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CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY

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Ian Rory Owen

Phenomenology in Action in Psychotherapy

On Pure Psychology and its Applications
in Psychotherapy and Mental Health Care

 Springer

Ian Rory Owen
Leeds and York Partnerships NHS
Foundation Trust
Leeds
United Kingdom

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This book is dedicated to the generosity of Eduard Marbach in offering a helping hand to me in inviting me to stay at his home and giving authoritative insights into Edmund Husserl's philosophy and what makes a sufficient piece of work in phenomenology. Without his help none of this would have been possible.

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Preface

Phenomenology is a theory of consciousness produced by qualitative methods of reflection and thought experiments that can be replicated. It represents consciousness as consciousness in its own terms and involves a complex account to justify its methods. Phenomenology shines light on what can be discerned about the workings of consciousness through awareness of the differences that appear. It studies the phenomena of meaning in social life and intersubjectively shows how to make rational understandings to explain meaning as publicly available, despite the phenomena appearing differently according to the perspective taken towards them. Phenomenology offers a formal means of representing intersubjective life with others. Personal life is part of the greater social life and is properly addressed by the term “intersubjective”. Intersubjectivity requires understanding that meaning for consciousness lies not only within consciousness and its living body, leib, but also between persons culturally and across time. The sought-after ideal conclusions of Husserlian phenomenology have been available since the publication in 1993 of *Mental Representation and Consciousness* by Eduard Marbach, Emeritus Professor of Mind and Phenomenology, at the Institute for Philosophy at the University of Bern, Switzerland, who was previously a student of the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget and a collaborator at the Husserl Archives. Eduard Marbach made formal conclusions on Husserl’s behalf after studying of Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts at the Husserl Archives in Leuven, Belgium. What is presented below seeks to amplify the type of insights that Marbach has made available to the phenomenological community.

This book was written to summarise some key aspects of Husserl’s theoretical-qualitative methods for making theory, so empirical research and practice in academia, philosophy and the sciences hit their targets. There are a number of disciplines that have adopted phenomenology as a way to help them co-ordinate theory and empirical research in psychology, nursing, geography, anthropology and other areas. But the main area of concern in this work is psychotherapy and mental health care. The book is written for those who would like to know more about how Husserl’s methods can be applied through knowing how they analyse everyday living, the natural attitude. Husserl’s position is so far from that of Descartes that claims

that phenomenology is dualist and concerns the mind-body split show a lack of reading of Husserl's texts. The work makes a steadily deepening definition of Husserl's approaches. Because Husserl defined his terms contextually, the same words can mean different things in different passages; and different phrases can refer to the same referent. There are interpretative problems concerning how to conclude on equivalent or highly similar terms over a period of almost 50 years. For a brief overview of this sort, it is best to standardise the terminology and present the core concepts and practices that Husserl used. But this has the effect of losing the fine detail and arguing the case for each term. Because of the attention to detail in the original, no attempt is made to present detailed information all at once. Rather, the purpose of each chapter is merely to introduce sufficient information to study the meaning of objects and the relation of consciousness to them. However, phenomenology is manifest when it grounds philosophy, reforms the sciences and improves associated practices through co-ordinating their activities around highly specific relations between concepts and meaningful experiences for consciousness. Because Husserl developed his conclusions and altered his definitions, reading him requires persistence to see the commonalities among the developments and how his writings are cohesive. So with such cautions in place, definitions are provided but without the fine detail of arguing for the conclusions made. The comments below aim to capture the constant themes as expressed in the mature works of *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and *Cartesian Meditations* and to refer in summary fashion to places where key distinctions were established. Detailed Husserl exegesis has been carried out in other works by Iso Kern and Eduard Marbach and is not attempted.

The Husserlian literature is a genre where writers in their current contexts grapple with expressing Husserl's intentions. Some express the general spirit of what he believed, they argue, whilst others stick with the precise letter of what he wrote. What Husserl wanted was a research style of immersion in inherent givennesses to the extent that only the manners of the givenness of consciousness inform the findings. The type of conclusions provided emphasise the connections between intentionality and object sense, "noesis and noema", concerning belief, the presence of the body and the ego, as attention is split across time, place and person. Understanding what is present now exists in relation to re-creating what is no more and what has not yet come to pass. This is one reason why Husserl's writings were so voluminous – there are so many parts and wholes to consider: meaning, habits, the will, drives, the role of the body and social relationships are just a few.

The work is presented in three parts. Part I introduces the map-making method. Part II expresses some maps of the territory of consciousness of what it is like to understand the meaningful world in which we live and share meanings. Theory as a map must represent the territory that it is about and be proven in its accuracy. Part III concerns using the maps made to support self-managed changes of lifestyle, a territory that spans meanings of distress and well being. Therapy and mental health care work lessen the influence of distress although in some cases it cannot be eradicated. It presents formulation as a means of representing distressed consciousness in the world. What is argued for across the first two parts is understanding consciousness as the meeting point of all minds. Such findings apply to the public and the

professional communities of the hypothesisers, testers and users of psychological knowledge. Part III shows how phenomenology creates a common technical language to map meaningful experience. Specifically, what it is like to be an embodied person who lives a life between meanings of satisfaction and distress expressed as emotion, relationships, understanding and belief. Please note that the use of single inverted commas below means that irony is being used. The following disclaimer is also necessary: Although this book is in-part based on my experiences in clinical practice, no real individuals are intended by the brief case vignettes mentioned. Any resemblance between persons mentioned here and real persons is entirely coincidental. Finally, thanks to Chris Stones of Johannesburg University, Helen Williams of Leeds and York Partnerships Foundation Trust and Bill Stiles of Miami University for reading Chapter 15 and making helpful comments.

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