



Editorial

by **Christopher R. Stones**

Editor-in-Chief

The 1976 Winter Edition of *Philosophy Today* published a verbatim transcript of *Der Spiegel's* interview with Martin Heidegger which had taken place on September 23, 1966 but which he forbade to be made public until after his death as "it is neither pride nor stubbornness, but rather sheer care for my work, whose task has become with the years more and more simple and in the field of thinking that means more and more difficult."

In September 1966 Rudolph Augustein and Georg Foff conducted *Der Spiegel's* interview with Heidegger, the focus essentially being on 1933 (the year in which he became Rector of Freiburg University).¹ Throughout the interview Heidegger continually emphasized the profound connectedness of man and the world:

The world cannot be what it is or the way that it is through man, but neither can it

¹ The interview - which lay in *Der Spiegel's* confidential files for almost a decade - had focused on Heidegger's behaviour during the Third Reich about which he had been silent for more than thirty years: His 1933 rectorial address on the occasion of his inauguration as Rector of Freiburg University, "The self-determination of the German University", appeared to support Hitler's view that history required Germany and the German people to fulfil themselves through their own determination (which was the essence of National Socialism, and which led to the unfolding of the Nazi atrocities during the second World War). Heidegger had approached *Der Spiegel* saying that he was ready to address himself to these reproaches but that the interview should only be published after his death.

be without man. According to my view this is connected with the fact that what I name with the word Being, a word which is of long standing, traditional, multi-faceted and worn out, needs man for its revelation, preservation and formation.

The hallmark of all phenomenological approaches to understanding the world which we inhabit is precisely this recognition of the connectedness of everything. In this regard, the phenomenological perspective is one committed to understanding human phenomena in their context as they are lived. As Kvale (1996) asserts:

A *phenomenological* perspective includes a focus on the life world, an openness to the experiences of the subjects, and a primacy of precise descriptions. [In this respect, it aims at] understanding social phenomena from the actors' perspectives, describing the world as experienced by the subjects, and with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be. (pp. 38 & 52)

Qualitative methodology has emerged as part of a broad movement in the social sciences referred to as an "interpretative turn" (Rabianow and Sullivan, 1979) which emphasizes the contextual nature of research and is less concerned with universal law-like patterns of human behaviour than with making sense of human experience from within the context and the perspective of that human experience.

Describing the essence of phenomenology in the social sciences, Amedeo Giorgi, founding father of the phenomenological approach to empirical human science research, expressed the following sentiment:

Phenomenology is the study of the structure, and the variations of structure, of the consciousness to which any thing, event, or person appears. Phenomenology is interested in elucidating that which appears and the manner in which it appears. (1975, p. 83)

In the light of such descriptions of phenomenological approaches to inquiry, it is hoped that this first edition of 2006 indeed reflects this context-driven sentiment in its eight peer-reviewed papers.

The first paper by Theodore Petrus (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) explores engagement with the world of the supernatural through the exemplar of Anthropology. The paper raises important concerns around the limitations of scientific rationalism in attempts to study the so-called supernatural. In his paper “Engaging the World of the Supernatural: Anthropology, Phenomenology and the Limitations of Scientific Rationalism in the Study of the Supernatural” Petrus argues that scientific rationalism has acquired a privileged status as being one of the pillars of a “true science” but that this only seems to work reasonably well within the context of the natural sciences. When researchers begin, however, to work within the social sciences, particularly in the context of the anthropological study of the supernatural, it is no longer possible, he argues, to have a rigid application of rationalism as this would severely limit studies of human life that challenge the contemporary Western scientific rationalist view of reality.

In a somewhat related but nonetheless distinctly different thrust, Kathryn Gow (Queensland University of Technology, Australia) argues in her paper “The Holy Grail Experience or Heightened Awareness?” that moments of spiritual atonement are best accounted for by examining a broad range of hypnotic phenomena such as time distortion and orientation, fantasy proneness, absorption and the experiential state of dissociation. Gow argues that objective knowledge about sensory modalities and peripheral sensing are central in assisting one to understand the experience of heightened awareness which can be conceptualized from both spiritual and secular viewpoints. The paper refers to some definitive therapeutic benefits of heightened awareness and concludes that there must remain a balance between spiritual and mystical concepts on the one hand and secular on the other.

“Experiencing the Meaning of Breathing”, the third paper in this edition, reports on a series of experiential workshop outcomes of the author himself (Steve Edwards from Zululand University in South Africa) and those of several other participants. Edwards’ paper points to the vital link between breath and life which has, since the beginning of recorded history, provided the foundation for a host of religions, philosophies and practices. In penning this paper, Steve Edwards outlines several themes - incorporating Western and Eastern perspectives - ranging from consciousness, bodiliness and spirituality through to illness prevention and health promotion, all of which are intimately related to breathing patterns. His paper proceeds to describe how conscious control of breathing can result in emotional and experiential changes that lead towards a healing of the psyche and how these benefits can be experienced through the daily practise of specific breathing exercises. In drawing his paper to a conclusion, Edwards’ argues that the experiences emerging from breathing exercises fundamentally underline the importance of breath for life, consciousness and energy, and that to experience “the meaning of breathing is to experience more meaning in life in all its aspects and phases.”

Tracy Watson and Deon de Bruin in a paper entitled “Getting under the Skin: The Inscription of Dermatological Disease on the Self-Concept” examine several psychological factors that have long been associated with the onset, maintenance and exacerbation of many cutaneous disorders, arguing that psychological factors are largely overlooked in the field of dermatological treatment since skin problems tend not to be regarded as life threatening. Watson and de Bruin point out that although there is a plethora of research in the field of dermatology, most of this has been quantitative and, moreover, is related to the body covering, i.e., the skin, rather than the emotions associated with cutaneous pathology. The thrust of Watson and de Bruin’s paper is that it is not possible to fully understand the impact of body disfigurement in isolation from the patient’s experiential world. Given that healing takes many forms and exists at many levels, becoming aware of how individuals describe their non-acceptance of the embodied self in terms of their self concept may provide support for medical and mental health professionals to foster more positive and accepting body narratives in such patients.

Whilst Watson and de Bruin’s paper deals with patient experience related to body-surface pathology, Ingrid Richardson and Carly Harper, in a paper entitled “Imaging the Visceral Soma: A Corporeal

Feminist Interpretation”, argue against the concept that “medical visualising technology” is neutral or simply a transparent conduit to observe the “fact” of the body interior. Their paper alerts us to the understanding that modern high-tech computerized visualisations of the body interior are not simply transparent viewings but rather are interiorised views of the body as filtered through computer generated algorithms. Richardson and Harper’s paper is not solely a feminist critique of modern techno-science imaging mechanics but also is a call to the realisation that the body internal is not necessarily as we believe it to be universally. Rather, it is an interior image interpreted through a cultural and techno-science lens. While retaining its philosophical critique, the paper refers to magnetic resonance imaging in some detail and includes a series of magnetic resonance images of the body interior. Richardson and Harper conclude by emphasizing that scientific discourse is both intrinsic to, and inseparable from, the way in which we understand and live our bodies in contemporary Western culture.

The sixth paper in this edition of the *IPJP* is by Steven Smith (Simon Fraser University, British Columbia) and is entitled “Gesture, Landscape and Embrace: A Phenomenological Analysis of Elemental Motions.” This paper explores the “felt imperative” to have an embodied connection to the spaces we inhabit - “deeply, primarily, and elementally.” Using Merleau-Ponty’s theoretical framework, Smith reflects on the “flesh of the world” by examining a range of gestural reciprocities and connections, embraces and primordial attunements, motions of rhythm and reciprocity, all of which Smith argues emanate from the world in identification with it. Smith argues that “a phenomenology of elemental motions provides the ... reminder that to be at home in various landscapes means to know what it is to be embraced corporeally, sensually, within the human and especially more-than-human folds of the world.” Smith’s paper calls upon poetry, reminisces of childhood (including his own) and surfing (Smith himself having spent many years as a surfer). Smith’s paper ends with a series of questions - each begging an answer - that emanate from the first question “How might we become more at home in the world?”

Ryan Kemp (a Clinical Psychologist working in the United Kingdom) in his paper entitled “Notes toward a Phenomenological Reading of Lacan” argues that Jacques Lacan’s work is existentially richer than is often acknowledged, especially with regard to phenomenological psychotherapy. Kemp argues that reading psychoanalysis through the lens of existential phenomenology has the potential to rehabilitate this former body of work. Accordingly, Kemp’s paper

explores the early work, especially the developmental theory, of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in relation to psychopathology and treatment, which are explored within a phenomenological perspective. In particular, Kemp’s paper places an emphasis on psychotherapeutic experience arguing that Lacanian psychotherapy is essentially the “linguaging of the unconscious” in that it heals through speech and the presence of another. Kemp argues that the analysis is over, according to Lacan, when a full entry into the “symbolic” is attained and when the subject relates to the therapist, through the transference, about himself. It is this relationship of therapist to client and its understanding from a phenomenological perspective that is the call of Kemp’s paper.

The final paper in this edition of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* is one penned by four authors (Willem Odendaal, Charles Malcolm, Shazly Savahl, and Rose September) in which attitudinal differences between parents and their adolescent children regarding Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are explored from the perspective of the adolescent’s experience. The participants (23 in number) comprised a convenience sample of senior pupils selected from three secondary schools in the Cape Peninsula (South Africa), and the attitudinal information was elicited through series of focus group discussions. Thematic content analysis was applied to delineate the focus group material, with themes emerging around the difference between parents and adolescents regarding ICT and, in particular, the importance of ICT in adolescents’ lives. Odendaal and his colleagues stress that the outcome of their study has led them to be more optimistic about adolescent experience of the differences between them and their parents in this regard. The paper emphasises the need for parents to acknowledge that such technologies have become an important medium facilitating adolescent developmental needs and that social scientists have an important role to play in assisting parents and adolescents to optimise the benefits of these technologies.

In concluding this editorial I wish to thank members of the journal editorial team including the language and copy editor and our webmaster. In particular, the dedication and commitment to quality of the members of the journal Editorial Board continues to ensure that the *IPJP* maintains a high standard in its endeavour to always be at the forefront of knowledge development, while simultaneously aiming to reach an ever-widening audience in the Southern hemisphere and increasingly in the Northern as well.

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.

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