

Editorial

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

The *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* now being in its eighth year of existence, it might be instructive to reflect upon developments within the journal since its inception in April 2001.

While the journal was established primarily to provide a high-calibre open-access publication platform in the southern hemisphere, it has attracted a significant number of papers from the northern hemisphere. Ironically, while the submission rate in the southern hemisphere has been in line with initial projections, the number of submissions from authors in the northern hemisphere has far exceeded expectations. Disciplines represented by the authors have covered the broad spectrum of, in the main, anthropology, sociology, education, nursing science, psychology and, of course, philosophy. Distinctive tendencies noted in respect of the papers submitted to the journal have not, however, been interdisciplinary but cross-cultural. While mainstream philosophical expositions tend to predominate, a large number of submissions have dealt more specifically with issues germane to the domains of the health sciences and, in particular, psychotherapy, psychiatric disturbance, culture specific phenomena and nursing, as well as consciousness, ethics, research design, meditation and poetry. Interestingly, most of the papers dealing with matters of consciousness, meditation and alternative healing practices have come from countries in the northern hemisphere, whilst submissions from the Asian sub-continent have more generally tended towards philosophical expositions, commentary on and critiques of contemporary western philosophical theory. Of more recent note has been the impact of phenomenology on business models in the corporate sector, as reflected by a number of submissions from both the northern and southern hemispheres.

In addition to the regular twice-yearly editions of the *IPJP*, two Special Editions have appeared to date, the first dealing with methodology and paradigmatic shifts within phenomenology, and the second focusing on the application of a phenomenological approach in the broad field of education.

The *IPJP* has been an online endeavour since its inception. In fact, it was one of the first journals to be exclusively online, especially within the southern hemisphere. In step with the enormous strides made by journals in the use of the relatively new electronic cyberspace medium as a means of making knowledge accessible – widely, easily and rapidly – the journal has sought to maintain its commitment to an open-access model with respect to its readership (as was commented on more extensively in the editorial of the previous edition of the journal).

Like all journals that aspire to be world-class, the *IPJP* has a robust editorial review policy and stringent review processes are in place. Currently, the journal's acceptance rate in relation to the number of papers submitted is in the region of 55% to 60%, with the corresponding level of rejection indicative of the application by the reviewers of academic criteria appropriate to an accredited international journal. While allowing for diversity of submissions, it is also necessary to ensure that the focus of the journal remains within the parameters of phenomenology.

In the *IPJP's* first editorial, the then Editor-in-Chief asked, "What is phenomenology?" Almost a decade – and many papers – later it might prove helpful, again,

The *IPJP* is a joint project of the Humanities Faculty of the University of Johannesburg in South Africa and Edith Cowan University's Faculty of Regional Professional Studies in Australia. This document is subject to copyright and may not be reproduced in whole or in part via any medium without the express permission of the publishers.

The *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology (IPJP)* can be found at www.ipjp.org.

to attempt to answer this question. While I hesitate to do so, even in the simplest form, given that there are so many diverse and firmly held views of what best defines phenomenology and constitutes a phenomenological orientation, I will nevertheless take the proverbial bull by the horns and hazard the following tentative answer to the question first posed in the journal in its inaugural edition.

Phenomenology is arguably most commonly understood to be a philosophical method developed in the early years of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl and his circle of followers at the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany. The term "phenomenology" – which originated not with Husserl, but with the publication in 1807 of Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* – is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning "that which appears", with the suffix "-ology" (derived from the Greek *logos* meaning "word" or "reason") implying "science" or "knowledge". In essence, thus, phenomenology – in the Husserlian conception – is primarily concerned with making the structures of consciousness, and the phenomena which appear in acts of consciousness, objects of systematic reflection and analysis. While the appropriate perspective in this regard is necessarily that of the experiencing consciousness or 'first person', Husserl held that essences perceived from the 'first person perspective' are universal rather than limited to any given individual. Insofar as phenomenology attempts to overcome the bias inherent in the circular logic of empirical science by limiting its focus procedurally to that which appears – "the thing itself" – it is believed by the Husserlian school to provide a truer basis for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge.

In its aim to determine the essence of phenomena, Husserlian phenomenology seeks to identify the properties and invariant structures of consciousness and conscious experience, including judgments, perceptions and emotions. Although many of the phenomenological methods involve reductions of various kinds, it is crucial to understand that phenomenology is – in origin, focus and aim – essentially anti-reductionistic, and that the reductions are merely procedural tools used to better understand and describe the workings of consciousness. There is thus not the intention to reduce any phenomenon to these descriptions themselves.

To what extent do the six papers included in the current edition of the *IPJP* – or, for that matter, those in the preceding seventeen editions – answer the question "What is phenomenology?"? To what extent do they pose it? It is the task of the reader to ask that of each paper published in the *IPJP*.

The first paper is by Alon Segev. Under the title *Leaving the "Real Hume" in Peace and Reading the Dialogues from a Moral Perspective*, the paper challenges the conventional reading of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* by focusing on the dynamic rather than the static facet of the text and, in the process, identifying its thrust as moral rather than epistemological-ontological in nature. In Segev's reading, the central question confronted by the interlocutors in Hume's *Dialogues* is thus not whether or not God exists, but a moral one, which as such, Segev concludes, accounts for their dogmatic persistence in their respective positions throughout.

In his paper, *Phenomenological Philosophy and Orthodox Christian Scientific Ecological Theology*, Allan Savage, the Director of the Adult Faith Office of the Diocese of Thunder Bay in Canada, focuses on the interface between philosophy and orthodox Christian theology. Arguing that contemporary theological interpretive dialogue requires a philosophical partner that aims to capture the essence of the divine and human activity in the world, he identifies phenomenological philosophy as not only providing a more satisfactory way of understanding spirituality and contemporary human existence than is possible within the conceptual framework of traditional metaphysics, but as more conducive to reaching a thorough theological understanding of ecology. Savage thus contends that, from a theological perspective, the essence of environmental experience is best understood, both immediately and holistically, through what might be termed a phenomenological eco-theological approach.

Given its appropriateness as a mode of inquiry that seeks to articulate lived experience, Cheung On Tam made use of a phenomenological methodology to investigate museum visitors' experience of paintings. In his paper, *Understanding the Inarticulateness of Museum Visitors' Experience of Paintings: A Phenomenological Study of Adult Non-Art Specialists*, he presents rich descriptions of the experience of paintings generated from interviews with eight participants, and reflects upon the two major categories of experience that emerge: those aspects that can be articulated and those that cannot be articulated, with his analysis focusing on the latter. Cheung On Tam's paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of his study for art educators.

Changing focus from perception and reflection to concrete understandings of the body, Akoijam Thoibisana's paper, *Heidegger on the Notion of Dasein as Habited Body*, elucidates Heidegger's notion of Dasein with regard to embodiment. Pointing

The *IPJP* is a joint project of the Humanities Faculty of the University of Johannesburg in South Africa and Edith Cowan University's Faculty of Regional Professional Studies in Australia. This document is subject to copyright and may not be reproduced in whole or in part via any medium without the express permission of the publishers.

The *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology (IPJP)* can be found at www.ipjp.org.

out that the body can be understood from two fundamentally different but yet interrelated aspects, these being 'the body-as-corpse' and 'the lived-body', Thoibisana identifies the Heideggerian perspective on Dasein as comprehending the lived-body rather than the body-as-object, and critically re-examines the contributions made by Heidegger's notion of Dasein towards a more complete understanding of the phenomenology of lived-bodiliness.

Gabriel Rossouw, who has previously published in the *IPJP*, presents a paper on *Maori Wellbeing and Being-in-the-World* in which it is argued that, in order to accommodate indigenous Maori knowledge of well-being, there needs to be a more meaningful interface between research and practice in the mental health domain. Rossouw proceeds to show how the medicalisation and classification of psychological disorders within a western medical nosology is unable to account for the extent to which cultural and spiritual factors are associated with problems-in-living. Reflecting on Heidegger's analysis of Being and his phenomenological method of understanding, Rossouw argues that, insofar as its grasp of the fourfoldness of human being resonates with the world view of the Maori and their understanding of well-being, Heideggerian phenomenology provides the key to a more cross-culturally authentic mode of psychotherapeutic practice.

The penultimate paper in the current edition of the journal – Rajib Dhar's *Leadership in the Management Institutes: An Exploration of the Experiences of Women Directors* – deals with corporate leadership concerns within an educational context. Focusing in particular on the challenges faced by female directors of academic institutes in India, Rajib Dhar's phenomenological analysis of interview data identifies five major themes in the participants' move towards and experience of leadership in the educational context, pointing to career progression patterns in relation to family, societal and traditional pressures, expectations and constraints, challenges related to being female within a male dominated society, and the challenge of balancing personal and professional life demands. It is Dhar's hope that research of this nature will impact on education policy in such a way that it facilitates more effective leadership through the provision of appropriate support structures.

The current edition of the journal concludes with a review by Steve Edwards of the most recent book by Trish Sherwood, who played a central role in spearheading the development of the *IPJP*. Published by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) under the title *Emotional Literacy: The Heart of Classroom Management*, the production of the book was a collaborative family effort, with the author's daughter, Tara Sherwood, contributing the illustrations.

The current edition of the *IPJP* thus presents a set of thought-provoking phenomenological explorations covering a broad spectrum of issues ranging from Heideggerian epistemology, ethics and morality to the aesthetics of art experience and concerns within the educational sector at both management and classroom level. Each of the papers included implicitly poses the question "What is phenomenology?" and, each in its own way, answers it in a way that both grasps the essence of phenomenology anew and poses new questions.

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.

The *IPJP* is a joint project of the Humanities Faculty of the University of Johannesburg in South Africa and Edith Cowan University's Faculty of Regional Professional Studies in Australia. This document is subject to copyright and may not be reproduced in whole or in part via any medium without the express permission of the publishers.

The *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology (IPJP)* can be found at www.ipjp.org.