

## *Editorial*

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I had a conversation with Alphonso Lingis the day before yesterday in London. I asked him what contemporary phenomenologists of practice should do in order to “do phenomenology” and not something else that might be easier. He was silent for a long time. Then he said that he wondered if phenomenologists today should not dare more. His reply addressed me intensely for it is phenomenological in the crux of its matter. However, his response should not have surprised me, as a contemporary phenomenologist. Yet it did so. Do I, Tone Saevi, dare to be a phenomenologist? Do I attend to my curiosity and intuition and give them priority in my life and research? Do I speak the truth about what I see in the world? Do I dare to see what needs to be seen? Do I stand up in my life and writing against injustice, suppression, for the dignity of every living thing? I truly do not. I see more than I dare to take in and to do something about. I know I cannot take on responsibility for all. Nevertheless, I can go outside of my comfort zone, see and write about issues that touch and provoke me. How would it be if I let my sensitivity address me more? Gadamer (1975) urges us to ask real questions, genuine questions, questions that make a difference. Although he was accused of being a traditionalist, which I indeed believe he was not, Gadamer here hits a sore point for me. Real questions of justice, care, difference and action are “Other-directed” and lead away from the plans and strategies of my own professional life. In his little posthumous book from 2001 *Fearless Speech*, Foucault reintroduces Euripides notion of ‘speaking the truth’, *parrhesia*. It might be dangerous to speak against “what the majority believes” (p. 15). *Parrhesia* is courageous and differs from flattery in that it takes a risk, a moral and ontological risk, and is prepared to deal with the consequences. If I were to speak the truth in the meaning of the word *parrhesia*, this activity may lead me outside of the realm of the university and away from the safe harbour of my profession.

Phenomenology and phenomenologists, like other research and researchers today, are subject to the market regime, the economically oriented world and to the demand of pervasive questions of the benefits and efficiencies that influence everything that is worth doing and thinking. Humanistic faculties are shrinking and humanist researchers are considered of little use to a privatized competitive society. I wonder if there is a connection between professional courage and the courage of which Lingis (2004) speaks – which he also links closely to trust? We are in this world, and cannot be elsewhere as there is nowhere else to be. This is a fundamental and important truth. The essential questions then seem to be: Are we as phenomenologists in the world differently and should we somehow offer resistance and put ourselves at risk, trustfully and courageously? Or do we represent more or less mainstream attitudes, values and practices? Phenomenology *per se* is a deconstructive practice and worldview, as our task is to question the taken for granted, to push borders, and to practice intense self-critique. As phenomenologists we are supposed to provoke, confuse, intrude, and disorganize the *status quo* of the unified, predetermined and competitively oriented hegemonic world-view. As methodological phenomenologists at home with philosophy and philology we come from and have access to a variety of professions and practices –institutions, cultures, societies and policies – and to a certain degree we also inspire, guide, form and encourage them. Where and how do the professions and practices we affect really move or change under our influence?

In research, we try to connect questions (and more problematically, answers or results) at a rational level to make them relevant to a wider professional area. But what if things do not fit – if phenomena and phenomenological questions somehow do not make sense to us – but rather stand apart, disengage and break up what we try to make sense of and connect rationally? Foucault (2001) makes a distinction between the Greek terms *aletheia* and *doxa* as truth and opinion (p. 87). The nature of *aletheia* is to disclose that which is concurrently outside of human control and predetermination. *Doxa* on the other hand, is foreseeable and known to us. The question is if phenomenology attempts to address the experiential qualities of *aletheia* or goes for the easier task: to follow the mainstream of *doxa*.

What if we should take seriously the point of phenomenology to see the world differently; on the basis of the world's premises rather than ours? What if the phenomenological rationality actually is to be addressed by that which *is* rather than by what we assume will support our career? How can we respond to Lingis' question about phenomenologists "daring more"? To let oneself be addressed by the world and its phenomena allows for the bewildering, the chaotic and uninvited to enter our lives, and challenges us to see and write differently. If phenomenology explores the world's phenomena and likewise constantly explores itself as a methodology and interpretation, there is a chance that the results will be indefinite, tentative and paradoxical. What if this were the authoritative experiential request to phenomenologists? In Caputo's Villanova Roundtable Conversation with Derrida (Caputo, 1997), deconstruction is characterized allegorically through the figure of a nutshell: "Whenever deconstruction finds a nutshell – a secure axiom or a pithy maxim – the very idea is to crack it open and disturb this tranquility. [...] One might even say that cracking nutshells is what deconstruction *is*. In a nutshell" (p. 32). I believe that deconstruction is not something that one could apply to phenomenology, something that comes to phenomenology from the outside. Even though deconstruction can be recognized in a multitude of ways in the practice of doing phenomenology, phenomenology and deconstruction do not give answers but pose questions. The point is not to form a secure self-identical meaning that goes unquestioned, but to return to the world itself and to the original questions of humanness today.

In fact, phenomenologists should be more daring than institutionalized academia at present can accept. The fact that current research is politicized and institutionalized does not only affect the freedom of phenomenologist, but all research as free research. Foucault's 'fearless speech' is more relevant and daring than ever. This is also why it is important that we as phenomenologists feel addressed by Lingis' appeal. Phenomenology is daring to its core. By describing the world's situations and interpreting the world's truths we have a special responsibility, I think, to put into words the experiences of the marginalized and impoverished, the broken and disturbed, the threatened and exposed, the weak and the vulnerable. We have a democratic responsibility to care for the margins and those who exist in the margins. Our phenomenological responsibility in fact is limitless, and is about human beings, animals, plants, species, cultures, societies, systems, politics – everyone and everything for which care is needed in practice and writing. We face this impossible possible dare.

My encounter with Alphonso Lingis introduces the first 2015 issue of P&P, which is just now before your eyes either on the screen or in your hands. We wish you a courageous reading.

## References

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