

with these notions acquired with so much effort by generations of philosophers throughout the centuries? Because to insist on keeping the difference between an *ordo essendi* and an *ordo cognoscendi* equates to reinventing what Heidegger called ‘the onto-theological tradition’. (The fact that most of the continental philosophers Rorty admires – namely Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault – were neither egalitarians nor liberals nor even advocates of a just or unjust ‘larger loyalty’, might perhaps pose a problem for a liberal ironist).

The liberal ironist dispenses with Truth because conflicts about what is true led in the past to disagreement and war. Let us say that we grant that humans are essentially historical, and every claim is contextual, could it be that Rorty’s pragmatism is no longer the right tool in our new historical context? Could it happen that the owl of Minerva has arisen again at dusk and this very book has emerged when people are no longer fighting about truth but against fake news? A new post-truth era has just been inaugurated, but we are not necessarily freer. We might need to engage in the genealogy of an outmoded idea: not the idea of truth but the idea of the death of Truth – an irony that Rorty would have appreciated – because even if, as Hannah Arendt noted, sincerity was never counted among politicians’ virtues, in our Post-Truth era the contempt for truth, far from liberating, is giving politicians an unlimited license to lie – which in practice is not producing agreement and peace, but producing war and intolerance.

Nagel opposed what he called Rorty’s sophisticated ‘subjectivism’, because “[...] it is used to deflect argument or to belittle the pretensions of the arguments of others. Claims that something is without relativistic qualification true or false, right or wrong, good or bad, risk being derided as expressions of a parochial perspective or form of life – not as a preliminary to showing that they are mistaken whereas something else is right, but as a way of showing that nothing is right and that, instead we are all expressing our personal or cultural points of view. The actual result has been a growth in the already extreme intellectual laziness of contemporary culture and the collapse of serious argument throughout the lower reaches of the humanities and social sciences, together with a refusal to take seriously, as anything other than first-person avowals, the objective arguments of others” (*The Last Word*. 5-6).

What remains clouded in mystery is why Rorty’s epistemological stance (or tools), namely his anti-representationalism, is in harmony with his pragmatic goals. *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism* was originally titled *Anti-Authoritarianism in Epistemology and Ethics*. This book is very important to understanding Rorty’s overall project.

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Nicolle ZAPIEN and Susi FERRARELO. *Ethical Experience: A Phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury 2019. 256 pp.

This book discusses the ethics of engaging with the paradigm of lived experience, particularly through an interest in the spatiotemporal constructs of such experiences via a comparative conceptual map across Husserlian phenomenology and Nishida’s moral

philosophy. The overall commitment of the book is towards the vision of a ‘better life’ through insights into two themes, that of time and intimacy. While the conception of the individual subject is explored, there is a stronger interest in understanding the “struggle for the reality of the we” (3) which could be political, moral or psychological, each with their own experiences of the real. The authors are committed to defending all such layers of reality. Phenomenology, in this book, is thus dealt with as a corpus of ideas and theorisation that can be put into practical application without reducing it to mere empirical research. In this way the phenomenological approach is offered as a median ground that can be exploited for theoretical discussions in psychology and philosophy. A suspension of the ‘natural attitude’ and a refusal of the subject/object dichotomy are some of the underlying themes framing the discussions in the book. In discussing the Husserlian methods of epoché and reduction, what is reiterated is an exploration of what is fully *present*, honing the capacity to *observe* more significantly than the capacity to understand. These observation-based disciplines become foundational for other normative disciplines.

Fink, who extensively philosophized from Husserlian thought, observed that phenomenology has been *misunderstood* more or less, reiterating that the goal of this approach is to clarify all that can be brought to manifest as real or ideal by direct engagement (31). Interestingly, Fink also identifies the ontological commitment of phenomenology to questions generally relegated to psychology: “Phenomenology comprehends the psychological region, using it as a basis for human exploration, while expanding beyond this region and reaching through the spiritual layers that constitute it” (33). The concepts of epoché and reduction disclose a triadic structure of the ego, as suggested by Fink, further foreground ways in which time as perceived by different subjective states is critical in unpacking the ‘layers of reality’ that constitute different experiences.

Hoping to address their core curiosity, the authors pose a unique question: “What is phenomenological time? [...] The phenomenologist, as a human being, does not have words to describe the sense of concreteness, but she might have the eyes to see what that core of reality actually is” (36). It is unclear what qualifies these ‘special’ kinds of perceptions talked about in the discussion of ‘cores’ of reality. While psychology helps phenomenology to “[...] disclose the transcendental layer through the psychological epoché, so psychology helps ethics to clarify the receptive layers of the volitional body” (39). In Husserlian thought, the body, described as an aesthesiological unit, becomes an original field of possibilities for the process through which a subject recognizes and owns her embodiment, moving from a state of ‘I can’ to ‘I want’ to ‘I do’, thereby resulting in the volitional body. The three categories of intentionality as proposed in Husserl – active, passive and practical intentionality – are shown to have resonance with Nishida’s conception of life, material and creating worlds. The core arguments in the book explore a rather tenacious link between morality, religion and the experience of time. However, the reader is left wanting when it comes to the question of unpacking the nature of ethical experience and what such an experience might entail. The critical question – how do ‘ethical experiences’ structure our view of reality –, although raised, is left unresolved in a manner that may have done justice to the scope of the book.

One of the most interesting chapters in the book is a tangential yet specific engagement with pathological and mystical time. The chapter focuses on a prolonged discussion on the experience of time and reality/unreality of time as experienced by schizophrenics and mystics. This is significant in breaking the paradigm of the linearity and teleology of time into neat silos of modern, premodern and so on. There is no possibility of such a discernment of teleological time in the background of a possibility of some sense of absolute time (68). This experience of absolute time, according to the authors, is devoid of the differentiation offered by the intersubjective world. Thus, the unified whole of time/space as experienced by the schizophrenic is undifferentiated and thereby apparently untimely. For instance, the authors observe that while the schizophrenic imagination seems to dwell in the ‘creating world’, mystics live in the ‘lifeworld’ (69); both dwellings are underlined by a certain feeling of a lack of synchrony. This chapter further discusses certain experiential analogies between mystics and schizophrenics. The experience of reality for both subjectivities is so forceful that it comes to them as the “heart of reality” (70). These interactions are what one may term as ‘trans-subjective’ and may also render certain experiences as *timeless*. The experience of timelessness is attained through a “self-distancing attitude” (72), whereby there is cognition of a layer of reality that may not be entirely determined by the subjectivities perceiving it.

There are also differences in the experience of time in the two subjectivities – the central one being a difference between self-recognition and self-identification. The authors suggest that while mystics preserve a form of witnessing or observing and recognize their ‘self’ in relation to this witnessing, schizophrenics do not seem to hold a similar sense of ‘self’, leading them to fully identify with realities that differ from that of the inter-subjective community. Having outlined these distinctions in the experiences of time, the authors make the following broader ethical argument, namely that “delusions and depressions” may arise in schizophrenics because of a stigmatizing attitude towards time and its layers which prevents them from having any “intimacy towards their inner world” of experience (78). The sense of time is lost in such a lack of acknowledgement. Further, tangential links between the concept of soul and time also emerge in the discussion, revealing perhaps an implicit theological commitment on the part of the authors to the larger arc of their discussions in the book.

The latter part of the book is solely dedicated to the analysis of three empirical studies carried out within small groups of subjects pertaining to three particular situations, marked by a specific class and group of people based within the Eurocentric context. These three cases include the experiences of being thrust into sudden group leadership roles, the experience of parenting dilemmas and the experience of acknowledging infidelity in a relationship. While it is explicitly unclear why these three situations are of particular significance to the authors in relation to the expansive theorisation undertaken in the first section, what is interesting about these empirical studies is the manner in which a certain philosophical commentary is made possible and emergent from the contingent data set.

This book is an interesting attempt at trying to bring psychology and philosophy into conversation with each other in thinking of phenomenological conceptions of time

## BOOK REVIEWS

and its experience for particular subjectivities. While the direct application of philosophical theorization to field studies may be conducive to generating new kinds and layers of knowledge, sufficient precaution should be taken when *cleanly* mapping theory to evidence. This tendency can be seen in the arc of the thesis laid out in this book. Without addressing objections to claims made or attempting to understand exceptions to the norm presumed, a philosophical proposition on such a vast concept like ethical lived experience may appear wanting. The process of philosophising, in its phenomenological attempt to universalize particular-subjective, intersubjective and trans-subjective experiences, must therefore exercise caution in order to avoid essentializing or thinning perceived experiences into conveniently delimited frameworks of analysis.

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