



## Editorial

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

During the compilation of this issue of the journal it was observed by the editorial team that the recent submissions - all independently conceived and originating from different corners of the world - engaged remarkably similar themes in their focus on issues around psychiatry and clinical psychology, the use of poetry as a research tool, and the philosophical underpinnings of the phenomenological approach.

This seemingly uncanny confluence of related themes brought to mind the work of Jan Hendrik van den Berg and the method of phenomenology he termed *metabletics*.

The phenomenological movement had its beginnings in Edmund Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* (*Logical Investigations*, 1900) when he conceived of transcendental or pure phenomenology as a way of conducting empirical research. Implied by his maxim "to the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*) was fidelity to the presence of things as they appear. Yet, as van den Berg argued in his *Different Existence* (1972), the way in which things appear is intimately related to the way in which we are. *Metabletic* theory thus proceeds from a sense of the essential oneness of the person with his or her world, the openness of each to change in the other, and the susceptibility of both to the spirit of the time, the *zeitgeist*. As such, the study of *metabletics* acknowledges the situatedness of human existence, of individual difference, in time and space, and the interrelatedness of intra-personal change with a changing world: the interrelatedness, thus, of human existence with the moment of history, as characterised not by a continuous flow over time but by discontinuity. "History, to Van den Berg, is not that which continually flows out of something, but that which discontinuously happens" (Kruger, 1979, p. 187). In brief, *metabletics* (*metabletica*) - a term coined by van den Berg (1956) from the Greek

*metaballein* meaning "to change" - is the study of change, focussing on the synchronic nature of seemingly separate changes, often in several spheres. In particular, *metabletics* pays attention to the similarities of changes occurring in the same period of time. Robert Romanyshyn (2001) described the *metabletic* moment as the "mutual mirroring of psychological experience and material event" (p. 14). *Metabletics* gives a voice to what is "a particular moment" by fitting together incidents, innovations, and changes in culture and human relationships that do not occur randomly but seem to occur simultaneously - as if "invited by reality". It is in this sense of an invitation issued by reality that I would like to conceptualize the collection of papers comprising the current edition of the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*.

"Examining the Lived World: The Place of Phenomenology in Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology" is the title of the initial paper in this edition. Proceeding from the argument that, over the past century, phenomenology has had a significant influence on a wide range of disciplines, including the field of psychiatry, and has enriched the way in which we can come to know the experiences of the other, Bruce Bradfield's paper explores the validity of phenomenology in the psychiatric setting and, in particular, its potential as a method of engagement in the context of an assessment aimed at psychiatric or psychological intervention. After explicating notions of Husserlian and Heideggerian philosophy in relation to phenomenological conceptions of intersubjectivity, Bradfield endeavours to describe a phenomenology that can effectively enhance psychiatric practice. The paper concludes by suggesting that phenomenology's attendance to the "things themselves" has the potential to give a descriptive density to clinical assessment, thus enabling it to become more truly

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reflective of lived experience and accordingly to render a clinically thorough description of a particular individual, as situated uniquely within his or her own lived world.

The second paper, by Ian Owen, strives to show how intentionality informs psychotherapeutic theory and practice. Entitled “Understanding the Ubiquity of the Intentionality of Consciousness in Commonsense and Psychotherapy”, Owen’s paper explores the role of intentionality in consciousness and the treatment of psychopathology within a cognitive behavioural paradigm. The thrust of Owen’s argument is that the raw data of classical Husserlian phenomenology is lived experience, and that the concept of intentionality can be considered a gateway to understanding psychological existence. Consequently, a phenomenological approach to psychotherapy serves to enhance the therapeutic encounter.

Richard Furman’s paper, “Poetry and Narrative as Qualitative Data: Explorations into Existential Theory”, explores existential principles through narrative reflections and poetry, and demonstrates the value of these as tools for understanding people’s lived experiences of often quite complex existential situations and processes. He contends that the existential therapist’s development as a clinician is predicated on the ability to have faced dread, meaninglessness and other existential dilemmas; as such, it is thus essential that therapists find ways to face these issues for themselves. Furman argues that the writing of poetry and an engagement with narrative reflections is one way of developing awareness about these issues.

Remaining with metaphoric and poetic ways of thinking, but moving away from formal therapeutic paradigms, the fourth paper in the current edition, entitled “Managing Above the Graft: How Management Needs its Fertile Wounds from which Imagination Can Grow”, deals with the evaluation of a leadership development programme and the use of metaphor to trigger imaginative engagement with problematic issues confronting an organization. David Russell points to the “transformative power of the poetic and imaginative stance”, and the “healing initiative” engendered when the wounds of failed expectations are perceived as opportunities to turn rupture to growth by grafting “art upon nature”. Russell asserts that, while metaphors and heightened images have always found a place in management studies due to the recognized need for motivational states that encourage desired action, what makes this study unique is that the use of failure facilitated the achievement of positive outcomes. However, as Russell notes, it is not failure per se that makes the

difference, but rather the particular language of image and emotion.

The fifth paper in the current issue, “Merleau-Ponty on Human Motility and Libet’s Paradox” by Brian Mooney and Damien Norris, explores the connections between brain wave activity (neural adequacy) and conscious sensory experience, and the implication, in light of Merleau-Ponty’s notions of “intentionality” and the “pre-reflective life of human motility” (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945/1962), that the body, and not only the mind, is a thinking thing. Indeed, their paper argues, we may be coming to a point where neuroscience can provide an alternative language to articulate Merleau-Ponty’s ontological speculations.

Archana Barua’s paper on “Husserl, Heidegger, and the Transcendental Dimension of Phenomenology” explores the transcendental turn in Husserl’s philosophical phenomenology in relation to the hermeneutical turn taken by Heidegger with his positing of the factual subject and Ricoeur’s selective assimilation of Husserl’s methodology with his own brand of hermeneutic phenomenology. Asking whether, despite their differences, the positions of Husserl and Heidegger have anything in common, Barua concludes that, along with their shared commitment to a phenomenological methodology and their shared insistence on the primacy of experience, it is possible to understand the transcendental way of doing philosophy and the so-called historicized way of philosophising as two distinct ways to reach one common goal, the transcendental dimension of meaning.

The penultimate paper, written by anthropologists Theodore Petrus and David Bogopa, explores traditional African beliefs and practices related to notions of witchcraft and traditional healing. Their paper, “Natural and Supernatural: Intersections between the Spiritual and Natural Worlds in African Witchcraft and Healing with Reference to Southern Africa”, shows how, despite modernization, the complex interaction between the natural world and the supernatural has not been significantly reduced. They argue that a distinct relationship exists between traditional healing methods and witchcraft beliefs, such that it is difficult to understand the dynamics of African witchcraft without referring to traditional healing methods, and vice versa. Using a Merleau-Pontian framework, Petrus and Bogopa outline various ways in which African witchcraft beliefs and practices interact within a cultural domain. Their paper concludes with the injunction that we should attempt to understand African communities’ lived experiences of the interaction between the natural and the supernatural - and, indeed, their worldview and

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way of being in the world - in a way that will be "comprehensible to the actors themselves".

The present edition concludes with a review by Rex van Vuuren of Ian Rory Owen's recently published book, *Psychotherapy and Phenomenology: On Freud, Husserl and Heidegger*, which deals with the complexities of the events, experiences and meanings which arise between a psychotherapist and a client. Owen's work responds to a perceived gap in the field of psychotherapy: the lack of theoretical justification and coherence regarding lived experience and the skills necessary for practising psychotherapy.

Arguing his preference for a hermeneutic phenomenology, Owen focuses on three historically profoundly influential individuals - Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger - in his quest for an answer to the question as to what it is to authentically meet a person.

It is hoped that readers will find the papers in this edition interesting as well as provocative. Something significant will have been achieved if each reader is moved - even if only to wonder and ponder - by at least some of material now being released.

### About the Author



Professor Christopher Stones has enjoyed a lengthy academic and research career, predominantly based at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, 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 on-line 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. Additionally, he is regularly called on to serve as an "expert witness" in medico-legal (civil and criminal) court proceedings.

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