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THE INDO-PACIFIC JOURNAL OF phenomenology

Editorial

by **Christopher R. Stones**
Editor-in-Chief

The close of this first decade of the 21st century marks an important milestone in the history of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, which, having made its first appearance in April 2001, now too completes the first ten years of its existence. It would seem appropriate thus at this point to reflect upon developments not only within the journal itself, but also within the broad field of phenomenology, over the past decade.

From the outset, the focus of the *IPJP* has been on the phenomenological approach in the broadest possible sense. The journal has accordingly catered for a wide range of disciplines, themes, theoretical positions and methodological approaches, and has attracted both empirical and theoretical papers from a broad range of institutions from every continent. In this regard, most of the papers submitted to the *IPJP* still tend to emanate from the northern hemisphere, although the number received from the Australasian regions and South Africa has increased significantly. The only common thread between all of these has been the desire on the part of the authors to explore a topic of interest from a phenomenological perspective – or to apply a scholarly focus to some aspect of the phenomenological perspective itself. The journal's readership, too, is linked only by cyberspace and an interest in the contents of the journal, with open-access online of benefit to both readers and contributors, as well as researchers in general. For those whose papers have not been accepted for application, the 'blind' peer review process adhered to by the journal since its inception has in itself been of value, in providing not only critical feedback from experts in the field, but guidance in respect of addressing the gaps and lacks.

While even the casual reader of the journal cannot help but to have noticed the broad spectrum of disciplinary backgrounds, topics and approaches represented in the regular biannual issues, the *IPJP* has also catered for more specific interest groups, or in-depth focus on a specific area of interest or application, in the form of special editions released from time to time. In addition to the two special editions released to date, at least three more are set for release in the course of the next year or two.

While we continue to receive generous support – but retain academic and intellectual autonomy – from our host universities, Edith Cowan University in Australia and the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, the journal recently forged links with the National Inquiry Services Centre (*NISC)* to ensure its long-term future as an open-access journal. *NISC* has now begun to release hard copies of the online *IPJP* releases, not only of current issues, but also, on a print-on-demand basis, of back issues of the journal. There has been relatively wide-spread interest in these hard copies by public and university libraries as well as by individuals wanting to build up their personal library collections.

The most marked development in the field of phenomenology over the past decade has been the extent to which phenomenological approaches, previously harnessed mainly by the social and human sciences, have, through disciplinary linkages, become established in an increasingly diverse range of disciplines. Literature searches point to these as including disciplinary fields as varied in focus as nursing education, sociology in general, geography, medicine, organizational change and development,

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education, and sport, to mention only a few. As a multidisciplinary methodology, phenomenology has thus witnessed phenomenal growth over the past decade. This development nevertheless highlights the fact that, even though we may often refer to “the discipline of phenomenology”, phenomenology in fact lacks independent disciplinary status. Which gives rise to questions around what exactly a phenomenologist is – or even whether there actually is such a thing! Is being a scholar in phenomenology the same as being a phenomenologist? And is one a phenomenologist simply because one engages in phenomenological research – or is it possible to engage in phenomenological research without necessarily being considered a phenomenologist? The answers to such questions would seem to lie as much in how one defines oneself as in how “doing” phenomenology defines one.
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Fittingly, this edition of the *IPJP* begins with a paper by Lester Embree entitled *Disciplinarity in Phenomenological Perspective*, which follows on from his focus in the previous edition on the increasingly multidisciplinary character and culture of phenomenology by focusing here on both the generic properties and the disciplinary specificity of the phenomenological approach. In essence, Embree argues that, beyond its generic properties, the “what” of phenomenology depends on the “what” of its cultural and disciplinary context. Accordingly, as he observes, we generally refer to phenomenology in terms of a distinctive disciplinary affiliation. Insofar as phenomenology is thus both specified and diversified by disciplinarity, the definition of phenomenology in the contemporary context rests to a large extent on the definition of disciplinarity. Identifying the generic properties of the phenomenological approach in terms of reflection, description and culture-appreciativeness, Embree applies these procedurally to a phenomenological exploration of the notion of disciplinarity, reflecting on its nature and meaning, describing the process of becoming disciplinized, and pointing to the implications of the disciplinization – and hence, in effect, inculturation – of not only prospective phenomenologists in whatever academic field, but of phenomenology itself. To extrapolate from Embree’s explication – from a culture-appreciative perspective, phenomenology could thus contemporarily be broadly defined in terms of a multidisciplinary discipline with an interdisciplinary code applied in discipline-specific mode, or a culture-specific variation thereof.

And then there are the historical trends and turns demarcating the development of phenomenology beyond its origins in nineteenth century continental philosophy, and constantly redefining its horizons. Suddenly, as demonstrated in this edition, the Lithuanian-born French phenomenologist, Emmanuel Levinas, has come to loom large in submissions received from every part of the world, with those included in this edition respectively focusing on the metaphysical and ontological implications of Levinas’s eventual departure from Heidegger, the methodological implications of a Levinasian basis for existential phenomenological research, and the relevance of Levinas’s notions of ethical obligation, absolute alterity and egological violence in the context of psychotherapy. Levinas died on Christmas Day 1995, but his legacy, shaped by the ethical underpinnings of his phenomenology of the Other and its break with both the Husserlian and the Heideggerian ontologies, would seem to have taken on new life of a kind set to shape the future face of phenomenology. This move, in its emphasis on ethics, obligation to the sacredness in the face of the Other, and sense of the infinite – and hence what could be termed the spirituality of phenomenology – would seem to reflect the spirit of the age, the Zeitgeist of our Sein, as much as the potential for perpetual renewal inherent in phenomenology as epistemology.

In their paper – *Ethics and the Primacy of the Other: A Levinasian Foundation for Phenomenological Research* – Gilbert Garza and Brittany Landrum point to the distinctive institution-based methodological traditions that have developed in the field of phenomenology in North America. In light of the turn to the Levinasian basis of the Seattle dialogal research mode, as distinct from the rootedness of the Duquesne and Dallas approaches in Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the authors consider the implications of applying Levinasian principles to existential phenomenological research – in the process asking “whether the very notion of Levinasian ‘phenomenological’ research is something of an oxymoron”. Exploring issues around Levinas’s emphasis on the ethical relationship and the primacy of the Other in relation to Heidegger’s Dasein-centric ontology, they point to the ethical standards demanded by Levinas, and, in particular, his insistence on the radical alterity of the Other, as implicitly privileging the research participants methodologically, and ultimately impacting on the very nature of existential phenomenological research – which, they suggest, “following Levinas, is no longer ‘existential’”.

Aimed at elucidating the distinction between the phenomenological projects of Levinas and Heidegger, Irina Poleshchuk’s paper, *Heidegger and Levinas: Metaphysics, Ontology and the Horizon of the Other*, similarly analyses the relationship between Levinas’s problematic of ethics and Heidegger’s analytic of Dasein, considering the implications of both for Levinas’s insistence on radical alterity. While a major difference between these two theorists is generally seen to be Levinas’s emphasis on ethics as the only

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appropriate basis for phenomenology, Poleshchuk suggests that, despite Heidegger's omission of any explicit reference to ethics in his seminal works, his ontology indeed has an originary ethical base – for which she puts forward a convincing argument.

While also noting the issue of ethics as the central distinction between Heidegger's and Levinas's philosophies, Amy Fisher Smith identifies in both the theoretical grounding for "supernatural disclosure", and hence the possiblility of miracles, in the psychotherapy context. Her paper, *Naturalistic and Supernaturalistic Disclosures: The Possibility of Relational Miracles*, explores naturalism and supernaturalism in terms of Heidegger's notion of "disclosure", and thus as contrasting modes of perceiving the other that, by revealing and concealing different aspects of relationality, impact differently on the process and possibilities of psychotherapy. Fisher Smith argues that, in its endorsement of naturalistic assumptions, psychotherapy tends to be limited in terms of its relationality to an instrumentalist ethic of means/ends calculations, conducive to what Levinas terms egological violence in the form of thematization and totalization. As such, it limits the possibility of the "miraculous", which depends on the presence of a "supernatural" component in a relationship, such as is enabled by the recognition of the divine in the other through Heidegger's "contemplative attitude" and the recognition of the infinite sacredness and mystery in the face of the Other inherent in Levinas's insistence on absolute alterity and ethical obligation. A case study is presented to illustrate the consequences of both forms of disclosure and the relevance of Heidegger's and Levinas's notions in enabling the possibility of miracles in the psychotherapy context.

From the focus of the preceding three papers on Levinas, the next three papers move to Derrida – an erstwhile student and later close friend and colleague of Levinas – and from Derrida back to Husserl by way of a possibly unexpected loop in the route.

In *Re-thinking What We Think About Derrida*, Dino Galetti proposes the need for the systematic formalization of Derrida's oeuvre for posterity, and counters opposition to this as contrary to Derrida's rationale by pointing to Derrida's own indication that there is indeed a "law" or logic that has linked his early and his later work from the outset. Galetti then sets out to demonstrate – albeit with due caution – that this is indeed possible. Showing how the "law" pointed to by Derrida arises from Husserl, Galetti proceeds to present a meticulously constructed model based on relating this "law" to key notions in Derrida's thinking. In the process, while emphasising that Derrida "never was Husserlian" nor "a friend of descriptive phenomenology", he traces Derrida's development beyond his original immersion in the work of Husserl for the first eight years of his career: the impact of which on the early Derrida is only now becoming more generally acknowledged.

Although the sharing of a focus of attention with another is a vital component of social competence at all ages, psychological research has not yet succeeded in clarifying how persons share perception of an object. Phenomenology, too, despite its emphasis on perception and intentionality, has failed to move beyond explicating the encounter with the Other, and has thus not to date explored the phenomenon of joint perception with an other (or others) of some thing. Addressing this concern, Timothy Martell, in *Phenomenology of Joint Attention*, thus takes the initiative by offering a systematic phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon of joint attention, drawing on the concepts of Husserl, Stein and Schutz. Interestingly, the focus of Martell's paper happens to link with the example given by Embree, in his focus on reflection, of people observing each other observing a playful puppy in a park, elaborating the phenomenological implications masterfully.

While also concerned with perception, but in entirely different vein, Janez Strehovec explores the impact on human experience and perception of the interface culture and the mixed reality created by the integration of the real with the as-if-real, the unreal, the e-real, the cyber-real, the virtual and the @-real, and attempts to locate the issues that arise within a phenomenological framework. In order to illustrate the constant attitude shifts demanded by interface extensions between the "natural" and "as if" modes, and the way in which a particular interface shapes the form and structure of an activity as well as enabling perception of a particular kind, he describes the experience of cycling through a city, his augmented perceptual experience of which is enabled by combining a very simple physical interface (the bicycle) and an imagined interface (a screenic ride simulator). The experience described raises questions concerning the kinaesthetic, proprioceptive and motor features of the cyclist's techno-shaped mobile perception. Strehovec's questioning of the capacity of phenomenology to accommodate either a mixed reality or new media objects either ontologically or methodologically also gives pause for thought.

The current edition concludes with a review by Werner Human of a recent book by Linda Finlay and Ken Evans, *Relational-Centred Research for Psychotherapists: Exploring Meanings and Experience*.

In closing, I wish you an enriching experience in reading the papers presented in this edition, and hope that in some way you find yourself challenged by the authors to reflect upon your own lifeworld and to engage with it ever more fully phenomenologically.

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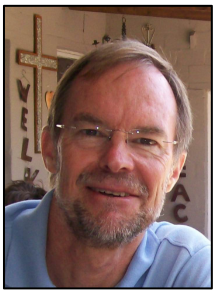

Professor Christopher Stones, previously of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa and currently Professor of Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg, has enjoyed a lengthy academic and research career, in the course of which he has taught in the areas of physiological, clinical, forensic, social and research psychology. He is Vice-President of the South African Association for Psychotherapy and past Chairman of the South African Society for Clinical Psychology. Editor-in-Chief of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* since 2003, he is also on the editorial panels of two other online journals. Using both natural scientific quantitative methodologies and phenomenological approaches, Professor Stones's research interests are in the areas of identity, attitudes and attitude change, phenomenological praxis and methodologies, abnormal psychology and psychotherapy, spirituality and religious experience, in all of which areas he has published extensively. An Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, with which he is also registered as a Chartered Psychologist, Professor Stones is registered with the South African professional board as both a research and a clinical psychologist, and conducts a part-time clinical practice with particular focus on adolescents, young adults and families, as well as offering long-term psychotherapy. In addition, he is regularly called on to serve as an "expert witness" in medico-legal (civil and criminal) court proceedings, and to contribute as a consultant in the field of forensic investigation.

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