

## Abstracts: Frontiers of Phenomenology

### **Heidegger on Plato's Myths**

Qinghua Zhu

What do Greek myths (μῦθος) mean for Heidegger, especially the myths in the philosophers' works? They are neither poetic illusions, nor the remnants of mythical representations of abstract thoughts. In these myths Heidegger found the originary ideas of the beginnings of Western thought.

Heidegger had an ambivalent response to Plato. While he often blamed Plato for being the source of metaphysics, Heidegger nonetheless discovered the truth of being in Plato's *Myth of Lethe* as discussed towards the end of the *Republic*. Why was it that the rebirth of lives came from the plain λήθη, and why should they drink the water of the river Ameleta before their departure for their new lives? Heidegger claimed that this myth revealed the long-concealed relationship between λήθη and ἀλήθεια.

### **East Asian philosophy and the necessary evil of translation: Thick translators, assimilation and respect for sacred cows.**

Kenn Nakata Steffersen

In two articles published in 2003 and 2010, the influential and prolific philosopher and translator of Japanese philosophy James Heisig has argued for "desacralizing" translation, against "perfect translation", and for "thick translation". Heisig prioritizes broad appeal and readability over accuracy, bringing the translated philosopher into the reader's space and facilitating an encounter on the latter's terms. He argues that for philosophy in general - and East Asian philosophy in particular - not to descend into self-imposed irrelevance requires a reckoning with "the sacred cow of fidelity to the original text" and that it is time for a "radical liberalization" of standards where translating philosophers are "set free to err on the side of creativity and rhetorical elegance". This paper discusses Heisig's programmatic statements on translation strategy in the context of a perceived crisis of (academic) philosophy in contemporary Japan, the global dominance of English, the effects of declining language capabilities and unequal distribution of translation capabilities among Western specialists on East Asian philosophy, the tendentially conservative and "domesticating" Anglospheric regime of translation, and the "foreignizing" alternatives found in Japanese translation history and in Schleiermacher, Nietzsche, Benjamin, and contemporary translation theorists. It suggests that philosopher-translators could learn from past philosophical reflections on translation, contemporary translation studies, the Japanese tendency towards "perfect translation" without "domestication", and professional practices in the translation industry. Doing so would help attain a suitable balance between domestication and foreignization, without killing philosophy in the process, as Heisig worries might happen.

## ***Edmund Husserl and Richard Moran on the Self-Awareness of Attitudes***

James Jardine

In a cluster of manuscripts written towards the end of his years spent in Göttingen (most likely between 1914 and 1916), Husserl offers a detailed analysis of the manner in which active modes of intentional consciousness (judging, grudging, loving, hoping and resolving are amongst those discussed), when repeatedly accomplished by an individual over the course of his or her life, may establish and manifest a distinctive form of self-acquaintance and self-identity. While parts of this manuscript were made use of in Husserl's analysis of the pure Ego in *Ideas II*, I will draw upon the reconstruction of these manuscripts in their original form, which are due to be published in a forthcoming critical volume of *Ideas II & III*. My aim will be to begin clarifying the sense in which egoic or personal character manifests itself in active modes of comportment, an aim that will be pursued by considering the way in which attitudes or stances [*Einstellungen, Stellungen*], are formed and disclosed to their agent through habitually rooted and sustained acts of position-taking [*Stellungnahmen*], particularly focussing on what he has to say about lasting convictions [*Überzeugungen*] as enduring features of the active Ego. I will try to show that Husserl's account can be helpfully clarified when compared with the recent treatment of self-knowledge offered by Richard Moran, arguing that while Husserl anticipates central features of Moran's account, his claim that egoic habituality is a condition of possibility for first-personal authority with regard to one's own attitudes permits him to offer a more nuanced picture, one that avoids some problems which arise from Moran's excessive emphasis on the role of deliberation in self-knowledge.

## ***The Inhuman Gaze and Perceiving Otherwise***

Anya Daly

In the gaze ... 'the other person transforms me into an object and denies me, I transform him into an object and deny him, it is asserted. In fact, the other's gaze transforms me into an object and mine him, *only* if both of us withdraw into the core of our *thinking nature*, if we both make ourselves into an *inhuman gaze*, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect's'.

*The Phenomenology of Perception*, (2006:360; 2012:420)

Merleau-Ponty here responds to the pessimistic and reductive Sartrean account of *the Gaze*, highlighting that this objectifying gaze only becomes possible by withdrawing into our thinking nature. The capacity to compartmentalize our manner of engagement with others, becoming empathically unavailable, closing down affective responsiveness and functioning purely through our rational capacities, can serve positive ends as in bomb disposal and surgery. However, outside circumstances such as these, empathic unavailability facilitates violence, negligence and ethical failure.

This paper focuses particularly on Merleau-Ponty's analyses of the role of perception in our engagement with others. For Merleau-Ponty 'the perception of the other founds morality' (*The Primacy of Perception*, 26) and conversely it is the 'rationalizing' of perception by

stripping it of empathic responsiveness, becoming an *inhuman gaze*, that allows ethical failure.

Through his groundbreaking analyses of embodied percipience, I argue that Merleau-Ponty offers a devastating critique of *the view from nowhere* (the God's-eye-view) - the objectivist, disembodied, unsituated, purely rationalist view which underwrites all *inhuman gazes*. He achieves this by revealing the normative structure of perceptual *gestalts* in both the phenomenal and the intersubjective domains, thereby establishing *the view from everywhere*, a view grounded in a multiplicity of perspectives. Normativity in the ethical domain is thus no longer outsourced to a higher authority such as duty, utility or the valorized virtue, but through the perceptual gestalt it is returned to the perceiving embodied subject, a subject defined moreover by inherent intersubjectivity.

### ***"I need to give it some feeling": emotions and self-esteem in epistemic experience***

Anna Bortolan

The paper explores from a phenomenological perspective various aspects of the relationship between affectivity and epistemic experience. I start by examining how affective states are involved in intellectual activity, focusing in particular on the so-called "epistemic emotions" and "epistemic feelings", such as the feeling of knowing, curiosity, wonder, certainty, and doubt. I suggest that while existing accounts of these affects correctly identify some of the ways in which they impact on epistemic experience and performance, some of their features need to be further explored. More specifically, I draw attention to the relationship which exists between epistemic emotions and feelings and other forms of affective experience, in particular self-conscious emotions such as pride, shame, and guilt and various feelings and evaluations which are often associated with the experience of self-esteem. I then proceed to present a phenomenological account of self-esteem, highlighting various ways in which this experience can modulate epistemic affects and ultimately have an influence also on epistemic agency and autonomy.

### ***Habit and Social Attention***

Elisa Magrì

In this paper, I intend to discuss the relation between habit and attention drawing on contemporary debates on automaticity and skilful action. In doing so, I will argue that the interplay between habit and attention facilitates acknowledgment of others as subjects partaking in a common world. In this respect, I outline the structure and activation of social attention, showing in what sense habit cannot be restricted to skills or absorbed coping.