

Editorial

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In higher education, many academic pursuits involve a variety of writing and reading activities. Much of academic life involves linguistic reflection and textual production, such as writing and reading of texts, our own and others, coauthoring texts, and supervising others' textual activity.

But what do we actually do when we involve ourselves in writing and reading? How does the text come into being under our eyes and hand, and how do we support the birth of other persons' texts? Derrida (1995) reminds us of the interpersonal quality of language and of our words when he says: [...] "it is always necessary to be more than one in order to speak, several voices are necessary for that" (p. 35). Saying something, talking, is a shared act – we talk to somebody about something – we direct our attention to this *something* that we have in common, and the dialogue thus engaged in is directed to the future. What is said exposes the author as would a testimony or an authorization, Derrida notes. That which is said, whether verbal or written, somehow involves an authorization or endorsement of what is said. This remarkable unification of what is said and the authorization implied in it is what Heidegger brings to attention when he claims that language speaks (Heidegger 1971). Language itself speaks. Speaking means letting something emerge, letting something show itself by naming some thing as something. To name something is to frame and delimit it. I give this something a definite meaning through its name. In her collection of essays from 1990, Ursula Le Guin describes a fictive event from the Garden of Eden where Eve returns all of the names given to creation, including her own name, back to Adam and to God. For Eve, the relation to the animals changes dramatically when they are once again nameless. Their names no longer define them, and the moment that the barrier of definiteness and certainty is removed, their manifold nature explodes and returns to the realm of being rather than of human knowing. The ontological shift leaves Eve confused. But by removing all of these names, Eve also opens up new and uncertain possibilities. She no longer knows what is what and what belongs to whom, but at the same time, in a peculiar way, a kind of nearness is established in all of this uncertainty and opacity. When language no longer includes names and concepts to separate and define, the need to slow down and dwell in the experience of the other takes their place. Eve's newly indecisive and undefined encounter with the animals leaves her in a fundamental dilemma:

In fact I had only just then realized how hard it would have been to explain myself. I could not chatter away as I used to do, taking it all for granted. My words now must be as slow, as new, as single, as tentative as the steps I took going down the path away from the house, between the dark-branched, tall dancers motionless against the winter shining. (p. 236)

Eve can no longer speak with certainty or as if the world was known and understood. Instead she has to meet each animal and each situation with hesitation and openness because she no longer knows who the animals are or what the situation implies. Her steps must be slow and her words searching in order to approach something that can no longer be taken for granted.

Heidegger (1971) reflects on how language is closest to humankind and how language faces us everywhere, and says:

We are always speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, and even when we are not particularly listening or speaking but are attending to some work or taking a rest. We are continually speaking in one way or another. (p.187)

What does it mean that we always speak in some way or another? What consequences does this have for our writing of texts, like the texts of this journal? Heidegger brings us further by stating: “To discuss language, to place it, means to bring to its place of being not so much language as ourselves: our own gathering into the appropriation” (p.188). Are we not now in a hermeneutics in which the experience of language and the world is one, in which we always already interpret our experiences, even if the interpretations are not intended and conscious? Human understanding is interpretation. We cannot but understand, because understanding is intertwined with the structures of life, and is, as Gadamer says “...the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate” (1970, p.87). Our direct, sensational, bodily and linguistic contact with the world is always interpreted, and we engage in the centripetal dynamics of interpretation by alternating between parts and whole in what Gadamer calls the hermeneutic circle. Through his contemplation on language and our relation to it, Heidegger however brings to our attention still another question. After having reminded us that we encounter ourselves first of all in language, Heidegger claims that in order to reflect on language we must approach the language of the language. We need to listen to how language, not ourselves, speaks. He would rather that “we leave the speaking to language” (Heidegger 1971, p.189).

The texts of *Phenomenology & Practice* speak of novel, interesting and outstanding themes, and of course do so in an exemplary phenomenological textual form. The language of these texts speaks words that are common to the professional and experiential world of scholars as well as to practitioners, but at the same time the language of these texts itself speaks. The texts consist of words arranged in carefully-crafted, written contexts, and they ask important questions and seek significant insights. The language speaks in anecdotes, stories, examples and questions that provide opportunity for experience rather than explanation, for listening rather than verification. The language of the texts is intended to give to the reader a deeper and more thoughtful, perceptible and immediate understanding of what it expresses. The texts speak. The texts speak in the pauses that separate their words, in the intervals and in the spaces between. The texts may in a sense spring from the intention of the authors, but at the same time the language of their language speaks differently to every reader.

The current issue of *Phenomenology & Practice* begins with a dive into the vital but often silent language of the pedagogical recognition. According to the author, Raquel Ayala Carabajo, pedagogical recognition rests on pedagogical authority, and is one of the most frequent and essential ingredients of pedagogical practice. Leading us through lived recognition in ordinary pedagogical moments of relational practice in schools, Ayala discloses the ontological nature of this type of recognition. The often tacit language of incarnate pedagogical recognition, reveals to the vulnerable child or youngster that “I know who you are” rather than merely “I appreciate what you have done”. “*Being* recognition” in this sense does not require exceptional conditions in the classroom, because its simple and authentic language speaks to the child through all kinds of situations.

The after-school programme is also an arena for approval and recognition, and speaks of the meaning of an inclusive and attentive pedagogical practice. In the second article, Knut Londal lets us see how children’s joyful play in the school yard speaks of daring deeds and

careful adaption to place, body and playground equipment. The way the children move and how they interact is incited by recognition from adults as well as from their playmates. The author indicates that children's movements and responses, which they often initiate and thus authorize, intertwine physical and verbal action and interaction. The after-school programme is therefore an important site of play and interaction by and for children, outside the adult-controlled institution of school.

Patrick Howard investigates into poetry and the phenomenology of reader response in the classroom. His paper shows how phenomenology can call forth the intricate and embodied nature of the reader-text relationship in a way that speaks to the child in terms of felt, rather than just comprehended sense. The child's response to a poem is not actually about the poem, but rather reflects a lived-through experience that the poem may evoke in the child. The poem is generative and in the response it generates for a young reader, it may open up spaces and structures of memories, sensations and reflections. If we listen to this article's poetic, responsive and almost lingering words, the language itself reverberates with its lyrical theme.

The Scarecrow of the Wizard of Oz is the leading character in Robert Garfield McInerney's paper on learning experiences and cognition. Lacking a brain, the scarecrow still solves nearly all problems encountered in the journey to Oz. From this credible fulcrum the author argues that pre-reflective, situated learning and embodied cognition are ignored and devalued in our educational system. In the story, however, the scarecrow earns a doctorate in "thinkology" rather than being marginalized as incompetent. In agreement with curriculum specialists, McInerney affirms the significance of students' unique learning trajectories including pre-cognitive and bodily situated learning as a counterbalance to Cartesian rationality.

Quite another perspective on human experience is in the focus of the fifth paper. Paul Sopcak leads us through the processes of mourning and expression that are part of writing a eulogy, and illustrates the intense relationship between alienation and meaning, self and other in the face of life and death. The experience of writing a eulogy is in a certain sense a final evaluation of the loved one, which ironically also renders to us the experience of death of words, and can surrender us to the sacred solitude of complete silence.

Turning from the experience of death we are invited into a study of the meaning of life, nature and ethics. Dylan van der Schyff introduces us to an exploration of the relationship between Aristotle, deep ecology and phenomenology. The paper strikes directly into the huge environmental challenges of today's techno-scientific world and the many ethical dilemmas we face. Direct human experience of "the flourishing life," intimated in both Aristotle and phenomenological inquiry, can provide some help. It provides a way of exploring experientially the moral meaning of nature as it is articulated in the practice and theory of deep ecology. Van der Schyff addresses ontological questions crucial of the 21st century, and does so by going to the roots of ecological phenomenology.

The last paper in this fourth issue of *Phenomenology & Practice* is Tor-Johan Ekeland's review essay of Robert D. Stolorow's book *Trauma and Human Existence* from 2008. Ekeland regards this tiny book as having been created out of a sense of epistemological responsibility, as it aims directly at the heart of what can be called the "epistemological torment" of western psychiatry. The book, according to Ekeland is a critical response to erroneous conceptions in western thinking as well as to our ecological ignorance and systematic neglect of our human interdependency.

This first editorial from my hand ends with a warm thank you to the scholars that have authored the seven papers of the current edition, to our outstanding peer reviewers, and to the editorial team and our proofreaders, Conrad G. Scott and Merilee Hamelock. I cannot think of more rewarding work than to assist scholarly publishing of this kind. And now, let us leave the speaking to the language!

References

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