



Editorial

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

Once again, there would, by chance rather than by design, appear to be a common theme interlinking the papers included in the current edition of the *IPJP*. While perhaps to be taken for granted as the central focus of a journal of phenomenology, what emerged strongly in the process of preparing the respective papers for publication is the common emphasis on human experience, whether common or uncommon, as not only an encounter with moments of knowing and enduring meaning, but as definitive of the essence of individual being as both embodied in itself and embodying universal essences.

A sub-theme is that of travelling, in the sense of experientially crossing thresholds, boundaries or borders, whether geographically or methodologically, or, as Eva Cybulska puts it, by having “crossed the Rubicon to insanity”. While Oscar Koopman “charts the journey” of his discovery of phenomenology, Christopher Howard’s explication of the experience of foreign travel as “generating a form of embodied learning” serves, in essence, as a metaphor for phenomenological research. As in the case of the latter, it is necessary for the traveller, as a stranger in an “alien world”, to bracket the “cultural attitude” brought from the “home world” in order to be open to discovering the character of the culturally other and finding “the right rhythm” for “syncing”. Howard comments that, in their attentive focus on “things” encountered and experienced, “the travellers I met sometimes sounded like amateur phenomenologists”.

The specific focus of each of the various papers moves from the disintegration into madness of a misunderstood genius, to the impact of both misunderstanding of hermeneutics and hermeneutic

misunderstanding in informing practice contradictory to the intent of the founding text, to the psychologically disorientating “light breaks” experienced by travellers to exotic foreign destinations when the knowledge schemes and tacit coping skills acquired in the home world break down in the alien cultural context, to, closer to home, the devastating impact of poverty on life choices and life chances, to a moment experienced “like a bird released from a cage” by a physical scientist on being “liberated ... from the constraints of positivistic thinking” by his discovery of phenomenology – and, finally, to the review of a book entitled *Caring and Well-Being: A Lifeworld Approach*. What this edition of the *IPJP* makes clear is that many lifeworlds do not even begin to approach a realm where words such as “caring” and “well-being” are, even just in concept, experientially meaningful, let alone dwelt in. Which raises questions about the relation of such words to not only the field of focus of this journal – phenomenology – but to the focus of the field itself.

The answer, however, lies in this edition of the *IPJP*. On the one hand, Oscar Koopman’s repeated reference in his paper to Husserl’s reaction to the devastation of Europe witnessed after World War I reminds us that Husserlian phenomenology has its origin in horror at the destructive consequences of scientific and technological developments that had lost touch with the spirit of the human and the meaning of the lived. Koopman also points us to Van Manen’s reminder that, in both essence and approach, phenomenological research is “a ‘caring act’, to be followed through with a deep sense of thoughtfulness and empathy”. This is epitomised by Eva Cybulska’s not only empathic and perspicacious, but also deeply

compassionate, interpretation of Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch* as representing his need for what amounts to a "saviour self", and her elucidation of the "double aspect" of his personality as revealed in his letters, notebook entries and the views of his friends as opposed to the public persona presented in his philosophical writings. Christopher Howard, Oscar Koopman and Ian Rory Owen all point explicitly to empathy as the key phenomenologically to accessing the realm of others' lived experience, with Owen elaborating on Husserl's clarification in *Ideas I* of exactly what empathy is and implies theoretically for empirical practice.

Most crucially, however, the answer to the questions raised above is, in brief, that, if words such those of the research participants quoted by Christel Marais and Christo van Wyk, who in the process give voice to those disempowered and demoralised to the point of lived voicelessness, can move readers not only to find their eyes suddenly prickling with tears but to painful new insight – then phenomenology is, ultimately, indeed all about moving people empathically towards caring: not only about the lived meaning of core psychological concepts such as

"caring" and "well-being", or the relevance of these in the therapeutic domain, but about *actively* caring about the well-being of others. This is perhaps precisely what is pointed to by Kathleen Galvin and Les Todres's call, in the book reviewed by David Edwards, for "a more aesthetic phenomenology" (2013, p. 150) capable of conveying findings in what Edwards paraphrases as "a humanly impactful way". For, as the authors themselves point out, "At the end of the day, the practice of caring is a form of 'living' and not just a matter of 'knowing'" (2013, p. 170).

Phenomenology, too, of course, is not only a philosophy, but a practice, open as much to being lived as to being used for research purposes.

David Edwards reminds us that what counts most in assessing the impact of academic writing is that "words mean the change they make" (Gendlin, 2004, p. 141). If the words presented to the world make no difference, thus, they mean nothing. I leave you with that thought, with the hope that the words contained in this edition of the *IPJP* indeed prove to make the change they mean to your own perceptions and the impact of those on your own sense of purpose.

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About the Author



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Professor Christopher Stones, previously Head of the Department of Psychology at 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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