



*Editorial*

by **Dr Robert Schweitzer**

What is phenomenology? This may seem a strange question to ask in a journal dedicated to advancing phenomenological theory and investigations. In addressing this question I am reminded of Kuhn's (1970) assertion that science is both a human activity and evolutionary. By the same token phenomenology may be seen as representing a human activity, in its broadest sense, characterised by its stance towards gaining a greater understanding of human experience. While not addressing this question directly, the current issue of the IPJP provides some exemplars of potential fields of investigation, the application of phenomenological methods and a proposed methodology within a contemporary context. The papers attest to the evolutionary nature of phenomenology.

The 'Invited Paper' for this Edition of IPJP arises out of Peter Willis's long interest in poetics as a medium for not only adult education and learning, but as a research tool for inquiring into aspects of human experience which require an exploratory and expressive modality rather than the more limited explanatory and interrogative modality of empirical science. It reflects Husserl's concern in the Vienna Lecture for

locating a method suitable for the revivifying of philosophy and the sciences, such that the Human Sciences can truly reflect that which is 'human', and not simply mimic the droll mechanics of measurement while missing entirely the meaning of what humans experience. The 'risks' spoken of here are those which every scholar chances in putting pen to paper, and thoughts into words. This paper finds its way into this edition of the Journal through one of those phenomenological 'co-synchronicities'. Peter Willis was writing it as a general enquiry, at the same time as Les Murray--one of Australia's premiere poets--was visiting Edith Cowan University, Bunbury Campus. The outcome is a welcome resource for those inquiring into matters related to human experience, and a coup for anyone in the Arts and Philosophy alike. There is much here to ponder and apply here in our own research.

Les Todres's paper entitled "Humanising Forces: Phenomenology in Science; Psychotherapy in Technological Culture" draws upon an existential phenomenological tradition in examining the human implications of living in a world of proliferating technology. He challenges the perceived trend in contemporary culture to view

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humans as objects akin to other objects by examining the manner in which individuals recover their sense of human identity within the process of psychotherapy. In examining the human experience, both individually and collectively, he draws upon his research into the experience of psychotherapy. He explicates the tension between structure and freedom which shapes the therapeutic experience to enable the person “to learn” in what he terms “an emotionally meaningful way”. He then examines the quality and nature of therapeutic insight both in terms of a meaningful personal narrative and the emotional work of understanding patterns and linkages over time. In exploring these themes he demonstrates the implications of a phenomenological methodology to access human freedom, both in terms of its possibilities and variations, in a contemporary therapeutic context. What is not said is that his paper demonstrates the kinds of research possibilities which would not be available to researchers utilising more traditional quantitative or qualitative methodologies.

The paper on the phenomenology of labelling by Bruce Bradfield also draws upon existential phenomenological premises in its critical examination of psychiatric diagnosis. He prefaces his argument upon an explication of a phenomenological attitude and situating the self as transcendent with all the implications entailed by this position for understanding consciousness as a process involving human freedom. The paper is rich in its philosophical argument as the author contrasts the notion of objectivity with lived-experience. His argument in relation to psychiatric diagnosis is based upon a cogent

critique of mainstream practice. Relatedness as a disclosing mode-of-being (in contrast the psychiatric diagnosis) provides an additional perspective in exploring the multidimensional nature of human existence.

Utilising a phenomenological research method to investigate tourism in Western Australia, Gloria Ingram demonstrates the capacity of phenomenology to explore everyday human experience across a range a dimensions including the experience of country side. The study exemplifies Husserl’s notion of returning to the familiar but with a new attitude. In this instance the investigator explicates the experience of hosts and guests in farm tourism. She also demonstrates the value of phenomenology as an applied methodology.

The paper by Stuart Devenish entitled, “An Applied Method for Undertaking Phenomenological Explication” is in many respects a timely “nuts and bolts” exposition illustrated by his own research into the lived experience of conversion. He describes the process of phenomenological investigation as essentially a process of distillation during which “the subject area chosen by the researcher, continually brought into consciousness as instantiations, adumbrations, attestations and unveilings of underlying structures reveal themselves as eidetic ‘residuums’.” The methodology, drawn from his recently completed PhD, is well informed by the theory underpinning phenomenology.

I wish to return to the question, “What is phenomenology?” While this editorial has not

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answered the question, I believe that this edition goes some way towards demonstrating the potential and the parameters of phenomenology. The contributions demonstrate yet again that phenomenology is not simply a method of qualitative inquiry but go beyond traditional approaches to qualitative study. To again draw upon Kuhn, phenomenology represents a paradigmatic shift in understanding the relationship between the scholar and his or her world. I am reminded of the African notion of *ubuntu*, which refers to the humaneness of personal and collective experience. Within African tradition *ubuntu* is considered to be of paramount importance within any community. Phenomenology may be seen as one approach to elicit and explicate the common experience of humaneness which we share with one another, within our communities and societies as a whole. Each of the papers in the current edition, in their own way, explicate aspects of *ubuntu*.

As Stuart Devenish, the author of one of the papers in the current edition, is also the Secretary to the editors of the Journal, I would like to take the liberty of congratulating him on the

successful completion of his Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Finally this is your Journal. I would like to invite all readers to consider submitting papers to the IPJP as their first choice for disseminating new ideas relating to the objectives of the journal. I also wish to thank the authors of the current edition for their valuable contribution to the Journal.

#### **About the Author**

Professor Robert Schweitzer is the Associate Professor and Head of Counseling Studies at the School of Psychology and Counseling, Queensland University of Technology in Queensland, Australia.

Dr Schweitzer is the Editor-in-Chief of the IPJP. His doctoral studies, at Rhodes University, entailed completing a thesis which was a phenomenological study of dream interpretation among urban and rural Inguni people.

Dr Schweitzer has published widely on psycho-social aspects of the family, of adolescence, and of mental health. He is regularly consulted in the area of professional development and the supervision of psychologists.

His areas of research interest include process and outcome studies in Psychotherapy and Indigenous healing.

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