



Editorial

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

Over the past several years, the internet has moved from being an interesting and, initially, novel way of accessing information to being the preferred, if not essential, information portal. For most readers, in fact, the most convenient, and hence primary, mode of accessing information has probably now become the internet.

Given the “information explosion” in a real sense, albeit through virtual connections, it eventually became necessary for online publishers to have a more reliable and consistent means of identifying documents than by way of the original URLs and web pages. Consequently, the concept of a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) was introduced to locate ‘objects’ on the internet regardless of changes in websites. The DOI is a system for identifying content within the digital environment and provides a mechanism for managing intellectual content and metadata so that, even though information about a digital object might change over time, its DOI will not.

The *IPJP*, in line with other major publishing sites, will begin to make use of the DOI system with papers released as from 2010. Each paper will be allocated a unique DOI so that, in future years, regardless of changes in the journal website and any other mirror sites on which the documents might be housed, internet users will still be able to access any paper published in the *IPJP* by referring to the DOI.

But enough of background business!

As the year draws to a close, we have put together a more extensive edition than usual, comprising nine papers. Three of these represent a novel approach for

the *IPJP* in being phenomenological reflections based on personal experience rather than deriving, in traditional academic mode, from rigorous theoretical exploration or empirical research. Having said this, each of these personal reflections nevertheless exemplifies the use of phenomenology to its fullest as a means of better understanding aspects of what it means to be human. Max van Manen not only identifies “responsive-reflective writing” as both “the very activity of doing phenomenology” and “the thing” (1990, p. 132), but goes even further in his view on the relationship between phenomenological writing and research: “On the one hand, the inscribing, the writing of the text *is* the research. ... On the other hand, the text once completed and in print-circulation is now a testimonial, a relic of embodied reflections. ... Research is writing in that it places consciousness in the position of the possibility of confronting itself, in a self-reflective relation” (1990, p. 129).

As in previous releases of the *IPJP*, the papers included once again span the globe and bridge the Pacific. In this edition, however, just over half the papers originate from the Northern Hemisphere – four from the USA and Canada, and one from Germany – with the remainder from Australia, New Zealand, India and Japan. By coincidence rather than design, marriage and methodology – and the marriage of methodologies – respectively constitute the central themes of six of the nine papers, with Nietzsche emerging as the dominant theorist drawn on in a number of the papers, the themes of which range from marriage, the limitations of language in phenomenological description, and the ethical and existential responsibility of the individual.

This edition of the journal opens with a paper by Patrik Aspers – “Empirical Phenomenology: A Qualitative Research Approach” – in which he explores both the philosophical foundation of empirical phenomenology and its practical application in social research. Aspers presents the thrust of empirical phenomenology – which builds upon the phenomenology of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger as well as the sociologist Alfred Schütz – as being towards scientific explanation that is grounded first and foremost in the meanings that people ascribe to phenomena, and only secondarily related, via the construction of the researcher, to the constructs of social science. As such, an explanation, as expressed by a theory, must thus be understandable to both the scientific community and those in whose meaning structure it is grounded. In addition to discussing the implications of empirical phenomenology for qualitative methods, with particular focus on participant observation and interviews, Aspers usefully summarises the qualitative research process in empirical phenomenology in seven steps and procedurally guides the reader through these.

In the second paper – “Cloaked in the Light: Language, Consciousness, and the Problem of Description” – Christopher Pulte focuses in particular on the implications of the limitations of language for phenomenological description. As such, the paper deals with what the author points to as a long-standing and ongoing issue within the domain of phenomenological thinking and research. Arguing that Friedrich Nietzsche had a better understanding than not only his contemporaries, but also than modern philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, of the severe constraints imposed by language on how we recognize and understand phenomena – with the very enterprise of phenomenology consequently compromised by virtue of its necessary use of language – Pulte points out that ‘seeing’ through language is fundamentally different from perception, in that description is an act of creation and its products thus not the same as those from which the description itself originated. The world constructed through language is therefore a projection, with language disguising the reality of a phenomenon by both revealing it and simultaneously concealing it in peculiar ways. Pulte’s paper culminates in the conclusion that we need somehow to arrive at an awareness that transcends the limitations of language if we are “to approach phenomena with the sightedness that is our goal”.

While similarly focused on the relationship between epistemology and methodology, the following two papers, by Renée Guimond-Plourde and David Giles

respectively, deal with the challenges of hermeneutic phenomenological research in the context of education. Renée Guimond-Plourde, in her paper titled “A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach to Understanding Stress-Coping as an Existential Phenomenon Lived by Healthy Adolescents”, introduces a qualitative/interpretative methodological framework based on hermeneutic phenomenology as conducive to understanding the meaning that healthy adolescents attribute to their experience of stress in school and their ways of coping. Guimond-Plourde argues that moving from the empirical to the phenomenal enables access to dimensions of meaning that elude traditional research approaches, while adopting a dual philosophical approach makes it possible to interpret the links between lived experience and the meaning attributed to it. Guimond-Plourde’s study elucidates the uniquely personal existential dimensions of healthy adolescents’ everyday experience in the school context as punctuated by their lived experience of stress-coping. Along with attempting to redress the absence of the adolescent perspective from the research literature, the purposive sampling of healthy, high achievers for this study addresses a further gap in the knowledge field by moving away from the disease model of stress and illuminating its positive contribution to individual functioning.

The title of the paper by David Giles – “Phenomenologically Researching the Lecturer-Student Teacher Relationship: Some Challenges Encountered” – points very precisely to its focus. Positioning his research methodologically as interpretive phenomenology with a hermeneutical analysis that draws upon the perspectives offered by Heidegger, Gadamer, Levinas and Buber, Giles identifies the challenges of phenomenological research as related, in the main, to the intensity of the lived experience, the fine attunement required of the researcher to the focal phenomenon, and the preunderstandings inherent in the researcher’s mindfulness of his own historicity, and elaborates on the challenges that he himself encountered in the process of phenomenologically researching the lecturer-student relationship in the context of teacher education. Despite the challenges it presents, a phenomenological approach is nevertheless shown to be uniquely appropriate for exploring the powerful psychological intimacy of a relationship that has its basis in recognizing and respecting the power differential that exists between the parties involved.

Consciousness is intrinsically the primary focus of any discipline that claims to be geared towards facilitating an understanding of what it means to be human and the human condition. In line with this, the

next two papers, although vastly different in theme and approach, both explore phenomena emerging from experiential contexts unique to being human: meditation and marriage, respectively.

The first of these, “Differentials of Light Consciousness: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of the Experience of Vihangam Yogis”, reports on research by a team of psychiatrists based in Ranchi, India. Ravi Prakash and his colleagues make use of an IPA approach to better understand the subtle differences that distinguish between the mystical experience of so-called “inner light perception” during certain states of meditation and more mundane experiences such as imagination, dreams or the sensory perception of external light passing through the eyelids. While acknowledging the difficulty of gaining scientific access to the experience of deep meditative states, the paper points to the possibilities of a phenomenological approach for exploring consciousness and gaining in-depth understanding of simpler states of mystical experience. Although this study is considered by the authors to be exploratory, it nevertheless demonstrates the effectiveness of IPA as a mode of investigating states of consciousness.

In her highly readable, interesting and yet serious paper with the racy title “Ten Tips for a Good Marriage According to Friedrich Nietzsche”, Skye Nettleton draws upon the wealth of aphorisms found in Nietzsche’s works regarding friendship, marriage, sex and power relationships, focusing in particular on Nietzsche’s thoughts on how the institution of marriage could be reinvigorated if it was founded primarily on friendship rather than on romantic love. Nietzsche saw friendship as not only more enduring than the fleeting feelings of romantic love, but as, in fact, the highest form of love, insofar as friends are able to inspire, and even push, one another towards the ideal of the *Übermensch*. In his challenge to lovers to be great friends, Nietzsche also points to the potential of the ontological differences between men and women to result in ongoing conflict. Friendship comes in various forms, however, and Nettleton elucidates those Nietzsche presents as models for making marriage work – albeit mainly in the interests of the males! While some of Nietzsche’s views might seem outrageous to the contemporary reader, Nettleton not only contextualizes these historically in the Victorian era, when the roles of men and women in society were fundamentally different, but points to the timeless wisdom in much of what Nietzsche recommends, making it as provocatively relevant today as it presumably was in his own time.

The current edition concludes with the three papers referred to earlier (paragraph 5) and broadly tagged

“Personal Reflections”. The first of these, by Michele Thompson, continues the theme of marriage in its intimate focus on “Experiencing the Marital Bed”, while the second, by Neil Soggie, deals, under the title “Thinking, Relating, and Choosing: Resolving the Issue of Faith, Ethics, and the Existential Responsibility of the Individual”, with the question of “Which is worse: Doing evil or being evil?”. The third paper, written by Luann Fortune as what she terms a phenomenological self-study, explores the meaning of the experience of “Being a Juror”. Self-report case studies have been long accepted within a range of philosophical and social science traditions as arguably providing rich textual data of a nature that might not otherwise be available. While it is not possible to generalize beyond the specific experience being reported, such studies nonetheless serve to foster research in the area reported on.

But now let us let the papers included in this edition of the *IPJP* speak for themselves. Experience, enjoy, contemplate, and explore.

In conclusion, it is with deep regret and sadness that we note the death on 3 June this year of one of the doyens of the phenomenological tradition in South Africa, Dreyer Kruger. Dreyer’s presence in the South African psychological and social sciences was highly influential during his lifetime, and, in addition to those who continue to carry the mantle in South Africa, many of his students went on to hold prominent positions in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand. In particular, both the Editors of the *IPJP* to date were introduced to phenomenology by Dreyer and inspired by his teaching to apply it, under his guidance, in our research towards higher degrees and, independently, beyond. It is therefore appropriate that, in his honour, we carry a tribute to his memory – in the form, for the present, of the personal reminiscences of his younger daughter, Amanda D’Angelo – in this edition of the *IPJP*, the first following his passing. In due course this will be moved to the Obituary section of the site which it was recently decided to establish in line with the *IPJP*’s endeavour to be an active online journal that is current as well as informative, and that serves as an informed resource for scholars in the broad field of qualitative disciplines. Along with publishing *IPJP* generated obituaries, links will be provided to pertinent online obituary and biographical pages, with registered readers of the journal able to contribute elaborative commentary. Readers are accordingly invited to submit obituaries that they believe might be appropriate for the journal.

We salute you, Thomas Marx Dreyer Kruger – as mentor, as man, as mensch.

Reference

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

About the Author



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 on-line 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.
