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Article abstract

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research method used in qualitative research in the fields of education and other human sciences, for example nursing science. It is a widely used method example in Scandinavia, and Van Manen is well known for his hermeneutic phenomenological method. In many studies the hermeneutic phenomenological method is inarticulate or ambiguous. Researchers generally lack a common understanding of what this method actually is. One reason for that is that the expression “hermeneutic phenomenological method” is contradiction in terms. Hermeneutics and phenomenology have their own distinct history. Hermeneutics and phenomenology as philosophical disciplines have their own distinct aims and orientations. Hermeneutic is orientated to historical and relative meanings. Phenomenology in Husserlian sense is orientated to universal and absolute essences. Martin Heidegger connects hermeneutics and phenomenology in very sophisticated manner as hermeneutical phenomenology and he provides a very specific definition of his brand of phenomenology. For Heidegger, hermeneutical phenomenology is the research of the meaning of the Being as a fundamental ontology. However, this kind of phenomenology is of no use for educational qualitative research.

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Hermeneutics and Phenomenology Problems When Applying Hermeneutic Phenomenological Method in Educational Qualitative Research

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Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research method used in qualitative research in the fields of education and other human sciences, for example nursing science. It is a widely used method example in Scandinavia, and Van Manen is well known for his hermeneutic phenomenological method. In many studies the hermeneutic phenomenological method is inarticulate or ambiguous. Researchers generally lack a common understanding of what this method actually is. One reason for that is that the expression "hermeneutic phenomenological method" is contradiction in terms. Hermeneutics and phenomenology have their own distinct history. Hermeneutics and phenomenology as philosophical disciplines have their own distinct aims and orientations. Hermeneutic is orientated to historical and relative meanings. Phenomenology in Husserlian sense is orientated to universal and absolute essences. Martin Heidegger connects hermeneutics and phenomenology in very sophisticated manner as hermeneutical phenomenology and he provides a very specific definition of his brand of phenomenology. For Heidegger, hermeneutical phenomenology is the research of the meaning of the Being as a fundamental ontology. However, this kind of phenomenology is of no use for educational qualitative research.

Introduction

Phenomenology is usually described as studying the essence, and hermeneutics as studying the processes of interpretation. There is a link between hermeneutics and phenomenology, but it is very complicated and there are unsurpassable differences (Ricoeur, 2008, pp. 23-50). The father of modern phenomenology is the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. Hans-Georg Gadamer is known as the founder of philosophical hermeneutics. Martin Heidegger serves as the link between Husserl's phenomenology and Gadamer's hermeneutics. Heidegger was a student of Husserl's and Gadamer studied under Heidegger. Their philosophies have a number of fundamental differences. There are also a number of other significant phenomenologists, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty (2006) claims that we are our bodies and that our lived experience of this body denies the detachment of subject from object.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Amadeo Giorgi (1985), Donald Polkinghorne (1976) and Max van Manen (1984, 1989, 1990), among others, began promoting the use of phenomenological qualitative methods in psychological and educational research. Their introduction of the phenomenological approach to the sphere of empirical research in the human sciences was *avant garde*, and their merits are undisputable.

Van Manen is the most famous of the three in the field of educational research. Van Manen is known primarily for his concept of lived experience and his hermeneutic-phenomenological method. I agree with Max van Manen that not all educational scientists and researchers have to be philosophers, even if they do use hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology (van Manen, 1990, pp. 7-8). However, if we do not know what we mean by using this methodology, we are in serious trouble. Many educational researchers use the phrase “hermeneutic-phenomenological approach” without knowing the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics.

I would suggest that there is an inherent contradiction or tension between Husserlian phenomenology and Gadamerian hermeneutics. The goal of this article is to further highlight and explore this contradiction. This tension can be explained briefly as follows: phenomenology is concerned with finding the essence of the things, whereas hermeneutics sees that everything has its being in language and interpretation.

On the basis of Husserl’s phenomenology, Aloys Fisher and Rudolf Lochner have developed a school of thought referred to as “descriptive pedagogy.” Fisher attempted to construct education on the basis of the notion of so-called unpreconditioned education, as well as that of the possibility of producing a pure description of educational actuality. Descriptive pedagogy quite quickly separated itself from Husserl’s phenomenology and was further developed by Lochner into positivistic value-free education (Siljander, 1991, p. 2).

In *Researching Lived Experience*, Max van Manen develops the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach into research method. He defines hermeneutics and phenomenology as human science approaches which are rooted in philosophy, which is why it is imperative that one know something of these philosophic traditions before attempting to use them. He emphasizes that this does not mean, though, that one must actually become a professional philosopher in order to use them, but, rather, it is sufficient to be able to articulate the epistemological or theoretical implications of doing phenomenology and hermeneutics (van Manen, 1990, pp. 8-9).

What is Phenomenology?

The question of what actually constitutes phenomenology is problematic. One way to approach the subject is to examine it in the context of the so-called phenomenological movement, which itself has had difficulty defining the premises of phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1984). Another way is by understanding phenomenology as a discipline that has its own sphere, which is consciousness or experience. The main figure associated with the discipline is Edmund Husserl, who is the founding father of pure phenomenology.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) developed the concept of phenomenology as a new method destined to supply a new foundation for both philosophy and science. He developed his concept of phenomenology gradually and reformulated and reconceptualised it up until the very end of his life. We can find at least three kinds of phenomenology, all of which Husserl himself practiced at some point in his philosophy. Husserl’s phenomenology began as a purely descriptive science and only later became a theoretical or “transcendental” one.

1. *Descriptive phenomenology*: going (only) as far as the eidetic reduction;
2. *Transcendental phenomenology*: including the transcendental reduction;
3. *Genetic phenomenology*: below everyday consciousness, to a more primitive level, out of which everyday consciousness is constructed.

Husserl considered reduction as the basic method of philosophy and his most significant achievement. He also admits that this is the most complicated and problematic aspect of phenomenology. Husserl’s famous slogan is: “To the things themselves.” This slogan implies that we should take a fresh approach

to concretely experienced phenomena; an approach that is as free as possible from conceptual presuppositions. His central aim was to “complete reforming of philosophy into a science grounded on an absolute foundation” (Husserl, 1999, p.1). Husserl claims that: “We are the true positivists,” by which he was referring to his aim to establish the rigorous science (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2007). The real concern of phenomenology was clearly formulated for the first time in his Logos article, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (Husserl, 1965). In this article, Husserl wrestled with two unacceptable views: naturalism and historicism.

The basic method of all phenomenological investigation, which was developed by and indeed became the life’s work of Husserl himself, is the “reduction.” The reduction is a methodological device one must possess before being able to do phenomenology. To put it simply, it is the transition from an ordinary, straightforward attitude (natural attitude) toward the world and the objects in it to reflective attitude. The precise nature of the reduction remained an acute problem for Husserl, and he spent his entire life trying to develop it. In the reduction, the existence of the world is between brackets. Husserl attempted to find a pure starting point for his investigation in a manner similar to Descartes, who presented the famous notion that one can only be sure about his own thinking. Husserl had no doubt that the world exists, but he wanted to eliminate all presuppositions. The tool Husserl used to remove all presuppositions was the *epoche* (Greek: “withholding” or “suspension”). The *epoche* is originally a principle of ancient Greek skepticism, but in Husserl’s philosophy, it is used as a means of “bracketing” of all commonsensical beliefs so that pure phenomenological description can proceed. The *epoche* was just one of a series of reductions that Husserl proposed in order to ensure that he was not presupposing anything. The phenomenological *epoche* or reduction works in two ways: it reduces our prejudices about things and leads us back to the things themselves. By doing so, it allows us to overcome the natural and gives us access to the rigorous science (Spiegelberg 1984, p. 119).

The first reduction is the phenomenological reduction, through which everything we take for granted becomes a phenomenon: that which is known in and by consciousness. This phenomenological reduction reverses man’s direction from an orientation toward objects to consciousness. In other words, the existence of the world becomes bracketed (Juntunen 1986, pp. 74-75).

The second reduction is the eidetic reduction. In it, various acts of consciousness must be made accessible in such a way that their essences can be grasped. Husserl refers to this grasping as the *Wesensschau*, the intuition of essences and essential structures. This intuition forms a multiplicity of variations of what is given, and while maintaining the multiplicity, one focuses attention on what remains unchanged in it. In other words, the eidetic reduction is a method by which the philosopher moves from the consciousness of individual and concrete objects to pure essences and thus achieves an intuition of the *eidos* of a thing or a being (Juntunen, 1986 p.72; Natason, 1973, pp. 65-66).

The third reduction is the transcendental reduction, which is also referred to as the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. The transcendental reduction supposedly provides us with access to “the transcendental ego,” or “pure consciousness,” within which everything that exists is an object. Whatever is in the world exists only as an object of pure consciousness. The phenomenologist task thus becomes to describe how this pure consciousness actually works. Phenomenology thus now becomes the exploration and description of the realm of being, which is not accessible to empirical observation but only to phenomenological description. Husserl had some rather strange views on the transcendental ego, for example that it would remain in existence even if entire world were destroyed. (Juntunen 1986, pp. 70-74.)

Husserl (1981) introduced the concept of the *life-world* in his unfinished work, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*. This is one of Husserl’s best-known concepts, and it is used as the point of departure in the application of Husserlian phenomenology to the human sciences. This concept is extremely interesting yet somewhat unclear (Derrida 2008, 141-143). Earlier, phenomenological reflection had aimed at providing the foundations of scientific knowledge by reflecting on it, which was only possible by giving up of the natural attitude. This raises the question: What is the relation between the natural attitude and the lifeworld (see Zahavi, 2003 and Carr, 1981, pp. xxxviii – hl)?

Heidegger and Phenomenology as a Question of the Meaning of Being

Martin Heidegger was Husserl's most well-known student. He redefined phenomenology and became one of the major philosophers of the 20th century. Heidegger reiterated the importance of Husserl's work to his own philosophy: "The following investigation would have not been possible if the ground had not been prepared by Edmund Husserl" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 62). For Heidegger, phenomenology has just one task: to ask and clarify the core question of philosophy, the question of being. Heidegger writes at the beginning of *Being and Time* that he only intends to present a preliminary explanation of the conception of phenomenology. When we understand phenomenology in the context of the question of being, it is the science of the being of entities, ontology. This same argument can be found in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: "Phenomenology is the name for the method of ontology" (Heidegger, 1988, p. 20).

Heidegger argues that the investigation of the meaning of being requires Dasein, which is a specific aspect of the concept of human being. Dasein is an ontological-ontic entity, which means that Dasein is a being that has the ability to question its own Being. This is the starting point of Heideggerian hermeneutics, because he sees the phenomenology of Dasein as being hermeneutic in the primordial sense of the word. Dasein's ability to question its own being is the core of Heideggerian hermeneutics. Heidegger makes no distinction between ontology and phenomenology, because both question the meaning of Being. What phenomenology actually is remains vague, as Heidegger's discussion of phenomenology in *Being and Time* is quite brief. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* is not much help, as the entire field of philosophy can be seen as phenomenology: "Phenomenology" is the name for the method of scientific philosophy in general" (Heidegger, 1988, p. 3).

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger presents three components of phenomenological method: reduction, construction and destruction. In my presentation, I focus exclusively on the term "reduction" because it originates from Husserl's phenomenology. For Husserl, phenomenological reduction is the method of leading phenomenological vision from the natural attitude of human being back to the transcendental life of consciousness, in which objects are constituted as correlates of consciousness. For Heidegger, "Phenomenological reduction means leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of being ... to the understanding of the being of this being" (Heidegger, 1988, p. 1). Heidegger's main argument is that the question of being has either been forgotten altogether or changed into the question of being as an entity. Being (*Sein*) is always the being of beings (*Seiende*), and Heidegger sees the accession to Being only possible through some beings. For Heidegger, the phenomenological reduction is this transition from beings to Being. The other two components of the phenomenological method, construction and destruction, serve the question of being in their own way (Heidegger, 1988, pp. 21-23).

What is Hermeneutics?

The most common definition of hermeneutics is that it is the art of interpretation. Today there are a number of different kinds of hermeneutics, from the exegesis of the Bible to radical hermeneutics as philosophical theory. We can identify six modern definitions of hermeneutics which correspond to six historical stages, which can be found also from Richard Palmer and Paul Ricoeur, among others, in some form (Ricoeur, 2008, pp. 53-71, Palmer, 1969, p. 33):

1. The theory of biblical exegesis,
2. General philological methodology,
3. The science of linguistic understanding,
4. The methodological foundation of *Geisteswissenschaften* (human science)

5. Phenomenology of existence and of existential understanding
6. The system of interpretation.

These definitions are not only historical stages, however, as each of them applies different standpoints and approaches to the problems of hermeneutics. According to Richard Palmer, the very content of hermeneutics itself tends to be reshaped according to these changes in standpoint:

1. Hermeneutics is probably most commonly understood as an exegesis. *Exegesis* refers to the interpretation of Holy Scripture, such as the *Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran*, etc. *Exegesis* as a technical term means "to draw the meaning out of" a given text. The opposite of exegesis is *eisegesis*, which means to read one's own interpretation into a given text. *Exegesis* can thus be said to mean the research technique we use to find the inherent meaning of a text we read, i.e. what the writer or person speaking actually said? In the context of Christianity, *exegesis* thus refers to what God really said in the Bible. Hermeneutics started as biblical *exegesis*, but according to Ricoeur (2008), believers today recognize the hermeneutical constitution of biblical faith and that way avoid the psychologizing reduction of faith. (See Palmer, 1969, pp. 32-34.)

2. Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) and Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) are the two important philologists who expanded the conception of hermeneutics from strictly biblical exegesis to the study of the meaning of other texts as well. We can already identify some of the basic conceptions of hermeneutics in Ast's thought, for example the hermeneutic circle and the relation of the part to the whole. Wolf emphasizes the meaning of historical knowledge and the idea that the interpreter should possess as much historical knowledge as possible. He also saw hermeneutics as inevitably having two sides: it always includes the components of understanding (*verstehen*) and explaining (*erklären*). (See Palmer, 1969, pp. 78-82.)

3. For Schleiermacher (1768-1834), hermeneutics as the Science of linguistic understanding refers to "general hermeneutics", whose principles can serve as the foundation for all kinds of textual interpretation (Ricoeur 2008, pp. 51-52, Gallagher 1992, pp. 332-333). Schleiermacher draws a clear distinction between speaking and understanding, which thus propels hermeneutics in a new direction as it becomes the art of understanding. The understanding always comes in the form of a dialogical relationship. There is a speaker and a hearer, and hearer mysteriously understands what the speaker is saying. Hermeneutics is thus the art of hearing. The dialectical interaction between the whole and the part in which each gives the other meaning is the hermeneutic circle. The goal of this circle is to understand the mental process or true meaning of the speaker/writer. According to Schleiermacher, we must leap into the centre of this hermeneutical circle in order to grasp the whole before we can understand the parts and vice versa. The significance of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is that hermeneutics is no longer seen exclusively as a special disciplinary matter belonging, for example, to theology or literature, but as the art of understanding any utterance of language. (See Palmer, 1967, pp. 90-92.)

4. Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) goal was to formulate a truly humanistic methodology for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, and he saw hermeneutics as being the core discipline for all the *Geisteswissenschaften*. The *Geisteswissenschaften* encompasses all those sciences which concern the understanding of man's activity. He wanted to develop as adequate method for the human sciences as those which existed for the natural sciences (Dilthey 1924): "We explain the nature but understand the human being." Dilthey's idea that understanding is circular and historical is of central importance to hermeneutics. There is no true starting point for understanding, since every part of the process of understanding presupposes the next and the one before. Dilthey was also laying the foundations for twentieth-century phenomenology by introducing the term *Erlebnis*. In English, there are no single words for *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, which are key terms for both hermeneutics and phenomenology. *Erlebnis* is translated as "lived experience," a term which is often used in hermeneutic-phenomenological research. For Dilthey, *Erlebnis* is part of his hermeneutics. Dilthey defines an *Erlebnis*, or "lived experience," as follows:

That which in the stream of time forms a unity in the present because it has a unitary meaning is the smallest entity which we can designate as an experience. Going further, one may call each encompassing unity of parts of life bound together through a common meaning for the course of life an “experience”—even when the several parts are separated from each other by interrupting events. (Dilthey, GS VII, p. 194) (See Palmer, 1967, p. 107.)

An experience forms a unity of meaning and is the act itself. As such, experience is not so much a matter of content as an act of consciousness. The experience exists prior to the subject-object separation. *Erlebnis* as an experience represents the kind of direct contact with life which we may refer to as “immediate lived experience.” Experience is also intrinsically temporal and historical, which is why it is constantly changing. This means that we can only understand the present in the horizon of the past and the future (Palmer, 1967, pp. 190-191; Ricoeur, 2008, pp. 56-61).

5. The two proponents of hermeneutics as the phenomenology of Dasein and existential understanding are Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Martin Heidegger explains the term hermeneutics in his later writings as follows:

The expression ‘hermeneutics’ derives from Greek verb *hermeneuein*. That verb is related to the noun *hermeneus*, which is referable to the name of the God Hermes by a playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor science. Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny; *hermeneuein* is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message. Such exposition becomes an interpretation of what has been said earlier by poets who, according to Socrates in Plato’s *Ion*, *hermenes eisin ton theon* — “are interpreters of gods.... All this makes it clear that hermeneutics mean not just the interpretation but, even before it, the bearing of message. (Heidegger, 1982, p. 29)

Heidegger presents the hermeneutics of Dasein in his major work, *Being and Time*. This hermeneutics refers neither to science or the rules of textual interpretation nor to the methodology of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, but to the phenomenological analysis of Dasein. His main goal is not to prove that there is a hermeneutic circle, but to show the significance of this circular understanding to the ontology.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was a student of Heidegger’s who developed his own philosophical hermeneutics, which owes quite a bit to earlier hermeneutics in general and to Heidegger in particular. Gadamer, however, takes his hermeneutics one step further with his controversial assertion that: “Being that can be understood is language” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 31 and p. 103; 1989, p. 474). Hermeneutics has thus encountered the positively philosophical question of the relationship of language to being, understanding, existence, and reality. Hermeneutics is placed at the very core of these philosophical problems, as it was now forced to deal with epistemological and ontological questions.

One of the most significant concepts of Gadamer’s hermeneutics is hermeneutic experience, which I will clarify in detail. Gadamer uses the word *Erfahrung* in the sense of its being hermeneutic experience, while *Erlebnis* is used in the sense of its being an experience adding nothing new to the concept. A good story—for example, an autobiography—widens our worldview. Gadamer refers to this kind of experience as ‘hermeneutic’ or ‘dialectic’ experience. Hermeneutic experience broadens our horizon and enables us to see something differently than we had in the past. Experience in this hermeneutic sense is always a negation. It is related to what Hegel has referred to with the term “determinate negation.” It is not the simple rejection of an earlier view, but the preservative overcoming of it with a new and wider view (Gadamer, 1998):

(...) we use the word ‘experience’ in two different senses: the experience that conform to our expectation and confirm it and the new experiences that occur to us. This latter—‘experience’ in the genuine sense—is always negative. If a new experience of an object occurs to us, this means that hitherto we have not seen the thing correctly and now know it better. The negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning. It is not simply that we see through a deception and hence make a correction, but we acquire a comprehensive knowledge. We cannot,

therefore, have a new experience of any object at random, but it must be such a nature that we gain better knowledge through it, not only of itself, but of what we thought we knew before – i.e., of a universal. The negation by means of which it achieves this is a determinate negation. We call this kind of experience dialectical. (p. 353)

In this hermeneutic sense, we cannot have the same experience twice. Experience in the trivial sense of the word means repetitive experiences (*Erlebnisse*), experiences that confirm our previous understanding of something. We need these confirmative experiences, of course, although we do not learn anything new from them. Trivial experiences do not make us more "experienced" in the Gadamerian sense (*Erfahrener*). According to Gadamer, experienced persons are individuals who have experienced genuine experiences which have broadened their horizon. After a series of genuine experiences, a person has turned her attention to the nature of the event of this experience and has become more aware of her ability to attain genuine experiences. This person is reflectively aware of her ability to learn new things and broaden her perspective. "The experiencer has become aware of his experience; he is 'experienced'. He has acquired a new horizon within something can become an experience for him" (Gadamer, 1998, p. 354). In educational literature, such a person is referred to as a "reflective learner."

Thus, nothing ever appears the same again following a hermeneutic experience. We see ordinary things ("ordinary things" in the former horizon, world view or paradigm) in a different light, and we also become able to conceive of totally new entities. Our "world" undergoes a change, and we become changed as people along with it.

6. Paul Ricoeur's philosophy can be seen as representative of hermeneutics as a system of interpretation. For Ricoeur, hermeneutics is the theory of the rules that govern an exegesis, an interpretation of a particular text. The text is understood very widely. A text can be group of signs, symbols of dreams, symbols or myths of literature etc.. For Ricoeur, hermeneutics is the system by which the deeper significance of a given text is revealed. He stresses, however, that there can be no universal canons for exegesis, but only separate end opposing theories concerning the rules of interpretation. (see Ricoeur, 1976, 1990, 2008).

There are several philosophers whose philosophy can either be called hermeneutics or seen as having contributed something to the field of hermeneutics, such as Karl-Otto Apel, Emilio Betti, Rudolf Bultman, Jürgen Habermas and Gianni Vattimo. Unfortunately, for the sake of brevity, I am only able to mention them here.

Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Science of Education

In his book, van Manen offers a fruitful description of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and hermeneutic phenomenological writing. He describes that "the purpose of the phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something" (van Manen, 1990, p. 77). He defines his method thusly: "The phenomenological method consist of the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive – sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, in the way language speaks when it allows the thing themselves to speak." (van Manen 1990, 111). He gives a very elegant demonstration both hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and hermeneutic phenomenological writing, which have influenced countless studies. But there are still inherent theoretical problems and contradictions between hermeneutics and phenomenology in his argumentations. He uses the entire inheritance of phenomenology without distinguishing between the different types of phenomenology or phenomenological movements. And there is a serious problem with his interpretation of Husserl's lifeworld, which is the key term of his phenomenology. He argues that the lifeworld is the world of the natural attitude of everyday life. He is mistaken in confusing the natural attitude with the lifeworld, because the natural attitude, as discussed above, is the target of bracketing in Husserl's reductions (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). This term is central to van Manen's work and is also connected to Dilthey's *Erlebnis*, or lived experience.

rience, which brings us to yet another problem. In Gadamerian hermeneutics, it is *Erfahrung* as opposed to *Erlebnis* that refers to real experiences. Heidegger, too, sees *Erlebnis* as representing the state of the possible death of art, whereas the experience of *Erfahrung* is the key to understanding both language and art (Heidegger, 2002, p. 50). Yet another problem is the actual results of hermeneutic-phenomenological research. If we understand it as revealing certain essences of experience, as traditional phenomenology suggest, we must begin by asking what we mean by the term essence. Van Manen sees the meaning of phenomenon and the essence of phenomenon as synonymous, which is something I find quite problematic (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Earlier in his book, van Manen agrees with Husserl and Merleau-Ponty that the essence of a phenomenon is universal, something which makes a thing what it is (van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Modern hermeneutics neither recognizes nor aims at recognizing this kind of universal essence. Hermeneutics is concerned with the understanding and interpretation of our being in the world and how our different ways of being in the world are connected to our understanding of things. Van Manen would seem to agree, because later in his book he writes that “The term ‘essence’ may be understood as a linguistic construction, a description of phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p. 39). Here van Manen comes close to a narrative and constructive way of thinking.

Perhaps I have been too harsh on van Manen. Perhaps we should thank him for highlighting the most important problems of the so-called hermeneutic-phenomenological research method. I have to wonder, for example, why it is not enough to just do the phenomenological research or hermeneutical research. van Manen himself does no mention to hermeneutics at all in his article *Phenomenological Pedagogy and the Question of Meaning* (1996). Although they do have a lot to offer one another, my argument is that there are significant fundamental differences between them. It is not enough to say that phenomenological research eventually becomes hermeneutic-phenomenological research simply because we always understand and interpret things. And again, for the sake of brevity, I have chosen not to focus here on yet another very big issue, namely the question of the truth. The question of the truth is connected to the question of essence and the whole idea of human research in general. My argument is that hermeneutics and phenomenology have given and will continue to contribute a great deal to the research of education and the human sciences. Nevertheless, researchers must educate themselves about both hermeneutics and phenomenology and reflect possible tension between them.

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