

Heidegger and the Lived Experience of Being a University Educator

“This book provides layers of insights into today’s higher education and reveals hidden aspects of teaching and learning. And it does so by showing how Heidegger’s thinking has much to offer in illuminating what it is to be an academic. All who are interested in the university can benefit from this admirable text.”

—Ronald Barnett, *author of Understanding the University, Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, University College London, UK*

“A highly useful and deeply touching account of how real conversation can contribute to the development of genuine professional relations.”

—Nel Noddings, *Emeritus Professor of Education, Stanford University, USA*

“Joshua Spier’s book not only elevates and celebrates the experiences of educators in university youth work courses, whose status in the academy often renders them invisible, it also seamlessly integrates the phenomenological and existential philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer as tools to better understand our experiences. The resulting text is both challenging and affirming, and it offers insights for university educators, administrators, youth workers, and students of philosophy alike.”

—Ben Anderson-Nathe, *author of Youth Workers, Stuckness, and the Myth of Supercompetence, Editor of Child & Youth Services, Associate Professor and Program Director of Child, Youth and Family Studies, Portland State University, USA*

“*Heidegger and the Lived Experience of Being a University Educator* reveals common threads in tertiary educators’ experiences, including uncertainty, caring, and the search for new possibilities. Far from presenting the university educator as an aloof intellectual, the interviews reveal university educators as deeply committed to reflective relationships with students and colleagues. As the teaching side of academics’ careers is pushed to the forefront of policy discourse internationally, this book offers a timely and valuable contribution to scholarly understandings of what it means to teach in a university.”

—Andrea R. English, *Chancellor’s Fellow in Philosophy of Education, University of Edinburgh, Scotland*

“Spier’s approach, which sets out to interpret lecturers’ experiential stories, enables him to draw unique connections between teaching approaches and teachers’ lived narratives. This exploration of the ‘dance of education’ reflects the rich and fluid manner in which the educational fabric is woven through meaningful, planned and unplanned interactions, between students and teachers.”

—Joëlle Fanghanel, *author of Being an Academic, Professor of Higher Education and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), University of West London, UK*

“Joshua Spier does a great job of scholarship and for educators in this involving and insightful book. His work offers permissions both to tell our stories and for us to listen to one another’s stories. This is critical as machination take the passion from our teaching practice. I will be recommending this short and entertaining book to my students and colleagues.”

—Paul Gibbs, *author of Heidegger’s Contribution to the Understanding of Work-Based Studies, Professor of Education, University of Middlesex, UK*

“Joshua Spier must be thanked for giving us a carefully wrought study that reminds us of the deeper reasons we do the work we do as educators. Focused on teaching in higher education, Spier’s book goes against the tide of educational research and practice that seeks to reduce teaching to a set of techniques. Drawing on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, the book presents rich stories of teaching that reveal basic, existential structures which will be recognised by all educators, regardless of their teaching specialty. With this book, Spier contributes to a growing literature that provides new ways to understand teaching as a fundamental commitment to the being of others.”

—Steven Hodge, *author of Martin Heidegger: Challenge to Education, Griffith University, Australia*

“Dr Joshua Spier has written a compelling and engaging book that deftly takes up the integrity of pedagogic conversations. Drawing on the stories of educators, and his own sensitive and deep interpretations, he poetically and practically embraces ‘something in the other’. I would highly recommend this book to all educators as an invitation to stop and listen – differently.”

—Nancy J. Moules, RN, PhD, *author of Conducting Hermeneutic Research: From Philosophy to Practice, Co-founder of the Canadian Hermeneutic Institute, and Editor of the Journal of Applied Hermeneutics, University of Calgary, Canada*

“Joshua Spier engages readers in fascinating conversations about the conversational relation of ‘the experience of educating within higher education.’ He shows that conversations are not just moments for sharing information, they are moments for sharing our being and our inner lives. Josh Spier richly infuses the thinking of great minds into his reflective explorations of the pedagogical significance of conversation. Unlike dis-

cussions, lectures and debates that can be planned, conversations are unplannable, unpredictable, ‘no one knows in advance what will come out of a conversation,’ says Gadamer. The most important condition of the conversational relation is a special kind of shared togetherness, in which the spell-binding qualities of true wonder, questioning, and insightful understanding of subjects can flourish. I highly recommend Joshua Spier’s book to teachers who want to draw their students into genuine conversational relations with each other and the subjects they teach. Only in such shared conversational togetherness can interpersonal growth and deep learning be effected.”

—Max van Manen, *author of Phenomenology of Practice, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Canada*

“Joshua Spier’s book is a thorough inquiry and provocative commentary on the experience of education within higher education. In the center of attention is the event (*Erignis*) of education, the (self)understanding, and the narrative identity of a teacher. Spier successfully illuminates the fundamental priority of conversation, which calls for radical responsibility of teachers to refine constantly their hermeneutic ear and learn from one another’s histories and life stories.”

—Andrzej Wierciński, *President and Founder of the International Institute for Hermeneutics, Professor of General Education and Philosophy of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Warsaw, Poland*

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For Matilda, Archie and Henri

FOREWORD

You are reading these words. You are ‘being’ a reader. By choice? Is this a book that you tracked down because you wanted to explore beyond the title? Is there a particular reason for engaging with these words? Or did this book simply come your way and you are still deciding if you will be bothered reading beyond this page. Maybe you skipped this foreword when you started reading the book. Now, having found yourself drawn in, you are looking for every last drop.

Reading is never simply ‘reading’. It always has its unique reader; right now that is ‘you’. A mood encompasses the experience. A wet cold day may have you looking for such a book. The emergence of sun may tug you outside. Maybe you have a cup of tea by your side, curled up in your favourite chair. Or perhaps you are reading this at your desk, in a mind-set of work. Pause and ponder about your experience of ‘being a reader of this page’. That is what phenomenology is all about. It takes us back to lived experience and in doing so reminds us of our own taken-for-granted stories. More than that, it calls us into thinking.

The quotes from philosophers, like Heidegger, make no sense at all on first read. That’s why we have Josh as a guide. He very gently, skilfully invites us to walk along with him. “Listen to this story”, he says and then goes on to share the thinking it evoked for him. It is likely a fairly ordinary sort of story. Maybe it will remind you of something similar that happened to you. And then together with Josh (ably assisted by Heidegger and Gadamer), you begin to peel back the layers of possible meaning. You will find yourself nodding. Yes, Josh is on to something here. You will feel

yourself waking up, getting intrigued, maybe even excited. You cannot read phenomenology as a detached observer.

Maybe you are a university lecturer, or want to be. Perhaps it is youth work that has enticed you to this book. Whatever, it is likely you have had plenty of experiences of being a student. There will be a familiarity, a recognition, a remembering. You will smile at the moment when through the teacher's eyes you see the student 'get it'. Your own hurt might resurface when you read a story of a teacher feeling mis-understood. Some stories will stay with you long after you have put the book down.

More importantly, you will take away a deeper understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Once you might have thought it was to talk, to tell, to teach. You will finish reading this book knowing that, paradoxically, it is to listen.

Josh's poetry will gift you afresh with wisdom that speaks to your spirit.

I am honoured to have been invited to write this foreword. I came 'before' on this journey of phenomenology. Now Josh picks up the energy and enthusiasm of the ontological way. I salute him for an excellent showing of phenomenology. This work has been a long labour of love. It is so deserving of 'you' the reader finding your own home amidst these pages. It is Josh's reward to have you nod, to tell him "now I understand what I already knew but had somehow forgotten".

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