

# PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD\*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many misunderstandings of phenomenology can be eliminated if the *question of method* is distinguished from the intrusive questions of phenomenological philosophy. Today phenomenology is primarily a *concept of method*, a way of acting; also it in no sense is a “trend” [of thought] because the time of a phenomenological philosophy obviously is past. Phenomenological philosophy as past now belongs with the history of the other trends of philosophy. In the course of time, phenomenology as *method* has undergone modifications and it remains a possibility for thinking.<sup>(1)</sup> (Note well: not the only possibility).

Current objections against phenomenology, its further development and application stem partly from the fact that the above distinction is not made. For example, an objection is made against the absence of an acceptable religious motivating force.<sup>(2)</sup> This is an objection that decidedly is valid when phenomenological philosophy is considered, but is not relevant when a method is criticized. For example, evidence of this is that no objection is made against applying the experimental *method*<sup>(3)</sup> that decidedly cannot lay claim to a religious motivating force. However, on the basis of the absence of a religious motivating force the strongest objection can be made against the philosophical trend known as *experimentalism*.

On the other hand, a further development that Heidegger views as a [threat to the] life source of phenomenology must be removed as a violation of Husserl-Heidegger and is seen as a parasite aimed at promoting a particular ideology.<sup>(4)</sup> The critical reader of this objection will quickly notice that it does not primarily involve scientific considerations but considerations that are mainly

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\* Translation (2006) of: Landman, W. A.: Fenomenologiese metode. **Pedagogiekjoernaal** (1983) Vol. 4, No. 2, 44-64.

ideological (even political) in nature—anything that leads to promoting the Christian-national idea must not occur.

A particularly meaningful development of which users of the phenomenological method must be keenly aware is the idea of meta-theoretical reflection by which phenomenology can be judged on the basis of scientifically accountable criteria such as knowledge, its scientific nature, its life philosophy nature, truth and sense as meaning structures.<sup>(5)</sup>

Emphasizing the significance of an activity-directed study of educating within a functional climate of thought with the application of the phenomenological method (where this is relevant) and with improving practice as an aim,<sup>(6)</sup> must be welcome. Fundamental pedagogics applies phenomenology as a method also for the sake of improving practice<sup>(7)</sup> and in this phenomenology, as method, finds additional meaningful reasons for its existence.

In the following attention now is given to:

1. Phenomenology as a method such that it can figure as an aspect of research methodology;
2. Phenomenology-in-function: meaningful connections with the essences of the course of the lesson and modes of learning.

## 2. PHENOMENOLOGY

2.1 The phenomenological aim is an ontological understanding of educating, i.e.,

disclosing pedagogical essences;  
knowing essences that give meaning to educating;  
manifesting pedagogically meaningful ways of living;  
uncovering ways of living that are meaningful for becoming a proper adult;  
unveiling ways of living that are characteristic of the pedagogical;  
unlocking the ontic (concrete-meaningful) characteristics of educating.

2.2 The phenomenological method is a call to thinking from the reality of educating itself, i.e.,

a thinking search for what makes the pedagogical what it is and not otherwise;  
thinking that discloses essences;  
thinking that eradicates essence blindness;  
reflecting as fundamental thinking.

### 2.3 The phenomenological synthesis

Phenomenology as method requires a rational and affective approach; i.e., it is a knowing and emotional method where this involves rational and signifying disclosing and thus rational and extra-rational interacting. This means it involves a rationally justified scientific necessity and philosophy of life significance as an affective demand.

### 2.4 Phenomenological means

It is obvious that if the researcher will practice phenomenology as a method, i.e., apply it as an essence-disclosing and essence-verifying entering into and penetrating he must have means for doing this at his disposal. The means at his disposal are the following phenomenological activities (steps of thinking):

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES: ESSENCE TABLE	
Phenomenological Activities	Brief description
1. Thinking away	If one or another matter regarding a proposed (thought out) situation can be thought away and that situation doesn't change such a matter can be ignored.
2. Acting away	If one or another matter regarding an actual situation can be acted away and that situation doesn't change such a matter can be ignored.

3. Separating	When it is determined which matters are important and which are not, and the unimportant matters are eliminated (left out), the important matters will (be) appear more clearly.
4. Contradicting	For each matter its converse is stated as a possibility and its negative (or positive) is indicated so the positive (or negative) of the concerned matter can appear more clearly.
5. Hermeneutic questioning	The following question is asked of each relevant matter: What purpose is served by actualizing it? Or: what is the significance of its actualization?
6. Placing in a triadic structure	Fitting a matter that can be shown to be faithful to reality in a triadic structure (whatever pole at all) is a meaningful matter.
7. Naming—verifying	Naming meaningful matters must fulfill the following demands: a) must allow that matter to appear more clearly b) must be appropriate to being human c) must be linguistically acceptable.
8. Awakening to life (enlivening)	A matter that is acceptable to a philosophy of life is an enlivened matter (that has been awakened to life).
9. Practical application	A matter that can be part of a specific practice (especially to improve that practice) is a meaningful matter.
10. Categorical status	A matter that can be used as a means of illumination, i.e., in terms of which

there can be meaningful reflection, is a meaningful matter.

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These means of disclosing (steps of thinking) are used with the specific aim

- a) of eliminating everything that impairs or makes impossible the researcher's approach (bringing nearer) to the educative reality;
- b) to verify the essence-status of a possible essence that he has seen and disclosed; and
- c) to direct self-criticism,

## 2.5 Phenomenological ways of application

This involves ways of using the phenomenological means. These means can be used as

- Phenomenological reduction
- Eidetic reduction
- Phenomenological construction

### 2.5.1 Phenomenological reduction (eliminating activities)

The phenomenological reduction is an attempt to renounce each form of essence blindness. The investigator wants to penetrate (to the essences of) the reality of educating. To be able to do this there first must be an elimination of all forms of essence blindness that might accompany the investigator or what is added to them as concealing.

In terms of the phenomenological means, the forms of essence blindness that must be eliminated are

- what can be thought away
- what can be acted away
- what is removed after the separating
- the contradictories
- that regarding which the hermeneutic question cannot answer positively

- that which cannot be allocated a place in a triadic (dialectic) structure
- that which from its naming is anti-pedagogical
- that for which no accountable life can be awakened.
- that which cannot be made practical because it works to restrain practice.
- that which cannot possess any categorical status because it really is obscuring and this is all forms of essence blindness.

Various forms of essence blindness have been described.<sup>(10)</sup>

### 2.5.2 Eidetic reduction (disclosing activities)

Eidetic means to penetrate to the essential characteristics that make possible the phenomenon of education's appearance in its real meaning. Thus, essential characteristics are those fundamental structures (with their essences) that give meaning to the pedagogical. The pedagogical (reality of educating) will lose its authentic meaning if such an "essential characteristic" [isn't essential because it:]

- is thought away
- is acted away
- is removed after the separating
- is viewed as contradictories
- cannot be hermeneutically questioned
- is faultily named
- is not enlivened
- cannot be used categorically.

Eidetic reduction can be viewed as a research aim. Various methods of research can be used for this.

### 2.5.3 Phenomenological structuring (Constructing)

Phenomenological structuring refers to structure forming. Structure forming occurs through determining the co-existentiality and co-essentiality of the essences.<sup>(11)</sup>

### Co-existentiality requires a common being-there

When two essences only can be-there if they are related to each other, they also must possess a common being-there with each other by which both include a common parts of each other otherwise we are involved with separate realities that stand apart from each other as independent things and then there no longer are real essences. This common being-there can be called a structure.

### Co-essentiality requires a common being-such-and-such

If essences only possess their own being-such-and-such in relation to other essences then they also must possess a common being-such-and-such in which they have a part. When this is not the case, one is not involved with the real essentials of a particular being (structure or situation). Only those essences whose actualizations lead to proper adulthood can be essences of the fundamental pedagogical structures.

## **3. PHENOMENOLOGY IN FUNCTION: MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ESSENCES OF THE COURSE OF A LESSON**

Actualizing the phenomenological reductions (with their steps of thinking) can occur by way of the essences of the course of a lesson, i.e., by means that promote the unlocking of reality. A question that arises immediately is on what basis can it be expected that there is a connection (relation) between phenomenology and the course of a lesson. The answer is that both are primarily involved in unlocking reality so its essentials can appear.

Essences of the course of a lesson are defined<sup>(12)</sup> and the possible ways they are valuable as a form of the course of phenomenology are shown so that these essences are redefined in terms of the phenomenological reductions. This will be done in tabular form below.

In the second column of the table the unlocking essences appear and in the third column their effects on phenomenological application are described.

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## PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTIONS

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**(A) PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION**

**(B) ESSENCES OF THE COURSE OF A LESSON (disclosing essences)**

**(C) PHENOMENOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

(A)	(B)	(C)
<p>(A) Phenomenological steps of thinking are used to eliminate essence blindness</p>	<p>(B) <u>ACTUALIZING FORE-KNOWLEDGE</u> Existing meaningful experiences are involved</p>	<p>(C) The researcher has available life worldly (pre-scientific) experiences of the forms of essence blindness and their results . By conversing (including literature study) he can become aware that he has experience of forms of essence blindness and their results that must be eliminated. Because of eliminating essence blindness, the first essences begin to appear. Because of this one is impelled to an intensified elimination of essence blindness.</p>
<p>Phenomenological reduction</p>	<p><u>STATING THE PROBLEM</u> A meaningful question is asked that directs an appeal to questioning consciousness.</p>	<p>The researcher directs his consciousness to reality asking for its essentials and reflecting increasingly in sharper correspondence with the elimination of essence blindness. The notion that the existing essential knowledge is inadequate to solve the problem leads to a stronger elimination of essence blindness. Then there is a decision to take an active role in eliminating essence blindness.</p>
<p>Phenomenological reduction</p>	<p><u>EXPOSING NEW CONTENT</u> Unlocking new knowledge</p>	<p>Unlocking new knowledge (essence disclosing) necessary for solving the problem becomes stronger to the degree that essence blindness is eliminated. Important additional essences begin to</p>



		appear along with their meaningful relations and conceptual clarity begins to arise.
Phenomenological reduction	<u>ACTUALIZING CONTENT</u> Controlling insight into the essences	Research about improving the elimination of essence blindness and the consequent beginning appearance of essences and enlivened self-activity regarding disclosing essences.
Phenomenological reduction	<u>FUNCTIONALIZING</u> Acquired knowledge is made functional	Knowledge (experience) acquired of the forms of essence blindness and their effects are applied in the service of the increased elimination of essence blindness.
Phenomenological reduction	<u>EVALUATING</u> Judging the degree of insight and application	Critical determination of the success of eliminating essence blindness and its effect to clarify planning what must be done next.
<u>EIDETIC REDUCTION</u> Phenomenological steps of thinking applied for disclosing essences (and their meaningful relations)	<u>ACTUALIZING FORE-KNOWLEDGE</u>	The meaningful experience the researcher has acquired with the phenomenological reduction leads to effective essence disclosing, i.e., they come to light more clearly.
Eidetic reduction	<u>STATING THE PROBLEM</u>	The researcher directs his unhindered questioning consciousness to more clearly appearing essences. He asks for verification of their essence status.
Eidetic reduction	<u>EXPOSING NEW CONTENT</u>	Efficacious essence-disclosing unlocking (as establishing new knowledge) and meaningful relation-disclosing become possible and clearness of understanding thrives.
Eidetic reduction	<u>ACTUALIZING CONTENT</u>	A clear appearance of essences (with their relations) stimulate self-activity regarding essence-

		status-verification.
Eidetic reduction	<u>FUNCTIONALIZING</u>	Essence-knowledge acquired during essence-disclosure are used in the service of sharpened essence-disclosing.
Eidetic reduction	<u>EVALUATING</u>	Critical determination of the effect of essence-status verification sharpens the planning of what must be done subsequently, namely, applying essence-knowledge for problem solving.

Research procedures can be judged in terms of the contribution they can make to the eidetic reduction (as a form of hypothesis testing and problem solving).

#### 4. PHENOMENOLOGY-IN-FUNCTION: MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MODES OF LEARNING

Actualizing the phenomenological reductions (with their steps of thinking) can occur by way of actualizing the modes of learning. On what basis can this be possible? Answer: Both involve acquiring meaningful contents, i.e., acquiring essences (with their meaningful relationships).

### PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTIONS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION	MODES OF LEARNING <sup>(13)</sup> LEARNING ABOUT REALITY	PHENOMENOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE
Phenomenological steps of thinking are used to eliminate essence-blindness	<u>SENSING</u> (1) Immediate being  directed to and open for meanings (2) Appearing presence of meanings	When the researcher begins to reflect, within a short time there is a movement in the direction of what attracts, i.e., freedom from essence-blindness and at the same time a standing open for meanings, i.e., for essence-disclosing. Paired with this is a fleeing from what threatens and repels, i.e., all forms of essence-blindness.

Phenomenological reduction	<u>PERCEIVING</u> (1) Beginning ordering (2) Beginning search for what is (3) Entering the problematic	The researcher opens himself to ordering in the form of looking for keywords that his thinking can systematize. He will come into contact with real meanings and begins to really remove them from obscurity. He will now also begin to ask meaningful questions about the first essences that begin to appear and also regarding essence-blindness that impedes their appearing.
Phenomenological Reduction	<u>THINKING</u> (1) Encountering reality as a problem. (2) Sharpened search for what is.	The researcher will bring the essence he searches for closer. His approach is to ask about the reasons for essence blindness and the best ways to eliminate them. Then his search can be strengthened and also his question about what is essential and non-essential is sharpened.
Phenomenological Reduction	ATTENDING (1) Intensive being involved. (2) Active listening and looking. (3) Sharpened signifying.	The researcher experiences impediments that stand in the way of his intention to intensively and actively think about the reality of educating in order to disclose meanings. He identifies and eliminates essence blindnesses.
Phenomenological Reduction	REMEMBERING (1) Having been. (2) Taking up the past.	For the researcher what is enduringly meaningful has the advantage of reflecting free of essence blindness and he takes the responsibility to act in light of his past experience with overcoming essence blindness.
EIDETIC REDUCTION Phenomenological steps of thinking are used to disclose essences (and their relationships)	SENSING	The researcher strongly resolves to move in the direction of essence revealing with a strong move away from essence blindness.

Eidetic reduction	PERCEIVING	The actuality of essences is brought to light by the researcher increasing momentum and intensity and he strongly attends to naming essences so that essence naming occurs with their appearance.
Eidetic reduction	THINKING	Encountering appearing essences by questioning (verifying) of their essence status leads to a clear separation of essentials and non-essentials.
Eidetic reduction	ATTENDING	Active, thinking, intense involvement with disclosed essences are operationalized in the form of verification activities. Each verification contributes to further disclosing. The phenomenological steps of thinking are used to verify essence status.
Eidetic reduction	REMEMBERING	The enduring meaningful is the coming to light of essences (with their meaningful connections) in the clearest possible way for the eidetically attuned researcher. This is done in terms of earlier meaningful experiences with essence disclosing, taking responsibility for * effective essence naming * critical essence verifying *phenomenological constructing (structuring).

The contribution a research procedure can make to “learning about reality” as learning problem solving (hypothesis testing) will determine if there can be a place for it in the plan of research.

## 5. SOME DEFINITIONS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

5.1 The term phenomenology is a combination of two Greek words, *phainomai* that means “I appear”, “I show myself” and *legoo* that means “I speak”, “I let it be heard” (I in this case is reality itself). Phenomenology, then, is expression of the essence of a matter; essences are made visible.<sup>(14)</sup>

5.2 A phenomenological method is a method that:

- allows real essentiality to come out of being hidden<sup>(15)</sup>
- by *addressing* (acquiring perspective), *discussing* (dialogue, intersubjective verification), and *speaking through* (radical reflection) leads to illumination and understanding.<sup>(16)</sup>
- through illuminating disclosure, essences are lifted from being hidden.<sup>(17)</sup>
- is only meaningful if it leads to ontological understanding.<sup>(18)</sup>
- is sensitive when within it cognitive understanding and affective penetration form a unity.<sup>(19)</sup>

5.3 A phenomenologist is someone who allows reality to describe and explain itself as it would have done if it could have.<sup>(20)</sup>

### A PHENOMENOLGICAL WAY OF DOING RESEARCH (also for doing curriculum research)

#### Stating the problem

#### Phenomenological reduction decisions

##### 1. ESSENCE TABLE

By the eidetic reduction, bringing essences to light in the places they appear.

##### 2. VERIFIED DEFINITIONS

Ways of verification: phenomenological, formal logical, definition requirements.

### 3. REFINED STATING THE PROBLEM

Verified definitions are re-written in question form and ordered.

### 4. REFINED HYPOTHESIS FORMING

Refined statement of the problem is rewritten in the form of a hypothesis.

### 5. MOTIVATED PROCEDURE SELECTION

Refined hypotheses serve as motivation for procedure selection.

### 6. PROCEDURE APPLICATION

- a) Application of selected procedures.
- b) Transcendental reduction.

### 7. RESULTS (OUTCOME)

- a) Ordered in light of the demands of the procedures used and interpreted phenomenologically.
- b) Transcendental reduction.

### 8. CONCLUSIONS

- a) Return to the hypotheses. Interpret with respect to confirmed and disconfirmed hypotheses.
- b) Transcendental reduction.

### 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) For further research.
- b) For improving practice.
- c) Transcendental reduction.

### 10. DETERMINING PRIORITIES

- a) For implementing recommendations
- b) Motivation of priorities in terms of the pedagogic, policy and funds.

## AUTHOR'S SUMMARY

Phenomenology primarily refers to a method and not a philosophy. The time of phenomenological philosophy has lapsed. In the same way as for instance the experimental method, the phenomenological

method does not require a religious foundation, although as in the case of the implementation of all methods, the life view permissibility should be considered and it should be subjected to metaphysical judgment.

Regarding phenomenology as method, attention should be given to the phenomenological aim, method of work, means and applications, as for instance means of reduction (phenomenological and eidetic).

Phenomenological means are ways in which reality is disclosed, and there is therefore a close relationship between these means and the essences of the progress of a lesson. There are also ways in which learning about reality can take place, and there is, consequently, also a relationship with the modes of learning.

Phenomenology is of particular significance for curriculum research, especially for curriculum design and curriculum evaluation, as phenomenological essences are existential possibilities, and phenomenology is reflection regarding the fundamental structures of experience.

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