

# BOOK REVIEWS

What do you do in your spare time? What do you do when you are not working? How many different sources of meaning do you have in your life? It is the mark of a rounded person that they are able to do something different that engages them not for its economic value but simply because of its intrinsic value and for the embodied experience it brings.

There is a now famous story related by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Prime of Life* about when Jean-Paul Sartre encountered phenomenology. He had met up with his friend Raymond Aron who had just returned from studying Husserl in Berlin. The three of them were in a bar in Montparnasse drinking apricot cocktails and Aron said, '*You see my dear fellow, if you are a phenomenologist you can talk about this cocktail and make philosophy out of it*'. Sartre turned pale with emotion at this. *Here was just the thing he had been longing to achieve for years – to describe objects just as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process*'. Sartre went out immediately and bought Levinas' book on Husserl, was transfixed by what he found and arranged to go to Berlin to study with Husserl. And the rest is history.

We can use phenomenology to study things that are easy to dismiss as everyday and ordinary. This is the Natural Attitude as Husserl put it, but when we get past it we discover the extraordinary in the ordinary, and we also discover why they were so meaningful. The first four books reviewed this issue are about such things, hobbies, pastimes, what we do in our spare time. When we look at these things we discover why spare time, is anything but 'spare'. Sexuality in all its manifestations is multifaceted and one of these is its recreational nature, or rather its re-creational nature. The next two books are about this. Existential therapy is context sensitive and it is only a short step to the next book on the possibilities of doing therapy outside rather than inside. Mindfulness, we are reminded, is a buzz word and many claims are made for it, so many in fact that they cannot all be true. The next book takes a step back and looks at its origins in philosophy and particularly in Buddhism. Religion as a topic can be curiously divisive in many ways and has been concerned with the definition of 'good'. Which is probably where the disputes start. The connection with aesthetics is also well established and the next book addresses this issue. We finish this issues' reviews with two more connected books. One on a point which in an increasingly technologised world still finds it hard to get heard, and the last on a timely review of what has happened to RD Laing's thought since his first book, *The Divided Self*.

**Martin Adams**