

Journeying with Van den Berg

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The author offers a description of how his earliest encounters with Van den Berg inspired him, gave him a vision, a way of seeing, and his vocation to phenomenology and psychology. He acknowledges his indebtedness to how Van den Berg's style cultivates an aesthetic sensibility that has shaped his own efforts to find a poetic voice for psychological writing. Tracing out the path of a 40-year journey, and weaving in Van den Berg's work, the author shows how he came to appreciate phenomenology as a work of homecoming, how such homecoming is a matter of the heart, how metaphor is the language of the heart and its ways of knowing, and how Van den Berg's phenomenological metabletics guided his own metabletic studies on technology. At the end of the article he shows how he came to appreciate how metabletics is a cultural therapeutics and a foundation for an ethical epistemology.

Meeting a Teacher

I first met J.H. van den Berg in 1968 as I was nearing the completion of my doctoral studies in psychology at Duquesne University. He lectured on some of the work of Harry Stack Sullivan and while I was interested in Sullivan's work, there was something else in van den Berg's words that captured my attention. Actually it was two things that spoke to me. The first one was his way of presenting phenomenology. It had a simplicity about it that invited one to come close to the world, to attend to the presence of things in such a way that one could see them again, or perhaps even for the first time. His phenomenology was like a moment of awakening or remembering something once known but forgotten. Many years later I came to appreciate that phenomenology practiced in this fashion was a work of homecoming, a work of anamnesis or un-forgetting, a work of return.

The second thing about van den Berg's words and presence was his deep interest in history as the field of psychological life. This was and is his metabletics, and one key to metabletics, perhaps the primary key, is the recognition that people of earlier ages lived a different existence. Here was a man, an elder, a teacher who was giving voice to something I always felt but could not or dare not articulate—that the world is 'haunted' by the ancestors whose unfinished business is the weight of history that waits for our respect, understanding, and continuation. Here was a teacher who was giving voice not only to my passionate love of history, but also to the indissoluble bond between history and psychology. In those early days these two streams of my life began to mingle.

I have had the good fortune in my life to have had many fine teachers and teaching is and has been for me a vocation. Over the span of nearly forty years now I have had many opportunities to reflect on this vocation, and to ask myself this question: “Who is a teacher?” Of all the many ways this question has been answered for me, the one that stands out is the quality that defined for me van den Berg’s presence so many years ago. He inspired me and gave me a vision, a way of seeing, and in doing so he opened the path of my intellectual vocation. In this essay I want to honor that gift by describing some of the by-ways and even detours that I have followed. It is my way of repaying a debt, a way of returning to that beginning and remembering the journey, a way of traveling that path again and saying thank you to my teacher, my companion, my friend. What I offer below are scenarios of inspiration, descriptions of some of the ripened fruits seeded in that journey.

Scenario One: Phenomenology as Homecoming

In many places van den Berg tells us that the world is the home and the habitat of our subjectivity. We know ourselves through the world. The world is the landscape of our experience and if we are to understand each other we have to know the layout of the world in which the other person lives and has his or her being.

But, of course, this is true of phenomenology in general. Phenomenology begins with our entanglement in the perceptual world, the world that makes sense as we sense it. From this starting point, Merleau-Ponty notes that the task of thinking and knowing “...consists in re-learning to look at the world...” It is a work that invites one “...to take up this unfinished world in an effort to complete and conceive it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.xx). In his reflections on Merleau-Ponty’s work, therefore, John Sallis (1973) aptly describes phenomenology as a return to beginnings. Re-learning to look at the world again, phenomenology becomes a work of re-turning with re-gard to the world in which we are enmeshed for the sake of coming to know with awareness those bonds that tie us to existence. In this respect phenomenology truly is a work of homecoming, a work of coming home to the world, a work of return to what we already know without knowing that we know it.

This work of homecoming, however, is never finished. Phenomenology as a return to beginnings is always a project. The thought that returns

to its beginnings in the perceptual world is not the same thought that has its beginnings in the perceptual world. Because it takes an act of thinking to find that thinking has its foundation in perceptual life, the beginnings to which thinking returns are not secured and fixed. The very work of phenomenology, therefore, circles back on itself. It is a way of working that perpetually returns to itself. If phenomenology is a work of homecoming, then the home to which it returns is made in the very acts of returning. For the phenomenologist, origins are a destiny. The phenomenologist, as Merleau-Ponty notes, is a "...perpetual beginner..." (1962, p. xiv).

What van den Berg brings to this philosophical expression is the feeling quality of this work of homecoming. He guides his readers home through examples, and indeed, as he once said to me, the phenomenologist is a good storyteller. The stories, however, are not made up by the phenomenologist in some private sanctuary of the mind. They are found right there in the world, in the way that the things of the world unfold themselves to one who has the patience to linger for a moment with them, to be a witness before becoming a critic. One of the fruits of my journey with van den Berg, collected in a series of essays written in the 90's, has in fact been this understanding that a phenomenologist is one who knows and appreciates the value of reverie, that capacity to be a lingering witness, that poetic capacity of negative capability, which John Keats described as the ability "of being in un-certainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." (Keats cited in Romanshyn, 2002, p. 120). The phenomenologist does not hurry things along. He or she is not impatient. Indeed, sometimes now in my own reveries of phenomenology and memories of van den Berg, I imagine the phenomenologist as an eavesdropper who loves to listen into the subtle voices of the world's language.

Once long ago, van den Berg told me a story that I still remember for its deep wisdom. He was traveling in a car with a noted phenomenological philosopher who was speaking profoundly about the issues of phenomenology. It began to snow and van den Berg, captured by the change in the landscape, pointed out the beauty of the scene to his companion. The companion took one quick glance and continued with his oration. Van den Berg was not judging the companion; he was only drawing a contrast between the philosopher who returns to the world via mind and idea and the psychologist who returns to it via the things themselves, via their naked appeals. In this, van den Berg is the psychologist who draws near to the world, who allows himself to be seduced by the epiphanies of the world and who in this proximity to things draws close to the poet. This is another fruit of

my journey with van den Berg. He has taught me how to be ever so careful and loving with words, and through that gift I have come to appreciate how poets are excellent companions.

So I know van den Berg would be pleased with the evocation of Keats. And I know he would approve of these lines from a few other poets who illustrate so simply how phenomenology is a homecoming, how a feeling quality in one's words is important, and how we are cautioned to be full of care about how we speak, to listen before speaking, to let ourselves be addressed by the world and to be responsive to its calls, and to let language begin in the ear and not on the tongue.

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time.
 (T.S. Eliot, 1944, p.48, ll 239-242)

since feeling is first
 who pays any attention
 to the syntax of things
 will never wholly kiss you;
 (e.e. cummings, 1959, p.35)

There are multiple examples of phenomenology as homecoming in van den Berg's work, each one of which also illustrates the feeling sensibility in his descriptions and the poetic quality of his voice. In *The Changing Nature of Man*, for example, he tells the story of Jean Cocteau to illustrate the psychological work of remembering. In van den Berg's hands, a diary entry of an event in Cocteau's life becomes an experience that reminds the reader that indeed it is the things of the world that hold our memories. Cocteau traces his finger along the wall in front of his childhood home, and at a level at which he did so as a small boy, and as if by a miracle the past becomes alive in the moment (1961, p. 211-216).

Commenting on this event, van den Berg says the only thing that makes sense of the moment: Cocteau's memory of his childhood is in the wall. The scientific and rational mind of course objects, because it knows that memories are stored as engrams in the brain, and of course that fact is true. No one, however, lives in the world that way, in that second structure

of explanations, as van den Berg calls it. On the contrary, we live in the first structure of experience, in which the world is the shifting landscape of our experiences, in which one's memories, for example, are safeguarded by things, in which things are like sentinels that faithfully guard them. So we know the facts but we feel the truth of what Cocteau has done and what van den Berg has said, and in that moment perhaps we feel a variation of the lines by e.e. cummings. He or she who knows only the syntax of things, the explanations for them, will not only never wholly kiss you; he or she will also never wholly feel at home in the world. In another poem, cummings captures the truth of this aesthetic regard for the world that cuts beneath reason and explanation, that sensual, almost animal aesthetic tie we have to the sensuous world that keeps us anchored in things, when he says that we do not know Spring because "some oneeyed son a of a bitch" has invented an instrument to measure it. No! In the face of all that instrumentation, cummings says only this: "the thing perhaps is/ to eat flowers and not be afraid" (ibid, p.29-30).

Van den Berg's examples escort us back to that first structure of life and experience, return us from that second structure of explanations where we lose ourselves and forget who we are because we have lost touch with the world. And in this work of return, one cannot help but feel that one has come home, that phenomenology is homecoming.

In *A Different Existence*, van den Berg gives another beautifully simple and effective example of how the world of things makes visible the qualities of our psychological lives. It is the story of how a wine bottle, placed near the fire in expectation of a friend's visit that has been cancelled, reflects the loneliness of his evening (1972, p.33-35). I do not, however, need to describe this example or pad my account with others, because one example is enough to call us home. Indeed, that is all it ever took for me. One example set me on a path that led to my first book, *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor* (Romanyshyn, 1982). Without van den Berg, I would not have had the ability to see and to say how the world as the landscape of one's subjectivity mirrors who one is. Without Merleau-Ponty's philosophical phenomenology so enlivened by van den Berg's psychological descriptions and animating examples, I would not have been able to develop how the mirror of things images, deepens and refigures who we are. Cocteau's childhood memory is in the wall when he touches it ever so carefully with half closed eyes; the wall is the mirror of that experience. The wine bottle reflects the disappointment of one's evening; it mirrors back to the man whose friend

has had to cancel the appointment the loneliness of the evening. And Spring is not known by the one-eyed measure we take of it, but by the way we take it in, are inspired by it, digest its scents and aromas, and find mirrored in its colors and echoed in its sounds the end of the long winter of the soul. The trees, the birds, the temperature of the air, and the quality of light reflect back to us that we are born again with the world.

The reader might wonder here if I have made too much of these simple examples. I would argue I have not. Phenomenology as homecoming is a work of anamnesis, of un-forgetting, and once having had such an experience, one cannot un-have it. In this regard, one epiphany of that first structure of life and experience lingers, like a friendly companion reminding you not to forget. And so, when twenty years after the publication of my first book, the offer came to re-publish it, the cover that I commissioned my daughter to draw shows the scene of the wine bottle (Romanyshyn, 2001). I remember its impact, how it awakened me, and I pass it on. Phenomenologists are not made. They are simply awakened by stories that we share with each other on the journey home.

Scenario Two: Homecoming as Heart Work and Home Work

In the previous section, I suggested that van den Berg's phenomenology awakens our aesthetic sensibilities. His phenomenology as a journey of homecoming is a form of education, a way of being drawn out of oneself into the world through the feeling function, a matter of descent, if you wish, from head to heart, which is a small distance if measured in anatomical terms but a great divide if measured in another way, in the ways in which we are situated in the world. In those essays written in the 90's and mentioned earlier, I was following a path inspired by what van den Berg had given to me. I was being drawn into the ways of the heart.

Each morning's dawn is always a gift and if truth be told always something of a surprise. We awaken after sleep and there before us again is the world to behold. A promise of sorts, made when we trust ourselves to sleep has been kept, and indeed it is that renewal each morning, that keeping of the promise each day, that allows us to surrender into sleep and witness the epiphany of the dawn with pleasure and joy and thanks. And so, in the 90's I wrote in this way, trusting myself to what beckoned and willing to be surprised by what dawned. Indeed, I would argue that a phenomenologist at his or her best knows what to say not before he or she says it, but only with that sense of surprise after it has been said, like the poet Eliot suggests in the

lines quoted above. In fact, I would say now after forty years of practicing phenomenology that it is in fact the capacity to wander in wonder and to be surprised along the way.

Of course, surprises are also often shocks that initiate a fall into darkness, but my point here is not about what we are given so much as how we receive it. *The Soul in Grief: Love, Death and Transformation* (Romanyshyn, 1999), which is a phenomenological description of the darkness of despair after loss, is an elegiac description of the grieving process, a song of lament and praise that traces a seven year long process of descent and awakening through the aesthetic appeals of the world. The journey home began within a moment of the world's greening. The processes of love, loss, descent and transformation truly are seasons of the soul. They follow that rhythm of the world in its own processes of blooming and decay rather than the maps of a mind that has lost touch with the world and its cycles. In this regard phenomenology as homecoming and as heart work restores the broken connections between oneself and nature.

To be drawn out of oneself by the world, to come home to oneself through the world requires a way of being in the world as a matter of heart. Blaise Pascal, 17th century mathematician, mystic, and philosopher, wrote, "The heart has its reasons, which reason cannot know" (Cited in Romanyshyn, 2002, p.154). In those essays of the 90's, I found some of the reasons, which are more like ways of evaluating and welcoming the world. And so there are essays on compassion and sympathy not only as legitimate modes of perception, as ways of knowing the world and being in it that count as much as the reasons of mind, but also as values that are rooted in the pathetic heart, in the pathos of a heart that is more than a pump, in a heart that can be filled with passion and feeling and which can suffer the world's presence.

What van den Berg's phenomenology inspired in me was a defense of *cardiognosis* as a method, as path or roadway home where one can be a witness before being a critic, and where along the way one can allow the world to call one back to what otherwise might be passed by, forgotten, neglected, ignored, disregarded. Van den Berg's work planted a seed that flowered into a way of being present to the world with re-gard. In so many of his descriptions, we are given examples of this re-gard for the things of the world, examples of this attitude of learning to look again at the world and to discover in the ordinary something extraordinary, the miracle, as it were, in the mundane. And so I began to write about the importance of the

backward glance and the necessity for virtues like hospitality and patience in that turn that re-turns one to and with re-gard for the things that would otherwise be dis-regarded. When, therefore, my students ask me today to tell them what phenomenology is, I say simply that it is the capacity for fidelity to experience, and I add that this capacity is embodied in the style of the backward glance. I tell them that the phenomenologist moves ahead by having the heart to keep an eye on what is left behind.

Rilke's *Duino Elegies* are exquisite descriptions of this posture of regard, of this attitude of the backward glance. In the eighth elegy, he gives us the image of a man on a hill overlooking his valley for the last time, and he asks, "Who's turned us round like this/So that we always/do what we may, retain the attitude/of someone who is departing?" In response, he says, that just like this man on the hill "will turn and stop and linger,/we live our lives, forever taking leave" (Rilke, 1939, p. 75 ll 32-34).

Writing these lines, I remember that Van den Berg once told me that his name means the man from the hill, and I begin to wonder how a name can be a destiny, for Van den Berg knows the value of the backward glance. He has made it into a method in his phenomenology and his metabletics, and in doing so he has given to us, and especially to me, the gift of the heart and its values. To know the world with heart is to have the courage to remember what is always left behind and which is not to be forgotten. Courage and memory are rooted in the heart, etymologically and psychologically.

But how does one say what one knows in this way? How does one speak from the heart? What is the language of the heart? While van den Berg has not to my knowledge ever raised these questions, his work has nevertheless opened them as significant questions for me. In doing so, he has inspired another direction in my work and opened another path of inquiry.

Scenario Three: The Metaphoric Language of the Heart

In these scenarios of inspiration I am not following any linear path. My journey with van den Berg has been a meandering one, with all the joys of wandering in wonder that go with that style. Indeed, this essay in honor of van den Berg has been such a wandering, and as such it is and has been another opportunity to engage the backward glance, to re-collect and re-member those many ways in which he has been my teacher. The threads of phenomenology as homecoming, as home work, of the world as a mirror that images, deepens and refigures the events in life as experiences, of

the issue of the heart and its values as a way of knowing have always been entangled. All the threads are always there even while they are gathered and woven together in new ways. And so, even while my latest book, *The Wounded Researcher* (Romanyshyn, 2007), has less than my earlier works by way of content that is related to van den Berg, the style is indebted to him. Indeed, in some ways it is, I believe, the most mature expression of my phenomenology and its indebtedness to van den Berg, a fact that echoes what I said in the beginning about how a teacher is one who opens a destiny, who gives a vision, who embodies a style or particular way of knowing the world and being in it. It is the most mature expression of how my phenomenology has been indebted to van den Berg, because it takes up again in a deeper way a challenge that his work gave to me in the very beginning, the issue of language that was already previewed in my first book.

The Psychology of the Sickbed is a small jewel, one of those fine essays where van den Berg uses a simple example to describe how the world of the patient is a different physiognomy, which reflects or mirrors the changes in the patient's life that the illness brings. Let us eavesdrop for a moment to listen to what van den Berg (1966) is saying here about the one who now faces a different world, a world in which one is ill:

I hear that the day has begun out in the street. It makes itself heard; cars pull away and blow their horns, and boys shout to one another. I have not heard the sounds of the street like this for years, from such an enormous distance. The doorbell rings; it is the milkman, the postman, or an acquaintance; whoever it is I have nothing to do with him. The telephone rings; for a moment I try to be interested enough to listen, but again I soon submit to the inevitable, reassuring, but at the same time slightly discouraging, knowledge that I have to relinquish everything. I have ceased to belong; I have no part in it.

The world has shrunk to the size of my bedroom, or rather my bed. (p. 26-27)

I marked that passage many years ago when I first read it, especially the last line, that line about the world having shrunk to the size of one's bed. What a curious way to say things, and what an absolutely accurate way to depict the world of illness. Amplifying his remarks, van den Berg describes

how the clothes of the one who is ill tell him of his changed existence, how one's shoes, for example, say, "today you are ill." But who has the ear for such words? And what does it mean to say the world has shrunk to the sizes of one's bed? No tape recorder would ever pick up those words, and no camera or ruler would ever record or measure that change in the size of the world. And yet anyone who has ever awakened to the day with a fever that cancels the plans one had made knows the truth of what van den Berg is saying here. Indeed, for the sake of this truth, there really is no other way to say it. When one is ill, the world does shrink. So, what is this truth, and what is this strange language that speaks it?

Certainly it is not an empirical truth. It is not a fact that can be quantified. Nor is it merely an idea that the sick person has in his or her mind, which is projected onto the room. The truth of the shrinking room is more subtle than either the language of facts or ideas allows. Phenomenology would call it a lived truth, and van den Berg would say that it is a truth that belongs not to the second structures of explanation but to the first structure of experience. But still those questions remained for me. What is that truth that is neither a fact nor idea, and how does one speak it?

The shrinking world that is one's illness, like Cocteau's wall that is his childhood memory, or the wine bottle that is the loneliness of one's evening, require a different sensibility. They require what I have called a metaphoric sensibility, and which I have worked on developing the last twenty-five years, from *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor* (Romanyshyn, 1982) through some of the essays collected in *Ways of the Heart* (Romanyshyn, 2002) to the most recent book, *The Wounded Researcher* (Romanyshyn, 2007). The path, of course, has not been a straight line, for I have also been drawn into other areas and questions. But the point I wish to make is that van den Berg and his work gave me a vocation, and how can one be devoted to the life of thinking and writing, to the creative life, without having been called into one's work by a teacher, a mentor, a guide? We are not the authors of our work or even our lives as much as we might think we are. We are also, and perhaps most fundamentally, agents in service to what remains unfinished and asks to be continued through us. We live and work in the shadows of those who inspire us. We belong to a community of companions, and in moments like this one, we are obliged to acknowledge them.

It is not my intention here to go into a long discussion of what constitutes a metaphoric sensibility or how that way of being and thinking

responds to the questions I raised at the start of this section. Let it suffice to say that van den Berg's phenomenology opened for me that path where the world as mirror of those subtle truths that are neither matters of fact nor of mind requires the language of metaphor, that speech of the heart that has its reasons that reason does not know. His descriptions of that first structure of experience in which we live place us in that gap between fact and idea where our consciousness has to slip the bonds of the literal to become open to a more subtle way of thinking and saying, open to that metaphoric sensibility that alludes to what remains elusive. Indeed, I would say now that one cannot read van den Berg with understanding without this capacity for a metaphoric way of thinking and saying. His phenomenology as a journey of return from the second structures of explanation to the first structures of life and experience, as a journey where one throws away the maps to wander in the territories, is not only a matter of heart but also a radical transformation of consciousness.

This transformation of consciousness is, however, no easy task and it is for me a measure of how radical van den Berg's work has been for me that it was only in 2001 that I could more fully appreciate the vocation he gave to me. The world as the mirror of one's experience is the truth of the image, as the phenomenology of the mirror indicates. To be in that space between fact and idea, then, is to be in the space of the image, a world that is as ontologically real as the worlds of matter and mind, and which requires its own way of knowing. Depth psychology, especially the work of Jung, has defended this realm of psyche as image, and along the road Jung and others in the tradition of depth psychology have also been companions. Indeed, these two traditions of phenomenology and depth psychology have been for me the cornerstones of my journey, and in my own life and work I have been that grateful eavesdropper on the dialogues between them. At times, in fact, I have to confess that van den Berg and Jung have been testy companions, each not so favorable to the presence of the other, but both good teachers. Out of this dialogue, I have come to appreciate more fully that the metaphoric sensibility that van den Berg's work requires is the capacity that allows one to appreciate those subtle truths of the image defended by Jung and which van den Berg's work unfolds and presents, those epiphanies of the subtle world of the psyche that is as ontologically real as the worlds of matter and mind. Through this dialogue, I have come to appreciate how phenomenology and depth psychology truly need and complement each other. Van den Berg's phenomenology is a psychology of the depths and

Jung's psychology in its best moments is a phenomenology of the psyche. Hence, when my first book was re-published, I changed its title to bring together the ontology of the image with the epistemology of metaphor. In the Afterword of *Mirror and Metaphor: Images and Stories of Psychological Life* (Romanynsyn, 2001), a metaphoric sensibility becomes the epistemological strategy for the ontology of the image, the language for those subtle truths that are neither matters of fact nor idea that van den berg's phenomenology has so exquisitely unfolded.

I know that van den Berg has been critical of depth psychology and that he has written phenomenological critiques of it. His book *A Different Existence* is one of the finest critiques of the Cartesian metaphysics that underlies depth psychology, and I agree with it. But beyond that critique, it is the need that phenomenology and depth psychology have for each other that has sustained my interest between the two. And in this van den Berg exemplifies for me another quality of what it means to be a teacher. In addition to having given me a vocation, I have always felt supported in the ways that I have taken up his work in my own fashion. A good teacher gives a vocation without requiring that one becomes a disciple.

Scenario Four: From Phenomenology to Metabletics

In 1989, I published *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, and that book, like the others I have cited here, owes its inspiration to van den Berg's work, specifically to metabletics, his unique creation and creative application of phenomenology to history. Van den Berg coined the term metabletics more than fifty years ago to describe his work in the field of historical psychology. That first book, which has been followed by numerous other works in this field, describes an approach to history that is radically psychological. His metabletic studies are not a history of psychology. On the contrary, they are a psychological history, a history of the changing nature of humanity's psychological life. Here are his words from his first metabletic publication, which was translated into five languages including English under the title *The Changing Nature of Man: Introduction to a Historical Psychology*:

The whole science of psychology is based on the assumption that man does not change...Whereas, in traditional psychology, the life of a previous generation is seen as a variation on a known theme, the supposition that man does change leads to the thought that earlier

generations lived a different sort of life, and that they were essentially different. It is this thought which, in principle, defines historical psychology. (1961, pp.7-8, his italics)

But if humanity's psychological life is fundamentally mutable, how does one discover these changes? Where does one locate a record of them? What visible traces do these shifts in psychological life leave?

The reply to these questions is already given in his phenomenology. Just as our current psychological life is mirrored through the world, the psychological existence of people of earlier ages is reflected in the ways they built their buildings and painted their paintings, developed their mathematics and arranged their music, shaped their economic practices and practiced their politics, investigated the human body and explored the matter of the material world, buried their dead and worshiped their gods.

To appreciate what van den Berg is doing here we have to understand that he is not saying that only our perceptions of reality change, while reality itself remains immutable. Psychological life is not essentially a projection unto a fixed and immutable world. Indeed, the singular most daring aspect of van den Berg's metabletics is this insistence upon the interconnection between the changing character of psychological life and the changing character of the world. Psychological life and the world are two sides of one coin. When psychological life changes, the world too changes; it matters in a different way. If we are to understand people of an earlier age, as we hope one day to be understood by those who come after us, as more than pale approximations of the truth of reality, then we have to avoid what van den Berg calls the principle of constancy, according to which the essential nature of man and woman remains the same, and according to which the march of history is a march of progress that overcomes the erroneous and even false knowledge of earlier eras. In three volumes, two devoted to the metabletics of the human body (van den Berg, 1959, 1961) and one to the metabletics of matter (van den Berg, 1968), he has documented a series of these changes. These pioneering and important studies, however, still await an English translation.

The work of metabletics is guided by six principles, three of which are theoretical and three of which are practical. The three theoretical ones are the principle of non-interference, the principle of reality and the principle of mutability. The three practical ones that flow from the theory are the principle of simultaneity, the principle of the unique event, and the principle of emphasis.

In *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, I used van den Berg's metabletic approach to show how the technique of linear perspective drawing, with its emphasis on knowing the world as if looking at it through a window, shifted 15th century's humanity's relation to space and changed its relation to self, world and body. In a later essay, "On Angels and Other Anomalies of Imaginal Life" (Romanyshyn, 2002), I described how the blueness of an infinite blue sky taken by us as a self-evident fact reflects a radical shift from an earlier age when our ancestors lived in a closed world roofed by the golden dome of heaven. I also showed how this shift coincided with an eclipse of Angles in European painting. Angles increasingly lost their place in the infinite blue sky of the post-Medieval world.

Each of these moments was a unique incident in human history, and in focusing on them, I was making use of van den Berg's principle of the unique incident and the principle of emphasis. I was also making use of the principle of simultaneity, which says that shifts in one area of humanity's psychological life are reflected in shifts in other areas. Indeed, it was this principle that most intrigued me about his metabletic studies, and I initially made use of it in my first book, *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor*. That book was an early attempt to do a metabletic study of the emergence of modern psychology. In that context, and drawing heavily upon van den Berg's work, I devoted a chapter to the work of William Harvey, who in the 17th century first described the heart as a pump.

In his work, Harvey changed the rhythm of the heart from one in which the blood percolated back and forth in tune with the slower natural rhythms of the world, to one in which the blood now flowed faster in its circulation around the body. Somewhat earlier, Copernicus had set the earth in motion around the sun, and somewhat later church architecture became Baroque, a style of building which emphasized matter in motion. Logarithms, a mathematics of faster motion, also belongs to this period of time, as do the circulation of money and the voyages of discovery around the globe. Each change is mirrored in the others, and taken together, they indicate some of the fundamental themes at the heart of humanity's modern psychological life. For example, Harvey's description of the heart as a pump equalized the hearts not only of animals and men, it also erased the difference between the heart of a king and his or her subjects. It is no accident, therefore, that this democratization of the heart had an effect on King Charles I of England, to whom Harvey, as court physician to the King, dedicated his book. Before be-

ing beheaded by the parliamentary forces of Oliver Cromwell, he is reported to have said that the king and his subjects are clearly two different things. Harvey's heart had erased that difference and in doing so that work laid a foundation for a world in which psychological differences among peoples have increasingly become eclipsed in favor of false equalities.

This example of the Harverian heart is a good one because it also allows me to illustrate the principles of reality and mutability in van den Berg's metabletics. In the context of metabletics, we have to say that people of an earlier time lived with a different heart, with a heart that was not a pump. They lived in a different world with a different body, and that world and that body were as real as the reality and the body of the pumping heart is for us today. Harvey changed the reality of the heart.

Van den Berg is a medical doctor, and he knows, as all of us do, that the heart is a pump. But that heart belongs to that second structure of reality discussed earlier. It is the structure of explanation, and it differs from the first structure of experience, the structure of life as we live it. While this second structure is an immutable fact, the first structure matters in multiple ways for individuals, and it changes across time and cultures. The first structure is real, and it is mutable. Van den Berg's book, *Things* (1970) is a wonderful example of this difference between structures. An example that I use with my students easily makes this point. If, while one is giving a lecture, one becomes short of breath and experiences pains in the chest, one wants to be brought to a physician. But, if in the middle of one's lecture, one confesses that he or she is dying of a broken heart because of a failed love affair, then that is an entirely different matter. In this case, one wants to be understood, one wants a heart response, a response of sympathy and compassion from the other. We live in this first structure of existence and the second structure is real only when that first structure is interrupted either by events like a heart attack, or when we intentionally take our leave and distance ourselves from the first structure, as Harvey did when he made his great discovery.

Van den Berg's metabletics is an extension of his phenomenological studies of those first structures of existence, these subtle structures whose metaphoric character requires, as we saw, the language of a heart that is not just a pump. These structures are born of our capacity to imagine reality in multiple ways, and it is within these structures of existence that we shape our worlds and enact our stories. If we are to understand the heart of a different age, we cannot import the knowledge we have now of the second structure of the heart into that period. If one is to avoid interfering with that earlier

age by projecting or imposing the second structure of our knowledge onto it, the principle of non-interference must be applied.

Some Closing Thoughts

I have written this essay to honor my teacher and my friend, and in doing so I have looked back on the journey I have taken with him these past forty years to appreciate once again the gifts he gave to me and the fruits of those gifts that became my work. From him I learned to value how phenomenology is a work of return, a work of homecoming back to the world as mirror of experience. I learned too that phenomenology as home-work is fundamentally heart-work, and that this heart-work requires another way of knowing the world and being in it, a way of knowing and being that gives a place to the imagination and its capacity to attune us to the subtle world of that first structure of reality that is neither a matter of fact nor an idea of mind. In this return to the world to look at it again and recover what we have lost or forgotten in the ways we have distanced ourselves from the world and broken our connections with nature, I came to appreciate how a psychology that would remain faithful to these subtle realities of the heart requires the development of a metaphoric sensibility.

This journey that I have taken with my companion would be incomplete, however, without mention of two other gifts that have born their fruit in my work. They are intimately connected to each other and both are deeply rooted in his metabletics.

The first one is the realization that metabletics is a cultural-historical therapeutics. As a study of the past, metabletics is not simply an antiquarian pursuit, an interest in the past for the past's own sake, a return to beginnings for the sake of those beginnings themselves. On the contrary, the return to origins is for the sake of a new beginning. It is a return to the past in order to appreciate how the past is still present in the present, how it lingers in our ways of knowing and being. It is a return to an originating moment in the past for the sake of remembering what we have forgotten of that moment and in doing so have come to live out in a taken for granted fashion.

As a cultural-historical therapeutics, van den Berg's metabletics opens a gap between our present moment and those originating moments of change, when our current manner of psychological life was being born out of another, different order of existence. In that gap, we are offered an opportunity to see how we have managed the gift of those changes as well as

given a glimpse of what we have lost and, I would argue, what we need to mourn. In this respect, I would argue that van den Berg's metabletics as a cultural-historical therapeutics has a post-modern sensibility insofar as it offers us a psychology of mourning, in which mourning becomes a creative act of remembering what has been lost, which releases the imagination into new possibilities. It becomes a foundation for a psychology whose proper work is to be against forgetting. In so doing, his metabletics challenges psychology's sense of itself as a discipline obsessed with the idea of progress. It turns psychology around and puts it in service to the work of progress through the work of remembering. Lest I be misunderstood here, I am not saying that van den Berg's metabletics argues that the past itself can be changed. As the title of one of his later metabletic books, *Gedanen Zaken*, indicates things that have been done cannot be undone. Nevertheless, how we take up that heritage matters, and here metabletics allows and invites us to take up those originating moments with awareness, to return in order to re-member them and in doing so open that small space where we might be freed from those structures, which, having become sedimented in our experience as simply the way things are, are recovered as historical creations. In this recovery, a heritage is taken up as a destiny with awareness of our participation in its continuation, and we are unshackled somewhat from the tyranny of its enslavement. In a piece I wrote in 1984, I described van den Berg's metabletics in this fashion as a cultural-historical therapeutics and that piece is reprinted in this volume.

The second fruit of my encounter with van den Berg's metabletics is and has been the realization that his work is also the foundation for an ethical epistemology. To the degree that his metabletic work does allow and invite us to recover the originating moments of a heritage as a destiny with an awareness of how we have continued those moments, we become obliged to acknowledge our collective responsibility for the ways in which we construct those second structures of existence in which we live. Moreover, we become obliged not only to the past but also in the present to look again at how we are responsible for the ways in which we are imagining the world now. One day we will be the ancestors whose world will have become a living reality for those who are to come after us. We owe it to them to leave behind not just the way we have made the world they have inherited, but also our awareness that what we have left behind was and remains a possibility to be continued.

In the final analysis, metabletics as a cultural-historical therapeutics and an ethical epistemology has been for me a foundation for a liberation psychology, for a psychology which, in helping us throw off the encrusted shackles of our cultural belief systems whose historical origins have been forgotten, prods us to become more responsible for the ways in which we have made use of the past that has been bequeathed to us and have failed to make use of its unfinished possibilities that weigh upon us as history and wait for us to be able to respond, to be 'response-able.' This sense of liberation feels like a gift of hope, and as I prepare to take leave of my companion now, I realize that perhaps the gift of hope is the best gift that a teacher gives.

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