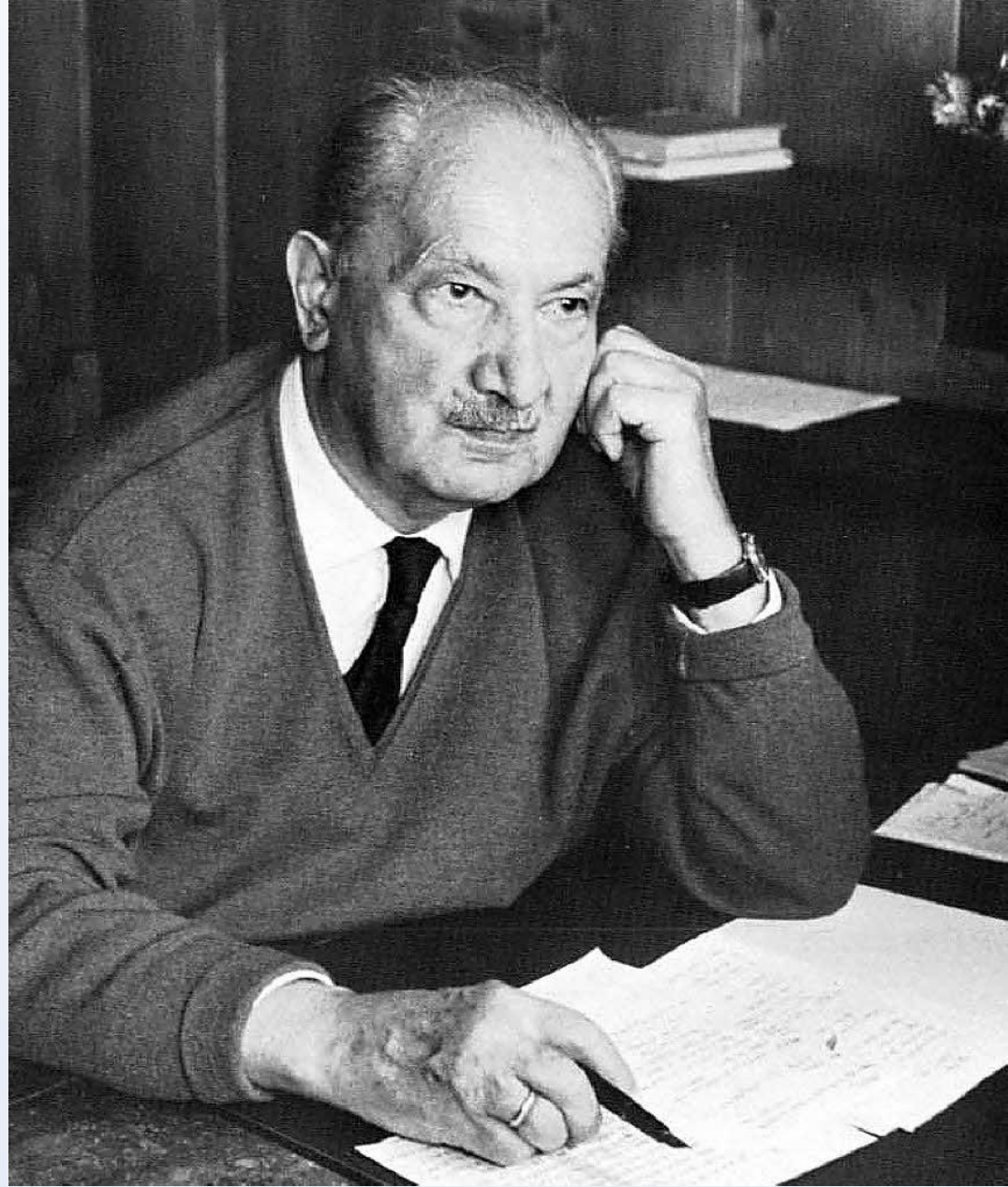


Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology and the use of crafted stories in interpreting the meaning of transition to parenting amongst couples with an IVF pregnancy



Martin Heidegger was a 20th century German philosopher. In his key text, *Being and Time* he argues for the intrinsic concept of context within any interpretation. Therefore any understanding of an experience is dependent upon the point in time to which it is related and the situation of that recounting; the human aspect of 'telling'. Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand phenomena which may not be easily visible, often because it is unremarkable, and requires more creative and intuitive approaches to reveal or to show itself.

⚖️ Heidegger refers to the word truth using the original Greek word *alethia* or unconcealment, which recognises that there is no absolute truth only contextual understanding. Therefore rigid adherence to text does not necessarily evidence rigour.

Crafted stories are a means of working with verbatim accounts to help get to the meaning of what was expressed. Extraneous detail is removed and the remaining key elements are sewn together to create the story the participant was seeking to tell. Thus, freed of superfluous material, the story can more clearly 'show' the experience and reveal the phenomena (Crowther et al 2016).

From here

D: Was it about...a year and a half was it?
M: Yeah I think it was just after a year we started to think didn't we, if something...
D: Yeah we started to question it, just a...but then, yeah we just carried on for a bit I think didn't we?
M: Yeah. It sounds really bizarre but now that we are pregnant and everything is thankfully okay, not long to go. I feel like it's almost...things become a bit of a distant memory, which is a nice thing really
D: Yeah it's gone quite quick hasn't it?
M: At the time it's all very full on and you know. And then when you first fall pregnant I think it's the fear factor which is the same for anyone, IVF or not, but then as a little bump starts to come and everything seems to be okay you know, tests are good, scans are good it has started to almost not...I don't think it will ever go away, you'll always remember it, but it's almost nice that it's not at the front of my mind now, more to the back of my mind I suppose.
D: Yeah we're kind of, yeah, just like a normal pregnancy now
M: Yes
D: You're past that stage of being well, not a special couple or anything like that but once the bump starts showing
M: It's a lot isn't it?
D: And you now kind of think oh we're just like a normal pregnant couple
M: It was a lot to go through weren't it? And now I think we're at a nice stage where we're really are just enjoying it and excited about it
D: Yeah just waiting, yes.
M: Yeah, you've done good really haven't you?
D: What putting up with-
M: Yeah you have

D = Dad; M = Mum



To here

Memory fades

'It was about...a year and a half, yes - just after a year, we started to think or to question why we weren't falling pregnant. We just carried on for a bit and it sounds really bizarre but now that we are pregnant, things become a bit of a distant memory. At the time it's all very full on and then when you first fall pregnant there's a fear factor, but then as a little bump starts to come and everything seems to be okay; tests are good, scans are good it has started to I don't think it will ever go away, you'll always remember it, but it's nice that it's not at the front of my mind now, more to the back of my mind I suppose.

We're just like a normal pregnancy now, not a special couple or anything like that but once the bump starts showing, you think oh we're just like a normal pregnant couple, but it was a lot to go through.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology is ideally suited to midwifery, a profession in which we become skilled at engagement with women, and their families, and in using intuitive listening. This receptive understanding or intuition enables us to understand what a woman may want or need without necessarily using verbal expression.

In acknowledging the importance of context for participants, we also need to acknowledge those for the researcher. Hermeneutic phenomenology does not try to suspend existing knowledge and experience, but instead acknowledges without allowing it to dominate. Thus findings are jointly constructed with the research participant(s) enabling new knowledge to be co-created or revealed.