

## A personal note

Like Salley Vickers, I was educated as a Jungian and I trained as a Jungian analyst with Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz and Dr. Dieter Baumann in Zürich. For some thirty five years I have been in practice with those in the healing and spiritual vocations, doctors, clergy and psychotherapists. I always have the *Fragments* by Heracleitus by my bed and that night, as I read '*Where Three Roads Meet*' I was struck by a collection of those effects called synchronicity and there were two in particular that struck me. Each of these fragments – and only these - were quoted before the story even began. I thought about them for a bit, then continued '*Where Three Roads Meet*'. One of the threads, one of the three roads in the story, is Freud's conduct as he lives towards his death and the help he gets as he does so.

I too am dying and the existential resonances from the book, concern about my own conduct on the way to death and the people who help me live and die (Heracleitus is one!) are panoramically reflected by Salley Vickers and her characters.

## Nicholas Spicer

*Editors note. Nicholas Spicer died 6 weeks after writing this review.*

## Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method

Darren Langdridge. (2007). Pearson Education. £28.99.

When I was invited to review this book, I agreed happily and without a second thought. After all, I was already in possession of not one but two inspection copies of the book, I had read parts of the book and I had been recommending it to students enthusiastically. What could be easier than to write a brief review of this text? Or so I thought. When I started to re-read the book with a view to review it for *Existential Analysis*, I was surprised to find that my experience of the book had changed. All of a sudden, I noticed what appeared to be unwarranted simplifications and generalisations, and I began to think of possible qualifications and limitations to claims and arguments presented in the text. What was going on? I realised that I was now reading the book with the eye of a critic whereas before I had been approaching it as a teaching and learning tool for myself and my students. In other words, and as a phenomenological perspective would lead us to expect, intentionality made all the difference! After all, it is not really possible to review the 'book' itself (as object); instead, the 'review' arises from, and tells us about, the relationship between the reviewer and the book.

It is with these reflections in mind that I decided to approach Langdridge's text in my role as a psychology lecturer and research

supervisor, and to review the book in its capacity as a research methods textbook for psychology students and researchers. As such, it is a most welcome and timely addition to the qualitative research methods literature. Phenomenological research methods have not received much attention within qualitative psychology in the UK until quite recently and when phenomenology did begin to be recognised as a viable and appropriate method for psychological research, it was via the medium of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which has achieved what could be described as hegemonic status. In fact, most of the postgraduate students I come into contact with are not aware that there is phenomenology beyond IPA! It is within this context, that Langdridge's text constitutes a (long-overdue) clear, accessible and engaging introduction to phenomenological psychology. The book's remit is ambitious in that it aims to provide readers with a basic introduction to phenomenological ideas in philosophy as well as to identify and illustrate a range of different ways in which phenomenology may be used in order to conduct psychological research. Langdridge's introduction to phenomenology as philosophy includes a chapter on '*Fundamentals of Phenomenology*' dealing with key concepts from Husserl's phenomenology, a chapter on '*Existentialism and Phenomenology*' which introduces Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty. A third chapter on '*The Hermeneutic Turn*', focusing on Gadamer and Ricoeur, completes Langdridge's introduction to the philosophical ideas underpinning phenomenological research. Clearly, it is impossible to do justice to the range and complexity of the body of thought addressed here within three short chapters. All that can be achieved is to provide the reader with a basic awareness of the concerns which inform phenomenological thought and some of the ways in which these concerns have evolved and diversified. In my view, Langdridge does achieve this goal. He also manages to communicate his own engagement and curiosity in such a way as to stimulate the reader. Each chapter offers suggestions for further reading at the end which allow those who want to enter more deeply into the subject matter to do this under their own steam. The next chapter, somewhat puzzlingly entitled '*Staking out the Territory*', is really about research design including methods of data collection, the role of reflexivity, ethics, how to ensure quality and some guidelines for writing up phenomenological research. I was impressed by this chapter's wide coverage and the amount of detailed guidance provided. Issues around research design and data collection in qualitative research are often dealt with rather perfunctorily, making them appear rather dry and less interesting than the analysis stage. Langdridge, however, succeeds in demonstrating how considerations of issues such as the role of the body in phenomenological interviewing (both face-to-face and online) lead us right back to the philosophical concerns introduced in earlier chapters and how, therefore, practical and philosophical considerations cannot be separated in

phenomenological research. The next three chapters describe what Langdridge identifies as '*different approaches to phenomenological psychology commonly in use today*' (p.54). He classifies these into three main approaches including 1) descriptive phenomenology, 2) interpretative phenomenological analysis, hermeneutic phenomenology and template analysis, and 3) critical narrative analysis. Langdridge argues that this classification resonates with the three earlier philosophical chapters (in fact, he goes so far as to say that '*the different schools of phenomenological psychology map on to the different philosophical schools outlined in the first three chapters*', p. 54) with the descriptive version being the most classically Husserlian, and the other two moving progressively towards a hermeneutic engagement with research texts. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that alternative classifications could and have been (eg. Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008) proposed and that no classification is without its limitations, it seems to me that Langdridge makes a case for his own choice and that his use of the descriptive-interpretative continuum is helpful. It also reflects recent and current debates within qualitative psychology around the role of interpretation in qualitative research in general (eg. Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008). I was a little surprised to find that Langdridge's own critical narrative analysis (CNA) constituted the third main approach as it is not (yet?) widely used in phenomenological psychology research. However, there is nothing wrong in using a textbook as a vehicle to introduce and promote new ideas, including one's own, and I for one was persuaded that Langdridge's CNA offers an interesting and productive way of reading a text. I particularly liked the way in which CNA integrates insights and perspectives from narrative analysis, discourse analysis and phenomenology in order to produce a critical reading. I also liked CNA's ethical take on interpretation. The final chapter- '*Key Issues, Debates and Rebuttals*'- picks up on and develops a number of theoretical concerns raised in earlier parts of the book. These include the respective roles of description and interpretation in phenomenological research, and the implications of the postmodern turn to language for phenomenology. This section will be more of a challenge to students and to those new to the subject matter. However, I felt that, having made the effort to introduce complex ideas clearly and accessibly and having succeeded at this, Langdridge is right to dedicate the final chapter to his own reflections around recent challenges to phenomenological thought and to identify future directions for phenomenological research.

Finally, I thought that the inclusion of photographs of the philosophers referred to in chapters 2-4 was a nice touch and I very much appreciated the helpful advice regarding the pronunciation of Duquesne (as in Duquesne University) as 'Du-kane' (p. 55)- I had always wondered....

**References**

- Giorgi, A.P. and Giorgi, B. (2008). Phenomenological Psychology. In C. Willig and W. Stainton-Rogers (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Willig, C. and Stainton-Rogers. (2008). Introduction. In C. Willig and W. Stainton-Rogers (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage.

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