



Editorial

by **Dr Robert Schweitzer**
Editor-in-Chief

This first edition of a new electronic journal devoted to phenomenology raises two questions: (a) why phenomenology and (b) why the emphasis upon the Indo-Pacific region? The answer to the first question involves a further question, which is as relevant today as it was in 1934 when Edmund Husserl commenced writing his *The Crises of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. The question is: what constitutes the main categories of being human?

Professor Dreyer Kruger of Rhodes University in South Africa, was a mentor to myself and two of the current editors of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology (IPJP)*. In the late 1970s he wrote,

we live in a time in which man has become problematic to himself as never before ... to speak of modern man as being alienated, anomic, living in a Godless, meaningless universe, of being in despair and so on, is not new ... Man's dislodgement from a meaningful relation to the world was accurately prognosticated in the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth century the malaise has grown deeper ... (Kruger, 1988, p.1).

It is within this context that empiricism, founded upon reductionism, has failed to address the questions of human significance. In contrast to empiricism, phenomenology provides us with the opportunity to study human existence in all of its facets. Phenomenology challenges the dominance of rationality, technology and measurement as the prime approaches to our understanding of ourselves. This approach reinstates human experience of our world as foundational. Phenomenology accepts the changing

nature of what it means to be human, the changing nature of our experience of the world in which we live and the very nature of the experience of change and transformation as an experience worthy of study in itself.

We live in a scientific society but the ground of our being is necessarily human. While the genome project probably reflects the epitome of our success to date in reducing phenomena to their constituents, this approach does not inform our knowledge of human experience. Our experience is necessarily based upon our consciousness, and this is a key concept in phenomenology. Phenomenology addresses questions which arise from our desire to better understand phenomena derived from our experience.

The journal includes the words “*Indo-Pacific*” in its title as it is intended to provide scholars in the Southern Hemisphere with an avenue with which we might express our scholarship and serve as a networking opportunity to undertake and disseminate phenomenological research. While we are aware that similar avenues exist in Europe and North America, the journal is, we believe, the first of its kind in our region for Indian, Australian, Asian, New Zealand, African and Pacific Island scholars to discuss in a phenomenological manner a broad range of issues related to the question of being human. Contributions from Northern Hemisphere scholars are equally welcome and we invite you to join us in our exploration of these essential questions. It is our hope that the *IPJP* will reflect not only the development of phenomenology but also the dynamic cultures of our region, as well as address the needs of scholars wishing “to return to the foundations of human experience” and make a contribution to the intellectual culture of the region.

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This current issue of the journal provides an excellent framework on which to build. Professor Lester Embree, from the Department of Philosophy, Florida Atlantic University, USA, has contributed a paper entitled "The Tradition of Phenomenology, a 5th Period". Professor Embree is a leader of the team that edited the encyclopaedia on phenomenology. As such, he is thus eminently qualified to view phenomenology in all its breadth and depth as he brings together his knowledge of the discipline including philosophical phenomenology and national traditions in relation to philosophical phenomenology.

Embree's overview of phenomenology, in all its complexities, provides a valuable insight into the roots of the various traditions and the outcomes of each of these traditions in terms of contemporary practice. From my own perspective I was made aware of the immense contribution of phenomenology in areas outside my limited discipline of psychology.

Embree puts forward the view that there have been particular stages in the development of philosophical phenomenology. These, he convincingly argues, start with realistic phenomenology that predominated immediately before and after World War I, followed by constitutive phenomenology, then existential phenomenology, with hermeneutical phenomenology following suite. He speculates about a new stage in the history of phenomenology, which he refers to as the fifth stage, and which will be characterized as a unitary tradition defined by a shared approach and procedure.

I share Embree's optimism in relation to the future of phenomenology which is based on the simple construct that the more we go towards an environment characterized by technology and digitization, the greater the need will be to focus on the human dimension of existence. In Embree's terms, the more we look at individualism the greater our need to look at qualitativism. This is a theme he develops in his paper in relation to the need for a reflective descriptive philosophy of culture and which he speculates may be called cultural phenomenology.

Embree's paper is followed by Dr Paul MacDonald's paper on "Husserl's Pre-emptive Response to Existential Critique". Paul MacDonald is Head of the Department of Philosophy at Murdoch University in Western Australia.

He brings Husserl to life, in a sense, by examining the changes and revisions in Husserl's arguments as well as his relationship with Heidegger and others. He describes Husserl (in Husserl's own words) as "*an endless beginner*." He refers to Husserl's imagery of

phenomenology "*as a series of paths, a journey, or a voyage*". MacDonald emphasizes the complexities of phenomenology by examining certain charges against Husserl including his emphasis on theory at the expense of practise. He provides an in-depth analysis of some of Husserl's basic concepts which he contrasts with Heidegger's, including the use of the reduction and categorical intuition in phenomenology. MacDonald's paper provides an example of the complex, and sometimes unresolved, philosophical issues which continue to underlie phenomenology.

In a unique contribution, Fred C. Rabbetts and Professor Steve Edwards, from the University of Zululand (South Africa), have provided a fine example of the application of the phenomenological attitude and method to research on AIDS. Their paper is a welcome contribution to the first edition of the journal for several reasons. First, the paper epitomises the value of phenomenology in addressing a distressing though unique phenomenon confronting a significant section of the population in a number of areas in the world today, that is AIDS. Second, the paper outlines the usefulness of the methodology in addressing the issues of concern. Finally, we are pleased to include a paper from our region of the world.

Carl Holroyd, a post-graduate student from Edith Cowan University, has contributed a study of the phenomenon of "Being-in-Community". In some ways it is almost as if he had pre-empted Lester Embree's notion of cultural phenomenology by examining the experience of community of individuals. His explication of community reflects the richness to be derived from phenomenological research as he addresses such issues as boundaries, the notion of self and reflective self, the experience of God, spirit and wisdom, and the role of voice in relation to experience. He extends his study to look at community as connective and healing, and he goes one step further in articulating community as transcendent space.

Readers with a background in phenomenology will be familiar with the term, to "*return to the things themselves*". Furthermore, phenomenology exhorts us to return to the familiar with a view to seeing what is familiar with new eyes. Dr Peter Willis, from the University of South Australia, does exactly this in his paper "The Things Themselves in Phenomenology". He provides a re-analysis of Husserl's notion of things themselves and provides an introduction to the role of language in phenomenology. His thinking is noticeably influenced by several writers including Michael Crotty, an Australian phenomenologist who died in 1998. The degree to which he integrates various ideas in this contribution provides an

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excellent introduction to a number of concepts which are often taken for granted by phenomenologists and provides a focus and deeper understanding of the theme “*things themselves*” which underpins this paper.

Overall, the first edition of the journal provides a mix of conceptual, theoretical and applied papers which, taken together, address the broad concerns of phenomenology which seek to gain a better understanding of human experience in all its facets and permutations. I certainly felt enriched having had the opportunity of previewing these contributions.

I feel privileged to be Editor-in-Chief of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*. I need to pay tribute, however, to the people who have been the driving force behind the establishment of the *IPJP*: Dr Trish Sherwood, Stuart Devenish and Carl Holroyd who are part of the Phenomenology

Research Group based at the South West Campus, Edith Cowan University, Bunbury in Western Australia. Trish, Stuart and Carl not only exercised their initiative to “make it happen” but with the support of Dr Ken Robinson have continued to provide the energy and expertise to develop this new initiative in the Indo-Pacific region.

We would welcome your feedback, ideas and contributions to the debates which underlie both shared and unique cultures in our region and beyond. We recognize that our readers and potential contributors will determine the success of the *IPJP*. We invite you to share in the development of the journal as we jointly explore those issues which enhance our knowledge of an infinite field: the understanding of human existence.

About the Author

Professor Robert Schweitzer is an 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.

References

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