

PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

edited by

JOSEPH J. KOCKELMANS

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The Dutch School

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Preface

Over the past decades many books and essays have been written on phenomenological psychology. Some of these publications are historical in character and were designed to give the reader an idea of the origin, meaning, and function of phenomenological psychology and its most important trends. Others are theoretical in nature and were written to give the reader an insight into the ways in which various authors conceive of phenomenological psychology and how they attempt to justify their views in light of the philosophical assumptions underlying their conceptions. Finally, there are a great number of publications in which the authors do not *talk about* phenomenological psychology, but rather try *to do* what was described as possible and necessary in the first two kinds of publications. Some of these attempts to do the latter have been quite successful; in other cases the results have been disappointing.¹ This anthology contains a number of essays which I have brought together for the explicit purpose of introducing the reader to the Dutch school in phenomenological psychology.

The Dutch school occupies an important place in the phenomenological movement as a whole. Buytendijk was one of the first Dutch scholars to contribute to the field, and for several decades he remained the central figure of the school. Van Lennep, van den Berg, Strasser, and Linschoten are other outstanding members. Although Plessner was of German descent and a philosopher by profession, I have included an essay by him also, in view of the fact that he taught at the University of Groningen and in his own way has made an important contribution to the Dutch school in phenomenological psychology.²

I have tried in this anthology to bring together a number of essays which actually show the phenomenological-psychological method at work. Some selections included here have been taken from works already available in English, whereas others were expressly translated for this volume. In the translating of these selections I have attempted to combine two principles: the translations were to stay as close as possible to the originals; and the translations were to be rendered in "good English." I hope the reader finds these two principles combined successfully here.

1. Cf. Herbert Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972). A selected bibliography on the subject can be found on pp. 369-400.

2. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi, 287-289.

have, indeed, seen something very important and have spoken of it in a remarkably adequate way. 2) Sometimes novels and poems illustrate a point on which the phenomenologist wishes to focus attention. And 3) most importantly, often an appeal to poetry and literature is almost unavoidable in that poetic language with its use of symbolism is able to refer beyond the realm of what can be said “clearly and distinctly.” In other words, most of the authors represented here feel that in human reality there are certain phenomena which reach so deeply into a man’s life and the world in which he lives that poetic language is the only adequate way through which *to point* to and so to make present a meaning which we are unable to express clearly in any other way. However, it is important to note that no author included in this volume has used literary works as a substitute for the work he himself has tried to accomplish. That is, poems and novels do not “prove” anything. But both can be enormously helpful in bringing certain phenomena closer to us and thus in making us “understand” them, helping us to understand ourselves and the world in which we live.

Finally, I wish to call the reader’s attention to another point of major significance. It is often said that phenomenological and hermeneutical psychology should eliminate all forms of empirical psychology. That this notion is a flagrant misinterpretation of the genuine intention of these authors can be shown easily. First of all, no *leading* phenomenologist has ever made this claim. On the contrary, all of them have argued explicitly that what we call “psychology” is a complex of various disciplines, each with its own typical methods: empirical psychology uses empirical methods, eidetic phenomenology employs descriptive methods, and hermeneutic phenomenology uses interpretative methods. Thus in the view of the leading phenomenologists, empirical psychology is possible and necessary and no phenomenological or hermeneutic psychology can be substituted for it. A psychologist must know “the facts” just as he must understand “their meaning” in our Western world. This is why he must learn to work as an empirical psychologist and to think about the meaning of what his research reveals to him. Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, and many other phenomenologists distinguish explicitly between empirical and phenomenological psychology and go to great lengths to explain how these different psychological disciplines are to be related to one another. And their ideas have been shared by the phenomenologists represented in this book. The reader should know, also, that many of the authors represented here have made important contributions to empirical as well as to phenomenological psychology. Buytendijk and Linschoten in particular have shown that and how the various approaches can go hand in hand, complementing each other.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the publishers who have granted permission to reprint selections from copyrighted material. I should like to thank my wife who has assisted me in choosing the selections and in solving some of the difficult problems connected with the translations.

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