

## Researching the Phenomenon of Judgement using Performance-Practice-led Methods within Soliloquy Methodology

By Jocene Vallack\*

*I completed my first PhD in 2005 after stretching out the candidature as long as was possible, to ten years. I was passionate about Husserl's pure phenomenology, and I was creating a methodology based on that, along with a generous sprinkling of Jung's psychoanalysis. It would all be served in the context of Jean Gebser's, philosophy of consciousness. I argue it was a logical and theoretically aligned methodology, using intuitive methods. The thesis was complete but the desire to know more would motivate a lifetime of further investigation. The intrinsic need to know how the unconscious can inform the extrinsic practice of scholarship is ever-present. I have come to know that through creative practice, I can access a state of mind conducive to uncovering universal meaning in everyday, personal experience. This useful ability, which I believe we all possess to some degree, informs the research methodology I call Soliloquy. When I published the book in 2021 (Vallack 2021) I thought (for a moment) I had put it to rest – but no. With a background in acting and writing, it has become apparent that when I act, or write, I sometimes enter an altered state of consciousness that allows the unconscious mind (so much smarter than I am) to inform my conscious mind, through the presentation of archetypes and images. As it is now possible to do a PhD through practice-led research, I have seized the opportunity to explore this new insight, and use play writing and production, as a method within the theoretical framework of Soliloquy. This time my research topic focuses on the concept of judgement – what is judgement (and why, according to the Myer-Briggs test, have I none!)? At 70 years of age, I am again a PhD student, now researching how practice-led research methods might further inform Soliloquy Methodology. This paper will discuss the privilege of doing a second doctorate, the benefits and perceived limitations of using practice-led research, and how creative activity paves a way for knowledge from the unconscious mind.*

**Keywords:** Phenomenology; Practice-Led Research; Play writing as Research; Soliloquy Methodology.

### Introduction

Soliloquy Methodology is my original approach to inquiry, which draws on both the intuitive unconscious and the rational conscious mind for research. It has evolved as a triangulation of theories by Edmund Husserl, Jean Gebser and Carl Jung. Because it involves intuition, the methods are well suited to artists and writers who may have a natural inclination to linger in these spaces. Unlike scientific, Mental Mode (Gebser 1984) methods, it does not start with a defined plan, but rather an

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\*PhD Candidate, CQUniversity, Australia.

inkling or noesis – a sense of wanting to know more – a feeling that takes one in a direction, the reason for which will later become apparent. In this research about judgement, I was drawn to the mythology of ancient Egypt. Although this kind of vague language is abhorrent to the hard scientist, philosophers and even theologians, along with artists may be more inclined to understand it. Unlike art, however, phenomenological research requires scholarly explanation in the end. In this paper I argue that Soliloquy Methodology is a theoretically aligned approach to research. I show how using it for this current PhD research into human judgement has produced a research outcome, which may be quite different to that which one may reach using more materialistic methods.

### **The Philosophic Context of Soliloquy Methodology**

Jean Gebser (1984) authored a theory about the evolution of human consciousness that contextualises the popular, positivist idea of consciousness. He contends that human consciousness has passed through several stages. The first he calls the Archaic stage, which relates to a time when living things were just vaguely aware of their environments. The second stage of this evolution he called Magical Consciousness, when humans believed in Gods and magic without question. Next was Mythical Consciousness, which allowed us to understand events through archetypal story-telling. Gebser then describes the stage where contemporary scholars have remained for some time. It is called Mental Consciousness. This pertains to the idea that understanding should be made only through logic and reason and embraces Scientific Method. Mental Consciousness dismisses earlier ways of knowing as primitive and delusional. Gebser goes on to purport that humankind is now moving into the next stage of the evolution, to what he calls Integral Consciousness, where each of the earlier stages are valued as ways to contribute to human growth and knowledge. As far as I can determine to date (for I have been refining this work for 20 years), my research framework, which I now call Soliloquy Methodology, draws on magical, mythical and mental consciousness, so perhaps it is an integral way of knowing in Gebser's sense of the word.

If one reads my earlier publications from the past two decades (Vallack 2002, 2010, 2015) it will be apparent that this methodology has been known by interim names. I have been refining both the methods and the caretaker names as my own understandings of the underpinning philosophies develop. When I originally constructed the approach it was called Subtextual Phenomenology (Vallack 2010) because I was researching phenomena in theatre relating to acting and directing. For actors, the subtext is the meaning behind the lines they are saying, which might be very different to the literal meaning. For the characters that the actors are playing, this subtext may be conscious or unconscious.

Later, to separate my work from what I have argued is a misuse of Husserl's term, 'phenomenology' (Vallack 2002, 2021) by those doing existential, interview-based research, I called it Alchemy Methodology (Vallack 2015). When I published my book in 2021, I called it Soliloquy Methodology (Vallack 2021). Soliloquy Methodology was consistent with Husserl's mandate that phenomenology must be

a product of the researcher's own experience. I now believe, despite the 'pop' connotations, Alchemy Methodology to be the most accurate name for the ever-evolving process because, to paraphrase Husserl, through solo, subjective inquiry one can reach the most universal of outcomes - that is alchemy in the philosophical sense. (For the purpose of this paper, however, I shall retain the name of Soliloquy Methodology for a final time in order to avoid confusion. It was under this name that the paper was accepted. My apologies in advance for the convolution, but it seems to be a side-effect of refining the methodology over time.

Edmund Husserl devoted a lifetime to clarifying Brentano's concept of phenomenology. I am heartened to read that like Soliloquy Methodology, Husserl's Phenomenology morphed over the years to what he finally resolved as Transcendental Phenomenology (Husserl 1964/1929). Gebser and Husserl were writing in the 1920s when scientific method and mental consciousness dominated the academy. As transcendental phenomenology uses mythical consciousness so that everyday events can be understood in an allegorical way, his contemporaries such as Heidegger could not understand Husserl's epistemology (Hopkins 2001). They remained locked in materialistic, Mental Mode consciousness. Heidegger used Husserl's terminology but distorted it to align with his ontological thinking. He did not recognise the essential ideas of the archetypal, a priori objects, which were reached via transcendence of the mundane data. As Mental Mode scholars, Heidegger and those who followed him – Sartre, Ricoeur and the American humanists, Giorgi and Wertz —misrepresented phenomenology as a kind of interview-based, narrative inquiry. In disciplines other than philosophy, it remains as such today and is widely practiced as Existential Phenomenology (Crotty 1996). This existential research approach that has been taught and used throughout the social sciences now for decades may have merit as research, but it is not phenomenology in its original, Husserlian sense. Philosophers who understand phenomenology (Carr 1981, Hopkins 2011, Crotty 1998) blame Heidegger for the confusion. I have sought to interpret Husserl's pure phenomenology and make it accessible as a research framework through Soliloquy Methodology. It involves Integral Consciousness (Gebser 1984) and can be further comprehended through the work of the psychoanalysts who were also the somewhat black-sheep contemporaries of Husserl – Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

Freud (1900/2010) and Jung (1953) were psychiatrists who worked with both the conscious and unconscious minds of patients. Their psychoanalytical approaches were controversial throughout the twentieth century until scientific thinking became more open to the possibility of the unconscious mind. There are some neuropsychologists today who are still skeptical about the unconscious (or the subconscious as it is sometimes called, although some would take me to task for implying that the two terms are interchangeable). Materialists – those scientists who understand living things and the universe as machine-like (Sheldrake 2012), are concerned exclusively with physical matter. Jung, however, after venturing into Eastern philosophies such as Taoism and Buddhism, among others, introduced to the West the concept of the Collective Unconscious (Jung 2020). I think this links to Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology because the mundane experience of the researcher is reflected in the archetypal object belonging to all of humanity in the Collective Unconscious.

The alchemy takes place when the individual's most personal experience can be understood as a universal, human phenomenon. That is when lead is turned into gold.

In Soliloquy Methodology, Art, meditation and dream journaling, for example, become the means to an end but not the end in itself. Initially, intuition guides the methods and allows the unconscious to surface with configurations far beyond the capability of the conscious mind. Eventually, the conscious mind can do what it does best — analyse and articulate the outcome. All levels of consciousness complement one another.

In this paper I focus on the artistic methods used in Soliloquy Methodology, but firstly, this overview of the theoretical framework will contextualise the methods:

### **The Theoretical Framework of Soliloquy Methodology**

- Epistemology
  - Theoretical Perspective
  - Methodology
  - Methods personal
- Objectivism (a' priori objects)  
Transcendental Phenomenology  
Soliloquy Methodology
- Experience (This is the researcher's experience. It starts with a question, the wording of which may later be refined as the outcome becomes apparent. It must be kept in mind that this approach will present the researcher with an image or cryptic clue, which must be interpreted. Questions must anticipate one, metaphorical response.)
- Epoche (Soliloquy's interpretation of Husserl's term) The researcher assumes a passive mind and allows the unconscious to lead them to relevant knowledge and experience.  
Epiphany (The researcher trusts that the unconscious will present a myth or archetypal image as an answer to the research question. It does.)
- Explication (Clarification.  
Decipherment. The researcher's conscious mind interprets what the unconscious has given up.)  
Explanation (Through the conscious processes of writing and speaking the researcher communicates the

research in an academically  
conventional way.)

### **How the Methodology Works**

These methods are a blend of the theories of Gebser, Husserl and Jung; three scholars who all wrote in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The innovations of all three were shunned by the materialistic scientists then dominant. They were ahead of their time. Now, one hundred years on, in the light of renewed interest in the science of consciousness, the academy may be ready for them.

The alchemy in Soliloquy Methodology takes place in the first three methods, when the researcher follows inclinations surfacing from the unconscious to move intuitively towards seemingly random readings or conversations. These noetic triggers make sense to the researcher later, with hindsight, during the Explication and Explanation stages.

This work must be intrinsically motivated as the inquiry demands faith and stamina throughout the periods of uncertainty. The unconscious will pick up on synchronicities and do the necessary synthesis for the research to present new outcomes and perspectives. From personal experience, I try not to think obsessively or impatiently about obvious answers to the research question, for that tempts the conscious mind to overshadow with stereotypical conclusions. I send out a request to the unconscious, in the form of a positive thought, asking for significant readings, occurrences and experiences to come my way to inform the synthesised outcome that will, in time, surface. I also have, in the back of my mind, a timeline in which this may happen. I can't explain it, but my unconscious seems to comply.

Contrary to most methodologies, other published research on the topic should initially be ignored. Again, this is to avoid the noise of overthinking by the conscious mind. I have found that everything seems to fall into place when the Epiphany is analysed.

At this point, I should say that many academics will not like this approach. It will not be for them. Rupert Sheldrake says that mechanistic scientists and skeptics require certainty, and in contrast, this approach is only suited to individuals who can trust – or at least hope with curiosity - that their intuition will lead them to an outcome. The state of limbo necessary to give time for the unconscious to do its work is unbearable for some. If one is comfortable with the wait and the faith, an answer will present itself. The unconscious knows because it is smarter than our conscious, reasoning mind (Erickson 1979). Soliloquy Methodology suits artists, empaths and dare I say – people who don't think too much – at least at the start.

### **Using Play Writing to Access the Research Epiphany Through the Epoche**

My current project takes the form of a second PhD for which I am doing practice-led research. It takes the form of a written and directed stage play, along with an explanatory exegesis. The topic is Judgement – because it is the phenomenon

with which I have struggled for decades as a lecturer required to assess student artwork. I have felt like a fraud and bailed out the work to markers at every opportunity. These markers are self-assured and competent. Their trust in their own judgement is sound. In contrast, I ask why it is that I feel unethical dismissing the art of someone's soul with an alphabetical or numerical result. I am using Soliloquy Methodology to explore this phenomenon, as it has worked well for me in the past. My PhD supervisor suggested that I should look at 'How' the methodology sheds light on judgement. At first, I resisted. Twenty-five years ago Michael Crotty (1996) convinced me that phenomenology (and I argue that Soliloquy Methodology is an application of pure phenomenology) only presents outcomes in the form of a priori objects. Pure, Husserlian phenomenologists get objects such as icons, myths and archetypes as answers, not descriptions. However, on further reflection, I now see that my supervisor had offered me a timely challenge. In this context of 'new science' and the new insights into consciousness, I am ready to explore how the methodology works, as well as what it shows.

This is the next stage of philosophical growth for Soliloquy Methodology. It is one which is taking me from the solid ground of Husserl, Gebser and Jung into new territory. I have chosen to understand the alchemy itself – the Epoche and the Epiphany and how the personal unconscious can transcend to reveal archetypes in the collective unconscious. Now it is onwards into non-linear territory of the unconscious, the collective unconscious, parapsychology, quantum physics and the science of consciousness. Now it is following my intuition that takes me to works by Sheldrake (2019), Radin (2018) and others, who are persons of science who are researching less tangible phenomenon. It is both challenging and fascinating, and because it is my second PhD, and because I am old enough to be needing neither approval nor promotion in the workplace, I am not deterred by travesties and ridicule one might anticipate from a rigid status quo of materialist thinkers. I am open to the possibility that this now is the 'new science' (Sheldrake 2013) or the age of Integral Consciousness (Gebser 1986).

### **Cat Show – A Play about Judgement**

I would now like to provide a description of how my current research into the phenomenon of judgement using Soliloquy Methodology is manifesting. I offer it as an example of how the methodology works.

My hobby for some years has been breeding cats and showing them at cat shows around Australia. I have bred Siamese and Orientals, Bengal cats and more recently, Sphynx cats. At earlier shows, I volunteered to help out with the recording and stewarding, and later I was invited to train as a cat show judge. This was no mean feat, as one is required to rote learn large books of small details relating to up to forty breeds of cats. For me, however, the hardest part was applying the listed criteria in order to make a judgement. It was just like trying to mark the art folios. I wanted to better understand this decision-making process because it did not seem to be as straightforward for me as it was for other judges. In the 1980s and again in recent years, I had completed the Myer-Brigg personality test, which is based on Jung's

personality types. As expected, both times I scored the same profile. I was amused to see that as an ENFP (Extravert/Intuitive/Feeling/Perceptive) type, I apparently have little or no judgement. Alternative profiles may include the personality elements of Introvert/Sensory/Thinking/Judging in varying combinations. A difference in personality profiles might explain why my markers showed greater efficacy with the folios and also why I am not comfortable awarding ribbons at cat shows. This question of judgement is what motivated me intrinsically for the research.

Throughout the process I have kept notes as my supervisors had recommended, and I recorded some dreams, but I will not spend much time pouring over them, at least until after the unconscious has presented me with the Epiphany. I was drawn to audiobooks about mythology and enjoyed reviving my long interest in Greek myths. Later, I went on to reading and listening to other types of mythology – Mesopotamian, Nordic, Celtic and parts of the Christian Bible – especially Revelations. It became apparent that some of the Bible stories I had been told as a child were also evident as myths from other cultures. They seem to be archetypal myths. For example, Noah's ark and the great flood features in Egyptian mythology. During this research period, I have become especially interested in Egyptian mythology and frequently go to sleep at night with the stories of Anubis, Bastet and Ma'at outpouring from my phone. It has become the foundation mythology for my play, which is now complete except for minor drafting. As I wrote I wondered what it had to do with judgement. Then it was obvious! Soliloquy had directed me to an ancient story that tells of a universal understanding of judgement. There are two parts to it. The first part uses a set of criteria, which allows for a rational understanding of judgement (a noesis). This is then subsequently overridden by an ever-enduring, visceral knowing (a noema) of what is judgement itself. I use the terms noesis and noema in the Husserlian sense, according to my humble interpretation. Allow me to illustrate my interpretation and this key research outcome with reference to the play script.

The first scene begins with a preacher outside the theatre, standing on a soap box and reading from Revelations (Pagels 2012). He has a donation tin at his feet, in an effort to raise money for charity. The audience enter the foyer to find there is a cat show going on. There are real cats in show cages. The judge is talking to the audience about the features of the particular cat breed she is judging. She is also training a new Steward and advising her on the judging process. It is an informal type of theatre, as audience members can purchase drinks at the bar and/or draw near to hear the judging commentary. After some time, the Egyptian god of the afterlife appears and announces to the audience they should move into the theatre. Once seated, the audience is informed that there has been an unfortunate error – the disinfectant used in the cat show was mixed incorrectly giving off carbon monoxide. He tells them they are indeed dead and in spirit, and about to face the feline Goddesses Bastet and Sekhmet who will now judge them to determine their fate in the afterlife. In order to pass through to the heavenly 'reeds', each will have to meet the criteria of the 42 negative confessions — 'I have never eavesdropped; I have never taken food from an infant...' etc. If they pass that test, Anubis will then reach in and rip out their hearts. Each heart will be weight against the feather of the lion goddess, Ma'at. If the heart is heavy with sin, it will weigh more than the feather and the heart will be thrown to another Egyptian monster who will eat it. The victim

will then cease to exist. However, if the heart is pure and light, the candidate will be escorted to a blissful afterlife. I have read variations on the details within this story, but ultimately it is this intangible and evanescent notion that challenges logic, which suggests that judgement is essentially noetic – that is, abstract and transcendental.

### **The Research Outcome Revealed through a Myth**

The Epiphany for my research into judgement came with the Egyptian Book of the Dead. I had drawn upon it for the plot of the play. Like the Standard of rules by which a cat show judge must assess a cat in a show, and like the assessment criteria used to mark the art folios, judgement is said to be formed according to each criterion. Is this a noetic practice to which Husserl refers? And is judgement itself ultimately more abstract, like Husserl's noema; like the intangible and incomprehensible weighing of the heart against the feather? I think now that at least in the context of this research, judgement is ultimately subjective and irrational, but those who judge need to justify judgement through pretended rationality. It is known as an unconscious given and then vindicated through conscious intervention. In other words, judgements are made without logic, and then logic and criteria are engaged to rationalise how the result can be made accountable through manipulation of the quantifiable criteria – the 42 negative confessions or the university's subject criteria or the cat judge's Standard.

### **Conclusion**

In this research I have passed the Epiphany stage and moved into the Explication and Explanation methods of Soliloquy Methodology. The research question has been answered in the form of an Egyptian myth. The myth answers my research question about the nature of judgement in the form of an allegorical story. I can now articulate and describe the position to which my unconscious and creative processes have brought me. I can now explore the readings that may be relevant. I am discovering that Kant's Critique of Judgement (Kant 2018) aligns with my own findings in some ways.

Finally, I would wholeheartedly recommend doing a second (or third) PhD if one has the time or inclination. My university has supported me with facilities, funding and the mentoring for which I am grateful. Had I just retired and written a play, it would probably not have been staged and not have generated research. The play will be staged at the CQUniversity's Conservatorium of Music in Mackay, in November 2025. I am privileged to present the research in part, now, at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Visual and Performing Arts in Athens in 2025. The final Exegesis will analyse how Soliloquy Methodology worked to answer the research question about Judgement as an allegory of the mythology surrounding the Egyptian Book of the Dead (Baldock 2024).

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