



## Editorial

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

*Aware we are looking back no longer to*

*Where we have come from, but must begin  
to plan*

*Arrival at those places to which we go –*

*David Wright - "A Voyage to Africa"*

*We shall not cease from exploration*

*And the end of our exploring*

*Will be to arrive where we started*

*And know the place for the first time*

*T S Elliot [Four Quartets – Little Gidding]*

According to phenomenological icons such as Aron Gurwitsch, Herbert Spiegelberg and Maurice Natanson, amongst others, phenomenology has developed out of a philosophical movement that is still in the process of being clarified and that consequently there are multiple interpretations and modifications of what has now become known as phenomenological philosophy. In this regard, phenomenology concerns itself with the fundamental problems of knowledge and the experience, at both the scientific and the pre-theoretical levels, which we have of the surrounding perceptual world and by which we

are guided in our everyday life. Gurwitsch<sup>1</sup> goes on to argue that whereas “positive sciences take for granted the objects with which they deal and concern themselves ... phenomenology poses the question of the existence of the objects and of the meaning of their existence” (1966, pp. 89-90). The papers in the current edition of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* aim to do precisely what Gurwitsch argues is the *raison d’être* of this philosophical approach to the understanding of our world, i.e., the world in which we find ourselves. Moreover, as reflected in this current edition, whatever variations might exit amongst phenomenological practitioners, the fundamental philosophical approach remains the same: discovery, explication and faithfulness to experience.

Since its inception in 2001, the *IPJP* has sought to serve as a forum for the dissemination of ideas around human experience and meaning, and, in so doing, to advance our thinking about the structure of human lived-experience. The past few editions of the *IPJP* have helped to elaborate this aim through the publication of a broad spectrum of topic-specific papers written by an equally diverse range of authors. The present edition of the journal follows this trend except

<sup>1</sup> See “The Phenomenological and the Psychological Approach to Consciousness”, originally published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* and later published as a revised version in *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology* (edited by Aron Gurwitsch (1966), pages 89-106) as part of the *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*.

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that, to a larger extent than in the past, there is a greater emphasis on notions of consciousness and experience and how these are to be understood within specific socio-cultural contexts and paradigmatic frameworks. Additionally, there is an underlying theme in the current papers that touches on issues of what might be meant by the notion of existential authenticity. Another important aspect of the present edition is that its papers have been drawn from an internationally diverse group of phenomenological thinkers straddling both hemispheres and from as far a field as South Africa and New Zealand on the one hand and the Northern Hemisphere on the other, more particularly North America and Canada as well as Bulgaria in Eastern Europe. It would thus seem while the initial aim of the *IPJP* was to focus primarily on authors from the Indo-Pacific region, it nonetheless is proving to be an attractive outlet for scholars much further afield. This is a welcome development as it confirms the broad readership of the journal and, more particularly, the extent to which an interest in phenomenology is a universal one.

Regarding the current edition, the first paper by David Edwards (South Africa) deals with unconscious influences on discourses about consciousness. The paper argues that many discussions about consciousness *per se* are often made more difficult primarily because an unacknowledged aspect of the debate is the individual's own attempt to find a way to express their own unformulated experience [see Halling's paper in this edition dealing with dialogal phenomenological research as well as Rossouw's work exploring enlightenment and individuation – Editor]. Moreover, this tends to be further complicated by the way in which discourses are based on particular ontological assumptions around ideological paradigms and expectations. Edwards' paper adeptly explores the notion of repression - as initially formulated by such significant thinkers as Freud, Jung and Janet during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - and how this now needs to be re-conceptualised as experience which is difficult to formulate in words rather than being considered as something which is denied direct access into awareness. A promising way forward according to this paper is through the adoption of a so-called "multi-state paradigm" as this would resolve many of the ideological conflicts around how best to understand consciousness and experience. Edwards concludes his paper with the assertion that because our discourses tend to be

embedded in our own "modes of experiencing", which are shaped by personal experiences that are often unacknowledged and un-reflected, many of the attempts to understand consciousness will continue to lack coherence as participants in the discourse will be speaking at cross purposes, with the consequence that many of the debates will tend to remain unresolved – hence, he argues, the debate will continue.

The second paper, dealing with the topic of enlightenment and individuation, argues that it is important for psychology as a discipline that a distinction be drawn between authentic suffering and what may be termed "neurotic" suffering. Gabriel Rossouw (New Zealand) asserts that a major difficulty with mainstream psychology is its conviction that psyche has its entire existence within the realm of reason and therefore it establishes a sense of reality which is permanent, absolute and of substance, rather than attempting to conceive of a reality in which subject and object are indivisible. In particular, he argues that there is therapeutic value in a suffering person remaining true to themselves by becoming, what he terms, an "indivisible being".

Rossouw's paper makes use of Jungian and Buddhist perspectives to illuminate his position that while the discipline of psychology makes a distinction between "neurotic" and "authentic" suffering, the Buddhist notion is that life itself is suffering and thus the aim of life is to understand how one came to be suffering as such. In other words, the process of healing recognised by mainstream psychology is quite different from that of Buddhist psychotherapeutic practices. Whereas in Buddhism it is simply enough for the person to acknowledge that "I suffer", Rossouw asserts that the mainstream Christo-centric (i.e., essentially Western) framework first requires that suffering be understood prior to its being acknowledged and accepted. Rossouw states that this encourages self-deception which, in itself, is problematic. Indeed, he argues, the West's scientific formalised and structured application of logic and reason as a mode of understanding tends to distort authentic experiences as they are interpreted in a way that ensures that they fit into formalised structures of logic [see Edwards' paper in this edition dealing with consciousness as well as Halling's account of dialogal research – Editor]. The gist of Rossouw's paper is that mainstream psychology distorts any true understanding of the nature of psyche because the dominant paradigm is that psyche begins and

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ends in the realm of reason. His paper strongly supports the Jungian notion of individuation where the individual becomes conscious of his indivisible uniqueness as a human being while simultaneously recognising that he is still no more than common man or woman but having a genuine recognition of being authentically in and of this world.

The third paper in this edition by Franco Carnevale (Canada) looks at the “technologization” of death in Western society and endeavours to understand the West’s approach to death through the work of Martin Heidegger. Sketching out the current Western stance towards death, Carnevale analyses this phenomenon in terms of modern science and technology, arguing that although the Heideggerian outlook does not oppose the modern scientific view of death, it nonetheless does provide a broader foundational concept of our living relationship to death as an existential reality. In so doing, Carnevale hopes that an explication of Heidegger’s work in this field might inspire a more authentic stance in the West towards dying.

After outlining what he refers to as a “Western style” dying process, which revolves around practices – civil and religious - enacted with regard to the final disposition of a deceased person, Carnevale proceeds to explore a range of formulations around the so-called “death philosophies” and cites the work of Elizabeth Kübler Ross as an exemplar. The paper points to the range of “grief therapies” that aim to foster “normal” dying (or grieving) and the related palliative pharmaceutical care procedures that have been developed. Carnevale turns his attention also to the far ends of this spectrum, which deal respectively with euthanasia on the one side and the high technology “resuscitative” approaches on the other. Using Heidegger’s philosophy, he attempts a phenomenological analysis of death within an ontological phenomenology, looking particularly at “technology” on the one hand and “being” on the other hand. Carnevale, who has extensive experience working in the field of palliative care, calls for a greater understanding of death and particularly how the existential realm of dying can help to foster an authentic understanding of human finitude and thus enhance our appreciation of our own being as a full engagement in life.

Steen Halling (USA) argues that historically there has been an ambivalent attitude in psychology towards the place for the “subjective” in clinical practice and research, and that this ambivalence even applies to phenomenological research where, from the outset, there is the expressed desire to embrace the personal whilst simultaneously attempting to present results which have an existence independent of the researcher’s relationship to them. Halling’s article discusses a collaborative approach to research that relies upon the development of a “relationship of intimacy” between the researchers and the phenomena being studied. Halling is at great pains to point out that what he terms “dialogical phenomenological research” refers to a focussed conversation that facilitates a deeper personal understanding of the important aspects of our lives. While Halling supports the guiding principle of phenomenology – being faithful to experience – he also points out that this is not so easy in practise. After all, limitations of language make it often more difficult to find words that adequately communicate deeper experiences [see Edwards’ paper in this edition dealing with consciousness – Editor]. Halling acknowledges that while there are legitimate concerns about the extent to which the researchers’ personal and cultural backgrounds may prevent them from coming to a meaningful and valid understanding of a topic, his own experience of small group collaborative research is that this has often helped to generate solid research outcomes. Halling’s paper provides several constructive pointers that go a long way towards ensuring valid and reliable outcomes of dialogical phenomenological research. Finally, Halling asserts that researchers need to have a relatively high tolerance for ambiguity since by its very nature, research must have the capacity for unexpected outcomes. The paper concludes with the suggestion that “... it is in the context of dialogue that presence and intimacy, truth and understanding, become possible”.

Moving away from the more theoretical expositions, the paper by Tsepho Ttali and Samantha Moldan (South Africa) is an empirical qualitative study intended to establish the personal impact that managing sexually abused learners had on primary school teachers working within an urban community. Using availability sampling methods, a phenomenological approach was employed to address research questions that focussed on the management of sexually-abused

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learners within an educational setting. Their research was also concerned with the extent to which the participants felt they needed specific support structures to assist them in their management of the sexual abuse cases. Although the paper refers to an urban community in a relatively small city on the Eastern seaboard of South Africa, the outcomes nonetheless have a more general appeal in that there is constant reference to international studies of child sexual abuse and comparisons are made between their outcomes and those of European and American studies. Additionally, for readers who are new to phenomenological approaches, this paper provides a specific methodological recipe for data analysis using Morrisette's five-step approach. The paper concludes with recommendations regarding possible support structures for educators who become involved in the management of children who purportedly have been sexually abused. In particular, support structures that are felt to be particularly important within the South African justice and welfare system are put forward.

The final paper in this edition of the journal is a submitted book review by Plamen Gradinarov (Bulgaria) which deals with Husserl and Yogacara, a form of Buddhist phenomenology. Gradinarov's review is a critique of Dan Lusthaus's fundamental premises in his philosophical investigation of this form of Buddhism. His review calls into question certain aspects of Lusthaus' argument, pointing out that Buddhist phenomenology can be considered either as "phenomenalist", essentially implying that the only things we deal with are phenomena, or it can be considered "phenomenological" to the extent that it opens the possibility for self-manifesting essences rather than structured internal and external juxtapositions, an approach adopted by Husserl and his followers. Gradinarov begins by providing an overview of how Lusthaus deals with Buddhist phenomenology, and then he proceeds to interrogate Lusthaus's work, arguing that it appears neither to satisfy Husserlian phenomenology nor the demands of a Buddhist phenomenology. Liberally scattered through the review are various Sanskrit terms which, no doubt, are essential if one is to fully understand

the essence of Buddhist phenomenology. Fortunately, Gradinarov has provided English translations of the Sanskrit terminology. Be forewarned. The review is not for the faint and light-hearted but for the philosophically serious.

In concluding this editorial overview, I invite all readers to give serious consideration to joining the journal's subscriber list. You are especially encouraged to write to the Editor with comments (positive or negative) that you might have about the journal (there is a page dedicated to readers' responses which will be uploaded on a regular basis). In this regard, if you would like your responses to remain anonymous, please indicate this when writing to the Editor in the first instance.

#### About the Author

Professor Stones has a lengthy academic and research career, having taught in the areas of clinical, social and research psychology. He is the Vice-President of the South African Association for Psychotherapy and past Chairman of the South African Society for Clinical Psychology. He is also an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and on the editorial panels of two other on-line journals. He has published extensively using both natural science quantitative methodologies as well as phenomenological approaches particularly in the areas of religious experience, identity and change management. Professor Stones has a part-time clinical practice with a focus on adolescents, young adults and families as well as individual long-term psychotherapy. Additionally, he is regularly appointed as an "expert witness" in medico-legal (civil and criminal) court proceedings.

His areas of research interest fall into the field of attitudes and attitude change, phenomenological praxis and methodologies, abnormal psychology and psychotherapy, spirituality and religious experience.

He can be reached at:

[editor@ipjp.org](mailto:editor@ipjp.org)

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