The choice to make the transition to English in 2002/2003 meant that the lived
experience descriptions that were selected for the study were translated into English.
This translation process included important research ethical dilemmas when
considering common research guidelines. First of all, when translating a text into
another language, the meaning of the text somehow always undergoes changes of
substantial character during the process of the linguistic transformation. Responsible
research then in this respect, should be about doing a thorough and qualified job with
the translations, combined with openness to the translation process. For the sake of
reliability of the translation, there is attached an example of the Norwegian anecdote
and the respective English translation.38 Yet, in the translation process there is
included an element of irrecognizability as well, a kind of changed appearance that
somehow also alters the identifiability of the persons involved.

Editing lived experience descriptions
The reason for dealing with experiential anecdotal material as an ethical issue is two-
sided, although the two aspects are closely related. First, the way anecdotes are
seen and treated in phenomenology has consequences for the anonymity and
confidentiality of the participant. Second, the terms ‘anecdote’ and ‘fictional’ are often
misinterpreted from perspectives outside phenomenology, in particular when

38 Appendix 12.
appearing together like here. Let us start with the latter issue. Anecdotes may be seen as ‘merely an anecdote’, a story or even a fairytale that we have no reason to trust scientifically. And of course, one should not consider an anecdote, evidence. In fact, phenomenology is not the science of empirical evidence and generalization. “The point that the critics of anecdotes miss, is that the anecdote is to be valued for other than factual-empirical or factual-historical reasons”, van Manen suggests (1997a: 118-119). In phenomenology, examples or anecdotes, serve as methodological and epistemological devices, through which the deep structures of an experience might be explored. Experiential anecdotes are not mere illustrations to make a complicated passage easier or to animate a boring text. The challenge of phenomenological writing is to make the ground structures of pedagogical phenomena and experiences ‘visible’ through the reflective use of experiential descriptions. Anecdotes are multi-faceted and act as concrete counterweights to abstract theorizing and as such “force us to search out the relations between living and thinking, between situation and reflection” (ibid: 119). In fact, in the case of pedagogy, anecdotes are the basis for pedagogical reflection on practice. The experiential anecdote particularizes the conceptualizing tendency of pedagogical discourse where, “paradoxically the anecdote tells something particular while really addressing the general or the universal”, van Manen says (ibid: 120).

The fictional character of the phenomenological anecdote is not related to the fact that the phenomenological inquiry might borrow lived experience material from fictional literature, like prose and poetry. Moreover, the ‘fictionality’ of the anecdote has nothing to do with its being invented or made up in the author’s imagination. Rather, the anecdote has a fictional character in that it possesses some of the qualities that we connect to fictional literature, for instance, its compelling and transforming nature and the way we personally get involved pre-reflectively and reflectively in its meaning and significance (van Manen 1997a). This quality of anecdotes is emphasized by their representative or symbolic value for human understanding and interpretation.

Examples in [the phenomenological] sense should not be confused with data. They do not refer to the world – they are not descriptions. They are more like icons. They should be used to refer back to what makes them possible (McHugh et al., 1974: 10 cited in van Manen 1979b: 9).
The significance of the fictional and iconic quality of these anecdotes to anonymity and confidentially lies precisely in the way lived experience descriptions are edited and reworked in the phenomenological writing process. “An anecdote is a certain kind of narrative with a point and it is this point that needs honing”, van Manen says (ibid: 69). By filing and sharpening up the point of the anecdote, the anecdote no longer is a personal or realistic story but becomes an experiential example for phenomenological analysis. In this process, the teller of the anecdote is made secondary and mainly invisible. Moreover, in this inquiry, supplementary to the fictional names of the twelve informants, there are as well connected other ‘identities’ to the anecdotes, in order to additionally anonymize the material.

**The researcher’s responsibility for the pedagogical situations**

Being a researcher that is given access to the classroom can highlight ethical dilemmas of responsibility. As a researcher I am the observer, the outsider given admittance to collect data from a field belonging to the students and teachers. What happens then when the researcher feels responsible for intervening in situations that he or she is supposed only to observe? On some occasions, I witnessed situations in the class that called forth my responsibility as a pedagogue and a human being, where I had to intrude on the behalf of the student participant. In these situations, the teachers gravely transgressed the edge of ‘teacherly’ behaviour toward students. As a teacher myself, I understand the huge complexity of teaching and the personal challenge it is to encounter all sorts of students. This understanding awareness kept me from acting when, from my own perspective, the infringement seemed to be a result of the teachers’ inattention to the student’s needs. At the same time though, my own pedagogical reticence could have serious consequences for the student. At times the teacher was not merely neglecting his or her pedagogical responsibility but rather intentionally utilizing the hierarchy of the asymmetric pedagogical relation to degrade and govern the student. On those occasions I decided to intervene by doing one out of three things. A few times, I mentioned the episode to the student in our next interview and offered my support to him or her. At others, I took up the matter with the teacher, in order to show that I had seen the episode and felt negatively in regards to it. On one occasion in particular, I arranged for a meeting between the
class teachers, the headmaster and myself, in order to present my concerns and hopefully provoke a more thoughtful pedagogical practice in the classroom.

**Fifth practice: Investigating lived experience**

**The way we experience the world**

“Whoever is searching for the human being first must find the lantern”, Nietzsche once said (Buylendijk 1947: 22, cited in van Manen 1997a: 4). This Diogenesian reference actualises the questions of what it means to study the human being in his or her humanness and what method this kind of study requires. Doing research is always to question the way we experience the world. Somehow, we always want to come closer to the world in which we live as human beings. Hermeneutical phenomenology is capable of encompassing my data material as a whole, and in particular the experiential anecdotal material. Here, Van Manen (1997a) points out three characteristics of phenomenology, which precisely address my intent of inquiry and the concrete data material that I have collected. First, phenomenology always begins in the lifeworld. This is the world of taken for grantedness and ‘habitus’, where the meaning of the lived experience somehow escapes consciousness in its constant move from present to past.

The lifeworld is the world of the natural attitude of everyday life which Husserl described as the original, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical attitude. In bringing to reflective awareness the nature of the events experienced in our natural attitude, we are able to form or remake ourselves in the true sense of Bildung (education) (ibid: 7).

Not until we reflectively attend to our experience can the significance of the experience become meaningful to us and shape our humanness. The exposed human vulnerability of pedagogical anecdotes, including the anecdotal material describing students and teachers at adapted education, require a lifeworld sensitive approach with non-cognitive as well as cognitive dispositions. For phenomenology, doing research is to profoundly address the way we experience the world, by wanting to know what *being* a human being is like. All human beings are in the world in a certain way, with a certain intentionality that is unique and at the same time, has something in common with humanity as such. As researchers, we attach ourselves to the human world by questioning its various ways of being, and by intentionally
theorizing and analysing the meanings of it. “In doing research we question the world’s very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us”, van Manen says (ibid: 5).

Thus, human science research itself, is ‘Bildung’ or in a sense, a process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ human. The responsible care for the ‘human being’ in his or her lifeworld is a personal act addressing the unique person as incomparable and irreplaceable. Secondly, “phenomenology [then] is the philosophy of the personal, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, or the social” (ibid: 7). Often in scientific terminology the researcher addresses the persons involved in his or her study as, ‘subjects’, ‘individuals’ or ‘cases’. However, in phenomenology we always study ‘persons’. The biological undertone of the term ‘individual’ does not necessarily relate to human beings but could be applied to all living creatures. The intention of phenomenology is to come to a closer understanding of the human being through his or her unique, ungeneralisable, non-repeatable, personal lived experience. Thus, phenomenology is the theory of the unique, as it is essentially interested in the singular experience of the irreplaceable person.

**Borrowing lived experiences from others**

The experience of being part of the lifeworld of students and teachers at adapted education, provided me the possibility of gathering their experiences of what it is like to be a student and a teacher in their particular pedagogical context. Borrowing lived experiences or similar research terminology when collecting data, made me as researcher more experienced in the field of the pedagogical encounter (van Manen 1997a). Even if the term ‘data’ is ambiguous within the phenomenological perspective, according to van Manen, an etymological meaning of “the notion of ‘data’ has some relevance to phenomenology, in that ‘originally ‘datum’ means something ‘given’ or ‘granted’. And there is indeed a sense in which our experience is ‘given’ to us in everyday life” (ibid: 54). Yet, the oral or written description of the lived experience is something else and less than the experience as it is lived. The description of a moment of lived experience always falls short of the complexity of the real moment. Nevertheless, when I use the lived experience, as a point of departure, the lived experience descriptions are not yet phenomenological material, but data on
which I work. The narrative material, the LEDs that I borrowed from my participants in order to come to a closer understanding of my phenomenon, is raw material for reflection. The important thing in phenomenological writing though, is that reflection starts and ends in the concrete lived experience.

The LEDs are gathered from the personal story interviews and from close observations but also from the panoply of spontaneous moments of togetherness in the classroom, the cantina, the schoolyard, the field trip and the innumerable short breaks in between everything that happens in a school. In the middle of writing, eating, chatting, waiting, being bored, laughing, arguing, watching, exercising, cooking, washing, ironing or printing, students and teachers tell me episodes from their lives and share worries with me, which provide me lived experience descriptions to reflect on. What characterizes a useful LED is that it is a concrete, direct and vivid description of a particular moment, where one refrains from casual explanations, opinions and interpretations. Quite often the short everyday moments between the participants and me brought about useful lived experience descriptions. This was particularly the case for some of the students. Being part of their daily activities helped them more easily recall the most startling and powerful experiences, than might have been the case in more constructed interview situations.

The terms ‘lived experience description’ (LED) and ‘anecdote’ often are used as almost interchangeable notions. Yet, some aspects can be distinguished between them. The lived experience description is the result of an attempt to capture in words or text, the immediate experience of the lifeworld, by making the effort to reflect on a particular lived experience as it was sensed in the moment. The immediate lived experience is pre-reflective and pre-conceptual, and the description of it will never be identical to it, but always a transformation of the direct experience as it was sensed. The anecdote though, is a further working up, editing and re-writing of the lived experience description, in order to prepare for phenomenological analysis. To become material for phenomenological investigation or what we call the phenomenological reduction, the anecdote needs to be ‘strong’. A strong anecdote speaks to us, stirs us, cognitively and non-cognitively, by its immanent meaning. Van Manen (1997a) uses other notions as well, such as recollection of experience (ibid: 63), story, narrative (ibid: 152) and example (ibid: 121ff), to indicate the
phenomenological description, the point of departure for the phenomenological reflection. Still, “anecdotes are a special kind of story” (ibid: 115), and should not be mixed with narratives or stories in the common understandings we have of these terms. The phenomenological anecdote belongs to the collective traditional product, which has the power to reveal the true character of something or someone. Thus the anecdote is important as experiential case material to pedagogy because it renders pedagogical reflection possible.

**Borrowing lived experience descriptions from literature and art**

One important function of the experiential anecdote is its ability to help open up the question under investigation. The stronger the anecdote is, the more powerfully it compels us, involves us personally, moves us and teaches us, the more the anecdote has the potential to open up the question reflectively and pre-reflectively. Therefore, to open up a theme or a chapter, it is essential to start with a strong anecdote. When the opening anecdote is powerful and really speaks experientially, the rest of the text tends to come more easily. For myself, the search for appropriate anecdotal material to open up a particular theme truly was one of the hardest challenges of the writing. Sometimes, it helps to borrow an experiential description from fictional literature or poetry, as human experience descriptions are the stuff of which novels and poems are made. I found strong literary sources relevant to my topic, for instance in Finn Carling and Chaim Potok’s novels, as well as in Lorna Crozier and Lize Stilma’s poetry. Literature, suitable for phenomenological reflection, has a certain evocative depth and uniqueness created by the author that ‘ordinary’ collected anecdotes often miss or have to a lesser extent. In phenomenology it is also possible to borrow experiential material from other artistic media, such as film, painting, sculpture and music. This work includes material from movies, such as, ‘My Life as a Dog’, and from sculpture, with images of the work of Alberto Giacometti. In phenomenology, one may use all available sources for reflection where the intention is always to increase practical insight and understanding of the phenomenon. The main focus in phenomenology is always the phenomenon, where the intention is to come to an essential understanding of this particular and unique phenomenon. Then, whether an anecdote is evidentially true or fictional is not of great importance. What is important is that the anecdote describes a possible human experience, and that its experiential truth is sensed by the reader. In van Manen’s words,
It is important to realize that it is not of great concern whether a certain experience actually happened in exactly that way. We are less concerned with factual accuracy of an account than with the plausibility of an account – whether it is true to our living sense of it (1997a: 65).

The etymological approach
The practice of hermeneutic phenomenology to “refer questions of knowledge back to the lifeworld where knowledge speaks through our lived experience” (van Manen 1997a: 46), strongly supports the attempt to reject theorizing, models, paradigms and other abstracting frameworks as first hand knowledge of human existence. Reflecting and writing, over and over again, kneading the experiential meaning of pedagogy, disability, relation, encounter, seeing and other terms belonging to the conceptual structure of my study, eventually led me to a more embodied and sensitive understanding of these phenomena. The terms, like most of our everyday concepts, had become so familiar to me and to others, in a way that deprived them of their original meaning and emptied their significance from our lives as teachers and researchers. Tracing etymological sources reminded me of their forgotten meanings, and re-awakened their reverberating and revealing lived meaning to me. The term ‘pedagogy’ for instance originally meant ‘to go with the child’ (In Greek paida – child, agogos – adult (e.g. slave) walking the child to school) and be responsible for the child during the day. The Greek term refined by traditional European pedagogical philosophy, understands the encounter between adult and child to be an asymmetric, responsible, personal and enduring relation (Bollnow 1968/1989, 1969, Langeveld 1974, Mollenhauer 1983, 1983/1996, van Manen 1991, 1997a, 2002c). The distinction between the various pedagogical terms of situation, relation and encounter is thoroughly interpreted by Max van Manen (1991) as well as by other Continental educators. ‘Seeing’, is particularly rich and meaningful as the metaphor of pedagogical understanding and experiencing. ‘Seeing’, as a human phenomenon, provides a variety of connotations like the perceptive, receptive, susceptive, which all come from the root capere, which is the Latin verb meaning to ‘take’ or ‘seize’ (Onions 1966: 900). ‘Seeing’, as understanding, knowing, feeling, is closely investigated in Chapter 3. In relation to the term ‘disability,’ the etymological

39 The term is etymologically explored in Chapter 1.
40 See Chapter 1.
exploration, as well as the investigation of fictional and historical sources prevented me from getting stuck in the relatively narrow contemporary Western interpretation of the phenomenon.41

Sixth practice: Writing and re-writing

Hermeneutic phenomenological research is fundamentally the activity of writing and rewriting. This notion may seem obvious and as such rarely acknowledged in research. Rooted in philosophy, hermeneutics and phenomenology are reflective disciplines, which assume the articulation of ontological, epistemological and theoretical implications, of methodological as well as of pedagogical character. This does not mean however, that one has to become a philosopher to practice hermeneutic phenomenology. What it means, is that as a researcher, one has to be willing and able to see the significance of the pre-reflective, pre-conceptual and pre-cognitive nature of the human lifeworld and be able to methodically address all aspects, especially the aspects traditionally omitted from research; the cognitively elusive and partly unspeakable experiences of our common human experience.

[Hermeneutic phenomenological research] encourages a certain attentive awareness to the details and seemingly trivial dimensions of our everyday educational lives. It makes us thoughtfully aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted (van Manen 1997a: 8).

The phenomenological question: What is this or that experience like? is not a common approach in pedagogically-oriented research. What we might ask, is the point of experiential descriptions or a plausible insight that brings us closer to the immediate world as we livingly sense it and as it shows itself to us, if it does not provide us with effective knowledge and impressive generalizable results? What I hope for is a deeper understanding of the subtle and not directly penetrable expressions that I experienced when interviewing and observing the students and their teachers in the context of the pedagogical encounter. I can say that here I met a pedagogical knowledge of an ontological quality, with origin in the soul and body of the human being as I searched to understand an embodied knowledge closely interwoven with ‘being’ itself. I sense with Røpke and Wivel (1968), ‘pedagogy first of
all to be of spiritual character,’ and at one and the same time, reject theory as something that stands before practice, in order to ‘inform’ it. Rather, theory is understood as a source to enlighten practice. Philosophers such as Gadamer (1960/1975) and Ricoeur (1981), have argued that the notion of ‘truth’ in the human sciences, presupposes a broadening of the notion of rationality, to possibly also include the manifold of human experience of what is true and reasonable in life as lived rather than simply as thought.

Going to phenomenological sources
Substantial elements of Continental pedagogical philosophy and phenomenology have been familiar to me since I worked with my post-graduate thesis. But it was when I was truly addressed by my deepest research interest that philosophy and phenomenology began to mean something to me. The strenuous effort it was to learn hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry and writing at the University of Alberta, included extended investigation of classical phenomenological sources as well as fictional literature possessing phenomenological qualities. Moreover, Max van Manen carefully taught me how to reflectively approach these sources in my pedagogical research interest. As a result of this thoughtful and patient supervision, the phenomenological world gradually became a source of personal and scholarly understanding for me.

What made phenomenological literature meaningful to me was both the fact that there already was a multitude of phenomenological texts written directly or indirectly that related to my pedagogical interest, as well as the experience that phenomenological literature is of another kind than research in general. It is a rare experience in research to enter into a dialogue with texts, to truly let the text speak and then willingly and reflectively respond to the message. For me, this dialogue with phenomenology became vital to my understanding of the lived experience material. Yet, reading and writing must alternate and balance. Reading too much at the expense of trying to formulate my own reflections of the phenomenon under investigation brought me nowhere. Hence, I learned to use phenomenological and theoretical sources as cultivators for my own reflection. And I learned that a cultivator should be behind reflection, not in front of it.
Phenomenological sources are highly demanding in the scholarly sense, and have quite often led me to sense an insufficiency in my own fragile and unfinished writings. This, along with the experience of not being able to express with satisfactory clarity what I somehow sense to be of significance to a phenomenon, was at times quite discouraging. On the other hand, comparing my own reflective capacity and writing skills to that of other phenomenologists, helped me become aware of the limitations of my experiential insight as well as to recognize my personal strengths.

**Transformation**

The intention to understand ‘disability pedagogically’ by the hermeneutical phenomenological method, included a basic working up of the research question, in order to make it phenomenologically addressable to the profound research interest of mine, as well as to the available data. I had to intensely scrutinize my own personal and professional intentions, as well as my pedagogical knowledge, experiences, and pre-understandings. In this section, I will address the two interdependent and synchronic processes of transformation that gradually resulted in the identification of my phenomenological research question. In the same way that there should always be a deeper dialectic between the methodology one chooses and the research question, the nature of the selected human experience to which one intends to direct one’s interest must be identified, before a true phenomenological questioning is possible. “To do phenomenological research is to question something phenomenologically and also, to be addressed by the question of what something is ‘really’ like”, van Manen asserts (1997a: 42). Phenomenological inquiry demands a personal, deeply reflected, intense, and enduring relation to the research question. What this actually means is easily underestimated. In fact, the effort it takes to become fully aware of the significance and dimensions of even an apparently simple phenomenological question, requires a transformation of insight and comprehension that cannot truly be grasped until the investigation is done and even then only imperfectly. The true meaning of questioning in phenomenology and in particular of the difficulty of choosing which question should be the one that will focus my deepest pedagogical interest, did not dawn on me until several months of wrestling with my relation to pedagogy and to myself as a teacher and as a mother. I finally understood that it was not sufficient phenomenologically to address a phenomenon, but the phenomenon as well should address me. “The essence of the question is the opening
up and keeping open of possibilities”, Gadamer says (1960/1975: 266). The ‘keeping open of possibilities’ however, is only possible if we keep ourselves open, in an honest and enduring attempt to live and ‘become’ the question.

But we can only do this [opening up and keeping open to possibilities] if we can keep ourselves open in such a way that in this abiding concern of our questioning we find ourselves deeply interested (inter-esse, to be or stand in the midst of something) in that which makes the question possible in the first place. To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the centre of our being (van Manen 1997a: 43).

Addressing and opening myself up to allow the phenomenological question to address my deepest concern, was a process of moral self-evaluation. I was called on to dismiss my long-standing protective theoretical approach to pedagogy. This approach, whose strength I earlier had not quite admitted to myself, had, I eventually realized, become a barrier that prevented me from truly acknowledging myself as a practising pedagogue. I realized that seeing students and really ‘seeing’ students was a challenge for me, and not only for the teachers I observed and interviewed in my study. It was not that I had not known this before. I remember telling myself this and recognizing the challenges of pedagogy, and in particular the pedagogy of special education, when I introduced my intent and inquiry to the teachers for the first time. During our extended relationship, I kept on repeating how hard it was to be a teacher and stand in the midst of unpredictable pedagogical situations, somehow being compelled to act. However, my knowledge appeared to be superficial and inadequate to meet the radical phenomenological demand of being personally addressed by the research question. Not until I had spent an extended period of time writing and rewriting of my research interest, and by reflectively shaping and editing the narrative material in order to focus the experiential meaning of the anecdotes, did I finally see the significance of the texts and realize what might become my research question.

Reflection

Doing a phenomenological inquiry is a reflective activity. One has to reflect on the aspects of meaning and the structures or themes that characterize the phenomenon. In fact, writing itself is a reflective activity just as reflecting is a writing activity. “The purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something”, van Manen asserts (1997a: 77). In fact, to grasp the essential meaning
of an experience is to go beyond the unconscious day-to-day understanding, or the taken-for-granted meaning of the experience, in order to see the structures or essentiality of this experience. Thus, phenomenological reflection, is the effort of coming as close as possible to the experience as it is lived. We reflect on something to understand the meaning of it. The phenomenological term ‘essence’ simply means the inner nature or the true being of a thing (ibid: 177), or in other words, the meaning of the thing to us. This meaning can in phenomenology only be textually expressed. Consequently, reflecting on essential meaning is a writing/reflecting process.

The phenomenological reduction
Van Manen (1997a) has written a profound and extensive methodological account of hermeneutical phenomenological research or human science inquiry and has thoroughly discussed the term ‘reduction’ only once, and then only in the final glossary. One then might believe that the phenomenological reduction is either unimportant or discussed indirectly in the text. The latter is true. In fact, van Manen (1997a) identifies the phenomenological reduction as,

the technical term that describes the phenomenological device which permits us to discover what Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls the spontaneous surge of the lifeworld. To come to a certain understanding of the essential structure of something we need to reflect on it by practicing a certain reduction (ibid: 185).

The reduction then is a certain attentive practice or a reflective sensitivity to the phenomenon under investigation. The reduction can be understood as a particular way of approaching the phenomenological question. The various levels of reduction are phenomenological practices that render possible an encounter with the phenomenon. Thus, practicing the phenomenological reduction is first of all to approach the phenomenon with a certain passive wonder. This wondering demonstrates a certain willingness that is open to what might be there to discover, and here one must make an effort to bracket taken for grantedness and prejudice. The hermeneutic reduction is characterized by a radical openness to what might become of an investigation. This openness includes explicating one’s pre-understandings instead of passing over or concealing them. To me, the openness of reduction first of all means to be serious about the labour of reflectively examining and turning over and over one’s texts in order to look for unseen layers of meaning in
the various phenomena. Practicing the eidetic reduction is the attempt to see the phenomenological invariations of the experience and hold the particularity and the universality of this experience in tension. Thus, the effort of discerning invariations is to dwell with the phenomenon, looking at the phenomenon from all possible angles, examining descriptions, interpretations, anecdotes, themes, by asking, 'does this phrase bring forth the experience in a way that resonates with my pre-reflective sensibilities? Or, is this lived experience description recognizable as a human experience? The phenomenological reduction challenges the scientific tendency to theorize and conceptualise the phenomenon, and implies the effort of dealing with the phenomenon in a non-abstract and experiential way. Reduction then, is not a simplification or conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Rather, it opens up the aspects of the phenomenon in all of its ambiguity, complexity and indeterminacy. Reduction at its best “is practiced as in concert” (van Manen 1997a) and is almost imperceptible.

**Theme work**

To reflect and write in an organized and orderly way, the phenomenological method, like other qualitative methods, implies the development of themes and thematic structures.

Unlike most other scientific methods though, phenomenological themes are descriptions of aspects of the phenomenon, the experiential structures that build up the phenomenon, rather than concepts or categories or other theoretical devices. Van Manen puts it like this,

> Making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of “seeing” meaning (1997a: 79).

This process of understanding and/or discovering thematic meanings or structures in an experiential text, is not something you simply are able to immediately do. Neither is there a recipe or procedure to follow or some preparatory exercises that can help a person master the necessary skills. Theme work is closely related to the ‘seeing’ of phenomenological meaning, and you have to see what ‘meaning’ means phenomenologically to be able to seek out this meaning. To identify meaning in an experiential text and to formulate a theme, is to answer the question that a text
poses. The meaning of the phenomenological text has an evasive and ‘hard to pin down’ character, in the same way that meanings in life are as well fluctuating and un-graspable. The theme then, responds meaningfully to the inner, sensed meaning of the text. Together, the themes of a phenomenological text should say something significant about the phenomenon the text intends to explore. The text of chapter 6 for example, includes the following themes ‘blinded seeing’, ‘seeing unthinkingly’, ‘the other’s look as self-seeing’, ‘the disabling look’, ‘enabling seeing’ and ‘enabling seeing of disability’. These themes are not simply subtitles that support the readability of the text. Rather, they are meant to be evocative meanings that bring about a deeper significance of ‘being seen.’ Somehow the themes emerge from the text and are simplifications of this text while at the same time every passage is shaped and focused by these themes, in its parts and as a whole. One might say that the themes of chapter 6 reflect the sense I could make of what it was like for students with disability to be seen. Yet, the themes of a text always represent a reduction of the lived experience they somehow are trying to catch. Van Manen (1997a) sees themes as intransitive, which means that they are not to be interconnected with objects. Furthermore, he says that “phenomenological themes are not objects or generalizations; metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the web of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are and thus lived through as meaningful wholes” (ibid: 90). There are lines of action that might be followed in order to organize themes and isolating thematic statements. Van Manen (1997a) suggests three possible ways to approach the uncovering of themes in the reflecting/writing process (ibid: 92ff). I tried all three of them in my early drafts, to better come to an understanding of the inner meaning of these. What the approaches have in common is that they support our perceptions in a concrete and practical way, as well as our searching for those experiential meanings of the text that reveal essentialities about the phenomenon being described.

Uncovering themes, letting themes emerge from the text, living through themes, are all phenomenological expressions of how themes develop in phenomenological reflection and writing. Yet, how should we, in the flow of potential themes, differentiate between superficial and insignificant themes and those, which are irreplaceable and essential to the meaning of the phenomenon? There is no specific method, other than the “method of the free imaginative variation […] to verify whether
a theme belongs to a phenomenon essentially (rather than incidentally)” (ibid: 107). To sustain the inventive imagination required of the researcher, van Manen has created a simple ‘tool’ for reflection. He writes, “In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (ibid: 107). From the day I understood the meaning of this advice, my computer screen saver had inscribed on it the rolling text, ‘what are the qualities that make ‘seeing disability pedagogically’ what it is, and without which ‘seeing disability pedagogically’ could not be what it is?’ This concrete and at the same time imaginative guidance, was of great support when trying to determine from the manifold of themes those that were essential and those that were only incidental.

**Being guided by the four existentials**
Phenomenological research is basically the exploration of the structures of human life and human experience. These fundamental thematic structures that constitute our lifeworld and the ways in which we experience being human, vary in modes and modalities. The phenomenological ‘truth’ is that every human being experiences the world in his or her own way (Heidegger 1926/1962), and therefore presents a universe of possibilities to phenomenological research. Also within the human lifeworld there are structures or fundamental experiences that we somehow share as human beings. The four basic existentials are of this quality. Van Manen says,

> The four fundamental existentials of spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality may be seen to belong to the existential ground by way of which all human beings experience the world, although not all in the same modality of course. [...] This is not difficult to understand, since about any experience we can always ask the fundamental questions that correspond to these four lifeworld existentials (1997a: 102).

The lifeworld existentials turned out to be of great help to me in my reflections on how to thematize and structure the four analysing chapters. However, I first saw how to use them to focus, as well as to delimit my themes after having written main parts of the texts. My experience of how to write, how to extract themes, how to structure and so on, have developed toward understanding and skill, precisely by the practice of this reflecting and writing. While the four existentials are inseparable they might be differentiated in research so as to explore their particular aspects. For my research,
they were particularly useful as meaningful and transferable aspects of lived meaning. For instance, trying to focus the themes in chapter 9, by showing aspects of the temporal significance of the other’s look, does not exclude the spatial, bodily or relational aspects of the phenomenon to be discovered as well. This is so, because the four foundational existentials are subjectively experienced in time, space, body and in relation. They are lived time, lived space, lived body and lived other that somehow always intermingle with experience and thus differ from objective or conventional descriptions of knowledge.

**The strong structure of the study**

By seeing themes and the existential aspects together, I placed a firm direction on the way the analyses should be accomplished. This tough directing was necessary in order to closely relate to the themes and unflaggingly stick to the basic idea of the inquiry. In addition, it prevented the texts from going in all kinds of directions and becoming chaotic. The faithful return to structure, themes and the basic idea, is what on the one hand created the meaning of the text, in terms of what the text initially was intended to become, and on the other hand what limited the analyses. Limiting the possibility of angles and perspectives is necessary although this aim can of course become too limiting to the phenomenological intention and thus reduce the value of the work and do injustice to the phenomenon under investigation. To balance this, is the responsibility of the author whose intention must be to open up the structure and make the phenomenological analyses possible in the first place.

The written text is separated in parts, chapters and themes since writing phenomenologically is the effort of trying to balance the research context by constantly considering parts and whole. To maintain a strong and oriented (e.g. pedagogical) relation to the phenomenon, it is necessary always to be mindful of how within the complexity of the text, every meaning and every theme is dealt with. Van Manen (1997a) regards phenomenological writing as a poetizing activity, and says,

> Most research we meet in education is of the type whereby results can be severed from the means by which the results are obtained. Phenomenological research is unlike other research in that the link with the results cannot be broken, as Marcel (1950) explained, without loss of all reality to the results. And that is why, when you listen to a presentation of a phenomenological nature, you will listen in vain for the punch-line, the latest information, or the
big news. As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result (ibid: 13).

The indivisibility of the phenomenological text and the experience of the text as particularly vulnerable to ordinary research conventions, might rest on the fact that the phenomenologist always “starts from the midst of life” (van Manen 2002b: 7), and always return to life as it is lived. Somehow the phenomenological writer must admit, like van den Berg does, “I have found very little compared to all that can be found. I have a few small crumbs of all the splendour in which we live” (1970: 129).
Chapter 5. ‘Seeing’ versus ‘the idea of seeing’\textsuperscript{42}. An attempt to show how the experiential dimensions of a phenomenological text is created

“He’s posed for me ten thousand times. When he poses I no longer recognize him. I want to make him pose so that I can see what I see”

(Giacometti about his sculpture below, ‘Bust with large eyes’ Diego 1957\textsuperscript{43}).

While research literature usually examines the content and the discursive aspects of the text, the intent of this chapter is to examine those aspects of phenomenological inquiry that perhaps distinguish phenomenology more pointedly from other research methods: the expressive and mantic dimensions of textual production. In this chapter I aim to show that ‘seeing’ experiential phenomenological meaning is different from the abstract and conceptually oriented study of the ‘idea of seeing’. In order to do this, I will bring forth an exemplary phenomenological text and explore this text from different perspectives, to possibly see what characterizes a phenomenological text in terms of its experiential expressive qualities. Not unlike Alberto Giacometti, who tries to portray the human face from scratch, by moving toward its minimum limits of

\textsuperscript{42} The subtitle is a paraphrase of Levinas’ statement, “It is not a matter of our idea of time but of time itself” (Levinas 1979/2002: 39).

\textsuperscript{43} August 30. 2004: \url{http://www.electroasylum.com/giacometti/ag10.html}. 
existence, phenomenology endeavours to describe the meaning structures of the phenomenon, in order to allow the “thing” itself to appear. Giacometti seeks the human significance of the look, and tries to re-create the indivisible and meaningful human face. This is how Simone de Beauvoir describes his artistic view.

A face, he told us, is an indivisible whole, a meaningful and expressive unity; but the inert material of the artist, whether marble, bronze, or clay, is, on the contrary, capable of infinite subdivision - each little separate bit contradicts and destroys the over-all pattern by the fact of its isolation (Simone de Beauvoir 44).

Giacometti stresses the imperfectability of any artistic work, relative to how the human face is experienced. He sees that the way artists manage to create the human face, always falls short of how the face truly is, in terms of how it expresses meaning. Similarly, phenomenological inquiry, like scientific methods in general, is unsuccessful in recreating the true and whole phenomenon. Yet, phenomenology makes an effort to seek a horizon, which leads one “to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it, but to see it better, within as larger whole and in truer proportions” (Gadamer 1960/1975: 305). This stance includes a refusal to accept the taken-for-grantedness of facts, abstract theories, assumptions and conceptions, in order to open up to interpretations of all kinds, cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of the phenomenon. Thus, in order to investigate how phenomenological texts speak, we best examine exemplary, practical phenomenological writings and ask ourselves: What do these texts look like? How have they been built up? How can we read a published phenomenological text and work backward from the finished product to the very process of writing, and somehow find out how the text is constructed? What can we learn when reflecting on the method, by which a commendable text is authored? An appropriate way to possibly find out how a text speaks, to know the method by which the text is constructed, is to examine the same text from different perspectives. I intend to show how doing phenomenology differs from other, more theoretical, conceptual and discursive methods of research, and consequently how, in an analogous way, ‘seeing’ differs from ‘the idea of seeing.’ The difference is profound, and constitutes the distinction between a study based on theory and conceptual assumptions, and a study

searching for the “essential” meanings of a phenomenon. The term ‘essence’ stems from ‘eidos’, which means precisely ‘inner meaning’ or the ‘whatness’ of the text (van Manen 1997a). In this study, ‘seeing,’ in a phenomenological sense of the notion, aims to describe aspects of the lived experience, or the inner meanings of the pedagogical encounter between students and teachers. Lived experience, refers to the “immediacy with which something is grasped and which precedes all interpretation, reworking and communication” (ibid: 61). Thus, lived experience forms the starting point for inquiry, reflection and interpretation.

**The expressive aspects of the phenomenological text**

In his article ‘From Meaning to Method’ (1997b), van Manen explores the relation between language, meaning and method in phenomenological research by analysing Linschoten’s text, *On Falling Asleep* (1987), in terms of how the text speaks to the reader. His intention is to discern the semantic, linguistic meaning and significance of a text, what the text says, from the mantic aspects of it, how the text speaks. The mantic meaning of a text, refers to the reverberation that the text can bring about in the reader, the possible influential power of the phenomenological description, and the ways experiential meaning, as well as embedded experiential meaning, seem to be constructed or authored. Phenomenological philosophers in various ways describe these mantic aspects of phenomenology. Bachelard describes the influence of the expressive textual reverberation on the reader like this,

> Through this reverberation, by going immediately beyond all psychology or psychoanalysis, we feel a poetic power rising naïvely within us. After the original reverberation we are able to experience resonances, sentimental repercussions, reminders of our past. But the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface (1958/1994: xxiii).

I will describe van Manen’s own approach, and examine his article, ‘Care-as-Worry, or “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”’ (2002c), in terms of how this text speaks mantically to the reader. By doing this, I hope to become sensitive to some of the principles of his text and to display to the reader how a phenomenological text may speak to our everyday experience and to pedagogical practice.
The reason that professionals remain intrigued with human science inquiry is that it is a science of plausible insight, and these insights speak not only to our intellectual competence but also to our practical intuitive capabilities. A good phenomenological text has the effect that it can make us suddenly ‘see’ something in a manner that enriches our understanding of everyday life experience (van Manen 1997b: 345).

Van Manen, like the pioneers of Dutch and German phenomenology, is more interested in doing phenomenology and reflecting on human experience, than in asking theoretical and philosophical questions of epistemology and metaphysics. Like them, he also uses literature and arts work, in order “to refer beyond the realm of what can be said “clearly and distinctly” […] and to make present a meaning which we are unable to express clearly in any other way” (Kockelmans 1987: ix, cited in van Manen 1997b: 346). To let things speak, or the ‘vocatio’ of a text, means that we feel ourselves addressed by the text. The vocative text is of a phenomenological quality that contains a strong embedded meaning within it. The ‘vocatio’ of the text is sensed as an implicit or felt understanding, that is both cognitive and non-cognitive, felt and reflected. The methodological challenge for the author of a phenomenological text is to try to articulate and make explicit this inherent, ‘pathic’ quality, so that the text addresses and reverberates with the experience of the reader. In his examination of Linschoten’s text, Van Manen employs five vocative ‘methods’, in order to see the text from different perspectives. I will use the same five features, in order to study van Manen’s text in terms of its mantic-expressive meanings. The five mantic figures van Manen calls “concreteness, evocation, intensification, tone and epiphany” (ibid: 347). In the following I will apply these vocative methods to van Manen’s exemplary text ‘Care-as Worry, or “Don’t Worry be Happy”’(2002c). Though, these methods are dimensions of writing, rather than fixed research techniques. In fact, the mantic dimensions of a text, usually are visible only as aspects of the text as a whole. In a good phenomenological text these effects work in concert.

Lived throughness

“Lived throughness means that the phenomenon is placed concretely in the lifeworld so that the reader may experientially recognize it” (ibid: 348). Van Manen opens up his article on care-as-worry, by introducing a passage from Margaret Laurence’s novel The Diviners (1975), showing a mother, Morag Gunn, who is worrying for her
sick child. In spite of all the doctor’s assurances that it is only the flu, and that her distress will not help her daughter, the mother cannot help but fretting that it might be something worse.

“Well, try not to be upset, Mrs Gunn,” he says sternly, “That won’t help the child, will it?”

Oh God. True. True. She wants to ask the doctor, young and brisk, to forgive her, to stay for a while, have a cup of tea, reassure her, tell her Pique isn’t very ill and will be fine, and that it isn’t Morag’s fault for having sent her out unwell into the raw morning. There is however, no external reassurance available, as she learns each time as though for the first time, whenever Pique is sick (Laurence 1975: 362).

Van Manen uses this passage from Laurence’s novel of a mother’s care-as-worry for her sick child, and thus immediately poses his phenomenological question concretely and recognizably to the reader through the use of prose. He wants to explore how care is actually lived in parent-child relations. He continues by describing how parents sometimes may make too much out of their worries for children, and that kids may hate this in their parents, while knowing in the back of their minds, that worse than care and worry from their parents, is to have no one caring about you. He quotes a young girl in government care who has told her teacher, “You know what I am afraid of? I am afraid that, if I would die, no one would really care” (van Manen 2002c: 265). His way of contrasting care with too much care, or the lack of care, helps us connect to our own experiences, and start to see an initial outline of what care-as-worry is like. Then he again turns to Morag, the mother in Margaret Laurence’s novel, and shows how she cannot help herself but worrying and goes on to fret inwards about her child:

If only there were someone to talk it over with. Someone to share the pain, I guess. That wouldn’t help Pique much. It would help me, though. Or would it? Look at Angie in Flat Two upstairs. When the baby is sick she says to Dennis that she’s worried out of her mind, and he says she always worries unnecessarily and she’s inherited it from her neurotic mother and she had better snap out of it. And maybe she is indeed worrying unnecessarily. As probably I am. But you would just like somebody to say – God, love, I KNOW and I’m worried too (Laurence 1975: 364).
The fictional passage provides to us concrete particulars about how the experience of sharing the pain with somebody, makes the burden of worrying a little more manageable to us. Many of us have memories of moments of desperate worrying for our child, sometimes without having a trustworthy person with whom to share our worries. Or how a student in personal difficulties may concern us so much that we cannot sleep, until we have shared our distress with a reliable colleague.

Morag’s experience reminds me of an early morning in May some years ago, when my oldest son of 17, was not in his bed, and had not been there all night. The night before, he had celebrated “Constitution Day” with friends in the city centre, and promised to be home by midnight. “If I am late, I’ll call”, he had promised. Responsible as he was, he called at 00.30am to tell me he missed the bus, but he was on his way to the terminal just now, and would be home at 01.15am. Assured that everything was okay with him, and secure that he would be home in less than an hour, we all went to bed. So, when he was not there the next morning, we just “knew” that something terrible had happened to him. To calm ourselves down, we called his friends, with whom he had been last night, but they all reported that he had left to go home by midnight, and they hadn’t seen him since. We called all his friends this early Sunday morning, to ask if he hopefully might be there, but in vain. Finally we called the police, yet according to their procedures, a person had to have been missing for at least 48 hours before any search was actuated. “Most likely there is no reason for worry”, they assured us, “yesterday was May 17., Constitution Day, and young people sometimes get too drunk and forget about their parents. He’ll most likely turn up very soon”. Yet, our son was not one to fit the statistics, and our worrying increased. In addition our son suffers from diabetes, and to our imagination, which at this moment was extraordinarily vivid, we feared he might have become unexpectedly ill. We decided that my husband should go to the city centre to search for him, while I would be at home watching the phone, in case he should call. The hours on my own, being haunted by imaginative pictures of my lone son lying dead in an alleyway, drowned in the dock, or beaten too severely somewhere without anybody there to comfort him, almost broke my back that day. I knew that for the time, I could contribute next to nothing to the situation. But being alone with the worries that seemed to increase from minute to minute, felt absolutely unbearable to me. Yet, I had to keep calm not to upset my other children. This resolve to be strong prevented
me from breaking down. I knew it would not change the situation, the only thing I wished, was that my understanding husband was there with me, to share my fretfulness and upsetting visions.

When we try to recall particular moments of caring, we tend to remember the moments which somehow stand out. But, van Manen points out as well that “the qualities of these experiences seem characteristic also of the more mundane and common moments of caring” (2002c: 265). He reminds us of the ordinary everyday parental concerns and worries about children, by turning to another fictional text, showing how a mother, Judith Minty, (From The Diary of Judith Minty, 1982) watches her thirteen-year-old middle son coming home from football practice, sick and half-crying. The mother describes her son with tenderness,

[He] the handsome one, the worst student, the one most admired by his peers […] he pedals off at 5p.m., and drags back into the house around eight every night…. But today is different. He eats little, says he is sick. […] After his shower he goes to his room, where he thinks no one can hear him. But I hear him crying (Minty 1982: 215-126).

His mother hears him, but waits awhile, to see what develops. She does not want to overreact or to anticipate what the boy himself might disclose. She worries, but still she is patient. She is a mother relying on her motherly intuition. Then, her son comes downstairs, and she tries to show him that she sees and accept his misery, by carefully approaching toward what possibly might be the source of his unhappiness. However none of her suggestions actually hit. Finally, when she is in bed, reading, he comes and sits at the foot of her bed. She puts down the book and listens to her son. Van Manen reminds us of how the mother remains patiently aware of her son, there in the background, until he is ready for opening up and telling her. She gently suggests some reasonable events that might have upset him; things that she thinks might possibly lie behind. Yet, she does not interrogate him in any way. Van Manen carefully suggests that the description of Judith's concern for her son, is a kind of pedagogical care.

[…] it shows how worry is the active ingredient of parental attentiveness. Worry – rather than duty or obligation - keeps us in touch with the one for
whom we care. Worry is the spiritual glue that keeps the mother or father affixed to the life of their child (2002c: 266).

When Judith’s son finally comes, to tell his mother what is wrong, she stays close and supportive. “As she engages her son in conversation – laced with love and humour – the heavy things that were worrying him now seem to become bearable,” van Manen writes (ibid: 266). The vocative connectedness between the fictional excerpts, van Manen’s examinations of the mother’s pedagogical care-as-worry, makes recognizable the lived-throughness of this phenomenological description for the reader. Listening to the mother’s way of caring for her son, who on his part, is deeply worried about the probability that basic things in his life might suddenly change; such that his sister might leave for college, or that his father or mother will die before him, Van Manen writes,

[...] we notice how nicely the worrying mother takes away the worries of her child, how she indicates her caring worry as a mother (that he will eventually have a life of his own and that she will miss him), but that he needs not to worry about that either (ibid: 266).

His concrete way of presenting the various aspects of care-as-worry, by using evocative fictional descriptions as foundation for reflection, and then reflecting mindfully on them without loosing track of the phenomenon in focus, is prefigurative. Reading this and reflecting on his reflections, somehow create in us, an increased sensibility for children and young people’s vulnerability and dependency on us. As a reader of van Manen’s text I recall my own younger son, who all his life has tried to resist changes in his daily life, big or small. Previous to any expected event, like vacations or celebrations, he seeks solitude in his room, in order to work himself through the downcast he feels. As parents we try to meet him with accepting attention, and at the same time we also try to be open to how we possibly might contribute to a positive exposition of his bothersome condition. By doing so, we hope to gradually help him dealing with this nature of his. I worry about him, though, and I often wonder if I have done a good job as a mother. Also as adults, the experience of shifting conditions on our job, or in private life, may make us feel faint-hearted or even that our life is in crisis. We may need time to cope with the alternation of our daily life, as well as concerning care from friends, family or colleagues to feel that we
manage the transition to a different life. Van Manen provides concrete portrayals of parental care-as-worry,

so that as readers we may find continuity between these concrete examples and the particulars of our own lives. Concreteness of text places us right in the midst of lived reality where a phenomenon [...] [such as caring and worrying] can be a felt concern (van Manen 1997b: 349).

If we, as readers, take in the concreteness of the focused question with interest and attentiveness, then we might feel that the phenomenological text enriches our understanding, and grants us with thoughtful awareness of concern to our life.

**Evocation**

“Evocation means that experience is brought vividly into presence, so that we can phenomenologically reflect on it” (ibid: 349). Van Manen’s article on care-as-worry, provides not only concrete fictional descriptions of lived throughness, but the text as well speaks to the reader (and the writer) through the vividness of its vocational effects. We often link affective and aesthetic qualities to prose and poetry, yet these properties belong to phenomenological texts as well. In fact, vivid visualizing effects are often precisely the conspicuous characteristic that makes people distinguish phenomenology from other qualitative research texts. Still, van Manen explicitly reminds us that vividness is not an aim in itself.

Vividness becomes functional when it acquires the power of realization, of fastening a hold upon nearness [...] Evocation calls forth, or brings to immediate presence, images and sensibilities that are so crisp and real that they in turn evoke reflective responses such as wondering, questioning, understanding (1997b: 349).

Let me give another example, of which a personal reading of van Manen might remind us. His phenomenological analysis of how the parents, Morag Gunn and Judith Minty, are concerned with their child's plague debouches in reflections on caring as an experienced affliction. Care-as-worry, he says,

is like an illness, a chronic illness. Incurable. Untreatable. It may have its easy periods when it seems to go into remission, but than it flares up again, especially in cases of caring for a child in difficulty, sickness or trouble, but
also in ordinary situation where choices of consequence need to be made. The parent who is possessed by this caring response to his or her child cannot help but suffer this illness (2002c: 267).

To considerate parents, the stunning analogy between care-as-worry and care-as-incurable-illness is most recognizable, and provides images and associations that bring about reflections. We might wonder how parents of chronically ill children manage, or how it might be to be the mother or father of a drug addicted young person. How do they respond to the continuous and constant anxiety for their child, sufferings that last over years and years? The connection between caring, affliction and chronic illness is meaningfully evocative, and might make us question our own caring as well. Do I, as a mother, really care for my child with this deep and personal quality of concern that my child needs? Am I like Morag and Judith, or do I sometimes have in common with Dennis, the husband of Morag’s neighbour, Angie, the tendency to leave the concerning care to others? On one hand, one might be prompted to reflect on how one acts in relation to children, who one really is as parent or a teacher, and on the other hand, questions of how children in general are cared for or not cared for, comes into mind.

Van Manen subsequently, turns to etymological and linguistic aspects of the term caring, and examines the difference between caring as commonly accepted meaning, and the lived experience of pedagogical caring, as “in the primordial context of caring for someone who is vulnerable due to age, health or circumstance” (ibid: 267). The way he contrasts the connotations that the English terms care and caring evoke, with the equivalences in Dutch, German and Scandinavian languages, stir up reflections of how unlike ‘care’ and ‘caring’ might be experienced in various cultures. The Dutch and German correspondent to ‘care’ is ‘zorgen’ and ‘sorgen’, and in contrast to care, which in English mainly evokes pleasant and fairly light connotations, they both are strongly associated with being burdened and worried. In the English language, the term ‘care’, additional to meaning care for the children, the sick or the old, also is a business term, connecting ‘care’ to “‘car care’ lawn care, skin care, carpet care and other profitable caring practices” (ibid: 267). Compared to the nice and ‘carefree’ English meanings of ‘care’, the connotations to ‘zorgen’ or ‘sorgen’ are more indefinite. In van Manen’s words,
I imagine a look that expresses zorg in the Dutch or sorgen in the German languages. This is a different and more ambivalent kind of caring look: It is literally a look that is not carefree and without worry. It may express affection, but it does not escape me that this face has worry wrinkles. A parent who looks with caring-zorg at his or her child seems to be loving, yes, but also always in some sense worried (ibid: 267).

What makes this description of the look of a ‘care-as-worrying’ parent so phenomenologically evocative, is not only its ability to let me see the difference that the language offers, but also its capability to evoke thoughtful reflection about care as practice. I am reminded of how I in fact practice pedagogical caring. Is my practice based on an understanding of ‘care’ mainly as a pleasurable and casual friendship with children, or do I also have the ability to bothering and worrying ‘zorg’ for a child? How is ‘care’ actually understood in Norway, and what are the attached connotations to our ‘caring practice’ in schools and society? The Norwegian term ‘omsorg’ comes from German, and such linguistically shares the connotation of ‘sorgen’ and ‘zorgen’. Yet, does our caring practice with vulnerable and exposed people reflect the care for the other, in a worrying kind of manner? Van Manen calls our attention to recent literature on ‘care’, which in contrast to etymological explications of care as invested with affliction, pain and worry, deals with ‘care and caring’ practically without the term ‘worry’ in the index or in the body of the texts (ibid: 268). One might wonder with van Manen, if “the sense of care-as-worry [does] not fit well into frames of professionalized relations? Is worry too problematic a concept for theorists in the health science?” (ibid: 269). These questions of course, are not easily answered. Still, there are also exceptions to the referred current ‘care’ literature. As a counter stream to contemporary (often Anglo-American) literature on ‘care’, are the gentle and mindfully authored texts of the Norwegian nurse and philosopher Kari Martinsen. A main theme of Martinsen is how the nurse’s vocation, is first of all to see and to care for the patients, from both a kind heart and out of real professionalism. Her commendable example of care, practiced through empathic concern and renunciation, is the Merciful Samaritan. Intensification

“Intensification means that we must give key words their full value, so that layers of phenomenological meaning become embedded in the text” (van Manen 1997b: 350).

45 See for example: Kari Martinsen 1996 and 2000.
Meanings in phenomenological texts emerge from the lived throughness of concrete anecdotal material, the vivacity and energy of the descriptions that evoke our reflections and support our understanding of the phenomenon, but also of the way the author makes use of poetic devices such as contrast, repetition and alliteration, by which the phenomenon in focus is given a deepened significance. The author has “to work poetically with the language so that felt understandings that lie beyond language come within reach” (ibid: 350). Van Manen’s text of care-as-worry works so well, precisely because he cautiously explores the various meanings of care, and such intensifies our experienced and phenomenological understanding of what care possibly means in our relation to the other. In order to strengthen a text phenomenologically, one has to explore the key words in terms of their manifold meanings and various aspects. This is exactly what van Manen does, through his examination of caring as worry. He explores different kinds of parental care, care in crisis and in the daily routine, what care looks like, how it develops in practice, how care is understood in various linguistic traditions, what is the relation between self-care and care for the other, how responsibility and care relates and ethical dimensions of care.

In order to intensify a phenomenological text, it is not simply sufficient to use the right communicative concepts so that the reader understands its primary meaning. The vocative significance of intensification is rather delicate and subtle. As readers we should “feel” or more deeply detect in a sensed way, the various understandings of the mantic message of the text. The passage that I will use as an example of phenomenological intensification in van Manen’s text, is the passage on page 271. Here he introduces Levinas’ predicament of the caring person as a hostage of the one, who appeals to his or her responsibility. Pedagogically, the caring adult as hostage of the vulnerable child, is strongly embedded with layers of meaning and consequences. Unthought aspects of care-as-worry open up, as we cognitively and non-cognitively sense that it is true that, when a weak and defenceless child calls us, we indeed feel a response that is unmediated by our intentions and reflections. In this “originary caring encounter, [...] thought comes too late,” Levinas says (cited in van Manen 2002c: 271). The person in pain or need has made an appeal to me before I know that I am called. “I cannot help but feel responsible even before I may want to feel responsible”, van Manen says (ibid: 271). This is what care is really about; the
powerless other, the helpless child, that has the authority over me, because he or she relies on me. I am responsible, because I am relied on. Because we in a profound way “are our living in the world with others”, as Heidegger suggests (Gendlin 1988: 44), caring is even more than the practical caring encounter. Rather, it is the experience that I have, of being crucial to the other person’s being and becoming. Within this perspective, van Manen assert, “careless parents are not necessarily uncaring, but unworrying” (ibid: 271). ‘Careless’ parents then, may be able to provide care, but in an unworrying manner, and thus without actually being aware of the depths and dimensions of their responsibility for their child. To be taken hostage by a weak child, is the opposite of be part of a reciprocal encounter of painless and agreeable care. Rather, the care for a child comes true, when we feel ourselves addressed and appealed to by the other, as the true other, possessing an otherness that is not the same as me or reducible to my interests (Levinas 1987/1993). Care-as-worry, is how adults care for children because children are actual and potential vulnerable, and their defencelessness calls to us in a way that we have to respond to. Knud E. Løgstrup distinguishes between responsibility and commitment, in that toward the ‘powerless other’ we feel responsible, but toward the ‘powerful other’ we feel committed (Bauman 1996). Thus, the powerlessness of the child, in a sense is turned to ‘power’, in that as adults and parents, we respond to the child even before the call is articulated, because we watchfully are attuned to him or her in worrying. Concludingly van Manen says,

Levinas shows us that in the encounter with the other, in this greeting, in this face, we experience and understand the purely ethical before we have involved ourselves in ethics as a form of thinking and reasoning. We have felt our caring responsibility even before we have made a commitment (2002c: 273).

Tone

“Tone means that we must let the text speak to us, address us, so that its deeper meaning has a non-cognitive effect on the reader” (van Manen 1997b: 352). With the image of the small child or the enfeebled or sick other, calling for my response, and the demand of this voice still being so strong, though, it might in fact have no strength, but be soundless and unheard by the ear. Nevertheless, I cannot but listen, and feel myself addressed. I do not intend to or will to, but my answer is all set, I am
wedged to the other with my pre-reflective response. Thus, caring as an attentive, worrying responsibility is not an activity, performed out of thought and contemplation. Rather, we feel addressed by the other before we know cognitively that we are. The phenomenological language endeavours to make clear what we experience in a feeling-understanding way. Van Manen nicely elucidates this tonal quality, when saying,

In phenomenological composed text, the human being recognizes, creates, and images forms of being, significance of humanness. This means that phenomenology does not only explain what something is, it also explores what this phenomenon can mean by offering possible interpretations (ibid: 352).

Providing explanations, reasons or references in a conceptual language, our regular way of building up research texts, falls short of the phenomenological project. Though, there is not an either/or distinction between semantic and mantic meaning, or between determinative and expressive language. Van Manen explicitly emphasizes the necessary rational, realistic and ‘scientific’ qualities of phenomenology.

Phenomenological discourse depends on cognitive meaning: argument, logic, conceptual, intellectual and moral intelligibility. But I have tried to show that this is not enough. Phenomenological texts must also appeal to our non-cognitive mode of knowing – without expressive or transcendent meaning a phenomenological text is like a poem without poetic meaning (ibid: 353).

Nonetheless, it is precisely these mantic and expressive features of phenomenology that are the hard parts of phenomenological inquiry and writing. The process of writing, as well as of reading of phenomenological texts, is a constant re-writing and re-reading, in order to allow the inherent meanings of the text to speak, so that we cognitively and non-cognitively may grasp them. Yet, it is the reader’s privilege to interpret the text variously, while the author writes for one interpretation (van Manen 1997b).

In the last part of his article, van Manen explores the Biblical parable on Abraham and Isaac, in Genesis 22, with view to caring as general ethics and caring a pure ethics (2002c: 273 ff). I will attempt to find out what is the vocative effect of this
passage, in particular how the way he uses the paintings by Caravaggio and Rembrandt, vocationally opens up to me his interpretation of this familiar story of our Western culture. Doing so, I'll test the tonal effects of the text, and see if it may bring about an experience of being addressed in a non-cognitive way. This might of course be a risky project, like this entire chapter is risky. Yet, there is no other way to explore tonal effects, than to put one's own vocative sensibility at stake. We can read a text for its message, or for its vocational qualities. Thus, Van Manen, at this point introduces Wittgenstein’s distinction between the primary and the secondary meaning of a text.

Primary meaning is the informational content that is more or less public and follows the detonative dictionary sense of a text. Secondary meaning can only be grasped when the reader is first of all competent at the level of primary reading; but then in additional competence seems required for grasping inner or secondary meaning (1997b: 354).

If we are open to the secondary meanings of a text, then the tonal quality of language may bring about a reverberation within us, and “touch us in the soul” (Gadamer 1996 cited in van Manen 1997b: 354). This transformative and altering effect that a text might have, van Manen describes in Bachelard's words,

The image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface [of our being or self]. 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 root 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. In 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 (Bachelard 1958/1994: xix, cited in van Manen 1997b: 355).

Van Manen’s text on care-as-worry, like all phenomenological texts, is doing well to the degree of how we as readers feel ourselves addressed by it, in that it has the ability to stir and change our being. This does not at all mean that a phenomenological text should be entertaining, or easy to read. In fact, the opposite is often the case; phenomenology presupposes that the reader is willing to read with attention, even though it might be a laborious effort. The claims on a good phenomenological text then, are not particularly modest. But first when the reader has truly worked him or herself into the meanings of the text, the experience of being
touched and challenged in the soul can possible come about. With respect to van Manen’s text, the reflective analysis of Abraham and Isaac takes up the last seven pages of his fourteen pages article, and starts with the concrete description of the renowned event. Let us retell the parable from van Manen’s text,

The time came when God put Abraham to the test. “Abraham,” he called, and Abraham replied, “Here I am.” God said, “Take your son Isaac, your only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a sacrifice on one of the hills, which I will show you.” […] Then he stretched out his hand and took the knife to kill his son; but the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham,” He answered, “Here I am,” The angel of the Lord said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy; do not touch him” (Sandmel 1976: 21, cited in van Manen 2002c: 273–274).

The story discloses how caring as experience is many-layered, and not always immediately intelligible for the thought, even though we at a deeper level may sense a certain nearness to Abraham’s dilemma, through the power of the language. Yet, how does van Manen prove the tonal effect, how does he appeal to us as readers, in a non-cognitive and feeling-understanding way? Accompanied by Kierkegaard’s reflections, in his text, Fear and Trembling (1985), van Manen starts to explore the experience that Abraham possibly might have had, both as a father and as a man who had his faith in God. He asks, “what did Abraham think when he set out on the journey to sacrifice his son? […] What did Abraham go through when he gathered the firewood and sharpened his knife? What possible horror did he experience when he bound his son, when he raised the knife?” (van Manen 2002c: 273). And he stays with Abraham after the angel from God has prevented him from sacrificing his son, and asks, “What did Abraham say to Isaac when he untied him? How did he live with himself after this event? How was the journey home? Was the trust between Abraham and his son Isaac irreparably broken? How did Abraham explain himself afterwards to his son?” (ibid: 274). The Bible sheds no light on these aspects of the story, yet, van Manen’s way of posing the simple, but susceptible questions, brings the text closer to what caring might mean in our recent everyday life. Moreover, does van Manen’s questioning not, in addition to drawing the parable near to our experience of caring, also touch us at an even deeper level? His enquiry somehow reveals that beyond every pedagogical encounter there are significant questions to
pose, not only to the general ethic content the encounter, but also to what might be beyond ethics.

Epiphany

“Epiphany means that the text must bring about a transformative effect, so that its deeper meaning makes an edifying appeal to the self of the reader” (van Manen 1997b: 354).

Van Manen follows up the thought of what might be beyond ethics in a way that provides true epiphanic qualities to the reader. He rejects that this, what, that might be beyond ethics, is the idea of ‘natural caring’, with which some recent authors seem to make the final backstop (ibid: 274). Rather, to possibly find out what is beyond ethics, van Manen turns to the significance of the other’s voice, the voice of another that called Abraham and prohibited him from killing his son. “Abraham may have been confused. Why did not God call to him directly as he had done when he asked for the sacrifice?” van Manen wonders (ibid: 274). The Bible says that an angel called Abraham from heaven a second time, to assure him that it was God who had sent him. “And indeed,” van Manen continues, “every other who calls on me as a true other, calls me with the voice of God, said Levinas. And the voice says, “Thou shalt not kill” (Levinas in Røtzer, 1995: 64, cited in van Manen 2002c: 274). “The ultimate other is God,” van Manen says, and involves himself and the reader in a thought experiment of how the situation of Abraham and Isaac might have gone:

Abraham tied his son to the sacrifice stake. He sharpened his knife as he must have done. Then he raised the knife and, at that moment, as he looked Isaac in the face, he heard the voice call his name. And the voice said, “Thou shalt not kill”. Of course, it was not Isaac, who uttered those words, but they arose from Abraham’s originary knowledge of the otherness of this other, who happened to be his own son (ibid: 275).
The question of who called Abraham with the voice of the Other is already an intellectual questions, yet, of course also a religious and ethical one. To this question there might be many answers, as van Manen sees it. “We might as well say that pedagogy called him. Or that Isaac’s face, the face of any child for whom the parent holds a unique and inexpressible caring responsibility” (ibid: 275). However, the epiphanic meaning of the story of Abraham and Isaac, phenomenologically analysed by van Manen, is most strongly embedded in the way he interprets Isaac’s face, in the paintings of Caravaggio and Rembrandt. I paste an Internet version of Caravaggio’s painting; to let you, as readers, have the experience of seeing for yourselves that, which van Manen so expressively describes.

In Caravaggio, Isaac’s face is contorted with dread and fright, and the angel’s face is expressive with appeal. But in spite of these very different expressions, what is most remarkable is the uncanny likeness of the two faces. Abraham is held from killing his son by staring into the face of his son. Strangely, in Rembrandt’s painting, Isaac’s face is completely covered over by the clutching grip of Abraham holding him down. It is as if Rembrandt, the famous master of portraiture, did not know what to do with the face of Isaac. And so he covered up the face completely. But Both Caravaggio and Rembrandt anticipate Levinas in their understanding of the significance of the face as the ethical experience of responsibility for the other, and in particular for one’s child (ibid: 275).
Van Manen does not present to the reader a definite set of ideas or insights. Like phenomenologist in general, he does not pretend to have the conclusion or the determinate answer to the phenomenon in focus. “Rather [the] text has reached its goal only if it is continuously confronted with the phenomenon” (van Manen 1997b: 355). Thus, the essence of caring, is not contained in the terms of his analysis. As readers, our understanding of the phenomenon of pedagogical caring, care-as-worry, is deepened in a way that has enabled us to reflect on our own practice in the encounter with children. Van Manen, nearly at the end of his text, writes, “Many parents, and many nurses would agree that this worrying is painful and troubling. But it is also necessary, because in care-as-worry, I experience the other who calls on me. Worrying keeps me in touch with the presence of this other” (van Manen 2002c: 278).

‘Seeing’

Van Manen’s exploration of Linschoten’s text serves as the methodological device for showing some of the significant differences between a phenomenological text and research texts in general. I have employed this exemplary examination of his, in order to come to an understanding of van Manen’s own text on care-as-worry, to possibly show, rather than explain, how a phenomenological text includes embedded vocative, expressive, mantic meanings, additionally to its more renowned methodological device, the phenomenological reduction. What van Manen so elegantly does, by bringing to our attention the vocative meanings of phenomenological texts, I apply to the notion of ‘seeing’, in order to show what characterizes the entire study, as well as the term ‘seeing’, used as the phenomenological metaphor of this study. Phenomenological ‘seeing’, rather than ‘the idea of seeing’, will be guiding this study, in order to examine how disability is understood pedagogically. ‘Seeing’, as concrete experienced lived-throughness, rather than conceptualised thoughts about seeing, is what I search to examine. The Norwegian painter, Thomas Phil, suggests that the main labour of living is the practice of seeing. Seeing has a potential that involves the entire scale, from blindness to sharp sight. “What you at first think you see, may not even exist”, he says (Bergens Tidende, June 20. 2004: 64). In this study, the practice of ‘seeing’ embraces a manifold of phenomenological nuances, including blinded seeing,
unthinkingly seeing, being seen by the other, disabling seeing, enabling seeing and finally pedagogical seeing of disability. The various modes of ‘seeing’ then, are examined from “the midst of life experience where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being” (van Manen 1997b: 356).
Chapter 6. The experience of being seen for students with disability. An example of a phenomenological analysis

**Blinded seeing**

How do we experience being seen by others? Perhaps we are rarely fully aware of how others see us. But if we do become aware, then it seems to be of great consequence, especially if we are not sure of the full significance of the others’ look. Something becomes visible, when it is not just “seen” but when it is made noticeable. In the preface to his autobiography “And yet we are human” the Norwegian author Finn Carling tells what it was like for him to speak for the first time on the radio about the experience of being physically disabled.

Dripping wet from sweat I sank into the seat of the car, waiting for me outside the television building at Marienlyst, leaned back and tried to light a cigarette. Again and again I thought: My God, what have I done! My God, I have told that I am a cripple! Despite the fact that I knew that this was something that everybody who knew me had already learned and connected to me; something that in their eyes had to be a significant aspect of my identity, still I felt as if I had undertaken an irrevocable disclosure (Carling 1962: 8 - 9).

Finn Carling had directed the “eyes” of his radio listeners to take regard of something that had thus far been disregarded, not paid attention to. And yet, it had been a secret that everybody could already see. In fact, talking of “an irrevocable disclosure” when everybody could see his bodily disability seems strange, but this is how Carling experienced that particular situation. So, how may one understand this kind of seeing of disability that is experienced as a disclosing of something that everybody can see? How can one disclose something that is already visible? Simply, it is a certain kind of attentive seeing: it is to make noticeable (and thus thinkable) what was only seen but not thought about.

It is in part a cultural and normative experience that when facing persons with disability, the disability itself is seldom mentioned. Children are taught not to point, stare or talk aloud about the impairments of people they meet. Disability is treated as unmentionable and as something that should remain unnoticed and thus invisible, even in our society of so-called tolerance and openness. Robert Murphy, professor of anthropology, and himself paralytic disabled, points out the painful predicament of this kind of (non) seeing of disability: “And so we are treated to the paradox of nobody ‘seeing’ the one person in the room of whom they are most acutely, and uncomfortably aware” (Murphy et al. 1988: 239). The condition that is visible to all is somehow kept invisible by becoming a non-theme. We see something but we take no notice, and thus what is seen remains in some sense blinded to our vision. Even when the obvious disfiguring of the other is profoundly disturbing, it is culturally
inappropriate to express this particular experience in words. It is inappropriate to even "see" the disability. And thus we practice a blinded seeing.

**Seeing but unthinking**

By being blind to the disability we do not allow ourselves to think about it, reflect on it, make judgments about it. The blinded seeing of disability remains pre-reflective so to speak--seen but unnoticed. On the one hand, this is how we usually seem to see each other. We see the various unique features that distinguish one person from another and that make it possible to identify and remember the person. But unlike with disability, these features are not taboo for reflection. Someone may have a prominent nose, but even though the prominence of the nose is not taboo or unmentionable, the facial feature is not mentioned. In fact, we may recognize a person by his or her nose or other features and yet not be fully aware of that.

On the other hand, some feature of disfigurement or disability is often something that is not just seen and not reflected on, it is something that one must actually try or pretend not to see. It must not become an object of thought. So to describe seeing disability is to describe a special kind of seeing, it is a normative seeing, in some sense.

A friend of mine tells me she was going to get new glasses. She says that she likes these glasses so much because they are almost invisible. The frame and lenses of the glasses are so thin and clear that they are hardly noticeable, such that others may not immediately recognize the fact that she wore glasses. Glasses that do not look like glasses, but leave the on-lookers with another impression. What impression? An impression of non-glasses, before they disclose themselves as the glasses they really are. My friend wants others to see her in a certain way (without glasses) and (not unlike Finn Carling) her announcement of her intent to get new glasses expresses how she stands in a relation to her (physical) self. But unlike Carling the new glasses are not unmentionable. In fact, my friend may feel quite pleased when she is told how thin her glasses are. "I like your glasses, they are almost invisible!"

Peter tells of his meeting someone at the airport:

Standing in the crowded arrival hall of the airport I tried to come to a decision. I was responsible for seeing to it that one of the main speakers of the International Pedagogy Conference was picked up at the airport and properly transported to his hotel in the town centre. I had brought a piece of white cardboard on which I had written his name with black felt pen: Mr. Adnams. The first few arriving passengers already passed through the broad, grey sliding doors between the international transit area and the arrival hall. I looked around and noticed other people holding up signs with names, so that their unknown visitors could identify and connect with them. My panic increased. I felt I had to decide. Should I hold up the handwritten cardboard, or should I just wait and look for a man in a wheelchair? Probably he would be the only one in a wheelchair. My recognizing him would not be a problem. But how would he feel when I, a total stranger, did not follow the usual procedure
when meeting foreigners at airports, but picked him from the crowd because of his wheelchair? Peter’s agony seemed related to whether or not he should act according to what he perceived as an expected norm, or to the relevant knowledge he had of the person he was going to meet. What makes it so difficult to adopt an appropriate way of acting towards the person in the wheelchair? Why was Peter preoccupied with what would be the right thing to do? If he held up the sign with his name, waiting for the visitor to find him, the wheelchair person would probably see his evasiveness, as he knew that Peter knew. He had properly informed Peter beforehand that he was a wheelchair user, and the car Peter used was designed to transport a wheelchair. That was the reason why Peter was the one chosen to pick him up. So, Peter could just wait until he saw a wheelchair person and then go up to him as if they had met before. But what would the wheelchair visitor think? If Peter did not follow the common procedure of meeting the arrival of foreigners at airports, the visitor might feel as embarrassed as he would, when he still had to greet him as if he was surprised to see his identity (“Hello, you must be...”). Peter seemed to experience ambivalence and perplexity, because whatever he decided to do in recognizing the visitor, he would probably feel uncomfortable with it. In spite of his progressive attitude towards disability in general and wheelchair users in particular, Peter was deprived of a feeling of comfort related to his predicament in meeting this person. Peter’s problem was not primarily his own seeing of the disability but whether the wheelchair could become noticeable in his seeing. In other words, Peter’s predicament was that he did not know the visitor’s relation to his own disability: whether the disability could be “seen” as something disclosed in the way that Finn Carling has described, or “seen” as something that is unnoticed. Peter did not know how to “look” at the visitor.

The other’s look as self-seeing

Jean Paul Sartre describes how the look of the other person can make one feel objectified, judged, embarrassed, or ashamed of whom one is. Even if one were doing something inappropriate, such as one’s actions are not improper until another person observes them, but become improper and awkward when they are performed before the eyes of the ‘other’. Somehow my self-conscious evaluation of my “self” becomes activated through the look of the other. I see and judge my ‘self’ as I appear to the other person. “By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other” (Sartre 1943/1992: 189). This object, which is my “self” as I now see my “self” with the eyes of the Other, has all of a sudden become recognizable to me. I see my “self” not from the inside, as I did before, but from the outside as the other person see me. I have somehow become aware of where “I find myself” by the glance of the Other. The glance has an effect that seems to be experienced even more powerfully by the person being seen, than by the person seeing. The latter may attach little or no significance to the look or to the message provided in the look, still it is how the look is experienced that is of consequence. The young student, Trude, has cerebral palsy and shows how her self-conscious self-awareness becomes activated by the look of the teacher.

46 The anecdote and the basic idea for its interpretation are freely cited from professor Mårtén Söder, Uppsala University, Sweden, from a presentation at the University College of Bergen, fall 2001.
I was walking with two of my classmates behind a group of students, padding along the pebbly beach. We were about to return to school from a short biology excursion along the nearby shoreline. I felt so good because two of the girls in class had chosen to walk with me. We laughed and joked, and the weather was just fine. All of a sudden I heard the impatient shout of the teacher from further ahead: “Get cracking you three! We haven’t got all day!” I felt that she addressed herself only to me, and I went as fast as I could. I almost ran, not to cause any delay to my friends. I was not able to speak and run at the same time, so we went silently into the classroom.

This ordinary situation describes a teacher impatiently requesting some procrastinating students to hurry up. But it obviously meant something different to Trude than to the other students. She seems to take the teacher’s prompt differently one may say, more personally and presumably negatively. Her concern is not only directed towards the teacher, but also towards her classmates. She suddenly feels that she is the one that causes the delay. She may even feel that she is the reason for them being the last ones in the first place because her physical condition only allows her to walk slowly; even more so when she is speaking and walking at the same time. Her friends could have walked faster if they had wanted to. They actually had a choice, but they opted to walk slowly to be with her. Trude could have been happy or proud because of their deliberate choice, and she even tells us she felt so good about it. Still this particular feeling of happiness may also increase her sense of responsibility for the situation. In the experience described by her the plain words are more complex than she is able to express.

How does Trude experience the look of the teacher? How does it make her question her relation to her self? When she was walking and joking with her friends, she obviously “finds herself” just living, without reflecting on who she is. She “lives” her own movements, gestures, speech and actions in a manner that is simple and unreflective. She does not judge her own embodied being, but lives it. In Sartre’s words she realizes her actions unconsciously “in the mood for-itself” not as an aspect of her being as “being-for-her” (ibid: 221). Her body is experienced in a mode of being that is passed over in silence (passé sous silence). She is completely taken up by her actions and forgets about her body. However, when she feels herself seen by the teacher, she instantly feels judged because she is the one who causes the delay. The look of the teacher puts her in a self-conscious and reflective relation to herself. She sees herself for “what” she is. The objectifying aspect of seeing prevents her
from experiencing herself as “who she is”--the whole physical and spiritual person. She is the disabled, cerebral palsy student, unable to walk as fast as the others.

The disabling look

To be looked at, and to experience oneself becoming an object to someone else (and thus to oneself), makes the person aware of his or her “whatness.” This conscious “whatness” somehow brings about a certain vulnerability, and a profound sense of being in default of a personal defence or possible escape from the look. The experience of being vulnerable to the look of another person may in particular be recognized in the following account provided by the young student, Synne. She describes how she is doing the dishes, believing she is alone by herself in the school kitchen. Then, suddenly she becomes aware of the look of the teacher. Synne has severe paralysis in the left side of her body and also poor eyesight. She says that she is only allowed to do boring tasks in the kitchen, but not washing up the dishes, for fear she might break them.

It was Friday afternoon and the rest of the class had hastily left when they were permitted, ten minutes earlier than usual. I had to wait for my on-time taxi to pick me up, and was alone in the school kitchen, except for the teacher taking a call in her office. The kitchen was all tidied, except for one thing. The big, white bowl from our bun baking remained at the counter. I decided to wash it properly, because I love to do the dishes. I filled the basin with hot water, added Sunlight, and put the bowl in the water. The smell and the warm water were so delightful. The bowl rotated in the water, as I whirled the dish brush along the brim. Remnants of dough were stuck to the inside and the upper edge of the bowl, so I had to scrub really hard. I spilled a bit of water but I wiped it up with the dishcloth. My sleeves got a little wet, but I didn’t care. Then a door squeaked and I suddenly felt the teacher was in the room watching me. I must have been too careless with the brush, for all of a sudden the bowl slipped out of her hands and fell to the floor. The moment Synne senses the look of the teacher, something seems to happen to her. She does not tell us how she experienced the look, whether it was a discrediting or an accepting look. She simply tells that something happened. The bowl slid out of her hands and fell to the floor. This incident could have happened also when she was doing the dishes alone. But isn’t this situation recognizable? Doesn’t the feeling of awkwardness slip into our bodies the moment we sense somebody’s disapproving look? Synne’s focus was directed at doing the dishes and the challenging task it was for her, to hold the bowl and simultaneously move the dish brush. She tells how she enjoyed the warm water and the smell of soap, but most of all, perhaps, she enjoyed the pride and pleasure in performing a task and taking on a responsibility she had
seen other people do. The squeak of the door changed all that. It made her aware of the presence of the teacher. We do not know if the teacher really disapproved of seeing her doing the dishes, or even took notice of what she was doing, but Synne feels herself looked at, and the situation suddenly changes.

The feeling of becoming an object under another person’s glance may shatter an adolescent’s fragile formation of a new self-identity, the sense of being “capable” and of doing things that one could not do before. The look of the teacher reminds Synne of being incapable, awkward, dis-able. Rather than looking at the dish she is washing, the look of the teacher makes the student conscious of being looked at. And rather than seeing the dish as an object, Synne sees herself as an object through the objectifying eyes of the teacher. Sartre says:

> We cannot perceive the world and at the same time apprehend a look fastened upon us; it must be either one or the other. This is because to perceive is to look at and to apprehend a look-as-object in the world (unless the look is not directed upon us) is to be conscious of being looked at. (Sartre 1943/1992: 258)

Sartre describes a situation that is true also for Synne. The look of the teacher takes away her world—the world of the kitchen in which she was fully emerged as a capable person. The look takes away her personal agency. She becomes more sensitive to “what” she is than “who” she is. The teacher’s look reminds her of her paralytic awkwardness. It is ironic perhaps that doing the dishes is a task that few people would prize as a favourite activity. But for Synne it is a pleasant, sensuous and self-affirming experience. However, Synne knows that she should not do the dishes, because she is bound to break them. Ironically the look of the teacher disables her in two ways: it does not only remind her of her disability, it also disables her in the sense of Sartre: the look objectifies and makes her self-conscious and awkward.

**Enabling seeing**

The look of the other does not always objectify and make one feel alienated to one “self.” People who generally believe in themselves and who are capable may in fact feel encouraged by the look of the other. For example, the athlete may perform a superb act under the admiring glance of the onlookers. The same can be true for Synne. In another situation, with another teacher, Synne might experience the “look” at herself as kind and positive. She might experience the teacher’s look as approvingly and positively promoting her to keep up her good work. Like a successful athlete on the playing field, the sensed glance of the teacher would stimulate her to do her utmost.
Ingrid and Hanne are two students of special education whom I am about to interview.

Ingrid and I sit down in the school cafeteria. Ingrid chooses where we will sit and she tells me that during the break in the cafeteria she always sits facing the teachers’ staff room. “That is because I look for Jorunn [the teacher]. Today she saw me and smiled at me. When the teacher smiles at me then it is okay to be there among the other students.”

When I ask Hanne if she will come for an interview she glances at her teacher and says loudly, “I have to be back at noon, then my cookies are ready and my teacher has to go for lunch.” Her teacher smiles at her when she overhears Hanne’s remark. I assure Hanne that our conversation will be over by then, and remark on the good idea of the teacher to take care of her baking while she is occupied with me. “The teacher looks after my baking just the way I do. My cookies are safe with her,” Hanne says trustfully before she settles down for our interview conversation.

Even before the interviews have started, both Ingrid and Hanne have unwittingly shown how they experience the look of the teacher. Each student apparently feels herself “seen” and cared for in the glance of the teacher. Ingrid looks for the look of her teacher and when she catches it across the cafeteria, she feels the stimulation of the teacher’s appreciative smile. The smile supports her in the social situation when she is surrounded by rowdy students. She does not trust her peers and has good reasons not to do so. However, the encouraging power of the look of the teacher is seemingly what she needs to hold her own in the situation.

Hanne has handed over the responsibility of her most appreciated activity, baking, to her teacher. The supportive recognition of her teacher is what Hanne experiences in her teacher’s availability. The look of the teacher does not make Hanne awkward or self-conscious; in stead it makes Hanne feel confident in herself. The look of the teacher enables her to feel capable and skilled in the task of baking cookies, and it supports her social ability in dealing with the visitor and the teacher. The encouraging look enables the students to put themselves at risk and increase their personal learning and potential.

Enabling seeing of disability

Oda says,

When my answer is wrong, I know it immediately because Per [the teacher] looks at me with this particular humorous glance and says, after just a tiny little pause: “Yes…?” Then I understand that he wants me to give the question a second thought. He just leans back comfortably and waits. That’s why I like him so much. I feel relaxed and smart with him.
Oda receives the opportunity to rethink the teacher’s question, and through the patient and understanding gesture from her teacher, she has the sense of being a competent student. She experiences the teacher’s “seeing” her as trustful, dependable, and personal in a positive manner. The teacher’s look repairs her habitual experience of feeling disabled among other students who can do many things. We may say that this is the pedagogical look - it is the look that strengthens and builds the student’s confidence, trust and competence.

To Trude the look of the teacher at the beach mediated the disclosure of her disability. For a wonderful period with her fellow students she had “forgotten” her “disabled self” until the glance of the teacher reminded her of it and replaced her experience of “who” she was for her friends, with “what” she was for the teacher. The teacher’s look changed her sense of self, but in a disabling manner. Oda, in contrast, experiences her teacher’s look as enabling. The teacher sees her the way she wants and needs to be seen to grow towards her potential. What then is it that Oda’s teacher helps her see? And how does his way of seeing succeed to provide her the experience of her self as smart and competent (even if, in comparative terms with the other students, she is not so able)?

Oda’s teacher sees her possibilities, in which he obviously has confidence that he expresses in his entire attitude. Simultaneously, the teacher seems to see her vulnerability, to which he responds in a caring and patient manner. And the teacher is capable of expressing and communicating his pedagogical intention in gestures, voice and attitude in such a way that Oda experiences his response as a confirmation of her self.

Seeing disability and being seen as a disabled person are interconnected experiences. The crucial point for the teacher is to understand how the student experiences being seen, and act tactfully on this understanding. Tact and tactful means to be in touch, fully in touch (van Manen 1991: 126). Being in touch or having contact with the student is the basic condition for a personal and normative encounter between teacher and student. A look that touches or affects the student in a positive manner is always part of a pedagogical relation. But a distant, indifferent, objectifying look is without relation and pedagogically largely meaningless or ambiguous. The important point is that, in our look we also betray our relation to disability. So the student’s experience of the teacher’s look depends also on how the student experiences the relation between them, as well as how the teacher sees disability.

The look as such always has the double significance of “seeing” and “not seeing.” In everyday life we may see the other without noticing or reflecting, and we may see the other more or less thoughtfully. The challenge of teaching is to know when to see and when to pass over seeing something (and thereby bringing it to notice). Would it not have been nice for Synne if she could have experienced the teacher’s glance as “not taking notice” of her doing something that she was not supposed to do? Or better even, the teacher’s glance could have been experienced as encouragingly surprised, “Good for you Synne! You are washing the big bowl.”
The pedagogical relation lets the student experience the look as enabling and encouraging, knowing whether to see the disability or not. Herein lies the pedagogical paradox of special education. To students with disability, any look so easily activates the self-consciousness of his or her disability. The student wants and needs to be seen, but at the same time not to be seen in certain (disabled or disabling) ways. How then should the teacher see and not see? How may the look possess a certain “blindness” that comes from seeing pedagogically? Pedagogical seeing is protectively blind to infirmity and disability, and constantly strives to strengthen and enable the student. The pedagogical look passes over what should be acknowledged and recognized but not called attention to.
Chapter 7. Blinded seeing – relational aspects


Seeing is a reciprocal act. We see and are seen by others. But how do we experience seeing and being seen? Perhaps we are rarely fully aware of how we see or how others see us. If we do become aware however, it seems to be of great consequence, especially if the significance of the look is unclear or evasive. Still, could the meaning of a look also be at a level less than vague and ambiguous? Could ‘seeing’ have the quality of ‘un-seeing’ or even being blinded? What then, would be the lived experience of a look that sees ‘unseeingly’, with no recognition, only ‘blindly’? It depends perhaps on who experiences the ‘blinded’ seeing. Is it possible to think that the person seeing blindly would not be aware of his or her seeing? Is it not that the person seeing without actually seeing consciously, would need to ‘reflect’ on the experience in order to be aware of it? Like the unexpected witness, of a criminal deed, who must strive hard to make an attempt to re-member what was actually seen, in order to capture the impression of what was going on? The person who is seen ‘blindly’ on the other hand, most likely would experience the look. To him or her, the blinded look might mean something in the very moment of seeing. How then should ‘blinded seeing’ be described experientially?

Being does not see itself

Seeing something or someone is part of being in the world, even if seeing lacks mindfulness or in some way or another, is blinded to what is actually ‘seen’. Blinded seeing, somehow has in common with the experience of pure being, in that it cannot be attentive to its own existence in the very moment of existing. Blinded seeing does not see itself in the instant of seeing. This also is true of seeing in general, as the look, ‘sees’ before we reflect on what is seen. Being, as well in the very moment of absorbed living, is not aware of itself. One has to post-experientially reflect on what was seen and what living was like, in this moment of unaware absorbedness, to possibly manage to get a conscious grip on what the experience was like. Sartre’s expository asserts:
We cannot perceive the world and at the same time apprehend a look fastened upon us. This is because to perceive is to look at, and to apprehend a look is not to apprehend a look-as-object in the world (unless the look is not directed upon us); it is to be conscious of being looked at (Sartre 1943/1992: 347).

Immediacy characterizes the glance, with which we see other persons and the world. The moment I open my eyes, impressions strike me. However, the sense of seeing, perceives the world at a certain distance. Unlike other senses, for instance hearing, vision at the same time connects and disconnects us from what we see. Sartre asserts that we are present for the Other’s look without distance, but at the same time the look holds me at a distance. “It’s [the look’s] immediate presence to me unfolds a distance which removes me from it” (ibid: 347). Merleau-Ponty takes another angle when he senses nearness in immediate perception, in contrast to how the phenomenon tends to slip away when we try to understand and get a grip on it. Still he agrees to that in ‘seeing’, an experiential tension is present. This tension seems to distinguish blind or inattentive seeing from reflective seeing. Merleau-Ponty clearly expresses this distinction by writing, “The world is what I perceive, but as soon as we examine and express its absolute proximity, it also becomes inexplicably, irremediably distance” (Merleau-Ponty 1948/1997: 8). Straus, on the other hand emphasizes the distance of vision in his discussion of the anthropological significance of the modalities of hearing and seeing.

We can flee from something which is visible in the distance,” says Straus, “but that which is heard – be it sound or word – has already taken hold of us. […] We have no power over sound, word, voice, or ‘voices’. […] Hearing is simultaneous with that which is heard,” Straus continues, “sound always takes hold of me in this moment. It is present and determines the actual singularity of my Now (1963: 376 - 378).

While hearing takes hold of us in the moment it is heard, like Straus suggests, and thus forces us to have heard what was uttered, before we can decide not to hear, shutting the eyes on the other hand, can effectively close out vision. The ‘soundlessness’ of seeing may keep a vision invisible to us. But if we keep our eyes open, the glance of the other annihilates the distance between us. Just think of the experience of meeting a beloved one’s look across a huge airport hall. Our reciprocal
glance immediately transforms distance to closeness. Yet, one could ask how is closing the eyes to shut out a vision different from seeing blindly?

**Variations of blinded seeing**

One of the characteristic ‘tools’ of the phenomenological method, is the eidetic reduction. The task of eidetic reduction is to determine how relevant the text is regarding its evocativeness and its recognizability of iconic images relevant to the phenomenon. Phenomenology has the iconic quality of knowledge, and is like the Dutch phenomenologist Buytendijk suggests, ‘the science of examples’ (van Manen 1997a: 121). Thus, phenomenology aims to visualize those structural features of the phenomenon under consideration, by which the phenomenon gets its essential character. In a sense, each phenomenological description is an example of possible aspects of the phenomenon, an icon that points to one possible qualitative perspective of the phenomenon we are attempting to describe. Van Manen in effect says, “[a] phenomenological description describes the original, of which the description is only an example” (ibid: 122). A powerful iconic example of a phenomenon has a certain transparency, which lets us see the deeper meaning structures of the lived experience it describes. This phenomenological ‘transparency’ is possible when the themes are relevant to the phenomenon, and the description calls forth a quality that allows for recognition. The phenomenon under study also needs to evoke the sensitivity of the writer, as well as the reader of the text. What then, we can ask, are potential variations of blinded seeing? How might possible ‘iconic images’, like lived experience portrayals of student - teacher relationships, help us understand the deeper meaning of seeing blindly in pedagogical encounters?

Schools are considered to be the containers par excellence of pedagogical situations. Yet, pedagogical situations may fall short of pedagogical moments where students and teachers actually recognize each other. In fact, one may presume that most of the time, the ‘pedagogic’ activity might be of little or no significance to the selves of the students. What Mollenhauer (1983) calls ‘form of life’ (German: Lebensform, Norwegian: livsform) states the pedagogical potential for a type of inattentive, unintended being-together, and to be the profound forming feature of daily life routine. Likewise the French term ‘habitués’ directs attention to the
significance of the frequently disregarded regularity of day-to-day life. Still, even if the habitual ‘life-form’ strongly influences students’ developmental self, the reflected pedagogical significance, is not necessarily present. Pedagogical situations, situations when children and adults are together and relate to each other, may not at all include moments of pedagogical significance to the child. In pedagogical situations, there would be two main perspectives of relevance, the student’s and the teacher’s. The basic intention of pedagogy, by which pedagogical acts of various kinds are profoundly influenced and shaped, is that of the teacher guiding the student toward selfhood independence and personal identity; always looking to the present and past to the future needs of this young person. Roughly said, the guide is the teacher and the one guided, is the student. Thus, considered the intention of this study, the way the teacher sees the student is of greater significance than how the student sees the teacher. The pedagogic intention can only be fulfilled if the teacher attentively searches to understand the experience from the point of view of the student (van Manen 1991). How the students experience the blinded look of the teacher then, is the main focus of this chapter. However, inattentive seeing, most likely is equally common as the reverse in the classroom.

The investigation of ‘blinded seeing’ in pedagogy, by consequence should initially include at least three main thematic perspectives, all facilitating the perspective of the student. There is the perspective where the student is not reflectively being seen but also desires the teacher not to see him or her. Then, there is the perspective where the student wishes to be seen by the teacher, but is not. Third, there is the situation where the teacher honestly believes she or he is seeing the student, but the student experiences not being seen. All three perspectives include aspects of how ‘blinded seeing’ in some way or another renders possible a certain self-seeing of the student. Consequently, there are pedagogical situations where blinded seeing from the perspective of the student is desired, looked-for and even needed. Conversely, there are situations where not being attentively seen by the teacher could turn out to be of great consequence to the student. The one who doesn’t see and the one, who is not seen, might experience the frequent pedagogical practice of un-seeing very differently.
An additional perspective is related to situations where the students are unaware of what is actually going on in the classroom. They somehow are present but still not into or part of, what takes up the other students. One might say that they are where they are not. Their body is visibly present, but their mind is absently occupied with something else. The condition of inattentiveness to the distance between body and mind, or the pre-reflectivity of mood, inner atmosphere or perception, is what Heidegger (1926/1962) calls “Befindlichkeit”. We always ‘find ourselves’ in a certain state of emotions, yet, we may need another person’s intervention in order to become aware of the particular sphere of feeling of which we are experiencing.

According to Bachelard, image comes before thought. Somehow an image or a reflection created in us from an anecdote, moves us, before we know what it is actually about. “The image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface” Bachelard writes (1958/1994: xix). In a certain way, the expression of the image or the story creates ‘being’ in us. We are part of the connotative iconic presentation before we understand the meaning of it, intellectually. Like the Biblical expression, where the Word of God, became flesh; the image of the expressed word, may create what being is described for us and in us. This visualization of the soul, may be evident in stories about the pre-reflective seeing of students, or adults, that once were students.

**Wanting to be seen blindly**

The well-known trend of young boys wearing caps or hats indoors has been a hot topic of debate among many class teachers of the adapted education group. Those teachers, who did not share a homophonic attitude to caps, consequently exercised dissimilar practices. The various teachers’ views on this phenomenon were rather unclear to the students, because for some teachers their wearing of caps was overlooked, while at other times the teacher bursted out in anger and commanded students to remove the caps immediately. They had heard of cap prohibition in other classes and seemed to be expecting what so ever might come. The cap indecision rendered the classroom atmosphere quite tense. It was hard for the students to foresee whether a reprimand would come or not. This uncertainty kept them
sensitively aware of their headgear. A close observation of one of the usual daily events may serve as an example.

The disorderly drifting group of adapted education students enters the classroom, and in utmost slowness find their working places. The knobs on the wall, intended for coats and caps are all empty. Boys this age wear caps as if this headgear were glued to their skulls. Henrik and Daniel’s uncertain looks hesitatingly float across the room, pretending nothing is at stake. The teacher, Trygve, takes no notice of their covered tops, but tells them immediately to take up their task from a previous lesson. The boys share secret smiles and nods. They won this turn.

These boys desire not to be seen. The teacher’s seeming inattentiveness fulfilled their wish, this time. Yet, their wish not to be seen by the teachers, is restricted to the cap thing, not to not being seen at all. The particular longing for passing-over-ness concerns one part of their being, one might say a particular element of their personal (and common) conduct. They may desire the teacher to disregard wearing of their caps but still see aspects of their being, that they consider relevant to this encounter. Or rather, they themselves consider the caps a relevant part of their being young boys, schoolmates, pals. Their head uniform is important to the experience of mutual connectedness, as a horizontal alliance, needed in order to allow them to be seen, as they want to be seen. Thus, they project themselves as they wish to be seen, which includes the teachers un-seeing of the caps. One might argue that expressions of so-called sub cultural symbols such as the use of caps perhaps should be recognized, and also negatively commented on by adults, in order to maintain their function. Yet, how would this kind of juvenile revolt affect the balance of the pedagogical encounter, in this class? Would the students of adapted education handle a dissension with the teacher as less significant as other students in general might? Does the disproportionate asymmetry of the relationship between these students and teacher make a revolt more daring? The teacher might be oblivious to such an issue as caps or no caps, or he or she might just be unmindful. The difference is most likely not that serious to the students. The class might be less disturbed or the teacher – student relationship a little less conflicted, when the teacher does not ‘see’ what might cause agitation in the class. However, why is it that this cap-thing, nevertheless is of pedagogical significance? In other words, is there an experiential pedagogical meaning to students’ headgear?
My 16 years old son, is an all day long hat-wearer. When questioned as to why this practice, he says, “I don’t know actually. It just feels right to me”. I know that in his class, there also are other hat-wearing boys. Thus, the hat costume might be the symbol of student liberation as well as a strong standardized uniform. Or as Solvang says, “Fashion is about emancipation and discipline at the same time. We obey and simultaneously we decide”\(^{47}\) (Solvang 2002: 36). There seems to be elements of social as well as personal influence on this hat-thing. But, how should one understand the expression that wearing a hat “feels right to me”? Does the hat simply give him a comfortable feeling, which may make this expression just another shallow phrase? Or is there something else in the experience that when covering one’s head, it feels just right? In religious contexts, people cover their heads out of respect, fear or humility. Moses hid his face from the Almighty, as he dared not see God.\(^{48}\) Perhaps he was also scared to let God see him. Persons charged of serious crimes may want or are recommended to cover their heads in public, to protect themselves against peoples’ stares. Might there also be an element of concealment when adolescents feel the need to wear hats?

Etymologically the terms ‘cap’ and ‘hat’ both take their meaning from the word ‘head’. The term ‘cap’ stems from Latin ‘caput’, and the term ‘hat’ from Old Norse ‘hætta’ or ‘hood’ (Onion 1966: 142, 430, 447), which both mean ‘head’. The etymological meaning of the terms, thus supports the experience of the inseparability of skull and headgear. The sense of the appropriateness of wearing caps or hats, as well as the experience of personal well-being or that wearing a hat, is right for me, may somehow be related to this ancient sense of connectedness. But could the experiential inseparability of head and cap/hat also have something to do with covering, hiding or protection? The term ‘cap’ refers to a ‘close head-covering’ (ibid: 142), and the term ‘hat’ simply to ‘head-covering’ (ibid: 430), while the term ‘hood’ additionally means ‘head’, as well as a ‘soft covering for the head and neck’ (ibid: 447). To cover (from Latin, con-operire) (ibid: 222), is to put or lay something over, in order to shield or protect. To hide, means to put or keep out of sight (ibid: 440). And to protect (from Latin, pro-tegere = cover) means to ‘defend from injury’ or to ‘cover

\(^{47}\) The original Norwegian text: ”Mote handler altså om frigjøring og disiplinering på en og samme tid. Vi adlyder samtidig som vi bestemmer selv” (Solvang 2002: 36).

\(^{48}\) The 2nd book of Pentateuch 3, 6.
in front’ (ibid: 717). When students cover their heads by wearing caps or hats, they might do so in order to shield their heads by keeping them out of sight of the teacher. Moreover, they might defend from injury by covering the front of their heads. Does this etymological ‘game’ in some way give sense to the experiential anecdote we started out with, of the student group and their blindly seeing teacher? Could it be that Daniel and Henrik and other young persons with caps, somehow experience the need to protect themselves from being seen in injuring ways? Do they expect or experience the teacher’s look to be harmful or damaging to themselves? Students want and need to be seen. Yet, when the look somehow feels hurtful or unpleasant, they may wish they were invisible. They may invent ways to protect themselves against being seen tactlessly. This may be what we see in the movie ‘My life as a dog’ (1985), where 12-year-old Ingemar closes his eyes and puts his fingers in his ears while he mumbles loudly, in order not to become part of his mother’s furious and uncontrolled outbursts. When Henrik, who wears his cap in the classroom, tells me that he sometimes ‘shuts his ears’, he may well be trying to avoid the insensitivity of the teacher. Henrik, reveals his ability to ‘shut his ears’ to me in these words,

Did you know that I am able to shut my ears? It’s true. I just bend over like this, with my head a little down, my eyes to the ground, and I am out of it. They see nothing strange with me; they don’t get it.

Shutting ears, closing eyes, disturbing mumbling, or wearing caps, could they all be a protection against being seen too closely, being seen through? We all want to be seen in certain ways and with an appropriate closeness. Sometimes we sense the look of others to be too near. This experience is not necessarily recognized by the person who is seeing. Moreover, the other person’s look also directs our own glance to our ‘self’, and compels us to see things we may not be prepared to face. Being seen or seeing myself then, is something I may not yet be ready for. Young persons may need sheltering caps/hats and the talent to sensitively flee from adult looks, until they feel it is right for them to confront the world face to face.

**Calling to be seen, but still being unseen**

Some times teachers should see more than they do. There are moments the teacher need to be aware of, as well as moments that should be recognized, because they
are of significance to the student’s being and becoming of self. Students might silently call for the glance of the teacher because they need attention in general, or in a particular situation. There are moments when being seen or not seen might make the crucial difference to a student’s life. 18 year old Tom, one of the students of the small, adapted education group, would like the teacher to address him about today’s homework; the countries geography.

Most of the students eagerly respond with or without the teacher’s direct questioning, confidently exposing their knowledge of Norwegian counties. Tom sits quietly turning the pages of his geography book over and over. Some of the pages he has marked with yellow labels. The labels indicate what most kindled his interest when he did his homework. He most likely would have enjoyed taking part in the conversation, but before risking participating he seems to need a direct prompting from the teacher. However, his careful preparation for this particular geography lesson is given no attention by the teacher. She may have long ago lost her confidence in his skills, because he usually is the type of student who rarely participates and does not prepare himself. Thus, on this exceptional occasion of preparation, he turns the pages over and over. Why is it that Tom prepared himself for this class? Was it just today? Is it a random coincidence or could we somehow understand the situation in light of the pedagogical climate between the boy and his teacher? What would encourage a student to thoroughly get ready to be asked about the current homework and then remain unrecognized by the teacher, and do nothing about it? We must ask then, what prevents the teacher from becoming aware of Tom in this particular moment, and what is it that keeps Tom from getting the teacher’s attention, when he realizes she does not see him? There might be various psychological or sociological explanations to the phenomenon regarding the teacher’s act as well as the student’s. Yet, how would this pedagogical incident be interpreted phenomenologically?

Løgstrup advises teachers to maintain an appropriate distance to students, by concentrating on issues of relevant pedagogical interest, not on what he or she considers to be the students’ psychological motives for acting or saying something or

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49 The portrait is shaped from close observation after five weeks in this classroom.
the other. His concept of the appropriate distance held by the teacher toward a student is called, ‘the restrictive zone’. He says,

A basic phenomenon of our existence is that all of us claim to be enclosed by a zone of restriction. We resist another person breaking into this zone…. The zone of restriction as well is given the function of sticking to the subject at hand (Løgstrup 1997: 176-177)

Tom’s teacher does not break into the student’s zone of restriction. In fact, she does not seem to be close enough to become aware there is such a zone. However, to acknowledge the zone of restriction of another person, you necessarily have to realize that there is a kind of relation between the two of you. You have to see yourself and the other person as two related subjects. Could it be that Tom’s teacher is inattentive to his very presence because she unconsciously has figured out what his motive might be for not being a good student? A motive is etymologically different from a reason, mainly in that a motive is understood as an underlying force or ‘that which moves a person to act’ (Onions 1966: 592), while a reason is based on facts or circumstances serving as grounds for action (ibid: 744). According to Løgstrup (1997) the motive only concerns the person, while the person’s reason for doing something should be questioned by others. To request the reason a student has for what he does or says is to offer this student a certain resistance, which supports the student’s developing self, and should be part of all pedagogical practice. But, to search for the student’s motives for acting or saying something, is to violate his or her personal ‘self’, by assuming an authoritarian manner and objectifying him or her. What the student does not see, or does not want to share, is not the business of the teacher. Thus, when Tom’s teacher seems to have lost faith in him, and appears to lack confidence in his potential, she actively abandons the pedagogical expectations she once had for him, and in a certain way attach motives to his actions which consequently objectify him and take away her ability to see him. His attendance is by consequence, disregarded. She neither sees him nor acknowledges his contribution. Somehow, as Levinas (1987/1993) says, in the objectifying his face might have become barely recognizable to her.

The original Danish text: “Et elementært fænomen I vor tilværelse er det, at enhver af os gør krav på at være omgivet af en urørlighedszone. Vi sætter os op imod at noget andet menneske bryder ind i den…. Urørlighedszonen har altså også den funktion at få os til at holde os til sagen” (Løgstrup 1997: 176-177).
To be ‘seen’ but still not ‘seen’

My friend Terje, shares an epoch-making experience from his early schooldays,

“I was 8 or 9, and daily teased and trashed in the schoolyard, especially by a muscular boy, a year older than me. But I never fought back. My teacher saw some of the incidents and made efforts to put an end to the badgering, by reprimanding the older boy and encouraging me to fight back next time. However, I never told him what I repeatedly told myself; in fact I had a specific motive for not retaliating to the offence. Deep within me I was convinced that as Jesus had never defended himself, neither should I.”

This teacher interferes with what are clearly incidents of student bullying, and he does so in a way that is reasonably common amongst teachers. He makes an effort to reprimand the perpetrator, presumably he also comforts the victim and simultaneously tries to push him to defend himself by hitting back. Yet, the younger boy does not seem to take his teacher’s advice. His sense of the situation is perhaps too foreign to the teacher’s knowledge of students so as to fit with any principle of reciprocation. To help himself cope with the complex situation, he does what children sometimes do, he makes comparisons to a person worse off than he experiences himself to be. In a corresponding way, Ingemar, in ‘My life as a dog’ (1985), over and over again, reflects on how it might be for Laika, the Russian space-dog, to move towards a slow annihilation inside the space capsule circulating around the earth.

What could possibly be the pedagogical message in Ingemar’s, as well as Terje’s experiences as related to the hidden and unspeakable essence of children? These experiences are not just occasional episodes; these two young boys are not necessarily extraordinary. Or in a sense one could say that all children are extraordinary. The experiences may serve as examples of the profound unavailability of every child. Children are profound mysteries, or in Leibniz’s words,” the subject that is a secret, a ‘monad’<sup>51</sup>“ (cited in Mollenhauer 1983: 86). How then, should teachers and adults ‘see’ in order to see what needs to be seen? Or rather, are there ways of seeing that some more than others, might help us understand the monadic child? Do particular pedagogical looks, allow for the child’s invisible (and unutterable) being, to be recognized?

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<sup>51</sup> The original German text: Das Subjekt, das ein Geheimnis ist, eine ”Monade” (Mollenhauer 1983:86)
Wittgenstein asserts that the “subject does not belong to the world, but is rather a border to the world” (Wittgenstein 1922/1999: 5.632). If so, how is ‘borderline’ pedagogy to be practiced? It is hard for us to think of ourselves as something completely solitary. Contemporary sociology resists this existential thought. Yet, even if other persons and things surrounded Terje, he still was in a sense solitary. Even if through sight, touch, sympathy and cooperative work we are with others, these transitive relationships never exist in a singular way (Levinas 1979/2002). I still never am the other person. “One can exchange everything between beings except existing. In this sense, to be is to be isolated by existence” (ibid: 42). Human experience shows that Levinas is right. What Terje and Ingemar actually are involved in, is the tough labour of existing. They work on their identity by acting on and reflecting meaningfully about their life situations. They take responsibility for themselves by being occupied with questions of how and why they exist. According to Levinas “identity is not an inoffensive relationship with itself, but an enchainment to itself; it is the necessity of being occupied with itself” (ibid: 55). Thus, when children essentially shape their ‘self’, the process usually seems to go unrecognized by adults. Most of the time children live backstage. Only occasionally do they capture the public scene. “Man is a half-open being” Bachelard says (Bachelard 1958/1994: 222). This is particularly true for children.

For we are where we are not

In a certain way we are blind to aspects of our experiential being. We cannot reflect on ourselves and at the same time be taken up in action. The Danish philosopher Knud E. Løgstrup in one of his books (1997) describes an incident on his way to the post office to send a letter. Later on he reflects on this situation: while he had been walking down the street toward his goal, he discovered that he was not thinking of where he was heading, but rather his thoughts fluidly took up various themes. He realized that what he had been reflecting on were concerns like his struggle with the latest text, the party the family was giving the next night, a difficult debate with a colleague. A mixed multitude of thoughts, images, ideas and sensations had run through his mind. The one issue he had not thought of, was where he had been heading. His steps lead him to the post office, yet he did not at all have in mind the

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particular place he was heading to. He had been reflecting on questions related to his past and future, and in this flow of consciousness, he was totally in the reflection. Like Sartre asserts, “reflection, demands that the reflective be in that which is reflected on” (Sartre 1943/1992: 213). On his way to the post office, one might say that Løgstrup physically was, where he consciously was not. He was fully taken up in reflection and forgot about his body. He was conscious of the world and not of him ‘self’.

Quite often students sit at their desks, looking more or less absentminded, reflecting on things that are irrelevant to school subjects. If this condition is frequent, teachers might call these students daydreamers, airheads or students weak of concentration. We tend to see this condition of assumed inattentiveness and distraction as undesirable, and we make efforts to wake them up to what is going on in the ‘real’ world. And yet, how could these seemingly negligent students’ be understood differently? How is it that we sometimes are where we are not, and could this ‘being somewhere else’ possibly be explored experientially?

Sixteen-year-old Niklas a moment ago enjoyed a great meal of chicken and coke with his classmates in the school kitchen. Coke is Niklas’ absolute favourite drink. If he ‘cooperates’ in class, he is allowed to buy one coke every Wednesday in the school canteen. The assistant keeps the money in her locked desk drawer. So he has to ‘cooperate’. Quite frequently he does not collaborate as expected, and his weekly coke becomes beyond reach. Then he cries, and promises to cooperate the next week.

However, today he got his coke, and also a delicious dinner, even if the teacher told him he was a problematic and reluctant student while they were preparing the meal.

Now the mealtime is over, the other students tidy up the kitchen, while Niklas and I sit at the table. Niklas is not interested in household work at the moment. Instead, he looks out through the huge windows in the kitchen. I follow his glance beyond the kitchen stoves, ventilators and cupboards, toward a turbulent winter sky covered by threatening clouds. “Do you see how fast the clouds move?” he asks, recognizing that we share a focus. I bend a little to see past the cupboards: “Yes, I do.” I say. “The wind makes the clouds race off.” “Yes,” I reply. “He really blows them quickly. Look, now there are hardly any more clouds left.” “Yes”, I agree, “they have almost reached the mountain top.”
“Do you see the black cloud over there?”
I nod.
“Soon the rain will come,” he concludes. Then he rises and unties his flowered school kitchen apron.53

Some moments ago, Niklas was engaged in the joint group dinner, especially taking pleasure in his coke, and involving himself in cheerful chat with his classmates and teacher. Now, he with awe has turned his attention to the sky and the drifting, unstable clouds. His entire perception is mindfully focused on the world outside the window. Niklas is situated in a physical space with his body, and yet his mind is entering another space, a space that transports him away from his everyday reality. So there is a doubling of space of experience here. Niklas at the same time dwells in two spaces, the space of the school kitchen and the space, which the drifting skies open up to him (and us). The term ‘space’ itself possesses rich semantic meaning. The word does not simply refer to physical extension and perspective. Etymologically, the term “space possesses the meaning of lapse or duration in time as well as distance; it carries the meaning of temporal and physical expanse as well as the time spent in an experience” (van Manen 2002a: 3). When Niklas enters the space of drifting clouds, he forgets about himself. The reality outside the window absorbs him and he is self-forgetful. Like Sartre says, none of us reflect on our reflection, we simply instantly take in the impressions we perceive.

Consciousness is not dual…. The immediate consciousness, which I have of perceiving, does not permit me either to judge or to will or to be ashamed. It does not know my perception, does not posit it; all that there is of intention in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the world (Sartre 1943/1992: 12).

How should one understand the close relationship between our being and our consciousness? Was Descartes right when he said: “I think, therefore I am” – or could the reverse be more true, ‘I am, therefore I think’? To possibly come closer to an understanding of the relation between the phenomenon of being and that of consciousness, a simple epistemological investigation might be initiated. Some way or another, knowledge has to relate itself to existence. Yet, when Niklas (and I) reflect on the stormy weather clouds, which fly across the afternoon sky, the basis for our shared knowledge of the sky and the clouds, as well as of our communication as

53 Close observation after four weeks in an adapted education class.
such, come from our experience of what it is like to be human beings. Niklas, with a young persons awe and admiration shows me the roving afternoon grey sky and evokes wonder in me as well. It is noteworthy, how the almost forgotten awe for the power of nature can be stirred up by encountering a phenomenon through the eyes of a student. Somehow, lived experience feels like a route, or as Bachelard suggests,

Being here and there one should think twice before saying. “Entrapped in being, we shall always have to come out of it. And when we are hardly outside of being, we always have to go back into it. Thus, in being, everything is circuitous, roundabout, recurrent… (Bachelard 1958/1994: 213).

Being as experience, according to Bachelard, is a spiral and the spiralled being never knows if it is approaching the centre of the spiral or the facade. “In the reign of the imagination, an expression hardly proposed, before being needs another expression, before it must be the being of another expression” (ibid: 214).

“Knowing always implies teaching” (Pierre Janet cited in Bachelard 1950/2000: 49). Bachelard continues, “Moreover, it is of little importance whether or not we communicate our knowledge since our innermost thoughts is itself ‘a way of talking to oneself, a way of teaching oneself’ (ibid: 49).

“Time is what we know about it” (ibid: 49). Being is a way of knowing, like knowing is a way of being. Thus, being in the flow of time Niklas and Henrik know something about time, without actually reflecting on what time is. According to Janet (cited in Bachelard 1950/2000: 49-50), we act in relation to time; “if we are talking about knowledge of time, we have to arrive at ways in which we can protect ourselves against time and ways we can make use of it”. One may suggest that the boys in one and the same action are deliberately imposing a different meaning to the situation than the teacher wishes them to, or thinks is desirable. Yet, at the same time, they open up the possibilities of time, by using it in ways they find preferable to the alternatives in the situation.
Chapter 8. Seeing but unthinking – bodily aspects

The pond’s hexagram whose lesson is repeated: everything you lose comes round (Crozier 2003: 40).

It is part of a cultural and habitual experience that when facing persons with disability, the disability itself is seldom mentioned. Disability is treated as unmentionable and as something that should remain unnoticed and thus invisible, even in our open-minded, so-called equalitarian society. The obvious condition that is visible to all is somehow kept invisible by becoming a non-theme. We see something, but take no notice, do not give it attention, and thus what is seen, remains in some sense unconscious to our vision. By treating disability as inappropriate to mention or even see, we practice a seeing without reflection. We see but dare not really make judgements about what we see. In a certain way, we practice seeing unthinkingly. Robert Murphy, himself quadriplegic, mentions that before he was disabled he does not remember thinking about physical disability, except as something that happened to others. Disability had no relevance to him. He says, “A disabled person could enter my field of vision, but my mind would fail to register him – a kind of selective blindness quite common among people of our culture” (Murphy 1987: 86). Moreover, he describes a gulf of alienation that marked his seeing of the disabled. They were as unfamiliar to him as were the inhabitants of a totally remote culture with an inaccessible language. He felt no empathic oneness with disabled persons, rather a sympathetic separation.

A move where one tries not to move

The Swedish film ‘The Test’ (Prøven 1985), edited by Margareta Garpe, describes Rebecca, a 40-year-old pregnant woman. The film opens in a desolate waiting room at a hospital, where she and her husband Hannes, are about to receive the results of an amniocentesis test. Their awaiting of the impending medical results is filled with insecurities, and strongly highlights the way they express their feelings toward the coming child. In one main sequence, Rebecca, in despair, shares with her husband a disquieting encounter she had with an intellectually disabled toddler and his mother in the supermarket.
“Yesterday I saw the Greek woman at Domus. She was there with her child. Have you seen him?” Rebecca asks.
“Well, in fact she has many…” Hannes replies.
“No, I mean the youngest. He could be… three years old or so.”
“Yes, I know.”
“He is nice. However, it shows. He has Downs. The woman is my age, perhaps a bit older.
[…] He is not worse than other lively toddlers. But she looks as if she has to apologize for herself and the boy. And it is so visible! People do roundabouts to avoid meeting them. The movements are perhaps barely perceptible, but oh… still so felt! The boy sits there in the cart waving, laughing at people, who… look away. There is a void around the boy. He contaminates. He should be punished.”
“It is not that bad…”
“Yes, it is. People are embarrassed. They are embarrassed because they feel sorry for him. But there might be no reason to feel sorry for him, or… is it that his mere existence is tragic? He should not exist? He should not have been born…” (Garpe 1985)

Rebecca is an attentive seer, who brings to light what was seen when she considered the disabled boy and the people around him. She experiences that people, herself included, treat the intellectually disabled toddler as if he were invisible, while in fact he is smiling and waving at them, trying to catch their attention. Like Rebecca, the other people encountering the toddler with Down syndrome must have seen something, yet without obviously taking this ‘something’ into consciousness in the present moment. They see him; yet, they seem to somehow move their beings away from him. Because of Rebecca’s uncertain future, she attempts to understand the meaning of the boy’s intellectual disability, in this case primarily for her own self, but this reflection brings alarming thoughts to mind. The disability of the little boy proves to mean something to her, and due to her condition, this is not at all surprising. A mother-to-be is likely to be concerned about the condition of her unborn child. Finn Carling, himself physically disabled, speaks of that almost universally recognizable moment, when right after their child has entered the world, the perfection of the child seems to have primacy over life itself.

When a crippled child comes into the world, the stage on which he will have to act his part in life is already set by people’s attitude towards the disabled. Thus it is not strange that the very first question a mother usually asks, when she has given birth to her child, is not whether it is alive, but if it is well-formed (Carling 1962: 47).

54 The text is my translation of a passage from the movie The Test (Prøven 1985).
Being well formed, non-disabled at the moment of birth, is (maybe) the visible part of the child. The lack of perfection is what we know as ‘disability’ or ‘stigma’. Etymologically, ‘stigma’ means ‘mark branded’ or ‘mark of disgrace’ (Onions 1966: 869). Being experienced as deviant according to people’s attitudes leaves marks on the disabled child. Like the crucified Christ, who was stigmatized from pointed instruments, the disabled person endures the stigma of being deviant on his self. Deviance is to set a brand upon. The experience of disability as a branding, seems to be part of a cultural seeing, belonging to our unconscious being. Rebecca’s lived experience could possibly illustrate a significant aspect of how we practice the unreflective seeing of disability. What does it mean, that we tend not to reflectively see disability, but at the same time, seem to be extremely aware of it? How should we understand Rebecca’s experience of people who did not see the disabled toddler and his mother, and the fact that they somehow, almost unnoticeably, move their looks and bodies away from him? How could they be aware of something that they did not seem to notice? What is the experience of seeing, without noticing or paying attention to what one sees? When we see without noticing or reflecting on the meaning of what we see, our perception may be normatively or culturally unconscious to what is seen. The eye receives the message without recognizing or interpreting what is actually there. In other words, seeing without thinking is pre-reflective, pre-comprehended, pre-conscious. How then should the experience of ‘seeing unthinkingly’ be described experientially in pedagogical situations?

**A move that becomes unmoving**

Like it is possible to see unthinkingly it may also be possible to hear ‘deafly’ or even smell ‘inodorously’. The poem called ‘Lydia’ (Stilma 1985: 39), describes a mother, who has been deprived of her only child. The mother sits at the porch of her house calling out her daughter’s name, every evening at twilight. The city people however, have become so used to the evening breeze bringing crazy Lydia’s calling into their homes, that they hardly recognize her voice anymore.

No one heard the despair in her voice any longer.  
No one felt pity anymore.  
Lydia had been crying her evening cries for so many years!
It had become as insignificant as the yapping of a farmyard dog.

The city people do in fact hear Lydia’s crying every evening but they take no notice of their hearing. They no more discern the meaning of what they hear. Like we, in a certain sense become deaf to the repeated yapping of a dog, the neighbours have in the course of time, become inaccessible to the meaning of Lydia’s calling. Her being has become,

a spirit that has lost its “being there,” one that has so declined as to fall from the being of its shade and mingle with the rumours of being, in the form of meaningless noise, of a confused hum that cannot be located. It once was. (Bachelard 1958/1994: 217).

Her crying is merely an echo, which is heard, but not noticed. The echo of meaning has become meaningless, useless, a shade of noise not reverberating in the hearts of the listeners. Lydia’s being has become nothingness to the city people.

However, would the experience of habitualized sensing, like that of the ‘deaf’ hearing of the city people, be an example of pre-reflective sensing? Not quite, I think. Pre-reflective sensing, like blinded seeing, remains pre-conscious, and thus this way of seeing at no moment of time, is open to our vision. But then, how should we understand the experience of Rebecca, who in her later reflections, discloses what was not actually seen in the ‘immediate’ encounter between the disabled toddler and the customers in the market? While habitual seeing which once was a conscious perception but later on, through the process of time, has turned into non-seeing; it is possible to believe that unthinkingly seeing, can later become conscious by disclosure of what was not seen. These two experiences are characterized and distinguished by an opposite relation to time; the first, where Rebecca in the market, was seeing pre-reflectively but was brought to consciousness by revelation and the second where the crying of Lydia, once was attentively heard, but now has become un-reflectively heard later on. Thus, what once was seen and reflected on in the past, belongs to a different phenomenological theme. Concluding then that ontologically, unthinkingly seeing, is characterized by pre-reflectivity, pre-consciousness and pre-comprehension in the moment, but might afterwards become mindfully understood.
How then, may seeing unthinkingly be experienced in the moment of lived experience? How is the person’s sense of the situation to be understood? Did Rebecca somehow sense what was actually at stake in the situation, when she met the Greek mother and her intellectually disabled toddler? Indeed, Rebecca ‘re-membered’ the experience, and is later on capable of revealing to herself and her husband what was pre-consciously experienced in the actual moment in the market, and the meaning of it to her. Thus, what characterizes pre-reflectivity is that the lived experience requires reflection to become conscious. In this way seeing is not aware of what is seen in the moment of seeing. In other words, seeing does not see itself.

Holding back the move

Then, what would be the lived experience of ‘unthinkingly seeing’ in adapted education, among these teachers and students? Would there be pedagogical situations, where seeing, but trying not to see certain features, is recognizably practiced? How would one experientially describe the experience of pretending not to see, and thereby not letting what one sees become an object of thought? Are there not situations where teachers might attempt to resist seeing what they truly see? Yet, by trying to somehow restrain what they actually see, are they not renouncing their pedagogical responsibility for the encounter with the student? Anne, a young second-year student of an adapted education class, with a left hand paralysis, describes the experience of a teacher pretending not to see her, when the group was playing cards in a math class.

In the math class today we played cards. We often do, in order to practise the numbers and train the counting more quickly. I like playing cards, and I often played at home with my father and grandmother and cousin before the accident. When we play cards at school, I sometimes am allowed to put the cards in the cardholder in front of me at the table. In a way it is in me, that I want to do as much as possible on my own. But I hide this wish at school. Because of the accident I try not to let them see that I am able to do things myself. Today Monica (the teacher) held the cards for me, and she did not let me play myself. While she was doing this, I dared not say anything. But I felt slow and dejected, because I was not able to throw the cards on the table quickly enough. I even often lose cards on the floor and fail to hide them properly like the other students. I thought of it all the time while we played. I was doing wrong and the others were not. And I knew that I was not really participating. I didn’t tell anybody how bad it was. I never do. I try to understand the teachers and not argue, to have my way. Today I just sat there
together with them. The teacher looked like she was smiling, and handed me one and one card when my turn came up. A few times she let me choose which card to throw on the table. I think she wanted me to believe that I played myself. She looked at me like she intended to say: “You dare not disturb us”. I understood from her look that if I had played the cards on my own, I would constantly interrupt the flow of the game, and make it take too long. To comfort myself, I started to think that it was better to be friends, than to hold a bunch of cards by myself.

How can card playing be fun when someone else is playing your cards? Or more experientially expressed, what is the experience of playing cards, without playing them yourself? The lived experience of card playing is sensed in the hands and the body of the card player. Holding the cards, sorting them, choosing a suitable card to throw on the table, always sensing the others around the table, taking part in the conversation, orienting one’s whole being to the game. Being one of them who play cards. The complexity of the card player’s movements is staggering; the rapid eye movements, the constant accommodation of the fingers to keep the cards sorted and hidden from the glance of the opponents, the body tensed and prepared for the next pull, the intense atmosphere of thrill and pleasure. The experience of card playing is related to the sense of the particular cards in your hands while exchanging cards with the other players. The cards in your hand are not just any cards. In a hand of cards, the cards are you. Without cards you are not part of the play. The cards are your entrance to being a card player. Likewise, one is not a football player if one is not on the football field with the team, trying to score with the ball. Irregardless of being on an excellent team, and being a brilliant player; if you are not playing yourself, the experience of playing football is not yours. And what if an excellent player who was replacing you, came up to the bench line where you were sitting, just as he were about to score with the ball, offering you to kick the ball from your outsider position? Wouldn’t then, the meaning of playing at all be completely confused? The meaning of the game would be gone. Gadamer (1960/1975) considers the deeply sensed meaning of every game to be the experience of settled unalterable rules, to which all players must adhere. A game is not a fair game if all but one, sticks to the rules. According to the rules, it is basic to playing whether cards or football, that you be the player yourself, in order to experience the game as a player. And to be someone is not a replaceable condition.
Then, how may the significance of playing cards be understood experientially, from the point of view of the single card player? Like all human activity, card playing is enclosed in certain experienced structures, like time, space, body and relationality. As to time, one has to play when the play is going. The duration of the game frames the participation. Within a single hand, time is assigned to the individual player. You must take your turn at just the right time, if you are to join the game. The cards have to be played out in the correct order or the play will collapse. This is common knowledge even for young children. We all want the rules of play to be respected, although we know that a young child sometimes is tempted to cheat in order to win. Also solitary card players compete with the luck of the cards, and are particular about doing things right or the game loses its significant meaning.

With regards to space, card playing, as with other social games in general, happens at a certain place. To participate one has to be present in this particular spot, while the game is in progress. The single card player also has her or his own order in space, which is crucial in order to prevent chaos in the game, and to maintain the social experience of relationship. There is certainly a degree of freedom related to the use of one’s own space. One may for instance move one’s head, arms and body, as long as one does not disrupt the co-players or the game. As with the structure of time, the structure of space relates to the rules of the game, as well as to the rules of the relationship between the players. A game may partake of different rules, both in regards to the game itself and to the social relations within, but every change must be done according to a reached agreement between the participating players. The agreement may be openly communicated or implicitly understood, but must be democratic, as well as absolute. There is also a certain vocal space as well as a personal space, which allows the individual to express him or herself. The space of fair play at its best, is distributed justly and with an open mind. Still, sometimes one or a few persons occupy too much personal space, while others express themselves unobtrusively like we see with Anne.

Card playing presupposes the player’s attention in several places over a moment of time. The hands must be paid attention to, (and also the hands as well as the eyes of the others), in order to get all the particular card-playing details just right. The pile of cards on the table must be focused on, in order to follow the play in an appropriate
way. The features and movements of the other players have to be watched, especially the cardinal player to the right, to whom you as player are dependent. Card playing is an activity where the body is tensed and alert for action. Your body reveals you before you know, if your attention should fail.

As the play goes on you become absorbed in the game propelled by the turn taking and excitement and you may experience that your hand and the cards are inseparable. They become a unit of the play. Your left hand, holding the talon of cards, and your right hand choosing and picking just the right one to beat your opponents, work together as if they were one, not two limbs of one body. The hands act before you consciously tell them to, and do quite independently and suitable choices. The routine of card playing, somehow grows to be the regular movements of your hands.

The relational dimension of card playing exists, whether you play solitarily or with others. If you play ‘Patience,’ you do so precisely to attain the sensation of fellowship. You imagine a thrilling fellowship with the hidden opponent, which is represented by the unpredictable and mysterious deck of cards on the table or on the computer screen in front of you. The game of ‘Patience,’ lies precisely in the experience of the cards being able to make moves, which might be seen as analogous to the way a living opponent might act inconsistently regardless of my predictions. However, the relationship in card playing usually entails a fellowship amongst competitors, good-natured although dead earnest. But, you must be part of the competition to count. You are either in or out. Being in between would demolish the game and de-motivate the players. You may of course hand over your cards to another person temporarily, in case you have to take care of essential business, but as soon as you return, you claim your cards back. In this case, you must catch up and tune to the game again. Included players, may deliberately hand their cards to another person to let this person play their part provisionally. One could also become tired of playing, and forward one’s favourable hand of cards to a chosen co-player. This, however, does not invalidate the experience that one has of being a counted player, even though one surrenders his or her cards to someone else. If you are not part of the card playing fellowship, it does not matter what you do. You are just outside.
Consideration of individual space in a social context, often is a question of evaluation. Sometimes a teacher sees the subject more clearly than students, as he or she has an entire class to care for, and thus attempts a fair distribution of space for everybody. However, to occupy space in card playing, you must at the very least be allowed to play. If somebody plays for you, this person occupies the space you should have had. And what is really this phenomenon of occupying space? In some milieus, the question of personal space is to never be touched. Some families, classes or workplaces, are ‘dense’ (Skirbekk, in Skjervheim 1992) or closed, in a way that does not allow personal space and a reasonable degree of independence. The space of the ‘dense’ life form or the agreed environmental code of these societies, is built on a certain way of being together, which includes little or no space for the individual’s individuality. This may as well be what characterizes the card playing situation and the atmosphere within this particular adapted education group.

This description of what the lived experience of card playing might be like for Anne and other card players, does not do justice to the complexity of card playing as an experiential phenomenon. Yet, my intention is simply to emphasize the point that card playing might seem simple, but experientially it is not. The complexity of card playing, like other human phenomena, is overwhelmingly complex. However, Anne’s teacher does not see what the experience might be for her student. She does not reflect on what might be at stake. Or rather, she might actually know, but represses this knowing so that it does not really a concern for her. Within a certain understanding, one might say that her hands do as her look does. So, by not allowing herself to become affected by what she sees, the teacher acts without empathy, and thus is pedagogically tactless.

**The body extended**

What could this ‘cardholder’ possibly mean to Anne? What in fact may be the cardholder’s experiential meaning? To look at, the cardholder is a curved piece of wood, approximately thirty centimetres long and seven centimetres high, divided by a two centimetre deep longitudinal grove, in which the cards are to be placed. In a sense the cardholder functions as the second hand of the card player, the hand that holds and separates the distributed cards, so that he or she may see the entire hand
at a glance and be able to choose from these with one’s other hand. It is possible then that being a card player with only one working hand, that he or she might experience the cardholder as an extended part of his or her body, a helping hand, in the deeper sense of this phrase. The cardholder, as Anne’s helping hand, and extension of her body, becomes perhaps not unlike the white stick of the blind person, being his or her ‘eyes’; the cardholder then becomes Anne’s second hand. This refusal or forgetfulness on the part of the teacher, then, in regards to letting Anne use her helping hand in a comfortable and appropriate way, as a part of her (extended) body, becomes a rejection of her. The cardholder is the only possible tool for Anne to utilize in order to participate independently in card playing. Without it, she will have to share participation with someone who is helping her, or she might even feel she should give up her participation of the game to someone, involuntarily or out of helplessness. Thus, a student such as Anne, may need a bodily extension or facilitating object (like the card holder) or (pedagogically) a helping hand from the teacher, to carry on an activity. In fact, it is part of being a student that one may be in need of pedagogical 'extensions,' be these bodily, mentally, spiritually or practically. Pedagogy, in terms of the relationality between teacher and student is the supportive, extensive process of leading and teaching. Although pedagogical practice is characterized by, and always composed of, limitations and constrictions alongside extensions and enrichment of the student (Løgstrup 1956/1991; Mollenhauer 1983), the pedagogical intentionality, as well as the intention of true pedagogues, is to bring about that, of which improves, enables and supports the student toward his or her independence of self.

When physically (and/or learning) disabled, and for the most part in need of practical support, you may feel ashamed of not wanting the support people offer you. Anne experiences not to want the support she is given. And what is more, she does not need the support she is provided, at least not the full amount of it. Thus the gift of support becomes an enforced burden with which she has to put up, in order to be socially accepted.

The touch of wor(l)ds
Is not, hiding one’s desire to act as much as possible independently, in a way, to want hide your self from the other person’s view? The irreducible right to establish one’s self as a unique person is closely related to doing things in one’s own way, to put one’s own mark on life, by performing life individually. This may sound like a strange statement, but Anne clearly says, that ‘having suffered an accident (that disabled her), makes her feel that she should try *not* to let other people understand that she does not need assistance’. Why would she not let her teacher see that she can deal with things herself? What is the experienced significance of her utterance? Suppose she had said rather: “Because of the accident, I try to let them see that I am able to do things myself” or “because of the accident, I try not to let them see that I am unable to do things myself.” How may these expressions be understood? A self-confident person might express independence, by saying the first comment. The latter sentence might be said by a person ashamed of her helplessness, and perhaps also of being handicapped in general. But when you want people not to see that you are independent, how is this to be understood? Does Anne perhaps sense their claim to help her, even if she does not want or need help, as a demand she has to fulfil? Could it be that for her, the experienced modes of helping, as well as the climate of the situation, support her feeling that being disabled is considered a static condition? This, including help, despite how this support is provided? Could it be that she experiences her self as unprotected by the person she is dependent upon and whom she is supposed to trust? Small children are not able to partially trust other persons they simply trust or distrust\(^55\) (Løgstrup 1956/1991, 1971). Anne seems to have learned to trust her teacher with reservation, and to hold back something of her self. She hides her experienced ability of being independent of the teacher’s help. She somehow knows that the teacher may not protect her trust.

We all seem to share the assumption that the other person’s world does not, in a deeper sense, include us. We tend to believe that the world of the other only sporadically touches our own world. Somehow we believe that the other’s world remains intact and goes on as before, after having now and then been in contact with ours. Here then, encounters between us would not be very important. Only the strongest or most significant event between us, might leave traces on the path of the

\(^{55}\) Trust and distrust are on different levels. Distrust is the absent of trust, which is the basic condition of human life. (Løgstrup 1971: 18-19)
other person’s life, or so we assume. However, experience shows that what is true is 
in fact the diametrical opposite. Løgstrup (1971) asserts that we do indeed form one 
another’s world and future possibilities.

A person never has something to do with another person without also having 
some degree of control over him. It may be a very small matter, involving only 
a passing mood, a dampening or quickening of spirit, a deepening or removal 
of some dislike. But it may also be a matter of tremendous scope, such as can 
determine the very course of life (Løgstrup 1971: 16).

Personal encounters then, by their very nature have an influence on the other 
person’s words and manners, little or greatly. The encounter between Anne and her 
teacher, during the card game, strongly took control of the student’s actions and left 
er her no personal space. Her teacher, in fact, held Anne captive. Løgstrup describes in 
a powerful way, the depth of trust in human encounters, as we, in every relationship, 
deliver ourselves into the hands of others. By addressing one another in encounters, 
such as card playing, we at the same time, even though often unarticulated, trustfully 
‘ask’ the other to accept us. Then, “not to let the other person come into his own 
through words, deeds, and conduct, but to hinder him instead …is a denial of life, his 
life and our own” (ibid: 14). By not letting her senses speak to her, the teacher 
practices an unreflective seeing of Anne’s pedagogical needs, and thus, in the 
situation denies her the space of a personal self. Anne’s unarticulated call for 
response, failed. The teacher did not protect her student, whom had given her her 
trust, but rather she turned her down. However, the strange thing about life, is that 
trust is not of our own making, or something we can claim. Trust is always given. The 
condition of human life then, is, that while relating to each other, we are bound “to 
surrender something of ourselves to the other person either by trusting him or by 
asking him for his trust” (ibid: 19). The ethical demand of human encounters, 
including that of Anne and her teacher, is to protect the part of the other’s life and 
destiny, which is, in trust, given to us in the encounter. Yet, Anne did not tell what she 
wanted her teacher to protectively care for. How then, can her teacher possibly know 
how Anne feels? Løgstrup emphasizes that the demand for love in encounters, is 
unarticulated, unspoken, and “is not to be equated to a person’s expressed wish or 
request” (ibid: 21). The demand to protect the life and the best of the other person, on 
the contrary, does not include instructions as to how or when this sheltering care
should be provided. Anne, even if she is the one concerned, could not possibly tell her teacher what to do, so that the latter could then apply the correct solution to the situation. This would make the teacher her student’s tool, and result in indulgence, not in pedagogical love. The teacher’s challenge is to interpret what she sees. “It is of the essence of the demand that with such insight, imagination, and understanding, as he possesses, a person must figure out for himself what the demand requires” (ibid: 23). However, if the teacher had reflectively, addressed herself to Anne’s situation, how could she possibly avoid the two obvious pedagogical traps, of either wanting to please the student or trying to change her? To hazard the conflict between one’s ability to determine how to respond to the demand, while at the same time to feel the powerlessness when one tries to foresee how the other person will react to one’s actions, is risky. Yet, the other person’s will and individual sovereignty should not be constrained, but rather he or she should be generously provided the necessary space.

The will to determine what is best for the other person – and to speak or remain silent, or to act in harmony with our insight into what we believe to be best for him – must be coupled with a willingness to let him remain sovereign in his own world. The demand to guard that part of the other person’s life, which has been delivered over to us, irrespective of the words and actions which the demand may indicate, is always at the same time a demand that the other person be given ample time and opportunity to make his own world as expansive as possible. The demand is always also a demand that we use the surrender out of which the demand has come in such a way as to free the other person from his confinement and to give his vision the widest possible horizon (ibid: 27-28).

However, this is exactly the opposite of what Anne’s teacher does, as she unthinkingly deprives her student of her individual independence and responsibility, by taking over her card playing, and at the same time depriving her of her extended hand, the card holder. And this is exactly what Anne senses she ‘should not’ require; her autonomy and freedom of will. The contrast between pedagogical care and abuse of authority can be understood when we come to see that we do not act as tactful teachers when we take over the student’s own responsibility. This is even truer, and correspondingly more difficult, when the student is disabled. Heidegger distinguishes between the Others, from whom one distinguishes oneself, and “the Others, among whom one is too” (Heidegger 1926/1962: 154). The Others, ‘among whom one is too’,
are the Others, who in my experience, concernfully exist alongside me, with me. Where the Other is, is always determined from my location, my proximity, and is therefore spatially experienced, not categorically described. Thus, ‘being with’ others can still mean that you feel alone, that your encounter with the others is experienced as moodily unfamiliar or alien.

**Who am I to you?**

The touching of our worlds always means something, even though its significance may be unclear, ambiguous or even veiled (Løgstrup 1956/1991). In pedagogical situations, encounters between teacher and student happen continuously, yet the brief quality of these encounters may make one encounter hard to distinguish from the other. The moments, when we meet each other’s worlds, seem to us to merge and amalgamate. Nevertheless, the touch was there, and it influences us in one way or another. In the next experiential description we see an encounter between Daniel and his teacher Fanny, which at first glance seems to be of a highly superficial nature. Yet, is the experience of this encounter of some significance to the student? Does the experience of who Daniel is, somehow stir the teacher? And moreover is Daniel in some way or another touched by his teacher’s way of seeing him?

The teacher, Fanny, writes in large letters on the blackboard: **Norway is located on the Northern hemisphere.** She then turns to the group of adapted education students and says, “Please, type this statement on your computer.” Three of the students already sit by their computers. The two of them respond quietly and in a concentrated way; Tanja quickly gets the job done, and Synne, who has forgotten her glasses today, thoroughly tries to discern the keys, by bending her head close to the keyboard. The third student, Daniel prints ‘Nor’, then he switches to the screensaver and back to Word a few times. Eventually he prints ‘way’, and then he yawns, stretches his arms over his head, and returns to the screensaver. Fanny comes up to him, saying, “Weren’t you supposed to print what Fanny told you?” Daniel pushes the key and ‘Norway’ appears at the screen. “You should do what Fanny tells you, or she’ll be annoyed at you,” the teacher says before leaving his desk with a snort.

Daniel slowly prints ‘is’, then a long line of sssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss, at the same time as he repeats the sound loudly to himself. After that he removes the words ‘Norway is’ and replaces them with ‘LOCATED ON’, in capital letters Arial black. “What does ‘Northern hemisphere’ mean?” He poses the question at full volume out in the air. Nobody responds. He tries again, now the question is softer, directed more
to himself. Again, no response. Ten minutes later Daniel still sits playing with the keys, listlessly switching in and out of Word.

What is striking about the encounter between Daniel and his teacher, is that the teacher does not anticipate that her student will do as told. She does not seem to have any expectations for him to fulfil. She tells him to obey her orders, but does not really expect him to do so. On the contrary she goes away from him, and does not return for a very long time. She simply leaves her student with some empty threats about being mad at him if he does not do as he is told. Daniel is left in front of his computer, in an atmosphere of noticeable unconcern and neglect. Does the teacher really not perceive him? Is she too engaged with her other students to become aware of his condition, and later on of his questions? Does she not see that he works haphazardly, and that he doesn’t even make a move to get the job done? Teachers sometimes pretend not to see, what they in fact see, in order to encourage the growing independence of a student. Is this the case with Fanny and Daniel? It might be. Yet, why doesn’t she at least make an effort to get him on the right track? And why doesn’t she show that she has expectations of him? Could it be that she in fact holds no particular expectations? Etymologically the term 'expect' (from Latin ex + spectare), means 'wait for; look for in anticipation (Onions 1966: 337). Does this teacher look for something with hope, eagerness and keenness in regards to her student? It does not seem so. A term closely related to the pedagogical expectation, is disappointment. This teacher does not tell Daniel that she’ll be disappointed in him if he does not do his assignment; rather, she tells him she’ll be annoyed. Could there be disappointment, without expectations? Or expectations without potential disappointment? According to Levering (2000), when talking about disappointment, there is always strived for expectations involved. “The term disappointment may be said to indicate the unpleasant feeling that occurs when desired expectations of sufficient importance do not come true” (ibid: 66). In view of Levering’s characterization of disappointment, the term not only presupposes required expectation, but also that the expectations should be of adequate importance. How then can we understand the seeming lack of expectations on the part of the teacher, the significance of the job Daniel is supposed to accomplish, and the fact that the teacher seems to hold no disappointment in regards to her student’s poor achievements? Could it be that the required work at the computer is not really of
importance? Yet, why then expect the students to spend time and effort in it? Could it be that the teacher does not, in reality, expect her student to carry out the typing duty she has assigned him? How is it then, that she gives him the job in the first place, and that later on, comes back and strongly advises him to accomplish it? Could it be that the teacher does not expect Daniel to understand the term 'disappointment'? Or does she consider her expression of disappointment not to be a sufficient incentive to increase his effort? Or is it rather, that she intends to disturb him sufficiently by telling him that she will be mad if he does not do his duty, although in reality she may not really be angry when it comes to that point? Or could it be that the teacher avoids the expression of disappointment, because she thinks that Daniel already senses her disappointment in him? There in fact, seems to be several interpretations of the current pedagogical situation. However, what concerns pedagogical practice, is that it is by its very action necessarily reflective and moral/ethical (Løgstrup 1956/1991, 1971; Skjervheim 1991; van Manen 1991). Accordingly, the degree and quality of reflectiveness and moral attention of the teacher, unavoidably, will reveal itself directly in pedagogical practice. What then would be the ethical demand in regards to the encounter between Daniel and his teacher? How does the teacher’s practice, possibly bring to light her understanding of her unmotivated student? When expressing expectation in a student, the teacher at the same time indirectly tells the student that he or she is accountable. Does she, by not expecting him to fulfil his work without verbal threats, consider him negligent or even irresponsible in failing to do his imposed work? How else can one understand this detached order from the teacher? Wouldn’t the average pedagogical situation contain some incentive or expectation from the teacher to a student, reasoned in the fact that it is the student’s responsibility for getting his or her work done? Moreover, how is the relation between teacher and student to be understood, when the teacher neither takes responsibility for the student until he is able to take over the responsibility for himself, nor seems to expect him to be accountable in the first place? Løgstrup (1997) identifies the pedagogical relationship by its basic asymmetry. The teacher and the student have different parts, and the parts should not be confused.

The contribution from the student in order to help the teaching happen as expected, is to respect the difference and not interfere with it. The contribution of the teacher, in order to help the teaching flourish, is to make equal the relation between him or herself and the student. [...] What I think of is that the
teacher in a certain understanding sees the student as equal, by that the teacher all the time is aware of that the student, in his or her own terms, should acquire the matter and the skills. The teacher should respect, that willingness to learn, consists of the student's own seeing, knowing, and doing\textsuperscript{56} (ibid: 75).

Løgstrup's description of the teacher – student relationship, poorly corresponds to the portrait of the encounter between Daniel and Fanny. In addition to her lack of confidence and expectations in the student, the teacher's use of her own first name and third person pronoun when addressing her student, is somewhat conspicuous. Why would she speak of herself like this? When do we address ourselves by our first name to persons we know beforehand? Pedagogically it would be appropriate to address a child like this, before the child has yet established an identity of his own, with the intention of helping him differentiate between his own self and the selves of other persons. Still, addressing Daniel in this way, emphasizes the teacher's view if him as irresponsible, deviant and even immature. The way she unthinkingly sees him in the first place, by addressing him as she does, erases any semblance of a regular pedagogical relationship. Rather than stating that the teacher 'should' expect something from her student, even at the risk of possibly being disappointed later on, one may ask, rather, if the student does not have reason to be disappointed in his teacher, who does not meet any of his (unarticulated) expectations and needs.

\textsuperscript{56} The original Danish text: Det bidrag, det står til eleven at give til at undervisningen lykkes, er at respektere uligheden og ikke antaste den. Det bidrag, som det står til læreren at give til at undervisningen lykkes, er at stille eleven lige med sig selv. […] Jeg tænker på, at læreren i den forstand skal tage eleven som sin ligemand, at han hele tiden har in mente, at eleven på sine egne vilkår skal tilegne sig stoffet og færdighederne. Læreren skal respektere, at lærevillighed består i, at eleven selv vil se, selv vil vide, selv vil kunne (Løgstrup 1997: 75).
Chapter 9. The significance of the other’s look – temporal aspects

An honest clock doesn’t strike; certainly an honest clock doesn’t allow the second hand to catch its breath at the twelve. An honest clock is thoroughly complete in its attempt to eliminate time (Van den Berg 1970: 112).

The irrevocability of the other’s look

Some moments we share with others turn out to be of great significance to us. Some moments in one way or another, shape one’s life and may well shift the direction of it. How is it that these moments are crucial but not others? How does a moment become so significant to someone? What is it that touches us in this particular moment more so than in other moments? Here, a sister tells of how a teacher’s way of seeing her older brother, at one particular moment, turned into a life altering experience for him.

In my brother’s class, it must have been about grade two or three, someone dropped a quarter on the floor and my brother leaned down to pick it up. The teacher decided that he was stealing and embarrassed him at some length. Teachers, in following years, would comment things to him like: “Oh, I see you have dropped the stealing habit” or “Congratulations! You haven’t stolen anything this year yet.”

He carried this all his life. When he finally told me his story, at the age of forty, he said: “I thought people could see it in me. Maybe those teachers were right. Maybe I would steal.” I don’t suppose he ever really knew what he intended to do when he bent down for that quarter.

Where does the sudden impulse to pick up a dropped coin come from? Picking up a quarter is a whole lot of things. One does not think. One does not intend to do it. It just happens. This boy wouldn’t be able to speak to what his intention was. Not even as an adult. He was altogether taken aback and bewildered by his teacher’s reaction. This bewilderment seems to have lasted far beyond the moment, and as a grown man he still isn’t sure: Maybe the teacher was right; maybe she was not right. Maybe his intention actually was to steal the coin. But he will never know. The moment has gone. He is not in the moment anymore. It is too late. The experience is set. One
cannot experience an experience once more, in order to change the impact of it. With Gadamer (1960/1975), one must admit that an experience is not reusable.

At first glance, this story may seem to be much exaggerated. One may feel that it can hardly be true. And if it is true, it happens most infrequently. Most teachers do not act this insensitively towards a child. Yet, is it in fact too strong? It depends on the perspective that the event is seen from. From a child's perspective, fundamental events happen all the time; the small moments that change one's life. However, life does not necessarily change for both parties. One of them may not even know what has happened, or pay attention to the impact the situation may have had on the other person. Yet, if we listen to the moment; we will change. It is something that happened to this young student and his teacher. He may in fact have listened too well. He may have wished he hadn't. The teacher might wish she had listened more carefully. In a certain way, he listened for both of them and has carried it with him all the time after. He re-experiences the event every time he tells about it. His teacher may or may not have noticed and even if she had, she may have believed that children easily forget or that they need to be checked in order to learn to behave morally, or any number of other reasons in order to justify or explain such an incident. She most likely has forgotten about it. There are so many students to think about for teachers. Still, for this particular student, the direction of his life was altered. We find out further on in the story that this boy, though he was bright and able, struggled regularly with school. As a youngster, he was sometimes just this side of the law. Witte-Townsend's experience might as well also have been this boy’s.

Certain memories seem to ride along just beneath the surface of our lives where everyday awareness may find them... they are our connection with ourselves, and our knowledge of the past. Because we have these memories we know that we are legitimately and solidly a part of the story of our own lives (2002: 171).

Being very involved in printing, lithography and intaglio, as a young man the student searched all over the world to find someone who would take him on as an apprentice in order to learn to silkscreen. He could find none. Finally, he heard about a man in Munich and went to talk with him. The man said: “Oh, I don’t need anybody, but come back in a week or two. Give me some time to think about it.” The young man of our story, came back and the first thing the fellow said to him was: “Well, I guess I could take you, because you know, I just have the sense that you would never lie to me and
you would never steal from me." The young man stayed with him for as long as the elder man lived, and then took over the business from him. The young man had treated him as a father. Not before this man died, did he tell this story to his sister. Having been deprived of a thoughtful teacher as a child, he finally met one in the silk screener in Munich.

The un-lingering look

We seldom notice the moments of our lived experience, let alone linger on them. The moments flee into each other, each one so quickly gone and replaced by the next. “The instant,” Levinas says, "has no past and future, it is fragile, evanescent, wordless, and thus sees in the past and future, in the horizons of the world, in the dialectic of temporal horizons, an exit from itself” (Levinas 1987: 6). Somehow the moment flees from itself, as it does from us. Yet, if we pay attention to instantaneousness, in terms of being concerned with a child’s lived experience, we learn that the experience some way or another, has significance to this child’s particular being. Being concerned, according to Heidegger, is to be in the world in a fascinated way (Heidegger 1926/1962). And the pedagogic teacher as well, is fascinated by the possibilities of children (van Manen 1991). It takes a certain closeness to the experience, (one’s own or the other person’s), to be stirred. The mode of being in the world, in a concerned and attentive way, is to encounter the experience as well as the person, with an attitude of “tarrying alongside” (Heidegger 1926/1962: 88). The encounter then, is a ‘dwelling with’ rather than an attempt to achieve something from the other or from the situation. To Levinas, the instant is the “very accomplishment of existence” (Levinas 1978: 76). Thus the experiential moments of life are the person’s very existence, the way he or she is, in and with the world. Lorna Crozier in one of her ‘ghazal’ poems writes, “You must climb the plum tree to see the blossom” (2004: 36). The significance of nearness to the experience, the dwelling and lingering mode of being with others, is exactly the theme in this next telling of an encounter between Niklas and his teacher in the school kitchen.

“Would you please bring these shelves to the sink?” The teacher says as she hands the two smudged baking shelves to Niklas and returns to the kitchen stove she is in the middle of cleaning. Niklas takes the shelves, and responds, “Why? Why to the sink?”
Niklas always asks why. He seems constantly to be in need of explanations. Even to issues that are obvious and which he, in the teachers’ opinion, should be able to figure out himself. Sometimes he is provided reasons, sometimes not. This time the teacher annoyingly snaps at him, “Don’t you mind about the reason, just do as I tell you!”
Niklas says again, “Why would you clean these at the sink?”
The teacher loses her temper, is by his side in a moment and snatches the shelves from his hands. She says, “I’ll take them myself. Get out of my sight. You’re always in my way!” She turns her back to him dismissively.
Niklas, stands on the spot for a moment, hands hanging, head bowed. Then he goes to the fridge, takes out a bottle of milk and asks pleadingly to the teacher’s back, “Would you like me to pour you a glass of milk?”
The teacher yells at him to get away. Niklas takes a seat at the farthest table by me, his small figure debilitated humiliated and puzzled.

What is the intention with which the teacher sees Niklas? Pedagogical practice always is intentional, in terms of always having its own understanding of the situation. The look can have the intention of keeping oneself back from controlling or possessing the other person’s being, or it can be an act of ‘handling’ the other and determinating the outcome of the situation. In Heideggerian terms,
looking-at, enters the mode of dwelling autonomously alongside entities within-the-world. In this kind of ‘dwelling’ as a holding-onself-back from any manipulation or utilization, the perception of the present-at-hand is consummated (Heidegger 1926/1962: 88 - 89).

In this dwellingly way of perceiving the other, the perception sees beyond what is visibly seen. The look addresses itself to the other with fascinated concern for the other’s experience. The Heideggerian term ‘dwelling’ (ibid: 88), in the present situation, might be asked as the question: “Can I dwell with you,” which is always posed from a position outside the other person. The other person is ‘encounterable’ (ibid: 81), yet, not closer than ‘being together with’ him or her. When Heidegger introduces the term ‘dwelling,’ it is an existential, as a being-in (ibid: 79). The person exists by residing or habituating his own being. As a matter of fact, the first person existent, ‘I am’ means ‘I reside’ or ‘I dwell alongside’ the world (ibid: 80). The encounter between Niklas and his teacher, like all other pedagogical encounters, raises the question of how one is ‘dwelling with’ the student. Pedagogically, the challenge is to take the time to actually be in this moment with the student. To Niklas and his teacher the incident they are both a part of, is experienced by them in notably
different ways. Niklas needs the space of time, which the teacher does not permit, neither for him nor for herself. When we are not residing in the moment with the other, then we are rushing around and writing the script. A dwelling attitude has a certain hesitative quality, which lets the other dwell in time and space. The whole business of being fast and doing a lot, makes being-in the space difficult. It is like van den Berg suggests, “He who moves with speed through a landscape, proves that he has little respect for the things in it” (1970: 117).

The ‘omittable’ look

After having witnessed this heart-rending and pedagogically inappropriate episode, I decided to remind the teacher (who was one of the participants) of the event, when our next interview came up. However, already the next morning Niklas and I were to meet for our weekly research conversation. My situation as a researcher left me highly indecisive as to whether it was appropriate or not to mention the humiliating episode to the boy. Finally I decided most carefully to try and touch upon it when we met. I deemed that I had acted in a pedagogically irresponsible way by witnessing the degrading event without attempting to intervene. I somehow felt I had to show Niklas that I was aware of how tough the experience had been on him, and that I had seen his vulnerability. When we were both properly seated in our chairs in the usual room where we had our conversations, I immediately said, “I am sorry for what happened yesterday in the school kitchen, Niklas. I should have prevented it.” He buried his head in his hands, and cried sorely. He gasped, “I should obey my teacher. I know I should. She does not love me if I don’t.” All my attempts to comfort him, telling him that he had the right to ask ‘why’ and that his teacher was not allowed to treat him so badly, were all in vain just as they always were. On another occasion when we met, this experience came up once again. Niklas seemed to re-experience the pain and misery through a variety of his expressions. I never told the teacher of Niklas’ painful experience in regards to this unpedagogical encounter. Although, when I mentioned in general, the episode in the school kitchen to her, wanting simply to understand her experience of it, she could simply not recollect it. Thus, what Crozier writes could also be part of Niklas’ experience, “Walking in the midst of others, one returns alone” (2004: 26)
Isn’t it remarkable that what Niklas remembers with such intensity, the teacher does not remember at all? Somehow this is stirring. How can we understand this in terms of paying attention to, or seeing students? There are instances when something is important to a student and not to a teacher, to you and not to me. But if I see that something is important to you, then I must acknowledge that it is important to you. Otherwise it is a dismissal; a double not seeing, a double dismissal, when one does not pay attention to it. The teacher may want to make this out to be an insignificant incident. In attempting to believe this, she is missing him a second time. The first mistake, anybody can make. But when the evidence is there, that it is important to the person in front of you, then it turns into a kind of wilfulness. It makes this other person invisible again. The contrast is vivid; she not remembering it while he is feeling it over and over again.

When one shares a space with someone, it is not that one could not say or do the wrong thing. But one would do it in another way. It has to do with ‘breathing with’ the other person. Dwell and breathe in the space of being. It is trying to feel what is happening and what the experience of this moment is. This is especially so when people tell us things that are difficult for them to admit, and where it would be easy to rush to conclusions. Yet, allowing Niklas the opportunity to give a voice to the experience also gave the experience a place and a time to be.

**Something that looks like nothing**

According to Heidegger humans are inherently ontological. We do not necessarily reflectively understand all that we are doing, but in our manner of being there is always an implicit sensed understanding. The pre-reflective understanding, Heidegger calls “pre-ontological” (Heidegger 1926/1962: 32). The pre-ontological understanding of how one is situated in the world, or where ‘one finds oneself,’ always comports with existence and how this particular way of existence is for me. In Heidegger’s words: [Dasein’s] “essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own” (ibid: 33). Thus the human lived experience always has its own moody quality, though the sense may be pre-cognitive and ever so vaguely felt.
Dasein always has some mood (Gestimmt ist). The pallid, evenly balanced lack of mood (Ungestimmtheit), which is often persistent and which is not to be mistaken for a bad mood, is far from nothing at all (ibid: 173).

So what seems to be nothing; still is something. In the following common classroom situation where a student asks for permission to go to the washroom, what superficially looks like nothing may well be a kind of innate sense of something to Niklas.

The signs are unmistakeable. Since the class started he repeatedly has changed his position in the chair, uncomfortably crossing his legs. Finally, he raises his hand: “May I go to the washroom, please?”

The teacher that has expected his request, sighs audibly. Niklas needs guidance to get to the faraway men’s washroom as well as he needs to be controlled so that he will behave properly when he is among other same age adolescents. But he does not seem to be able to wait for the break when she can follow him.

The teacher responds somewhat dismissively, “Then you’ll have to use the small washroom just outside in the hallway”.

The class giggles. The nearby washroom is the girls’ washroom. To Niklas however, boy or girl makes no difference. In any case, he does not understand. Yet his expression is bewildered as he leaves the classroom.

To Niklas the difference between the boy’s and the girl’s washroom seems to be a cognitively meaningless distinction. Accordingly, the teacher’s answer appears appropriate in the present situation, because the event is insignificant to him. Yet, what is this ‘something’ that he senses as he leaves behind his laughing classmates? The situation leaves Niklas in a particular state of mind, although still, he does not seem to understand what the situation is about, nor does he share the humorous aspect of it with the other students. Neither does he comprehend, nor does he feel like the others. Still, what might be his experience of the situation? Heidegger suggests that “man’s ‘substance’ is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather existence” (Heidegger 1926/1962: 153). Could it be that Niklas’ experience is existential rather than intellectual or emotional? Moreover, could it be that his experience of existence is a participatory existence, being with the other, partaking in the situation, still in a personal way? Bachelard asserts with Minkowski’s words: “the essence of life is not a feeling of being, of existence,” but a feeling of participation in a flowing onward, necessarily expressed in terms of time, and secondarily in terms of

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57 Close observation after six weeks in an adapted education class.
space” (Bachelard 1958/1994: xii). What is possibly the temporality of the experience to Niklas? How does Niklas experience the moment of time of this event? How do we experience time in situations where everybody but us, seems to understand the situation? Do we not feel that the instant lasts forever or rather that time rotates? The moment somehow adheres itself to us. It comes back again and again. Our body fails to continue its free movements; its experiential appendage prevents it. We spin around this experience of being put aside. Our momentary experience is not a reflective pondering on what it was that we did not catch. Rather, there is a sense of being thrown into loneliness and inexistence. For a moment Niklas is prevented from sharing the onward flow of life in his class. His experience somehow separates his existence from that of the others, and leaves him alone.

Did the teacher's answer make a difference to him, nonetheless? Did he somehow sense that being a boy, in the girls' washroom would be inappropriate? Did it, in one way or another, make a difference to him not being recognized as a boy? Or, to not be recognized as a boy able to understand such an obvious difference? It seems like his possible experience of self was unrecognised and devalued in this situation. And what is more, the teacher possibly did not acknowledged his self at all. This very moment of non-recognition may mean more to the student than we might possibly believe. Van Manen elucidates the meaning of recognition in the following way,

To receive recognition literally means to be known. Someone who recognizes me thereby acknowledges my existence. [...] Recognition is inextricably intertwined with selfhood and personal identity. And self-identity is the realization of the tension between the being of self and the becoming of self, between who we are and who and what we might become (2002a: 38).

The significance of a teacher’s recognition, in fact is nothing less than the question of identification of the self of the student. It is a matter of significance to the student’s existence rather than to his or her cognitive capacity of understanding. To acknowledge the student's self somehow is to identify his or her personal existence in the present, as well as, a future possibility. How the student experiences him or her self ‘seen’ in the moment, has a ripple effect toward his coming of self. How Niklas senses his self recognized then, while leaving the classroom on this particular day, is not ‘nothing.’ Rather it is something quite significant. Besides, being significant for
who he is to become, in the time to come, the experience means something for who “he is coming to be” (van Manen 1991: 33).

Wouldn’t it also be possible, that sometime in the future Niklas, might come to understand this situation and feel embarrassed by what he earlier did not understand? Will this moment then, sometime in the future flash back on him? Niklas will mature, learn more and understand things he does not see today. There is a possibility that he will experience a similar situation sometime in the future, and be reminded of the event when his classmates laughed at him without him knowing why. He might then, very well recognize the difference between boys and girls, as well as that between boys’ and girls’ washrooms. Should we not in pedagogy, care for the possible ‘future self’ of the students as well as that of their ‘present self’? Moreover, if he were not come to know this difference in the time, would we then understand the teacher’s practice as pedagogically appropriate?

**Being seen through**

Students need to be noticed. Interestingly, to be ‘noticed’ derives from Latin, ‘notitia’, and means to ‘be known’ or ‘acquainted’ (Onions 1966: 615). To be attentively known by the teacher, is what most students expect and anticipate in the classroom, and thus what they most want when it is missing. To be seen with approval, feeling special to the teacher, being encouraged and valued through well-founded praise and feedback, positively builds and strengthens students’ self-esteem and formation of a personal identity. Yet, seeing might be too ‘seeing’. In the same way as seeing at times may see too little, as when it is blinded or unthinking. Yet, the teacher’s seeing, which is more than the physical exercise of the eyes, may also see too much. When the teacher sees more than is appropriate, the student might feel that the look of the teacher penetrates him or her. Then the experience of a teacher’s look, is so intense, so sharp, that it feels painful to the student. The following anecdote shows a teacher’s experience where she once looked too closely into a student’s affairs.

One of my colleagues got a call from the student cantina cashier about Hanne, one of our overweight students, buying huge amounts of pizza and coke day after day. She directed our attention to the situation, which she assumed was not exactly healthy for the student. When taking up the inquiry with Hanne, she furiously told me that this was none of my business.
“I buy and eat whatever suits me. You stand off what I eat during break time,” she yelled at me, and left the room snorting with indignation. First, I felt bewildered and then, ashamed. I realized that she was right. By overstepping the line of privacy I really had insulted her.

The teacher’s meddling into Hanne’s school diet, clearly was done out of responsibility and with good intentions. She wanted to support a healthier lifestyle for the student, and somehow convince her by appealing to her will and reasonability. But her intention was not realized. One may easily think one understands why. Of course, the teacher was not very pedagogical in her approach, and yes, she seems to have been insensitive to how Hanne most likely experienced herself. And Hanne clearly and rightfully, felt overruled by her teacher. One might in fact, be tempted to call the teacher’s behaviour rather paternalistic. Yet, is there perhaps more to this episode, than unreflected deliberations, and certain authoritarian undertones? How would the situation be understood if we focused rather on the atmosphere of their encounter and the aspect of time? Bollnow (1968/1989), points at the often disregarded pedagogical knowledge, that tells us that human development cannot be externally forced on the student. There has to be something present in the young person, which is oriented toward development and which asks for the help. Young persons have to be ready for education to be susceptible to the teacher’s request. Of course this developmental readiness, is seldom conscious to the student, often not even to the teacher. Moreover, being ready for learning might be less of a cognitive question than a question of pedagogical tone and climate. Bollnow puts it like this,

Readiness to be educated is definitely not rooted in the intellect; rather it is founded on the deeper and therefore much more securely progressive spirit of a morning-like atmosphere. Accordingly, education must take this notion as its staring point: it should orient itself to the perfection of this spirit by guarding it and rebuilding it time and again when it is being destroyed (1968/1989: 21).

Hanne did not ask her teacher for support; at least not then and there, and not in any verbal way. Nevertheless, there might have been a questioning there, to which the teacher responded. Something in Hanne might be oriented toward the controlling of her dietetic habits, and somehow the teacher seems to have sensed her student’s need. However, although the teacher’s responsible sensitivity might have pedagogical potential, she did not succeed this time. The reason might be that she
did not see the significance of the pedagogical atmosphere in the situation. She put her faith in the student’s reasoning; yet, rationality is not the basic motivation for change and development. Most likely, Hanne was even more disappointed in herself than her teacher was, and perhaps, simply the common experience of disappointment would have been a better gateway to a conversation on eating too much, and how to possibly eat more healthily. Teacher-student encounters have the potential of turning into pedagogical moments, if the teacher truly pays attention to students’ expectations toward their future. The young person’s silent expectations, hope and ideas about his or her coming life, provide the possibility for the teacher to ‘arrange for’ pedagogical moments with this student. But first of all, the teacher must recognize the existence of expectations in a conscious and particular way, and be willingly attentive to traces left behind (Mollenhauer 1983, 1983/1996). The teacher has to be pedagogically aware of how the student finds him or herself (Heidegger 1926/1962). Expectations, though, are most breakable. Thus, the responsibility of the teacher, first of all, is to take hold whenever there are signs of discouragement in the student (Bollnow 1968/1989). Hanne, like most students, needs support to create in her life a fruitful differentiation between expectation and reality, and be supported through dispirited crisis, like that of being disappointed in herself for eating too much. In fact, Bollnow considers this one of the fundamental responsibilities of the teacher. He says,

To attempt to assure that this process does not end in unfruitful disappointments is the essential task of pedagogy, and in order to fulfil this task, the educator must first know the effects on the child of his happy expectations (ibid: 25).

What would be then an appropriate and pedagogically tactful response from the teacher, to that which might be already present in Hanne of ‘educational readiness’? What would be the best pedagogical way to have met Hanne? Do we know of good pedagogical solutions to a situation like that of Hanne and her teacher? Let’s imagine that the teacher had decided not to talk to Hanne after the phone call from the cashier; that she had skipped the entire conversation about too much pizza and coke. Instead, she would have chosen non-action as her pedagogical action; waiting for the pedagogical moment to occur. Van Manen considers pedagogical action as well as pedagogical reflection to be oriented toward goodness, and consequently the teacher
should show the young person what is good. (1991: 40-41). What would be good then, in this particular situation? In the real pedagogical situation, after having reconsidered the entire unproductive meeting with Hanne, the teacher did nothing but wait. Then, after some days, Hanne came up to her and said. “I thought of our talk the other day, and in fact you are right. I need to eat less. What should I do?” Together, they figured out how they could keep fruit and vegetables for her daily lunch, in the classroom fridge. The two of them in fact, invented the group’s Tuesday’s lunch, where the pedagogical focus was on buying and preparing tasty and healthy food and enjoying the meal together with classmates and teachers. Later, the students formed the pleasant tradition of inviting lunch guests from other classes.

It is hard to determine in regards to pedagogical practice, what might actually have happened if one had done this rather than that. In fact, the moment is gone and every pedagogical moment offers an experience that is brand new. In the encounter between Hanne and her teacher, Hanne’s vulnerability may have made her feel that the teacher was seeing right through her and somehow knew her better than she herself did. Seeing through students though, is not pedagogically appropriate. What is good for students is to be seen tactfully, with consideration as to their actual or potential vulnerability. To practice goodness then, sometimes would be to oversee, rather than to see what the student wants to hide. Thus, when time is ready, what was hidden might no longer need shelter. Each student then, through the tempo that is proper to him or her, might be ready to invite the teacher with them for the next step.

**Being overlooked**

Another aspect of being seen as a student is the phenomenon of being overlooked. Teachers might be inattentive or forgetful, but they might also ignore the student on purpose. One might ask then whether or not there are experiential differences between the experience of being overlooked and other kinds of conscious seeing? The difference between being seen blindly, unseeingly and being ignored is obvious, in that the latter is a cognizant seeing, while the first is not. What then are possibly related, but not experientially equal terms of seeing a student? For instance, seeing a
person unthinkingly in the sense of overlooking him or her, is also a kind of negligent, 
but can still be imagined as somewhat mindful 'seeing'. The dictionary offers an 
interesting connotation to the term 'ignore' (from Latin ignorare), which in fact is the 
opposite of noticing, that is ‘not to know’ (Onions 1966: 461). To ignore a person 
then, simply would mean not to distinguish this person from other persons as 
someone one knows in particular. One does not recognize the other with familiarity. 
What then, would be the meaning of overlooking a student in pedagogical situations? 
Would overlooking or ignoring a student mean that we do not know this person, as 
the dictionary suggests? Realistically most likely not, but experientially it may be so. 
One could understand the act of overlooking a student, as looking over or above, 
which includes turning your 'I' (eye) away from his or her face.

Let us relate this to a lived experience of 'overlooking' from an observer's point of 
view. The experiential description I have chosen depicts a moment in a computer 
class, where one teacher disregards a student while another simultaneously 
approves of the same student. What is the pedagogical challenge of this particular 
moment?

Endre and his teacher Knut, are in the middle of creating a card68 ordered by a 
customer. They are working in Clarise Works, a computer program made for 
this purpose. 
Fanny, one of the co-teachers, strolls by, throws a glance at the screen and 
says: “You really made a great choice with that horse, Knut”. Her back is half 
turned to the student, while she focuses her attention on the teacher. 
“I didn't,” Knut replies, smiling at the student, who cautiously looks up from the 
screen for a moment. “But Endre just found out how it works. And yes, I totally 
agree, it looks so good.” 
The co-teacher does not take up the approving tone towards the young 
student, who looks at her. Rather she looks away and leaves with the words: 
“Well, anyway, you should also have more space between the manus text and 
the heading.”
Knut and Endre sit back in silence, until the teacher says, “When working in a 
graphic program like this one, we should believe in our sense of shaping, eh 
what, Endre?” The student nods hesitatingly, unsure of what his teacher is up 
to. 
The teacher goes on, “There is no right answer to this of course, but if we 
move the logo further down, the balance of the image would be slightly 
disturbed. Don't you agree? Most likely Fanny didn't consider that detail”.

68 The term 'card' here means 'visittkort'.
What can it possibly mean experientially when we overlook a person, by actively avoiding the other’s face and in particular the encounter with the eyes of the other person? First it means that the other person’s eyes also are prevented from meeting ours. No reciprocity is possible. Even if the other person would like to meet our eyes, we prevent it by overlooking him or her. We are in charge of the encounter, determining what should become of it. Somehow one might say that overlooking a person, not meeting or letting eyes meet, being in power of the encounter, rejects the ‘openness’ of the other person. Levinas wonders, “Does not the fact that beings are ‘open’ belong to the very fact of their being?” (1991/1998: 4). We are genuinely open and correspondingly exposed to the world through our speech (Løgstrup 1956/1991, 1971) and by our face (Levinas 1983, 1991/1998). The co-teacher though, overlooks Endre, not only with her eyes; her whole being is not seeing him.

The face signifies in the fact of summoning, of *summoning me* – in its nudity or its destitution, in everything that is precarious in questioning, in all the hazards of mortality – to the unresolved alternative between Being and Nothingness, a questioning which, *ipso facto*, *summons me* (Levinas 1983: 122-113).

The unstable condition of being human, according to Levinas is revealed in the face. Thus, the openness of the face renders the person defenceless to inconsiderate others. In fact, the exposedness of the face is ‘summoning me’, is who I am. Levinas calls attention to the fact that “the transitive character of the verb to know is attached to the verb to exist” (1998: 4). By ignoring Endre, by not letting him be known to her, the co-teacher in a certain understanding, ignores her student’s very existence, overlooks *that* he is and *who* he is.

Overlooking students is common with teachers, and being overlooked is an equally familiar experience to students. Yet experientially, ignoring a person may not be as insignificant as we believe in the moment. One might believe that when the co-teacher deliberately overlooks Endre, focusing rather on Knut, that she escapes the encounter with the student in favour of one with his teacher. Yet, is this what happened? Would ignoring a person, be a non-encounter? Not as far as both parties of the ‘non-encounter’ sense the encounter to be. The non-encounter is something to them. In relational terms, one might say that Fanny objectifies the student, by
overlooking his presence. And even stronger, the co-teacher does encounter him but without addressing him with words. How is it then that without words, she still addresses him? Levinas considers ‘being’ prior to consciousness (1987/1993: 153).

One could ask then whether the experiential sense of an encounter with another person, isn’t the awareness of the other, than the rational knowledge of him or her. One might say that the encounter between the ‘ignorer’ and the ‘ignored’ somehow takes place beyond relatedness. When looking at Fanny and Endre, they seem not to be related in any sense at all. Yet they are, in a deeper sense of the term. “In every attitude toward the human being there is a greeting – even if it is a refusal of greeting”, Levinas says (1991/1998: 7). There is no speech between Fanny and Endre, still, there is something said. Fanny tells the student something by overlooking him. What is it that Fanny tells her student? One might suggest that what he (and his teacher and we as readers as well) perceives is that she does not understand him. In fact, one does not need to be in a relation to a person to express ones understanding of him or her. Rather, Levinas suggests, “in understanding this being, I simultaneously tell him my understanding” (ibid: 7). How we understand a person reveals itself through the understanding we express in our attitude toward him or her. One might see Fanny’s overlooking of Endre, as a kind of non-understanding rather than as a non-encounter. The co-teacher fails to notice the possibility of moving together with the student. While ignoring Endre and his contribution to the card-task, the co-teacher as well missed the opportunity to share his moment of successful exploration of finding the horse and choosing the perfect spot for the image. And what is more, by ‘overlooking’ ‘ignoring’ and ‘passing over’ the student, the co-teacher seems to create a relational non-relation of unrecognising, and by actively avoiding the student’s face, somehow she also misses his entire being.

**Being seen in particular**

Whereas Endre was degradingly overlooked by his co-teacher, he thankfully was seen properly by his guiding teacher. This teacher saw him in a way that truly addressed his self, which somehow softened the experience of being ignored. In fact, a student’s experience of the teacher’s approving look, may indeed release energy and bring a sense of joyful achievement. This is what happens with Henrik, a seventeen year old who spends one day a week together with his teacher, at a plumber’s shop, where he classifies bills and invoices for the company. This
particular day the teacher seems to see Henrik in a different and more profound way than earlier. This description is based on an interview with the teacher accompanying Henrik.

This morning, as usual, we enter the huge hall with pipes and tubes of all sizes, couplings and tools from floor to ceiling; always an impressive moment. The young secretary gently guides us to the narrow office and leaves us for a moment. Then she returns with two heaps of unorganised bills, which she puts on the desk with a smile and a friendly nod to Henrik, saying, “Well, this is a whole day’s work, I guess. However, you Henrik are used to these lists and may show your assistant how to do it.” Henrik meets her glance with a facial openness that I have not seen before. She leaves again, but peeps in after some minutes holding an instrument. Handing it to Henrik she says, “This is not the book-keeping classifier that you are used to, but I think you will figure it out easily. This one is new and a little more complex, but follows the similar principle. You’ll find me two doors to the left, if you need some support.” She smilingly pulls back her head and we are left alone.

Henrik immediately directs his attention to the huge piles of paper on the desk. Solemnly he says as he points to the left pile: “Would you mind picking out the biggest firms with the most accounts from those lists? I’ll start the alphabetical classification of the lists in the other pile and include yours gradually as you pick them out.” I do as he asks me. His speech is more distinct than I remember from the classroom. The desk is frankly too small for the two of us, so we have to sit pretty close. A few inches from my left elbow there is a fax buzzing and clicking, as it continually belches forth small heaps of new messages. The phone in front of us rings almost every minute, and is picked up, sooner or later by the man at the front desk. Joining the work, I feel Henrik’s activity. He eagerly moves forward, picking a paper from the pile, throwing a backwards glance at it, pinning it up if there are more than one sheet, and finally pushing it into the classifier. As I hesitate a moment without knowing where to put one of the lists, he throws a quick glance at it and says: “Just put it aside until you find more from the same firm.” I put it aside, and ask him: “Do you remember all the firms that are in the folders?” He leans back for a moment and smiles: “Yes, of course. I have to, to be able to do this job as quickly as possible.” Then he reels off seven or eight firm names, before he turns to the pile again with a cautious smile touched with pride.

We work for a long time in silence. I remember the silence because I felt so surprised by Henrik’s engagement and my own growing sense of confidence in him. It was a rare feeling. Usually, I had to motivate him to keep up with his work. Here I somehow was assisting while he took the responsibility. I ask him why he takes the time to pin up the sheets before he sorts them. Then, they won’t have to do it later,” he replies. Why hadn’t I recognized this pride and responsibility at school?
At twelve o’clock being tired and hungry I reminded him of the approaching lunch break. Henrik looks down, surprised at his watch and says, “Could we just finish the K? It will take merely five minutes.” We agree upon this. But I wonder to myself what could possibly have happened? Generally, I have to encourage him to work, without particular success. Yesterday for example, the entire day was like a constant break for him. He did almost nothing of educational value. Today he has to be encouraged to take a break.

How should we understand Henrik’s recently acquired awareness of work and self-reliance? Apparently, from the anecdote, we may deduce that the student this particular day somehow has taken on a different attitude to (school) work, and that this has happened without specific pedagogical praise and encouragement. One may ask then, if the teacher describes a random episode in regards to this student’s achievement? Is the student’s interest in and endurance of work, as well as his self-confidence, simply independent of the teacher’s presence? Bollnow (1968/1989) describes trust as the basic atmospheric condition of education. Yet, did the teacher at any point explicitly express his trust in Henrik? He did not. Not articulately, at least. On the contrary, he was surprised by Henrik’s eagerness to work as well as in his expressed competence and thought to himself how this possibly could have come about. Does the teacher’s taken-abackness make him an insignificant part of Henrik’s educational development? No, I think rather not. The teacher holds back his own action by adjusting to the student’s way and tempo of working. He mindfully gives up his habitual ‘teaching’ to allow the student to perform his duty. He does not do this because he is an indulgent or weak teacher, but because he realises that by doing this, he allows Henrik come to terms with himself and his job. What the teacher does in fact, is to pay careful attention to any impulse of distrust in himself. The situation leaves no room for distrust. One might pragmatically believe that when the teacher’s distrust is provided no space, there is then a space available for the student to act. This student’s actions call for the teacher’s attentive wonder and perhaps an awakening confidence in Henrik. Yet, according to Bollnow (1968/1989), confidence is a largely valuable and necessary pedagogical virtue although not as basic as trust. While confidence is related to a distinct ability and is independent of the response from the person one has confidence in, trust is a reciprocal relationship, which presupposes faith from the person being trusted. Thus, “trust is not the educator’s private matter” (ibid: 37), but has direct consequences for the student. Henrik’s
teacher, by expecting more of him and giving his student space to show that he can be trusted, somehow allows himself to be stirred to believe in Henrik. And the teacher’s beginning belief in him seems to have a transformative effect on Henrik. Bollnow (1968/1989) asserts that confidence in students has to be a little in advance and to be risky, in order not to discourage rather than encourage. One might rather suspect the teacher’s confidence in Henrik to be a little too late, yet, the result of their co-operative encounter reveals the opposite. It was just in time for the student to sense that his teacher saw him in a particular way and for the student to behave according to this way of being seen. Students like children and young persons in general, take over the role made for them by the environment (ibid: 35). In a way this is particularly true for Henrik and his teacher. We see the secretary of the plumbing company strike the right pedagogical note, when encountering Henrik with a complete belief in his potential. In fact, the trust in a person is not persuasive if it is not fully convinced. Somehow, the opening for the teacher’s thoughtful attitude this particular day, might well have been the unhesitating attitude of the secretary. This is not at all exceptional, as we as teachers sometimes need to look at our students through the eyes of others and as such literally see them with new eyes. Besides, there may be more to the teacher’s attitude in regards to Henrik than his initial lack of confidence in the student’s school abilities might indicate. Bollnow asserts that it is the teacher’s responsibility to trust the student. The students should not need to ‘deserve’ the trust in terms of behaving or performing in certain ways.

Because it is true that without trust education is not possible, then the educator must be able to find the power for such trust in his or her soul despite all his or her disappointments and often against all calculations and human sensibilities (ibid: 38).

How do Bollnow’s words shed light on the encounter between Henrik and his teacher? I think the secret is in the pedagogical atmosphere; the mood of trust that is at the basis of the co-operative event at the plumbing company. Without a basic reciprocal trust, their quiet-mannered togetherness would not be possible. The teacher trusts Henrik so much that he lets him shape his task himself, without at any time being tempted to take over. Although, “true pedagogic trust is not blind”, as Bollnow says (ibid: 38), the true pedagogical practice should balance between a certain ‘blinded’ trust to the possibilities of the becoming student in spite of all the
disappointments, and the student’s actual abilities. This democratic ideal in fact is somewhat paradoxal, in that on the one hand, young persons should be pedagogically equal but on the other, should be understood in their particularity. The educator’s influence should balance out with the student’s freedom of will and potential. Mollenhauer puts it like this,

If one [on the other hand] educates from the assumption that equality is fundamental, the child will not be harmed, as long as there is provided sufficient space for the particular abilities that might appear during the developing process59 (1983: 112).

Fruitful pedagogical trust then, believes in the student in spite of the risk of disappointment and failure again and again. The sensitive teacher, like Henrik’s teacher, is able to recognize and foster a positive atmosphere in which beginning abilities can emerge and relationship can develop. Yet, if it is true as Bollnow (1968/1989) asserts, that pedagogical trust cannot be created intentionally, but rather is kept up by a general trust in being and life, then the dynamic power of trust in pedagogical encounters, like that of Henrik and his teacher, is in fact one of life’s mysteries.

The look of ‘morningness’

The atmosphere of a situation is pedagogically, a positive phenomenon that creates great possibilities. However, atmosphere is a complex phenomenon that pedagogically can best be explored in terms of ‘togetherness’ (ibid: 3). The pedagogical atmosphere is the precondition for pedagogical moments that may emerge from the relationship between teacher and student. Every place has a certain atmosphere and we bring a mood or a frame of mind to the space we inhabit. In fact, van Manen (with Heidegger) claims, “for each specific mood or quality, atmosphere or mood is the way human beings experience the world” (2002a: 70). We always find ourselves in particular moods, climates, atmospheres, to which we are more or less attentive. Yet, the mood of a situation can be set by a certain tone in the voice, a gesture or a movement. Even silence has different moods. We can for instance

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59 The original German text: “erzieht man indessen mit der Gleichheitsunterstellung, kann dem Kinde kein Schaden entstehen, sofern den im Laufe des Bildungsprozesses hervortretenden besonderen Fähigkeiten nur genug Raum gegeben wird” (Mollenhauer 1983:112).
distinguish the contemplative silence after a meaningful conversation, or the
embarrassed silence following a thoughtless comment, from the silence of grieving
relatives at a gravesite. The atmosphere of a situation may be unconsciously sensed
although its significance in regards to the experience may be hard to grasp.
Nonetheless, the atmosphere of places, relations and emotions are there, and they in
one way or another, affect our experience. Some classrooms for instance have an
exhausting atmosphere, where we sense exasperation and dreariness. Times stands
still and the oppressing atmosphere weighs down both on students and teacher. Yet,
the opposite can be experienced as well. Bollnow explores a certain pedagogical
mood, which he calls the “sense of morning-ness.”

There is a certain temporality – a sense of the joyful unfolding of lived time,
which I would like to call “the feeling of morning-ness.” I mean to signify the
experience of a fresh, happy, forward-looking sense of life – such as one
experiences most purely in the early hours of the morning (1968/1989: 18).

An atmosphere of morning-ness may open up restrictions and support the self-
motivated vitality of the student. In fact, the student’s readiness to learn and will to
grow and mature, are grounded in the precondition of an optimistic and joyful
pedagogical climate. “Only the joyful educator is a good educator,” Bollnow asserts
(ibid: 17). A teacher cannot create a joyful atmosphere, but he or she can cultivate
the contented and cheerful feelings that arise in the classroom by genuinely sharing
the students’ positive and encouraging experiences. The teacher may well, with a
certain humour and cheerfulness, take the sting out of frustration and minor
disappointments by helping the student see further than the trouble. Trude, an
adapted education student, who experiences school a hostile place full of boisterous
youngsters, finds it encouraging simply to think of her teacher’s optimistic voice
saying, “Oh, Trude, you’ll manage. Take a little time and let yourself become familiar
with everything. You’ll get used to it. I can tell you.” Somehow, the teacher’s words
comfort Trude and cheer her up. Her problems are not taken away, but the teacher
has made the burden of worries bearable for her.

In the same way, the teacher’s gentle humour might alleviate a situation that could
otherwise move toward disintegration. This next teacher tells about a somewhat
turbulent situation that turned into a pedagogical moment with the help of a certain humorous intervention.

Daniel was making Bolognese and was about to add the pepper. Unfortunately, he had chosen whole pepper. One can see that it is whole pepper when it runs from the box, and I am sure he did see. But he didn't stop. He just took the chance.

So, "oi, oi, oi", and everybody laughed. He indubitably enjoyed it too, and even perhaps tossed a little extra in the pot. I guess he imagined that the sauce was spoiled now, and would just be thrown away.

And I had to tell him that this was not the case. "In the sauce there is a lot of meat that is worth much money. So we cannot just throw it out," I said. "You'll have to pick out the pepper. That's what you must do."

He looked at me with astonishment written all over his face. "You'll remember this, I tell you. All your life! The way you had to pick out all the pepper afterwards, will be what you remember best of all," I told him.

He smiled a little uncertain. His brave-like attitude was fading. The other students listened carefully. So he started to pick pepper, somewhat reluctantly.

"I'll help you," I said. "I'll be glad to help you."

Then we spent a quarter of an hour picking out whole pepper from the sauce, while talking of which spices would be proper in a perfect Bolognese.

This teacher seems to turn the situation upside down in regards to the student’s expectations. Her startling approach, in addition to saving the food, also made it possible for the student to straighten things out. Yet, what was it exactly that was saved, and how did the teacher do this? Is it not that the teacher accepts the situation as it is by not reacting with personal anger or moral reproach. The humorous stance she takes allows her to positively twist the situation into a moment of pedagogical significance, and shows that she sees the inexperienced and potentially vulnerable young person before her, and takes in as well, the amusing potential of the situation.

And what is more, she does not make any fuss about it. "Humour is the ‘gift of the light hand’, Bollnow says (ibid: 55). This teacher indeed has the valuable pedagogical gift of a light hand.

Picking out whole pepper from a large pot of sauce, what a tedious job! Most likely both of them thought like this. Daniel was taken by surprise but did also manage to see the humour in the situation. And helped by a little kind-hearted irony, he was able to freely accept how things needed to be put in order again. One might think that
Daniel, as most young persons, would not to comply with a teacher this easily. And I think he may not have been so willing, if it had not been for the cheerful reaction that met him. If the teacher had rather exercised cold justice and given him a harsh reprimand, he might easily have rebuked her solution, and the potential pedagogical moment would have disappeared. In fact, the teacher rendered possible a pedagogical moment by saving pepper from the saucepot.

Yet, what are the pedagogical ingredients in regards to the teacher’s reaction? How can we possibly differentiate the contents of her approach, so that we might see the pedagogical meaning of it? In short, what is the significance to students of a fresh, humorous, morning-like look? What is gained by aspiring to create an atmosphere of cheerfulness? Like Bollnow (1968/1989) asserts, the positive affections of particular situations, like this one in the school kitchen, presuppose an appreciative pedagogical atmosphere in general. Thus, the good experiences of particular events might pervade the common atmosphere and vice versa. Bollnow identifies three essential qualities of a pedagogical teacher, serenity, goodness and humour (ibid: 49). Serenity is a certain kind of undisturbed patience, which creates a certain distance to the student and the situation; yet, despite the space, the serene teacher is kind, warm and accepting, though not in the same way as the cheerful, impulsive spirit of morningness. While serenity is characterized by stillness and steadfast constancy (ibid: 50), morningness rather, is joyful and spontaneous. Both are pedagogical qualities, yet usually practiced by different teachers, or by the same teacher at different times. When encountering Daniel, our teacher seems to be both. It is hard to see only her patience or only her humour. They are both integrated parts of her practice. It takes much patience to pick pepper from a pot of sauce; yet, it takes even more, to see the situation as a possible pedagogical moment.

Patience is a virtue, which reconciles human beings and time. […] Patience enables the human being to restrict the desire of surpassing time, it brings the person into harmony with the course of time, whereas impatience always signals insecurity; one does not dare to wait, one is afraid of missing something (ibid: 44).

Our relation to time is decisive in how we meet students. To be in peace with time is to be patient. To be patient is to be attentive to the present moment, by not rushing
into the future. Our teacher accompanies Daniel attentively and with a great deal of humour. By doing so, she takes away the impossible character of the situation for the student, and turns it into a moment of joyful learning. She does not simply adjust her behaviour to make the situation different. Rather she sees his potential embarrassment, his social weakness in the situation, and turns to him without other motives than to help him develop personally from this situation.

One might think that when re-orienting the situation into a joyful togetherness by picking out whole pepper, the teacher degrades the pedagogical seriousness of the situation. This is not at all the case. Most pedagogical events, when seen from the perspective of time and of coming experiences, should be seen as minor worries. To take common pedagogical problems with humour, or lightly, does not mean that they are not taken seriously. If the teacher takes any problem as serious as the student, she or he would not be able to help appropriately. The teacher has the gift of humour because he or she “sees beyond the child’s immediate perception of the situation’s possibilities” (ibid: 55). A certain generalization of the problems then, may take away their uniqueness and make them more palatable to the student.

What is striking about this conversation over the bolognaisé pot, is that Daniel accepts the supportive but also protective relationship with his teacher. Without this agreement, pedagogical humour would not work. Yet, did the success of the situation simply depend on the student’s permission? This is partly so, as the pedagogical atmosphere of a situation is kept up by the student as well as by the teacher. However, ultimately what makes true humour so pedagogically powerful is that it is embedded in goodness.
Chapter 10. Disabling / enabling seeing – spatial aspects

This kind of solicitude [...] helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his care and to become *free for* it (Heidegger 1926/1962: 159).

We sense ourselves in situations, situated in more or less definite contexts in the world. In these situations we bodily and socially share the space with others. Yet, our life is interwoven with other persons’ lives in more profound ways as well. Heidegger’s notion of ‘Befindlichkeit or ‘the way we find ourselves’ in the world, precisely expresses our total situatedness in the world with others. “For Heidegger humans *are* their living in the world with others. Humans are living - in and living-with” (Gendlin 1988: 44). What is the significance of this intimate ‘living – with others’ in the experience of the other’s look? How are ‘I’ and ‘you’, the seer and the person being seen, included in the way we interrelate in the world with others? Gendlin clearly distinguishes the Heideggerian ‘way we find ourselves in the world with others’ from the sociological concept of ‘interaction’ and the psychological term ‘intrapsychic’, by claiming that Befindlichkeit includes both and exists before the particular distinction is made. He continues: “Interaction is also inaccurate for another reason. It assumes that first there are two, and only then, is there a relation between them” (ibid: 44). Gendlin indicates that ‘Befindlichkeit’ in fact means a relation between human beings that somehow are inseparable or woven together in existence, rather than existing as separate individuals. Moreover, relations seem to be understood as the basic condition of life, rather than as social associations into which we more or less intentionally move. If this is so, then, relations between us seem to have neither a particular beginning nor an exact end. Our entire being somehow is relational, or in Gendlin’s words: “[Befindlichkeit] is of a being that *is* it’s relating” (ibid: 47).

**Being on the inside/outside**
When it comes to our question of interest, the experience of being seen in terms of disability and enability, the goal is how to investigate and phenomenologically describe these particular phenomena, in light of this fundamental human intermingled relatedness. How is the experience of ‘seeing,’ possibly a part of our sensed relationship with others? The experiential relationship with others is not merely a question of perception or reception. We do not simply fall into situations of relationship accidentally or instinctively. Being with others, implies a certain understanding, though not necessarily a cognitive comprehension in the usual sense. Gendlin asserts that we are in a certain way responsible for getting ourselves into the various situations of our lives, as we temperamentally or moodily respond to certain possibilities encounter and not to others. Somehow, our way of being in the world, the mood with which we respond to what meets us, (in its ordinary active living modality, has an implicit understanding) not clear. The temperamental or experiential ‘mood-ness’ is “sensed or felt, rather than thought – and it may not even be sensed or felt directly with attention” (ibid: 45). What is more, this ‘wholly’ inattentive understanding always also involves communication. Speaking between us, as well as within us, is possible, not only when we actually say something to each other or ourselves, but also in that there is the expectation of communication, and the possibility of it. This relational complexity is also likely to be part of the experience of being seen. The experience of being seen may also include implicit seeing, or sensed seeing that is not actually the experience of being seen physically with the eyes of a person. Sartre mentions this doubtful or even invisible eye, and point to the vulnerability that this experienced look may bring about in us.

The look which the eyes manifest, no matter what kind of eyes they are, is a pure reference to myself. What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me, is not that there is someone there, it is that I am vulnerable (Sartre 1943/1992: 347).

In a certain way, there are always many ‘seeings’; we see others, we see ourselves and others see us. The ‘seeing’ happens concretely in the now, memorably in the past or imaginatively in the future, or as a mixture of all of these. Moreover, “just as ‘Befindlichkeit’ always has its understanding, and so also does it always already have its spoken articulation” (Gendlin 1988: 45), seeing also seems to include its own interpretation and verbalized understanding. This may be what characterizes the
experience of Frans, one of the adolescents in the adapted education class, who somehow feels himself seen in a certain way and expresses how he experiences this particular way of being seen. Yet, to whom should the ‘seeing’ be addressed?

The teachers’ morning meeting had left me with the students for more than 15 minutes. The students had been given certain duties, which presumably were to be finished during the teacher-free period. I made myself busy with ironing tea towels. Frans stood by himself folding towels with listless movements, while murmuring discontentedly.

“This is an education for losers” he suddenly says aloud. “We do not even get marks and exams. Don’t you see that?”

The last words were defiantly flung towards Fredrik and Hanne. Fredrik does not respond. However, Hanne rejects this saying turning to Frans:

“We don’t agree, we like this class”. Oda shows up and Frans directs his words to her: “We should go on strike to get away from this slavery. Imprisoned are we, this is prisoners’ work, for losers. Isn’t it, Oda?”

Oda catches his point, and the two of them continue the noisy agitation against what they consider the forced labour style of adapted education. The situation totally excludes me, unqualified to have an opinion as I am.

The young student’s verbal remonstrations clearly show that he feels himself seen negatively by some. Most likely the disapproving look he senses, is the look from co-students, parents, teachers or even society’s generally negative view of adapted education students. The look he experiences as a student in a class with such an unfortunate reputation, may even be a feeling or a sensitivity that is not actually reflectively known before it has been articulated. How the students find themselves is neither an inward nor an outward sensation, yet it is both. Every mood or sensation has its own understanding. Løgstrup says, “to instinctively feel something is the beginning of insight. One is moved and the movement is full of undeveloped acknowledgement”60 (Løgstrup 1972/1993: 114). Thus, as far as living is perceptual, not all that is lived can be spoken. There are not always words for what one senses.

Everybody is in the world in a personal way. Every experience is singular and complex and to a certain extent verbally indivisible to others. How then is the experience of being in the world to Frans in this particular context? What he says, is that he considers himself to be a slave or a prisoner, captured in a particular sort of education. Prisoners in general are assigned to a particular area. Their choice of

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60 The original Danish text: ”At have noget på fornemmelsen er begyndende innsikt. Man bevæges og bevægelsen er fuld af uudfoldet erkendelse” (Løgstrup 1972/1993: 114).
space is limited. The allotted space of a prisoner, typically, is inside. In geometry, inside and outside limitations are barriers. But it is not necessarily so in phenomenology. Experientially, inside and outside are not simply questions of borders, but rather a perspective among other perspectives, which may contain multiple nuances. Bachelard confronts geometric limitations by regarding ‘being’ as a circular movement: “Thus in being, everything is a circuitous, roundabout, recurrent, so much talk; a chaplet of sojournings, a refrain with endless verses” (1958/1994: 214). In this circuitous move, prison could be outside instead of inside. The experience of being a prisoner may have little to do with one’s being inside or outside of prison. Suffering and restraint could be both places.

What is more, it could as well be in the space between (in between-space, in Norwegian, ‘mellomrommet’). In fact, in the never-ending refrain of being, where inside and outside are not simply behind or in front of barriers, there also could be the experienced space-in-between. The space-in-between, the twilight zone, where space is neither dark nor bright, where one is not inside or outside, could be the space of Frans’ experience. Gustavsson (1998) directs our attention to the stories of disabled young adults who find themselves ‘inside the outsidedness’61. This location, inside the unwanted or outside the wanted place, could well be where disabled persons experience themselves. By introducing the notion, ‘shadowland of disability’, Robert Murphy (1987) describes his experience of being disabled and not allowed the social space of belonging. The ‘eye of society’ might be what, according to Frans’ experiences, watches and judges him, rendering him an imprisoned student, without the ordinary possibilities of marks and exams. Even getting marks and taking exams, holds great value for Frans, from his perspective of being in a different place than other students. What other students take for granted, Frans feels himself robbed of. He speaks of his own, as well as of other adapted education students’ robbed-ness of the possibility of the normal experience of school; of simply being an ordinary student with all that this involves, including the possibility of taking exams and getting marks. The strenuous effort, to hopefully be considered intellectually abled, thus seems lighter than the weight of admitting to being different. All of a sudden, Frans seems to ‘find himself,’ in the middle of his daily laundry work. The ‘outer eye’ momentarily seeing him, and he seeing himself. One way or another, he finds himself somewhere

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he does not want to be. Somehow, he is where he is not (outside laundry, out of ‘prison’) and he is not, where he is (‘inside’ adapted education with no marks and exams). Heidegger (1926/1962), uses the term ‘Dasein’ to describe the human being, ‘being-here’. The human condition is to be-here, living-with other persons. But, we are not here just like other things in the world. We are in a self-locating sense (Gendlin 1988: 48). Being self-located, includes a profound openness to the surrounding world. This directedness to others is part of our being-here, yet it begins with how we perceptually find ourselves. Frans, ‘finds himself’ in an unfamiliar place, undefined by notions of inside or outside, light or shade. The sense of being a prisoner, a slave or a loser as metaphorical expressions of being a student, is a commonly expressed experience among students. Yet, is the experience truer for some students than for others? Most students feel vulnerable in certain situations of their school life, but some students feel vulnerable all the time. And in particular situations, like when they sense the look of the other, they feel more vulnerable than vulnerable.

Shared space

Sometimes, we actively seek to be seen by the public eye. Like the time students put together a fashion show to present their work, we all seem to wish to be seen in ways that stimulate our selves. A teacher at adapted education tells of how she experienced her students unexpected inhabiting of the open space of the catwalk, and letting themselves be seen by the audience.

It was the second day of our school’s education exhibition. Students from the tailoring class, the hairdressing class and the jewellery making class, had introduced all kinds of trendy fashions on the long illuminated catwalk, professionally made by the students of the wood working class. The creative proficiency of the young students was manifested in self-designed garments, hairstyles and fancy jewellery, and the youngsters walked confidently up and down the catwalk accompanied by catchy music. The event ended with a stunning bride and bridegroom, to whom the applause of approval was overwhelming. As expected, students and teachers were all thrilled about the show.

The week before, our laundry class, finally received their new working clothes, of which we had awaited impatiently and now were so proud to wear. This particular day, when the show had come to an end, I was surprised to see that some of our laundry class students all of a sudden walked the illuminated
catwalk dressed in the new green work suits. The announcer, one of the teachers, told the public that they were students from adapted education, showing their brand new working garments. The students had initiated this extra show on the catwalk to make themselves seen, like the other students had done immediately before.

What is more, the next few days, each show ended with various students from the less trendy and previously ‘unseen’ occupational groups showing their working garments. First there were the elegantly dressed chefs with their tall hats, followed by the construction class students and the plumbers with all kinds of fascinating tools and equipment. I realized at that moment that something new had been created in this year’s school presentation. Somehow, the adapted education students, by showing themselves, had helped others become visible as well.

“The experience of being categorically equal to others, is the foundation of all further communication, creation of meaning and common understanding”, 62 Lorentzen says (2003: 19). What does it mean to be categorically equal in terms of disability? Does not the disability rather make the person categorically different? What is the possible experiential equality between the students performing themselves in the formerly planned mannequin show, and the students posing on the catwalk afterwards? When ‘cat-walking,’ they make use of the same physical space. Yet, how is the objective space experientially sensed? A significant difference, according to this theme, is that the laundry group students, by letting themselves be seen, also cleared the way for other students to show themselves, adapted education students and other groups, not previously represented in the show. This was not the case with the other students. Gendlin refers to Heidegger’s assertion that “human beings are with an implicit understanding, that is to say, they are “ontologically” because this is an understanding of being - of their own being and the being of others, things and tools involved in their own being-with and being-in” (Gendlin 1988: 54). Somehow the laundry students sensed and took responsibility for their understanding of their own being, as well as their being-with other (previously invisible) students. Their teacher recognized this step, and saw her students the way they wanted to be seen, with enabling approval and admiration. Somehow, by taking the initiative, the laundry class students who showed themselves, brought forth the experience of a visible invisibility

62 The original Norwegian text: "Opplevelsen av å være kategorisk lik den andre er fundamentet for all videre kommunikasjon, meningsdannelse og felles forståelse" (Lorentzen 2003: 19).
The shrinking space

Many everyday events are too insignificant to be taken notice of in pedagogical situations. The repeated nature of practices in classrooms, easily become habitual ways of being, and as such, strongly influence the student’s being and becoming as well as the pedagogical atmosphere of the class. Coming in late, is one of such well-known experiences of the daily life in schools. How may the student’s late arrival to class be understood experientially in terms of disabling/enabling seeing? Tanja and Fredrik, two adapted education students are frequent latecomers. They attend different classes and have different teachers and their habit of coming in late, is interpreted differently by these. This is how one of Tanja’s teachers sees this student’s repeated morning-practice.

Tanja is often more than half an hour late for school. During the recent weeks her late coming has become more and more conspicuous. In fact, time and again like today, the group does not seem to be able to concentrate and settle down before she arrives. The disturbed atmosphere of her anticipated arrival, somehow keeps the class on alert. When she finally arrives, without concern or apology, the activity that might have started up, is interrupted and difficult to resume. We have not been able to clearly decide how to address Tanja’s habit of arriving late. Some of the teachers reprimand her strictly; others greet her rather warmly and include her without further questions. I choose to take it like it is. Tanja’s habitual late coming is inevitable as I see it. She is like most other intellectually disabled students, what we call egocentric. Their thoughts move in circles around themselves and their own particular experiences. They are not able to evolve outside this circle. I suppose it might be part of the syndrome. Just look at Tanja. She loves watching TV and is late to school because she misses the school bus, due to being too late to bed at nights.

It is annoying, but still, there is nothing I can do about it. I would rather not bother her parents. They have enough. Because of her intellectual limitations I don’t believe in arguing with her. She would hardly manage to change her practice.

Tanja’s teacher might be bothered or even irritated with her student who is late, and who frequently disturbs the first lesson of the group. Yet, she does not intend to make any positive changes to the situation. One might suggest that Tanja’s teacher sees her student as a product of learning disability, and thus finds no reason to attempt to
alter her behaviour. In pedagogic practice, like in other social situations, we may tend to see certain groups of people as products of their heredity or environment, or as in this case, as a product of their diagnosis. According to the immigrant researcher, Unni Wikan, we (unconsciously) seem to make distinctions between the immigrants of our society and ourselves, when it comes to the personal freedom of the individual: “We treat Norwegians as people with various characters and the personal ability to think for themselves. Immigrants, however, we treat as the product of their culture” (Wikan 1997). The term ‘product’, meaning “a quantity produced by multiplying” (Onions 1966: 713), implies the rejection of an individual’s influence on the result, which in the case of immigrants, is culture or religion. A significant consequence of our stigmatizing culturally qualified view, is followed up by the Iraqi / Norwegian author Walid al-Kubaisi,

When the immigrant policy constitutes its view as the fact that Muslims are the product of their culture, the so-called multicultural society automatically offers freedom to the culture, not to the human being. […] The individual is deprived of the freedom to infringe with the taboos of the culture. (al-Kubaisi 1996: 80).

Could this deprivation of personal freedom be true also for persons with some kind of deviance? Could it be true as well that to give freedom to a culture, a minority or a marginalized group comes easier than to approve the freedom of personal character to the individual member of this group? When Tanja’s teacher deprives her of the possibility of changing her bad habit, she simultaneously somehow also refuses to break with certain cultural views that persistently stick personal restrictions onto the group of the ‘learning disabled’. In our perception of life, we might also be inclined to pre-reflectively reinforce the stigmatizing assumption that for instance, people who are addicted to drugs suffer from a lack of character (Goffman 1968). In the same way we might tend to assume that learning disability resists individual change and development. We might in fact, unconsciously hide behind a certain cultural taken-for-granted-ness or pre-comprehension that backs up and somehow taints the way we experientially perceive disability. Hence, when teachers in pedagogical situations

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63 The original Norwegian text: "Vi behandler nordmenn som folk med ulik karakter og evne til å tenke selv, men innvandrere som produkt av sin kultur” (Wikan 1997).
64 The original Norwegian text: "Og når innvandringspolitikken bygger sitt syn på at muslimene er at produkt av sin kultur, skjer det automatisk at det flerkulturelle samfunn gir kulturen frihet, men ikke mennesket. […] Individet blir berøvet friheten til å bryte med kulturtabuene” (al-Kubaisi 1996: 80).
see sightlessly, sense obscurely, and perceive the student without an opening to unacquainted possibilities, he or she at the same time may practice disabling seeing.

**Space of self-determination**

Frequently in the last few weeks, Fredrik has been late for school. Fredrik grew up in a juvenile institution, and has on a number of occasions uttered something about how hard it is to rely on the ever-changing groups of people caring for him and his fellow adolescents. This particular day, his teacher comes up to him during the break, in order to figure out what might be behind his repeated late-comings. Her intention is to help him put an end to this bad habit of his. This is how their conversation runs:

Fredrik, I saw that you where late to school this morning. And I remember you being late on several occasions recently. What is going on? Is there a problem you might be willing to share with me?’
‘I overslept.’ Fredrik replies without apologize.
‘I see. Is your alarm clock out of order?’ The teacher tries to catch his eye without success.
‘No, but I do not wake up when it rings. It’s not my fault. I just don’t wake up.’ His voice sounds injured.
‘You sleep very heavily then, I guess.’ Mildly smiling, the teacher’s looks at him.
‘I suppose so.’
The teacher senses a resigned tone in his voice and asks: ‘Is there anyone you could ask to wake you up?’ She tries to imagine how it is for the boy to relate to the changing staff of an institution.
‘I have already asked them several times, but they forget’.
‘Well, then we have to be more creative. What would be smart to do?’ Fredrik looks at her for the first time during their chat. He shrugs his shoulders, seemingly indifferent, yet his attention is not lost.
‘Who would you say, should see to it that you are on time for school?’ The teacher looks seriously at the boy.
He falters a bit and says somewhat inquiringly: ‘Me, I guess…?’
‘What will you do then? How will you still get up when you don’t hear the alarm clock, and no one remembers to wake you up?’ The voice of the teacher is a little provocative.
He pauses for half a minute. Then he says: ‘I might have to find myself another alarm bell with a stronger sound or perhaps two bells will do.’
‘Good suggestion,’ the teacher replies. ‘Try this - it might work very well. If not, I might help you. I could for instance call the ward to have a serious word with the persons concerned…?’
Fredrik straightens his lean body and shakes his head: ‘No way, if I am responsible, I am.’
Fredrik undoubtedly ends up feeling responsible for his late coming. Yet, might we believe that his teacher’s caring attitude somehow has helped to evoke this responsibility? What is the significance of this gentle inquisitiveness, which produces, a certain pedagogical unease in a situation like this? Heidegger (1926/1962) introduces the term ‘solicitude’ as the existentially corresponding word ‘concern’. ‘Solicitude’ seems even stronger than ‘care’ in calling attention to the other part of the actual human relation, in this case the student. Etymologically, the term ‘solicitude’ like the term ‘care’, has to do with the experience of being disturbed, burdened and troubled (Onions 1966: 844). When the teacher cares for the student, she or he is disturbed by the fact that something is not as it should be with the student, and the teacher’s burden is not eased until the condition is positively altered. Yet, with ‘solicitude’, the worrying seems to be related to a plea or a petition from someone. Pleas can have various modes, the unspoken and the tacit. In fact Løgstrup (1956/1991) asserts that most pleas are soundless and yet should be heard by teachers. Nevertheless, entreaties could also be overheard or inattentively passed by; translating into the idea that your troubled situation does not matter to me. I may even feel insecure of the meaning or the direction of the plea, and thus choose not to respond to it. The pure deficiency of everyday life may well lead me to feel that I am not really concerned with you. I may think that there must be others more committed than me, to answer back. This may well be the case with teachers. Yet, on the backdrop of both these teachers’ solicitude, what are possibly Tanja’s and Fredrik’s pleas, and how might their teachers pedagogically meet their requests? The basic condition of the pedagogical encounter is that the student is seen as a person and the encounter is understood as a unit between ‘you and I’. “This community is not merely a matter of fact, but also a matter of intention” (Langeveld 1975: 7). The student as well as the teacher brings intentions to the encounter between them. What then are the intentions of these two students and what do they, ask from their teachers? Personal pedagogical help, which is what students should have in schools, is help in many different life situations. Only by exception is pedagogic action foreordained and calculated. Usually, the teacher is unprepared for this or that particular situation, and thus pedagogical personal help to students, is based on the unanticipated experience of the situation, as it turns out to be. When Tanja and Fredrik show up in class, too late for the lesson, are they then presumably asking their teachers for some sort of personal help? I think they do. Even with seemingly trivial encounters between
teacher and student, these might become pedagogically significant. When as teachers, we meet a child or a young person, the young person appeals to us simply by being a young person. The pedagogical glance is simply different from other glances, in that we see this unit between us as a unit of pedagogical responsibility. We see the encounter per se, as a request we, as a teacher, should answer. We feel responsible without having been asked for responsibility. The student simply appeals to our responsibility without words, just by being a young person, somehow connected to us by invisible pedagogical threads. One may see with Augustine, the pedagogical relation metaphorically, as ‘shout and answer’, and feel the call to answer the shout. (Mollenhauer 1983: 102). Then, the ‘pedagogiality’ of the encounter lies precisely in how we as teachers respond to this (often unarticulated) call from the student. The responsibility of teachers is “to build up in every child his own understanding and intention of human realization” (Langeveld 1975: 11). Then, one could say that Fredrik’s call was answered responsibly and in a pedagogically appropriate way, while Tanja’s call was not. The solicitude of the teacher, one might say, creates two extreme attitudes, which are illustrated by the two portraits of the late-coming students. Tanja’s teacher takes away the care from her student by leaping in and replacing authentic care with the somewhat biased explanation of why Tanja cannot and will not in the future be able to take responsibility for herself. Fredrik’s teacher, on the contrary leaps ahead of her student, by seeing his potential for taking over the responsibility himself. She practices genuine pedagogical care, which gives back the concern to the student himself as soon as he or she is ready for the responsibility. Heidegger clothes the phenomenon in these words,

[…] Solicitude has two extreme possibilities. It can, as it were, take away ‘care’ from the Other and put itself in his position in concern: it can leap in for him. This kind of solicitude takes over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself. The Other is thus thrown out of his own position; he steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to, he can either take it over as something finished and at his disposal, or disburden himself of it completely. In such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remain hidden […] In contrast to this, there is the possibility of a kind of solicitude which does not so much leap in for the Other as leap ahead of him [ihm vorausspringt] in his existentiell potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his ‘care’, but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time. This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care – that is, to the existence of the Other, to a “what” with which he is concerned; it helps the Other to become transparent
to himself in his care and to become free for it (Heidegger 1926/1962: 158-159).

The ‘leaping in’ and ‘leaping ahead’ of teacher solicitude in pedagogical encounters, somehow provides meaning to the difference between seeing students in disabling or enabling ways. Even if events in the classroom frequently merge in the flow of time and activity, the lived experience of pedagogical situations may leave tracks that leave their mark on students’ being and becoming independent persons. Situations, apparently not even worth mentioning, might be building stones for the student’s interpretation of what it is like to be a human being, and how to understand the intention of life. Somehow, one may expect the indistinct and invisible elements of influence to shape the unconscious even more strongly.

Closing space

The brief moment that may turn out to be part of a disabling practice toward a student, is the case in Synne’s following encounter with a teacher who sees her pedagogical task as effectively distinguishing between the right and wrong grammatical results of her disabled student. Correcting a student’s text for spelling mistakes is one of the teacher’s duties, yet his or her approach to grammatical guidance, could make a significant difference to the student.

There are only a few more minutes left of the language art class, and the teacher leans over Synne’s desk, scrutinizing her text, which is nearly done. “You worked quickly today Synne,” she says praisingly. “But unfortunately there are much too many mistakes here. Can I have your pencil?” The student hesitatingly hands over her yellow pencil to the teacher, who in a hurry starts to correct the text with agitated movements. When she is finished, she says: “So, now you see what the correct spelling should be. I might as well complete the text for you, you’ll not achieve it anyway, the bell will ring in a moment.”
She writes the unfinished phrases, successively to Synne’s own text in the book, while the school bell rings. Synne sits still with her hands in the lap.65

Any uncaring pedagogical practice, like this one, may not be intentionally unkind. Yet, how should we understand this teacher’s actions? Should we understand pedagogical insensitivity at all or somehow try to justify teachers’ inappropriate

65 Close observation in an adapted education class.
actions? We all tend to give good reasons for our own practice with students and correspondingly criticize other persons’ ways. We all seem to be inclined to focus on guilt and non-guilt in pedagogical matters. Mollenhauer touches to the quick when he writes,

Reflections on upbringing to a great extent primarily are attempts of justification and distribution of obligation, generally both. Depending on own position we deliver labels. Guilty are the bad parents, the authoritarian teachers, the “suppressing” conditions, and the “emancipation pedagogues”. Our own life form, our own manner with the children, our own ideals and dispositions, come forth justified (Mollenhauer 1983: 11).

How then, can we assign more fruitful and interesting qualities to the portrait drawn of Synne and her teacher, than simply to censure the pedagogical practice? It remains, that the described practice is profoundly blameable, and truly restricts the student’s potential independence of self. At the same time, it reveals the teacher’s view on disability, as well as on pedagogy. However, we know that bad pedagogy arises from biased attitudes and most likely will have negative consequences for the students.

What if we were to look at the portrayed situation and ask: What would make this situation pedagogically appropriate? Instead of providing a recipe, which in any case would be futile, another portrait of a student-teacher encounter, may serve as a counterpart. In this scene, Niklas plays a board game with his teacher and even though the game takes place during the break, the content of teaching qualities is still present, especially as Niklas is not simply an average player.

**Opening up the space of time**

Niklas only reluctantly has let himself be persuaded to play, as he generally is so worried about losing any game. He enters games as if he heads into a dead earnest competition. Now, his breath is strained and his movements are abrupt and restless.

“I will start the game today,” he demands.
But it is Sonja’s turn, and Niklas is to be the second last. He leans heavily back on his chair.

“Who wins today?” He continues.

“We will not talk about winning, yet. Now we’ll enjoy ourselves, won’t we? ”
The teacher responds. “Here, now it’s your turn”.

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66 The original German text: "Nachdenken über Erziehung ist auf weiten Strecken zunächts Rechtfertigung oder Schuldigen-Suche, meist beides. Je nach Position werden die Etiketten verteilt: schuldig sind die schlimmen Eltern, die autoritären Lehrer, die “repressiven” Verhältnisse, die “Emanzipationspädagogen”, gerechtfertigt erscheint die eigene Lebensform, der eigene Stil im Umgang mit Kindern, die eigene Option, die eigene Gewohnheit” (Mollenhauer 1983: 11).
Niklas holds his breath and flings the cube across the table. One of the other students says resignedly: “Niklas always ruins the game.” The teacher replies in a calming voice: “You should throw the cube more carefully, Niklas. Or else it may fall on the floor.”

Niklas rubs his cheek and leans hastily over the table to move his piece, eight spots. “The category is ‘language and culture’,,” the teacher reads. “Okay Niklas, are you ready? Now listen, what do we buy at a pharmacy?”

“Books!” Niklas shouts.

“Let’s change the question a bit,” the teacher says. “What can you do in a library?” Niklas smiles largely.

“Borrow books and videos and DVDs,” he replies, still rowdy.

“Very well,” the teacher says, “but we don’t like it when you shout like this.”

One of the students looks at the teacher and says: “You are so kind to Niklas.”

“I am kind too,” Niklas adds.

Both portrayals contain possible issues related to pedagogical patience and indulgence, and/or the lack thereof. Patience, serenity, gentleness, mildness are all virtues that come from an attitude of expectancy and waiting. In fact, one of the most common practices of teachers is the practice of waiting. One simply cannot not wait in pedagogical settings. In daily life we wait for various things to happen: for the elevator or spring to come, for the dinner or the copying machine to be ready, for a bad experience to fade. But as parents and teachers, we also wait for a child or for a young person to grow and develop and to learn something. Waiting, is necessary in order to let the student come to his or her own understanding of things in the world, him or her self, in fact of life as such. One of the teacher’s main pedagogical challenges is to wait with patience for the student to ‘become’. Bollnow (1960) contrasts pedagogical ‘patience’ with ‘hope’ and ‘expectation’.

Pedagogical patience is characterized by the fact that it does not refer to past events; rather it is more like a state of being which is only possible when there is a precondition of a “trustful relationship to the future” (Fujita 2002: 129).

Looking back to our portrayals of Synne and Niklas, the difference between these two teachers’ views in regards to the students’ future, may become clearer. Niklas’ teacher, although she certainly has had to deal with similar situations in the past, seems to believe in Niklas’ future developmental possibilities. Synne’s teacher does not seem to have the passive quality required for patience, as she hastily rushes into the future; she skips the present experience of her student. Her action is characterized by impatience. While impatience is to accelerate the natural flow of

67 Teacher’s anecdote and close observation of the situation.
time and somehow jump over it\textsuperscript{68} (Bollnow 1960: 70) patience lies in the harmony between the degrees of wished-for and the actual flow of objective time\textsuperscript{69} (ibid: 75). Nonetheless, in the pedagogical practice, patience with only a superficial glance, could be confused with pedagogical weakness or unconcern. Compared to pedagogical patience which trusts the future becoming of the student, also exists in amity with the student’s ‘being’ today. The terms ‘hope’ and ‘expectation’ in pedagogical settings, more exclusively refer to potential future sceneries.

In expectation there is a strong inner activeness in spite of outer passiveness, there is a belief in the occurrence of the expected event; and the expected event is sensed to be imminent and clearly imagined. Hope differs from expectation in that there is a kind of relaxation as seen in the fact that no hope is unendurable or unbearable; the exact occurrence of the hoped for event is not definitely known; the hoped for event is indeterminate (Fujita 2002: 129).

In the ‘world of becoming’ (Fujita 2002), the world where we become ourselves, what is waited for, is highly changeable and evasive. What is waited for, is always a draft of what might become, and is realized only through modifications, abandonment and new beginnings. In the mechanical world, where one might wait for a vending machine to deliver a coke, the result of our waiting is distinct and predictable. So is it also to a great degree in the natural world, where waiting for summer for instance, is “characterized by powerlessness of the self and by trust to the external rhythm” (Fujita 2002: 131). In these cases, waiting is doing nothing. However, waiting for young people to develop, learn and mature is of a different kind. With children and young persons, we wait for what Pestalozzi (1746-1827) called the ‘vitalization of the inner child\textsuperscript{70}, where we practice a pedagogically imaginative seeing of a possible future for this young person. In Mollenhauer’s words,

Pedagogical practice has the shape of an experiment conducted by a hypothesis, yet, always with openness toward the future of the child. The hypothesis - or the image, which the educator creates of the child’s potential

\textsuperscript{68} The original German text: “Ungeduldig bedeutet also, dass er den Lauf der Zeit, der sich nicht vom Menschen her beeinflussen lässt, dennoch beschleunigen möchte” (Bollnow 1960: 70).

\textsuperscript{69} The original German text: “Die Forderung nach Übereinstimmung zwischen dem subjektiven Wünschen und dem objektiven Zeitverlauf bietet auch hier den richtigen Masstab” (Bollnow 1960: 75).

Thus, waiting for a child or young person to be-come, is in fact, waiting for an elusive and shifting process, walking along with the other, on an itinerary one does not know the end of. Furthermore, in the human world of becoming, the demarcation line between waiting and the result of waiting, is subtle. Waiting in the mechanical or natural world, does not have much to say in regards to how we wait. But in the world of becoming the subtle distinction between what we wait for and how we wait, somehow might make waiting productive. It matters how we wait. In the world of becoming, we can even say, “the very way of “how we wait” enables us to be aware of what has been out of our reach and thus enriches and transforms the initial “what we waited for”” (Fujita 2002: 133). How then, do we wait for young persons to ‘become’? How can we become conscious of waiting in a truer and richer manner for the becoming of students? How do teachers wait for a disabled student to become the person they possibly may come-to-be in his or her life? How we wait, is deposited in the very encounters with the students and no moment is insignificant. The experiences of Synne and Niklas call attention to the pedagogical challenge of how to wait in the world of becoming, and in particular how, how we wait, may enable or disable the student.

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71 The term ‘potential of development’ is used in lack of a more covering concept. The original German term is ‘Bildsamkeit’.

72 The original German text: "Das pädagogische Handeln hat also die Form eines hypothesengeleiteten, aber immer zur Zukunft des Kindes hin offenen Experimentes. Die Hypothese- oder das Bild, das sich der Erzieher von der Bildsamkeit des Kindes macht – ist notwendiger Bestandteil dieses Handelens. Ist diese Hypothese aber in der pädagogischen Interaktionen nicht beständig für Korrekturen offen, d.h., ist sie derart verfestigt, dass sie keine neuen Erfahrungen mit dem Kinde mehr zulässt – wird also aus dem offenen Experiment ein geschlossenes Ritual, dann droht auch die Bildsamkeit des Kindes zu erlöschen” (Mollenhauer 1983: 103-104).
Chapter 11. Seeing disability pedagogically – aspects

And so it can claim here only to end, not to conclude. [...] We do not seek a closure but an opening (Caputo 1987: 294).

Unless something speaks to us we cannot really see it. The aim of this work is to show how the experience of disability speaks to pedagogical practice and understanding. Somehow we are what we see, and how we see has consequences for our knowing, feeling, understanding and experiencing. Thus seeing is already a kind of pedagogical practice in that, by seeing the significance of a situation we place ourselves at the core of the experience (van Manen 1989). I have tried to explicate and make recognizable meanings of disability to pedagogy, meanings that in some sense are hidden or implicit in the pedagogical action. We know the world through our bodies, in space and time, and through our relations with others and the things around us. This knowledge is situated, embodied and sensed, rather than general, theoretical or conceptual. As phenomenology is not an empirical analytic science, deriving empirical knowledge inductively (van Manen 1997a), the attempt here was not to describe and explicate psychological or sociological consequences of disability in schools in regards to the individual or society. Neither was it to present critical and political analyses of the pedagogical way of treating students with various disabilities in Norwegian high schools. Rather, I have tried to contribute to the experiential understanding of disability to pedagogy. Or more explicitly, I have attempted to describe phenomenologically the lived experience of disability of the students and teachers in this inquiry, and at the same time to explore the significance of disability to the pedagogical encounter between them. Still, this intent goes beyond an interest in the sheer individuality of these students and teachers, as phenomenology is neither a methodology of particularity nor of absolute universality.

Phenomenology consists in mediating in a personal way the antinomy of particularity (being interested in concreteness, difference and what is unique) and universality (being interested in the essential, in the difference that makes a difference) (ibid: 23).
Thus, the phenomenological interest is to interpret by the help of language, the implicit meanings of concrete human experience in a way that establishes the contact between the uniqueness and the universality of the phenomenon. By attempting this, one comes to deal with the elusiveness of any description and interpretation of human experience. Somehow, language falls short when trying to capture the evasive, imprecise and many-layered meanings of the lived experience, simply because language is insufficient to catch the experiential dimensions of life. The reason why phenomenological classics are written in a different, often poetic-like style, is because ordinary language often lacks the rich embodied qualities that characterizes human experience. Phenomenological inquiry possesses a different rationality, that in addition to the “criteria for precision, exactness and rigor” (van Manen 1997a: 17), also has a nature unsuitable to circumscribe and encompass scientific theoretical conceptions. It is in this sense that van Manen (1997a) asserts that compared to many exotic and future-oriented natural scientists, who travel far and get sensational results, human science researchers do not go anywhere and their results are rather modest. In fact, phenomenological texts do not really have ‘results’ at all, at least not in the form of a conclusion or summary to an inquiry. With phenomenological inquiries, the text itself is the result. In fact, “Phenomenological research is unlike all other research in that the link with the result cannot be broken […] without loss of all reality to the results” (ibid: 13). At this moment, having written all but the concluding chapter, I will draw attention to this phenomenological peculiarity and prepare for a different kind of conclusion.

**Being**\(^{73}\) in question

To uphold the intention of the study, it was necessary on the one hand to look at how the students experience their being and on the other, to inquire into how the teachers see disability as a mode of being in the pedagogical encounter. “Research is writing in that it places consciousness in the position of the possibility of confronting itself, in a self-reflective relation,” van Manen asserts (1989: 240). In the phenomenological

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\(^{73}\) *Being* (in italics) is written so as to differentiate and at the same time to emphasize *being* in general, *being* a human being, from more specific notions of ‘being’, like for example Heidegger’s *Being* (with a capital B). In the same way the term *other*, when it needs stress or differentiation, is written in italics, in contrast to for example Levinas’ or Sartre’s ‘Other’, written with a capital O.
analyses I have undertaken, I have tried to reflect in a self-conscious way, on how students’ being and becoming is pedagogically influenced by disability. In pedagogy as in philosophy, the term being is a significant notion with its own dialectic. As my perspective is primarily pedagogical, I see being as a human personal and relational experience that finds expression directly and indirectly in the pedagogical encounter. However, concrete being, being as presence, is not a harmonious and clear-cut conception. Rather it is full of difficulties, irregularities and indistinctness, like life itself. And being as existence, the experience of being, should always stay this difficult and in question, constantly open to wondering and unconfined exploration. The human experience of being should always be in question but without looking for definite answers. Heidegger sees Being as an unfathomable and indefinite question, when in the last paragraph of Being and Time (1926/1962) he writes, “And can we ever seek the answer as long as the question of the meaning of Being remains unformulated and unclearified” (ibid: 487)? How then, is the complexity and inexactness of being to be understood in terms of disability? Is there a particular way of being disabled? Is being disabled a particular way of being? I believe so, at least in the sense that every way of being is particular and unique. Being a disabled student then, is to be in a particular way, unlike all other ways of being, just as being human, is particular to every one of us. Thus, to be is not to be defined, but to exist and to experience this existence personally and sensationally (Levinas 1991/1998). But since existence is the condition that is closest to us, it is easily passed over and unrecognized. To experience what is most familiar to us, is the hardest, and yet we tend to think of it as the easiest. Heidegger (1982/1998) reminds us that the most familiar remains what we think of as least worthwhile of thought, and, he continues “the closest appears therefore as if it where nothing. We see first, strictly speaking, never the closest but always what is next closest” (ibid: 135). Is it possible then to approach ways of seeing what being a disabled student might be like while at the same time keeping the question of being open and allowing it to remain so? Here, I intend to call attention to a few final aspects that hopefully can help deepen our understanding of disability in pedagogy. Nevertheless, I will avoid concluding or summarizing but rather I will reflect on the meaning of being, while turning one last time to some ontological aspects of disability and pedagogy.
Seeing disability pedagogically is to let *being* be indeterminate

Pedagogical questions are questions of *being* and *becoming*, rather than of *having*. We can only *have* in a certain sense that which is independent of us, what is added to us, and what we somehow possess (Marcel 1949/1965). We *have* what we can place ourselves over and against, in order to grasp or to capture it. Yet, in the same way that *being* can be absorbed into *having*, by the experience of the possessed taking control over the possessor; *having* as well can be sublimated and changed into *being*, for example when one transforms a talent one possesses into a vital and creative personal act. Marcel makes a distinction between problem and mystery, and sees *having* and what belongs to *having* as problem to be solved, while *being* and what belongs to the world of beings, as mysteries that cannot be reduced to manageable questions. “At the root of having, as also at the root of the problem or the technique, there lies a certain specialisation or specification of the self,” Marcel says (ibid: 187). The human self or *being*, as the human way of encountering the world, is not a rational, solvable problem. Rather, the young person’s *being* is unfixed, veiled, unsolved, indeterminate (Rousseau 1993; Uljens 1998; Benner 1999). How then, is the mysterious and partly hidden *being* to be understood pedagogically? How does the student’s *being* somehow make itself known? I intend to look into some pedagogical, ontological and ethical aspects of disabled students’ *being*, by once more introducing one of the participants, Trude, a student in the inquiry. In the following passage, she reflects on who she is and who she wants to become. In the following passage, she reflects on who she is and who she wants to become.

I.

Myself.

I am good enough. I am.

I am pleased with who I am.

I don’t complain.

But I’ll try to get things moving.

I’ll do everything,

even though it is hard or easy, I’ll manage.

I’ll balance two plates as one. I don’t manage, yet.

But I stake on it some nice day.
Then, I'll pile many plates upon each other, like this. Although I am not sure I'll succeed with that.
Then, I'll be a capable rider,
and a good drummer, and a swing dancer.
I dance swing excellently already. And I want to be a singer, and finally, I intend to be a useful kitchen hand.
Yes, work hard. You see,
I have my matters ready.

Trude is thrilled by the prospect of facing all kinds of tough and exciting goals she hopes to achieve. And she is sure she will achieve them some day. Balancing a pile of plates upon her forearm, playing drums, riding, dancing, and singing… could be seen as a challenge to a person with cerebral palsy. Still, be it an expectation, a hope, a vision or a dream, this is what she imagines for herself in her near and more distant future. Not exactly exceptional really, most young persons have future dreams. We all in a certain sense dream ourselves into being. Mollenhauer (1983) considers ‘self’ and ‘identity’ a necessary fiction from which I sketch a risky draft of who I am to become. He sees our being and becoming, our work on identity and self, obstacles, difficulties that come to something only through contradiction, inconsistency and unstableness. “The ‘attainable’ is more than the ‘actual’” he asserts (ibid: 157). The question of who I am, whom I want to or should be, is essential, yet most disquieting to me. Somehow my being, my self, who I am, conceals itself from itself, such that who I am is a mystery also to myself. Heidegger (1982/1998) reminds us of being as the kind of experience that always is at the same time open and hidden. The notion of ‘aletheia’, this ontological truth of Being, that constantly shifts and veils itself, is the condition of the possibility of all human truth, that discloses and discovers the depths and varieties of the world with all degrees of thoroughness and explicitness. “According to Heidegger’s interpretation, truth is not some reality that hovers over and apart from man, but is the fundamental event that happens with man’s disclosing way of being” (King 1964: 142). To disclose ways of being then, is the condition of our existence, the way we are in the world. And to be in

75 The original German text: ”das Mögliche ist mehr als das "Wirkliche” (Mollenhauer 183: 157).
a true way is to live in the middle of discovering and disclosing this constantly shifting world, which is always showing and hiding, presenting and withdrawing itself from being grasped cognitively and conceptually. Caputo (1987) grants that Heidegger is right when he says that “a-letheia is not a well rounded whole, in which being clings to itself, but a hyphenated, fluctuating play, in which things are never reducible to what they are” (ibid: 274). The falling short of, as well as the evasive complexity and mysterious nature of human life experience, is according to van Manen (1997a) what invites us to reflect in the first place. “Human life needs knowledge, reflection and thought, to make itself knowable to itself, including its complex and ultimately mysterious nature” (ibid: 17). Consequently, reflecting on the significance of disability to pedagogy, is to reflect on a phenomenon with a nature that is not identical to itself, a phenomenon that all the time flees thought, by alternately hiding and showing its identity. Relating to my own ability to be, to be ahead of myself (Heidegger 1926/1962: 1.6, King 1964: 128), is to dwell alongside myself, to care for my own being. Isn’t this what this student does, when she reflects on her being and becoming? How then should we in pedagogy, address students’ working on being as the way they inhabit their lives?

**Seeing disability pedagogically is to let be what is there and at the same time working for change**

In every encounter we reveal in one way or another, how we understand the other person’s being. The way we live our lives, the way we dwell with the other is the source of Being from where ethics originates (Heidegger 1954/1993; Caputo 1987). Ethics, according to Heidegger, is not value thinking, or rules to control human norms and behaviours. Rather, ethics is Being itself. The truth of Being means nothing less than the way one dwells, the way we live our lives, the way we care. In fact, the meaning of Being for Heidegger is “the gentle letting be,” Caputo says, who then connects this ‘letting be’ to human life, which is, “the life of ‘mortals’ who move in rhythm with and in response to the powers of the cosmos” (1987: 237). Somehow ‘letting be’ is a way of freeing the human being from what does not fit, and at the same time receiving what is already there at hand in the experience. ‘Letting be’ is a certain act of spontaneous attunement to what discloses itself in human life. (Heidegger 1926/1962: I.3, II.4). What are appropriate ways of responding to life’s
challenges in a pedagogy ‘attuned’ to disability? What does a caring dwelling-with and a gentle letting be, mean in terms of disability? How are pedagogical love and hope, confidence, care and humour practiced, in conjunction with the question of what is worthwhile knowledge? The main pedagogical question must be then, “what in my life, would be of sufficient importance to give to the young person (Mollenhauer 1983)? Or as Langeveld puts it, “what is a life worth living” (1983: 7)? From a phenomenological point of view, we seek the essential meanings in the pedagogical encounter, rather than attempting to understand it in pure theoretical or conceptual terms. In the pedagogical encounter we do not meet ‘others’, we meet ‘each other’ (Langeveld 1983). The “genuinely educational purpose” (Spranger 1958) of the pedagogical relation is one, which gradually ceases to exist, because the teacher’s basic intention is to help the student define his or her own life and purpose. This is in fact what Trude does; she identifies and interprets herself as a developing and achieving person. Her immediate and concrete view of her own present and future self, includes all possible aspects of self in one. She experiences her body as lived-through meaning, as a coherent unit, rather than encumbered with and objectified by diagnoses. Her body for her, is one of space, not in space (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002), and interprets itself as it is lived. Merleau-Ponty rejects seeing the body as a pure physical object. Rather, he sees the body as a work of art that is beyond any description. He says,

A novel, poem, picture or musical are individuals, that is, beings, in which the expression is indistinguishable from the thing expressed, their meaning, accessible only through direct contact, being radiated with no change of their temporal and spatial situation. It is in this sense that our body is comparable to a work of art. It is a nexus of living meanings, not the law for a certain number of covariant terms (ibid: 175).

In fact, Merleau-Ponty in his working notes at the end of *The visible and the invisible* (1948/1997), sees being and the world as one vertical experience, or intelligibility. He writes, “The flesh of the world is not explained by the flesh of the body, nor the flesh of body by the negativity of self, that inhabits it – the three phenomena are simultaneous” (ibid: 250). For Trude, as with all persons, disabled or not, the
experience of the body and of the self, are inseparable and instantaneous. Thus, *being* is prior to having.

Levinas' (1991/1998) contribution supports and furthers this notion of being’s preceding having. He asserts that basic to the ontology of being, is the ‘being in itself’, as it is affected in the interpersonal ethical and moral relationship. He claims that “to understand our situation in reality is not to define it, but to be in an affective state. To understand being is to exist” (ibid: 3). But whose existence provides the true understanding of who the student really is? How does the experience of being seen (or of not being seen) become of pedagogical and ethical significance to the student? How can we understand the experience of being seen and interpreted by the other; the experience of being objectified and vulnerable to the other's glance in terms of pedagogy? According to a Levinasian understanding of the individual person, the ‘I’ and the ‘Other’ do not correspond to each other. There is no other concept that corresponds to the ‘I’ as a human being. Levinas says, “the experience of the Other cannot be obtained by simple “variation” of oneself and the projection of one of those variants outside of oneself” (ibid: 26). He continues: “The irreplaceable singularity if the ‘I’ comes from its life” (ibid: 27). How then, is the relation between *being* individually and *being* relationally? Are they to be considered contrasts, or two aspects of the same? And how is seeing myself, different from seeing myself in the glance of the Other?

**Seeing disability pedagogically is to see that you are different from me**

Young people beyond the stage of the child, still have the expectation that adults will guide and direct them. As teachers, we experience students turning to us for guidance in small matters, such as how to solve this or that particular math problem, as well as in more difficult situations where they face significant transitions or crises. When facing fundamental questions in life, young students may search for confirmation of their actions, and have the need to be recognized by their teachers. However, we do not look up to persons that are indifferent to us, when we need advice or acknowledgement. We seek persons that we sense have some sort of concern for us. The term ‘indifferent’ means, ‘without interest’, ‘making no difference’
or ‘of no consequence’ (Onions 1966: 470). Thus, in a sense, the notion of ‘being indifferent to somebody’ encloses a double meaning. The person, whom I presume is indifferent to me, is, from my own point of view, uninterested in my problems or in my life. Accordingly, this also makes him or her without interest to me. We do not look into the face of, or seek recognition from persons, who do not have some significance to us. We trust in, depend on, and seek guidance from persons that we consider could make a difference in our lives. Yet, just because the student needs a teacher to guide him or her, does not mean that the student intends to depend on adults forever. What the teacher gives in the present, might build a foundation that will allow the student to carry on with, to build up by his or her own effort, his bright future. It is precisely this that underlies the following teacher’s guidance of Mette, an 18-year-old adapted education student, who has recently moved in with her boyfriend. Here the teacher says,

Sitting here, facing Mette, I strongly feel that I know what is best for her. I have this overwhelmingly powerful urge to just intervene, to set things straight immediately, instead of trying to help her sort out all these complicated matters at her own pace. But of course, I don’t just get things done. Instead we talk about things, and I sketch some possible ways of thinking and acting.

Today she told me about her boyfriend, very young and indeed immature, who imposes on her the total responsibility for their everyday life together. And in fact, she is neither prepared for nor able to take care of the practical things, like finances, housework, cooking and shopping, not to mention their sex life.

“What about contraception?” I asked. “Do you use something when you have sex?” Yes, they did, but what was so bad about being pregnant? To me her getting pregnant is nothing less than a catastrophe. But she has a totally different view of this possibility. Her background is far from mine; having a child when you are a child yourself, would be nothing extraordinary. But I want her to finish her education.

So I phoned ‘Young Prevention’ and made an appointment for her. What I in fact wanted to do, was to make an appointment with a medical doctor,
accompany her to the examination, and pay for the contraceptives. Get her fixed up. Yet, I did not of course. However, I know that if she meets any obstacles before getting to the contraception appointment, for instance no money, or forgetting the scheduled time, she most likely will not see it through this time.

Although the teacher may doubt that Mette will meet the challenge of solving the contraception problem this time, she does not give up the process of guiding her. The teacher believes that something is being prepared during their conversation - something of significance to the student’s maturation. Mette being only 18; the questions that are being dealt with in their conversation are big and unwieldy for her, and the teacher knows this. She does not consider Mette’s present challenge unimportant or irrelevant to her, but attempts to guide her student in a way that will enable her to grow into the responsibility, some time in the future. The teacher sees her responsibility as that of creating the opportunities for independence while keeping her student safe, but at the same time by her word and actions, she tells Mette that she will become able.

Becoming though, requires a certain waiting with patient impatience. One afternoon in the empty classroom after a demanding lesson, one of the participating teachers recited to me the well-known poem, ‘Vær utålmodig menneske!’76 written by the Norwegian poet, Inger Hagerup (1947). The first stanza of the poem goes like this, “Langsomt blir allting til. Skapelsen varer evig.”77 The poem’s challenging title along with the contrasting opening phrase, reveal the familiar experienced tension of human life. We all know how situations in life require us to hurry, unhurriedly. The more urgent a situation is, the more we have to ‘take the time’ to do things right. So it is with pedagogy. The ultimate task is to learn how to live and how to construct one’s own idea of the purpose of being human. This is what students like Mette and Trude are working on. What teachers do all the time to support, care, love, encourage, enable students like them, is in fact the impossible, insurmountable practice of

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76 The poem is not translated to English, but by way of experiment the title would be in English, ”Be impatient, you human being!”
77 A tentative English translation would be, ”Slowly everything is created. The creation lasts for ever.”
pedagogy (Løgstrup 1972/1993). What Løgstrup suggests is that pedagogy in practice embraces all areas of the lives of children and young persons. Being so totally encompassing and impossible to ultimately bring under one’s control makes pedagogical practice risky and unpredictable. Mollenhauer draws our attention to “the pedagogical deadlock”\(^7\) (Mollenhauer 1983: 14); the impasse, which necessarily is part and parcel of pedagogical practice. In this sense one can say that the pedagogical act could always be thought of and performed differently. Ultimately it is the responsibility of teachers to decide how to come up with possibilities even if the odds are against success. How pedagogy is practiced is characterized by the reflectiveness or thoughtfulness of the teacher in the very encounter with a student. Van Manen (1991) differentiates between reflective and thoughtful actions, in that thoughtful action “is thinkingly attentive to what it does without reflectively distancing itself from the situation by considering or experimenting with possible alternatives and consequences of the action” (ibid: 109). The mindfulness of a tactful action then, is neither to problem-solve nor is it simply habitual. Neither is it solely cognitive nor entirely impulsive. A tactful teacher responds pedagogically to the particular, personal encounter with each student. The pedagogical relation paradoxically, consists of a one-sided and risky pedagogical love and care that is concerned about the gentle leading of the student toward extension as well as towards the student’s achievement and becoming in the world.

For Levinas “the ‘I’ is different because of its uniqueness, not unique because of its difference” (1987/1993: 156). In contrast, Sartre’s analysis of the encounter with the Other (Sartre 1943/1992) strongly emphasizes the experience of being seen, as a disclosure of my objective vulnerability to the Other and to myself. Although the Other and I, somehow are seeing the same thing, I feel myself seen by the Other in such a way that all of a sudden I am revealed to myself. Can one ask then if there is not more to ‘seeing’ behind the seeing? What does ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’ really mean? As with all interpersonal acts and pedagogical practices in particular, even our smallest and most taken for granted gestures have a deeper meaning. What lies behind the glance of the teacher always comes with a certain intention. The

\(^7\) Mollenhauer writes, “Das historisch Besondere dieser Texte liegt nicht darin, dass wir etwa alle derartige Erfahrungen gemacht haben – das ist wohl kaum der Fall -, sondern darin, dass hier eine pädagogische Aporie, eine Weglosigkeit beschreiben ist, die wir als zu uns gehörend akzeptieren können” (1983:14).
intentionality of the glance has profound implications that go beyond consciousness and abstract knowledge, and speak directly to the potential or actual vulnerable nakedness of the ‘self’ of the student. This intentionality is experienced not simply in the pedagogical sense but goes far beyond such relational terms to something more like universal spiritual qualities of humanness and goodness.

Perhaps the spiritual bond lies in the non-in-difference of persons toward one another that is also called love, but that does not absorb the difference of strangeness and is possible only on the basis of a spoken word [parole] or order coming, through the human face from most high outside the world (Levinas 1987/1993: 103).

To Levinas, the spiritual encounter between persons is an act that does not suppress the differences between the seer and the seen. The profound strangeness and mystery of the Other founds the basis of the glance. The Other challenges me and I am challenged by the Other, yet the radical separation between us, also awakens my responsibility to care and love the Other in all his or her vulnerability. Could it be then, that the experience of being seen as a disabled student, is also determined by the teacher’s recognition of his or her own vulnerable but complex mysterious beingness – the ‘self’ that insists on moving beyond the comparability of sameness and difference – toward the Otherness of the unique ‘self’?
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