

## Book Reviews

**Lou Agosta**

*Empathy in the Context of Philosophy*

Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, 184 pp.

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*Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* by Lou Agosta is the newest offering from the Palgrave MacMillan series *Renewing Philosophy*. This collection of titles is dedicated to demonstrating philosophy's 'self-reflexive potential for renewal' which, according to Series Editor Gary Banham, is partially contained within the discipline's ability to 'relate to questions of contemporary significance' (Banham, p. xi). But, what makes empathy — which arguably reached its philosophical zenith a century ago — a significant topic today? Lou Agosta argues that it is due to our having entered a new empathetic age, where everything from the fitness of potential Justices to serve on the United States Supreme Court to the study of mirror neurons in the brain, are centring around questions concerning this important human attribute. Despite the increased attention, however, 'the inconvenient truth remains: We do not know what empathy is'. Agosta envisions his book as no less than 'an attempt to find out' (p. xiii).

Agosta seeks to undertake his study from a starting point of radical Socratic ignorance, bracketing his philosophic, as well as his personal, understanding of empathy. Although this is a worthy methodology, it is not one he is able to maintain. Instead, he begins and ends the book by stating his definition of empathy: 'Empathy is not constitutive of the physical world, but of the psychological one, understood in the sense of what makes us human' (p. 137). On its own, Agosta's definition is simply another answer to the question of what separates

humans from other animals — reason, self-awareness, language, moral agency, thumbs — and just as incomplete. What ends up making his formulation intriguing is that Agosta shies away from constructing empathy as a physical or cognitive state or condition, and instead refigures it as the result of intersubjectivity. He states: ‘The puzzling thing about empathy — indeed what might even be called its mystery — is that the empathetic individual gets her or his own humanness (being human) from the one with whom the empathy is occurring’ (p. xiv).

Agosta is well situated to present a study on the means through which someone gets his or her humanness through empathizing with the other. However, he does not take that task on directly. Instead, he seeks to engage the question of empathy through the works of philosophers Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and John Searle, and psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, as well as by briefly touching on the writings of many other thinkers including Immanuel Kant, Hannah Arendt and Sigmund Freud. The result is that Agosta must often execute what he himself terms a ‘violent reinterpretation’ (p. 28) as he ‘aims to recover what the thinker has to contribute to empathy, even if the interpretation of the contribution requires going beyond what the thinker explicitly says’ or necessitates ‘interpreting a thinker against himself’ (pp. 4–5). As a reader, one must sometimes do to Agosta what he himself purports to do to Heidegger *et al.*: implement an intensive and creative exegesis of *Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* in order to mine from the text that which is its strongest points.

For example, Agosta devotes several chapters to developing what he terms Heidegger’s ‘special hermeneutic of empathy’, which offers the possibility of authentically being-with-others. Of course, this option stands in stark contrast to those presented within *Being and Time* — inauthentic everydayness, during which we are subsumed within *das Man* or authentic aloneness, through which we experience ourselves as *Sein-zum-todes*, being-towards-death. Agosta must make his argument for the possibility of authentically being-with-others by utilizing a couple of ‘parenthetic remarks [from *Being and Time*] that are equivalent to a footnote’ (p. 27), much textual reinterpretation and some ‘modified’ translations (pp. 51, 53, 55, 57, 62). Despite all of his efforts, his position is still untenable; Heidegger and empathy seem to be two twains which shall never meet.

Conversely, in the midst of attempting to develop his Heideggerian hermeneutic of empathy, Agosta does posit an interesting and insightful critique of being-towards-death. Specifically, he argues that

The loss of the other is equally fundamental with the inevitable possibility of death; and, in the final analysis, it does not make sense to try and say which is more basic. From the perspective of individualization, death has priority; from the perspective of humanization, the other (individual) has priority. According to this approach, empathy is... ontological, and its withdrawal or absence is an ontological crisis ('who am I?') that renders individuals (and communities) vulnerable to breakdowns — traumas — that are dreaded as much (and sometimes more) than death itself. (p. 56)

In other words, the possibility of my own death — in the manner of *Sein-zum-todes* — issues a kind of existential wake-up call, opening the possibility of authentic individuation (p. 65), while my actual death, according to Agosta, is a 'meaningful completion' of my life (p. 67). Conversely, the loss of the other, one with whom we have a meaningful and empathetic connection, can be experienced as 'a kind of spiritual death' (p. 63), the closing off of future possibilities, which 'does not so much result in anxiety as in apathy, lethargy, melancholy, depression' (p. 68). Agosta does a nice job of explicating a release from this loss of the other (and, in a later section on Kohut and psychoanalysis, loss of one's own sense of coherence, wholeness and agency) through finding someone who will extend to us their 'gracious and generous listening' (p. 69). This experience, which revitalizes our sense of empathetic connection, loosens the grip of the spiritual death by allowing us to again take note of the intersubjective possibilities which remain available even in the face of tremendous loss or personal fragmentation.

Halfway through the text, Agosta veers away from Heidegger and towards Searle. Again, there are a multitude of issues with how Agosta employs Searle's work on speech acts. Agosta extends the theory in two directions which Searle did not: empathy and story-telling. Despite these difficulties, Agosta does offer an appealing discussion of the idea that empathy is foregrounded not only in the acts of receptive listening detailed above, but also through narrative, of which two types are identified: literature and folktales. Agosta does not explicitly define 'literature', but he seems to be indicating fictional books or stories which are read to one's self. His example is Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, which was published in Germany in 1901, and recounts the saga of a family in decline over the course of four generations. Agosta uses passages concerning a strained relationship between one father and son to demonstrate his assertion that literature 'stimulates the reader's empathetic receptivity and provides a segue to empathetic understanding' (pp. 77–8). In other words, reading about

this embattled, but fictional, pair serves as a kind of dress rehearsal for times when we might be called upon to extend empathetic consideration to a family member with whom we have had a less than ideal relationship. When Agosta turns his attention to folktales, he does offer a definition of the genre:

The folktale as a story told to another (a listener) is itself a cultural performance and performative. It is an artefact of language, although it is more than that through its rich pre-predicative symbolism. It reaches back into the imaginary from the perspective of the adult story-teller and into a way of being that is prior to the firm distinction of fact and fiction. (p. 100)

Agosta uses the Grimm's fairytale 'The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids' as his example, positing that the speech act of an adult telling this story to a child initiates what he terms 'the intentional acts of empathy', and does so multi-directionally (p. 104). For the teller of the story, the act of narration corresponds to his or her empathizing with the experience of being a young child who does not know how to judge the trustworthiness of strangers (pp. 101, 104). For the listener, who would typically be a child under five years of age, the story increases empathetic receptivity and understanding. Finally, 'the story opportunistically creates a series of vicarious feelings relating to desires — hunger, fear, relief, happiness, thirst — for the parent and the child to share in the process of telling the story, this building empathy between them' (p. 102). This empathy-building 'creates a community between the story-teller and the child (audience), humanizing them in a community of two' (p. 103).

Agosta moves on to the work of Husserl without working out some of the questions raised by his analysis of the intersection of empathy with literature and with folktales (for instance: could a selection of literature prompt the same empathetic intentionality as a folktale if it is read aloud to another person?) Predictably, Agosta struggles with utilizing Husserl's work, a fact which becomes clear when Agosta states that, over the course of Husserl's career, the topic of empathy migrated 'from the superstructure (or periphery) of his systematic thinking towards the foundation'. One sentence later, Agosta posits that Husserl 'underestimated (misanalysed) the richness of the concept of other; misplaced empathy in the superstructure rather than at the foundation of inter-human relations' (p. 114). The challenge of ferreting out Agosta's insights concerning the topic of empathy in Husserl's work is compounded by the fact that, in the same chapter, he explores pre-linguistic (or, I would say, non-linguistic) aspects of

empathy. His approach is via ‘the use of examples of the breakdown of normal constitutive functions’ (p. 112) such as in instances of prosopagnosia (face blindness) or in the case of Mike May; May, who was blinded in early childhood, had his sight restored as an adult, but was unable to correctly process the visual information received by his newly-sighted eyes. Agosta is not able to make a convincing argument that face blindness or difficulties with perceptual processing necessarily impair one’s ability to empathize. Of course, Mike May — like those who suffer from prosopagnosia — is lacking the information which comes from being able to perceive the face of another but, as Agosta admits, this has not left May’s other means of empathetic engagement impaired. As such, May is still able to be a ‘caring and effective father and husband and a successful entrepreneur’ (p. 131). For Agosta to make his point, he must add autism to the equation, a condition that — unlike prosopagnosia or the perceptual processing difficulties experienced by Mike May — is characterized by an overall impairment of intersubjective functioning, including those aspects related to empathy.

In short, *Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* is mixed bag. While Agosta’s use of Heidegger, Husserl, Searle and Kohut often asks more of their work than is reasonable, his own insights on empathy are original and engaging. He succeeds in convincing the reader that empathy is indeed a topic which is worthy of renewed attention as it migrates from ‘the periphery of ethics, aesthetics, and theory of mind to a key place in establishing and maintaining the integrity and emotional equilibrium of dynamic interrelations with other individuals’.

### **Sissela Bok**

*Exploring Happiness: From Aristotle to Brain Science*

Yale University Press, 2010, £18.99

*Review by Lisa Bortolotti*

*University of Birmingham*

The book is divided into nine chapters and reads just like an exploration into the concept of happiness, but also into the various methods by which happiness is aimed at and studied. This text is very accessible and fascinating in its choice of themes — philosophers, psychologists, social scientists, historians of ideas, and the educated general public would benefit from reading it and would find it both useful and thought-provoking.

The first, introductory, chapter in *Luck* highlights the importance of finding one's own perspective on what makes one's life worthwhile. To this end, the author, Sissela Bok, goes on to explore different views of happiness and the good life in the following chapters, considering both the writings and the personal experiences of philosophers, scientists, artists, and other men and women of genius who have reflected on the nature and attainability of happiness.

In chapter two, on *Experience*, Bok brings together the notions of personal narratives (journal writing and autobiographies), thought-experiments created by philosophers (such as Nozick's Experience Machine) and artwork, and concludes that personal reflection about the experiences that contribute to happiness is an essential part of the journey she wants to take us on, as the theoretical approaches to the question of what happiness is can be better understood by relating them to personal experiences.

In chapter three, on *Discordant Definitions*, Bok compares subjective and objective accounts of happiness, and asks whether the unit of happiness is a single moment in someone's life or better a whole life. These are some of the issues that existing definitions of happiness disagree about, and Bok reviews them briefly. Then, she spends most of the chapter discussing the relationship between happiness and virtue. She starts with a concise description of views in Ancient Philosophy and then she examines Kant's view, according to which virtue and happiness come apart and the goal in human life is not happiness but a good will. Some objections to Kant's view are considered, and a brief reflection is offered on the often incompatible definitions of happiness provided by more contemporary thinkers.

In chapter four, on the *Happy Life*, there is an excellent section on Seneca's thought and life, where the following key questions are explored: does wealth contribute to happiness? Is it better to be a participant or an observer in life? Opposed to Seneca's recipes for a happy life is St. Augustine, who identified happiness with desire satisfaction and claimed that happiness cannot be attained in the mortal life. The chapter continues with a fascinating account of the correspondence between Descartes and Elizabeth of Bohemia, where the relationships between health, adversities, and self-deception on the one hand, and happiness on the other are scrutinized in detail. The chapter ends with the influences of Seneca and St. Augustine on Pascal and the thinkers of the Enlightenment, who kept asking whether happiness can be divorced from virtue and whether it can be really achieved in the course of a human life.

In chapter five, on *Measurement*, different attempts to measure happiness are reviewed, in Bentham, Mill, Edgeworth and contemporary psychologists. Two questions that are debated among utilitarian thinkers is whether education, class, sex or race affect one's capacity to be happy, and whether the interest everybody has in maximizing happiness should be weighted equally in the hedonic calculus. Other issues that have an impact on measurements of happiness are whether different pleasurable activities come with different types of pleasure attached to them, and whether these types of pleasure should be counted differently in the calculus. Among more contemporary attempts at measuring happiness, Bok lists Ed Diener's method, where life satisfaction is measured by recording the subject's agreement with certain statements; and Daniel Kahneman's two methods, one involving experience sampling, where subjects carry a beeper which rings several times a day and record happiness or frustration, and one called the 'day reconstruction' method, where subjects write journal entries on the previous day. Bok carefully analyses advantages and limitations of each methodology and suggests that these methods are at their best when they are combined rather than used in isolation. The chapter ends with the promising endorsement of recently developed interdisciplinary projects bringing philosophical expertise to bear on empirical questions about happiness, such as those led by Appiah, Haybron and Flanagan.

In chapter six, on *Beyond Temperament*, Bok considers the relationship between personal traits and dispositions, and happiness. The chapter focuses on melancholy and depression, and notices how melancholy was romanticized as the attribute of people of genius, whereas depression is nowadays regarded as a psychiatric disorder that can affect anybody at any stage of their life. Different attitudes towards happiness are reviewed, such as tranquillity, hedonism and a conception of life as a discovery which is often accompanied by zest as a spiritual disposition. Although optimism may be conducive to embracing life and responding bravely to setbacks and adversities, Bok suggests that it needs to be balanced by empathy for other people's suffering.

In chapter seven, on *Lasting Happiness*, Bok starts with a fascinating comparison between the views of Freud and Russell on whether happiness can last. Freud denied the possibility of lasting happiness, whereas Russell argued in favour of it. However, they both valued love and meaningful work as fundamental ingredients of a good life, and identified preconceived ideas as a danger to true happiness.

In chapter eight, on *Illusion*, the discussion concentrates on the small adjustments we make to our own life stories and that contribute to our increased well-being, even if they involve heavily reconstructed memories or a positive interpretation of otherwise negative events (so-called 'positive illusions'). Bok asks whether it is good to rely on this 'psychological immune system', and whether self-knowledge is required for happiness. After a balanced discussion, she ends up adopting a cautious attitude towards apparently innocent positive illusions, on the basis that they can then degenerate into radical distortions of reality.

In the concluding chapter, on the *Scope of Happiness*, Bok argues that studying a variety of approaches to human happiness can be beneficial as it prevents us from accepting uncritically the preconceived ideas about happiness that are dominant in our cultural environment. As she has done more subtly in the rest of the book, she again invites us to try and achieve happiness with as much freedom as possible, subject to the moral constraints due to a careful consideration of the interests of others.

The book is highly recommended, and it is not easy to find fault with it. It does encourage personal reflection and is a powerful guide to really complex philosophical problems. In addition, it has the advantage of being written in an engaging style and to be always sensitive to the evidence on happiness emerging from the psychological sciences.

My only perplexity concerns the very point of the book: I felt like the author had not completely settled on one main objective, and this indecision between two different projects is a source of potential frustration in the reader. The first project is a thorough analysis of the philosophical dimensions of happiness. The detailed treatment of Seneca's views (chapter 4), the issue whether it is possible to measure happiness (chapter 5), and the difficult balance between the benefits and risks of positive illusions (chapter 8) are deeply satisfactory and could be the object of an advanced philosophy seminar. Such passages offer us the opportunity to appreciate Bok as a philosopher with original and interesting views. The second project is a cursory look at various conceptions of happiness through the ages, which would serve the purposes of an introductory book, but would not satisfy a more demanding reader. So, in some of the other chapters, the discussion is more superficial and many authors are grouped together without the issues being examined in detail. As a result, the importance of such issues for happiness is not always clear. These less in-depth chapters have also a role to play: they highlight the variety of existing

approaches and stimulate the reader's interest, giving rise to the desire for further reading. But they are slightly at odds with rest of the book and less memorable.

In sum, the book is a very welcome addition to the thriving literature on happiness and, if it has one fault, it is that it leaves the reader wanting for more.

### **Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow**

*The Grand Design*

New York: Bantam Books, 2010, 208 pp.

ISBN: 0553805371

*Christopher Holvenstot*

### **TOP PHYSICIST RENOUNCES ABSOLUTES!**

In *The Grand Design*, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow unveil 'model-dependent realism', a theoretical stance with extraordinary significance for the field of consciousness studies.

Hawking and Mlodinow begin with a brief history of scientism from its beginnings in myth, to the present moment of high faith in the laws of nature based on observed regularities expressed mathematically. Surprisingly, this musing on science is capped with the question, '...do we really have reason to believe that an objective reality really exists?' (p. 34). Hawking and Mlodinow introduce a position described as 'model-dependent realism'. In their defence of this position they defer to the significance of *conscious* processes in the creation of the models upon which our *physical* notions of reality depend. Some illustrative quotes:

[Model-dependent realism] is based on the idea that our brains interpret the input from our sensory organs by making a model of the world. When such a model is successful at explaining events, we tend to attribute to it, and to the elements and concepts that constitute it, the quality of reality or absolute truth. (p. 7)

There is no picture- or theory-independent concept of reality. (p. 42)

...it is pointless to ask whether a model is real, only whether it agrees with observation. If there are two models that both agree with observation, like the goldfish's picture (*of the world, through the distorted lens of a spherical fishbowl*) and ours (*without this lens distortion*), then one cannot say that one is more real than the other. One can use whichever model is more convenient in the situation under consideration... Model dependent realism applies not only to scientific models but also to the conscious and subconscious mental models we all create in order to

interpret and understand the everyday world. There is no way to remove the observer — us — from our perception of the world, which is created through our sensory processing and through the way we think and reason. Our perception — and hence the observations upon which our theories are based — is not direct, but rather is shaped by a kind of lens, the interpretive structure of our human brains. (p. 46)

Much of this is common knowledge in consciousness studies, but researchers in this field have deferred to traditional empirical science, obediently accepting that physics provides the legitimate absolute truth of reality while the dynamics of meaning and being (the associative interactions of information, signalling, and signifiers inherent to sentient processes in living systems) describe a secondary, less-than-legitimate, pseudo-reality that must be interpreted and explained using causal-physical logic. We have been warping the subject of consciousness to fit the explanatory parameters of our communally accepted physics-based reality concept. Hawking and Mlodinow's admission that even physical laws fail as absolutes, that even these are modelled in conscious processes, provides a generous opening for a transformation in our formulation of our concept of reality. This is a welcome development at a time when the field of consciousness studies is struggling to define its central subject matter — primarily because the physical principles to which we've restricted our communally accepted reality concept do not provide the explanatory tools for describing the emergence of awareness in nature and for understanding the presence of a perspectival consciousness within ourselves.

This admission of the 'absolute' fallibility of physics is significant and extraordinary, coming as it does from our top physicist. Physics, from the dawn of the enlightenment until this moment, has held the sovereign right to describe reality. Absolute truth has been synonymous with physical principles. Under the guiding metaphor of physical truths we have mistakenly assumed that a theory of consciousness, to be legitimate, must be described as emerging from physical properties rather than illustrated as part and parcel of the synergistic, associative dynamics of living systems. But Hawking and Mlodinow's admission of model-dependency is not the only revelation in *The Grand Design* that advances the interests of consciousness studies. M-theory is introduced and described as implying the necessary use of many overlapping maps of reality, each describing a specific matrix of dynamics and laws. Like classical physics and quantum physics, thermodynamics and biochemistry, the varied maps necessarily overlap while none tells the full story of reality on its own. Each map contributes to an improved navigational guide to our own pragmatic human

version of reality in a complex universe of infinite probabilities, infinite histories, and infinite alternate worlds. Whether or not M-theory provides (or even intends to provide) the final overlapping versions of physical law, Hawking and Mlodinow, by confessing model-dependence and legitimizing the use of many overlapping models, have released us from the burdensome expectation that all aspects of reality should be accounted for within the laws and metaphors of applied physics. We already possess many useful models that are non-physical — of the psyche for example, and of social structures. Relinquishing the expectation of absolute truth in independent physical models allows the non-physical models in the soft sciences to shine with new lustre and allows us to formulate additional models of consciousness without the impossible constraint that absolute physical truths place on meaning-based, relationship-structured concepts.

However, because he is a physicist, because he thinks and imagines like a physicist, Hawking's sense of the implications of model-dependence and M-theory are confined to theoretical and applied physics. *The Grand Design* is essentially the musings of a physicist. It is a brief review of familiar quantum properties and more recent theories involving strings, big bangs, multiverses, supersymmetries of space and gravity, etc. thoughtfully reconsidered in the new context of model-dependence and M-theory. This exploration is interesting in its own right but is nothing compared to the wider significance of the book. Model-dependence and multiple-theory analysis can be used to recontextualize nearly every field of endeavour. Nearly every area of expertise has in some degree been formulated on the now defunct precepts of empiricism and its underlying assumption of a single, obtainable, measurable, absolute truth. The field of consciousness studies is most acutely affected and has the most to gain by reformulating the precepts which distort our analysis and prevent a useful understanding of conscious properties and dynamics.

The assertion of the necessity for multiple-models including '...mental models we all create in order to interpret and understand the everyday world' (p. 46), coming as it does from our top physicist, allows us to begin formulating legitimate models of consciousness without the compulsory reduction to physical causation or even to quantum non-causal behaviour. We can now focus on explanations of consciousness that rely on its own unique properties and logic rather than borrowing properties and logic from other, supposedly more legitimate fields of endeavour. We can map for consciousness, not for physics. (We need not rely on the properties and logic of physics to explain or translate conscious phenomena.) What's more, because

processes and characteristics of perception and cognition are at the centre of creating any world-model whatsoever (be the model causal, quantum, mathematical, social, psychological, transcendental, etc.), consciousness studies can now rise with its own self-defined precepts to a position of sovereignty as the appropriate cultural institution to describe reality to the culture in general. If reality is model dependent, and model-making is a conscious activity, then describing consciousness is tantamount to describing reality. Consciousness studies, by developing subject-appropriate explanatory approaches, can provide the descriptive paradigm for understanding, exploring, reorganizing and revitalizing our condition — a condition which is itself altered by this new understanding of ourselves as model-dependent world-modellers. Just as physical properties were used to measure and prove a physical world, conscious properties can be used to describe, recognize, validate, and explore a consciousness-specific world-model. Instead of causal physical forces and objects, such a world-model emphasizes the supremacy of sentience and the meaning-based interactions of sentient entities.

The new version of reality that consciousness studies is situated to champion is no longer restricted to physical boundaries, brute forces, or quantum behaviours, nor need we revert to divisive transcendental faith-based explanations. A reality model that depicts us as physical creatures in a physical world does not suffice to illustrate the fundamentals of conscious properties because it does not suffice to illustrate that we are world-modelling, meaning-making creatures for whom the physical model is but one of many models — a mere subset category of the kinds of models we make.

...mental concepts are the only reality we can know. There is no model-independent test of reality. It follows that a well-constructed model creates a reality of its own. (p. 172)

Model-dependence and M-theory must go hand in hand. For if we admit we cannot be certain of an absolute truth regarding something like the nature of matter, then the inescapable logical fact is that we are going to need many different models of matter that predict its properties at different scales and in different circumstances. No model of matter (or of anything else) need be, nor can be, absolute. A model need only be useful in a particular circumstance under specific conditions. An initial and significant implication of this is that any model must state its purpose and its relevant realm of application. Prior to the admission of model-dependence, the implicit purpose of all science was to map the absolute truth about 'reality' and the explicit realm of

application was also ‘reality’. By discounting the notion of absolute truth, model-dependence forces a reconsideration of the term ‘reality’.

Hawking and Mlodinow explicitly defer to conscious and subconscious mental processes, the interpretive structure of brains, and so on, for formulating any and all models; and they claim that we cannot expect any model to be ‘true’ in the absolute sense — just ‘true’ within the limited parameters described by the models themselves. ‘True’ in this case becomes synonymous with ‘useful’ which, if Hawking and Mlodinow hadn’t proclaimed the death of philosophy (in the second paragraph on the first page, no less) we might read this as a validation of the pragmatism of Pierce, Dewey, James, and more recently, of Richard Rorty. Hawking and Mlodinow claim that ‘philosophy hasn’t kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics’ (p. 5), but this shows complete obliviousness to what would otherwise be a stinging truth: that Berkeley, Locke, Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, to name but a few, had already arrived at the inevitable mental source of all concepts about reality centuries before modern physics stumbled inadvertently into the same place. Hawking and Mlodinow cannot fairly blame philosophy for lack of relevance if they themselves (and the entire enterprise of physics) have turned a deaf ear to its lessons. With any luck, the physicists’ loss of absolutes could even result in sufficient humility to recognize the need for legitimate non-physical models of reality (philosophical or otherwise).

It remains to be seen whether philosophy can successfully fill the void of uncertainty left in the wake of physical absolutes. One could assert that the dramatically different non-classical properties that emerge in modern physics, the revolution of new information in cognitive sciences, and this unexpected admission of non-absolute physical models, combine to create a natural opening in which philosophy can plausibly reassert its relevance in daily life. Reality needs to be recontextualized and re-explained. In this sense Hawking and Mlodinow’s death-taunt delivers a useful and well-timed challenge to philosophy departments everywhere.

The publication of *The Grand Design* should be the shot heard round the world — the starting gun for a more useful, non-physical definition of consciousness, and the signalling of a foreseeable end to our outdated and highly destructive physics-driven materialist conception of reality. Though it may not have been their explicit intent, by renouncing god, taunting philosophy, denying physical absolutes, and admitting cognitive processes as the core descriptors of reality,

Hawking and Mlodinow have signalled the arrival of the age of consciousness.

**Anthony Hudetz & Robert Pearce (eds.)**

*Suppressing the Mind: Anesthetic Modulation of Memory and Consciousness*

New York: Humana Press/Springer, 2010, 252 pp., \$189.

*Review by Bill Faw*

*(Retired) Professor of Psychology, Brewton-Parker College.*

### Disclosures

I need to begin this review with full disclosure. I consider the lead editor, Tony Hudetz, to be a friend of mine — someone with whom I have palled around with at several consciousness conferences and have seen play guitar at Tucson Poetry Slams. I have written reviews of a few other people whom I consider friends — with a similar disclosure. After all, should one only write reviews of books by enemies or total strangers? I had emailed Tony in June (2010) to tell him that I had missed him and his guitar playing at this year's Tucson conference, and attached a copy of my *JCS* Tucson conference review. In his return email, he mentioned his new book and suggested that someone might want to write a review on it for *JCS*.

While I am not an anaesthesiologist, I am trained as a physiological psychologist with some medical school courses, including in behavioural pharmacology, and I have taught undergraduate physiological psychology for 20-some years. I will report some of the book's more technical findings along the way, but concentrate mainly on the book's implications for contemporary consciousness science.

### Introducing the Book

The core of the book came from two workshops — one on anaesthetic modulation of *consciousness* and the other on its modulation of *memory* — organized by the lead editors at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Conference on Brain Research at Snowmass Village, Colorado in 2007. Those papers were updated for publication, and three chapters added on sleep, computational analysis of the state of anaesthesia, and anaesthesia awareness. The book's contributors are from departments of anaesthesiology from prominent medical schools and universities in the U.S. and New Zealand. The editors present this book as the first book with a unified view of studies on anaesthetic modulation on both

consciousness and memory to bridge molecular, cellular, integrative, and systems-level effects.

### *Introduction*

Chapter 1 is an excellent introduction by Hudetz and Pearce. Most such introductions only write a paragraph or two, in order, about each essay in the book. The introduction in this book is much more thematic. It raises the major issues that spring from the book — and indicates how the different authors contribute to those issues. This Introduction is almost worth getting the book for — but while you have it you might as well read the fuller exposition in the remaining ten chapters. One is tempted just to summarize this first chapter and call it a ‘review’! I tried not to do that, but have ended up using the outline of the Introduction to present the book’s basic findings. We begin with a few sentences about each chapter and then give a fuller treatment of the book’s major themes.

### *Chapters on Consciousness*

Chapters 2 through 7 deal with the reversible erasure of consciousness by general anaesthesia. **Chapter 2** (Hugh C. Hemmings, Jr.) focuses on the ion channels and neurotransmitter systems involved in anaesthesia; while the invited **chapter 3** (Christopher J. Watson, Helen A. Baghdoyan and Ralph Lydie) treats anaesthetic hypnosis as an altered state of consciousness and goes into considerable treatment of the anatomical and physiological mechanisms underlying REM and NREM sleep.

**Chapter 4** (Matthew I. Banks) examines anaesthesia’s (especially isoflurane) effect on *auditory* perception, which allows thalamic and some cortical information-processing, but without conscious perception. In **chapter 5**, Hudetz deals with *visual* perception. Again, the brain preserves its reactivity to sensory stimulation, but the information is not integrated between perceptual and association areas, and therefore is not consciously perceived. Anaesthetics interfere with the integration in the gamma frequency band; with the posterior parietal association area especially disrupted. **Chapter 6** (Michael T. Akire) shows that anaesthesia suppresses the brain both globally and regionally. Brain metabolism decreases in a fairly uniform manner with increased dosage, but some areas are even more shut down — including the parietal and frontal regions along with thalamic activity. **Chapter 7** (Jamie Sleight, Moira Steyn-Ross, Alistair Steyn-Ross, Logan Voss and Marcus Wilson) deals with whether moving *from* or

*back into* consciousness is a gradual or sudden transition. This invited chapter deals with both clinical findings and computer modelling.

### *Chapters on Memory*

Chapters 8–11 deal specifically with the ‘amnesia’ component of general anaesthesia. **Chapter 8** (an invited chapter by George A. Mashour) deals with a transitional issue between the consciousness and memory aspects of ‘suppressing the mind’ — ‘anaesthesia awareness’ — where the mind is not fully suppressed during anaesthesia. This includes cases where consciousness and perhaps pain awareness were not sufficiently erased (‘intra-operative awareness’), and/or to post-operative memory of some event during the surgery (‘post-operative memory’). **Chapters 9** (M. Bruce MacIver) and **10** (Misha Perouansky and Robert Pearce) give considerable detail about the functioning of the hippocampus. Anaesthetics produce loss of recall at lower concentrations than needed to block consciousness or to impair sensory or motor responses significantly. Anaesthetics affect the hippocampus through glutamate and GABA-A pathways, but they also seem to affect exogenous or endogenous ‘drivers’ that tune the hippocampus for processing and storing incoming information. **Chapter 11** (Robert A. Veselis and Kane O. Pryor) presents a taxonomy of memory systems and then demonstrates that the episodic memory system is the one most effected by anaesthetics. Their focus is propofol which produces dense amnesia at low doses while a person is still awake. (I had a recent medical procedure done on me under propofol. I have no memory of the events; and I recovered from the anaesthetic quickly. Was I a ‘zombie’ for that hour?)

### **Basic Findings for Consciousness Science**

I have gone back and forth on this review for months — trying various ways of bringing out its essential findings for consciousness science. I have come back to the book’s Introduction as the best statement of what it is all about. So, this review lays out Hudetz’s and Pearce’s portrayal of anaesthetic modulation of memory and consciousness, but in my own framework — and by minimizing technical details. But first, I will present my own take on an outline of some basic distinctions which are pulled together from various parts of the book.

### *Basic Effects, Mechanisms, and Types of General Anaesthesia*

**Basic Effects:** it is important to realize that ‘anaesthesia’ includes a whole package of somewhat separable major effects and nervous

system mechanisms — some understood better than others. The term ‘general anaesthesia’ suggests that most of these effects occur in tandem. Each of these effects is of profound theoretical interest to ‘consciousness science’, and of profound medical concern to the 100,000 patients (in the U.S. alone) undergoing general anaesthesiology each day. A few basics on these effects, follows.

- **Immobility:** even minor surgery needs to halt basic reflex responses to being cut, probed, and sutured. Under general anaesthesia, there is a need to halt all voluntary and involuntary movement. Immobility involves almost full sedation dosage, with effects at spinal chord and brainstem reflex pathways.
- **Analgesia:** even minor surgery needs to halt pain sensations in the organs being manipulated. Major surgery needs to halt this systemically. This includes inhibiting nicotinic acetylcholine receptors.
- **Blunted autonomic responses:** major surgery needs to blunt fight-or-flight heart rate, blood pressure, and other responses. At least some of this effect involves serotonin 5HT-3 receptors, via the amygdala.
- **Sedation/hypnotic/unconsciousness:** while patients sometimes observe minor surgery on a monitor, major surgery needs to prevent conscious experiencing of the operation. In some surgeries conscious experience is maintained but not stored in memory. Sedation involves the upper brainstem, thalamus, hypothalamus, perhaps basal forebrain, and cortex.
- **Anterograde amnesia:** major surgery needs to prevent (as much as possible) the formation of memories of the operation — with or without unconscious sedation. The halting of memory consolidation is done at about half the dose as for sedation; through direct effects in the hippocampus and pathways into and out of the hippocampus.

#### **Basic Types of General Anaesthetics:**

- **Potent or volatile inhaled:** including ethers and alkanes
- **Gaseous inhaled:** including cyclopropane, nitrous oxide, and xenon
- **Intravenous:** including propofol, etomidate, and ketamine.

**Basic Mechanisms:** the basic mechanisms in general anaesthesia involve, as one might guess, *potentiating inhibitory* receptors (GABA-A and glycine — involving chloride and potassium ion channels) and/or *inhibiting excitatory* receptors (acetylcholine and glutamate — involving sodium and calcium ion channels). Some anaesthetics block glutamate receptors but do not enhance GABA-A;

others have the opposite effect. The long-known GABA-A *phasic* effects from opening chloride ion channels may be responsible for the loss-of-consciousness sedative effects of anaesthetics; while a more recently identified *tonic* GABA-A effect from a different receptor post-synaptically seems implicated in the loss-of-memory amnesic effects. But the complexity continues from here. For instance, ketamine paradoxically suppresses sleep-inducing and increases wake-producing mechanisms of the hypothalamus; while ketamine and nitrous oxide increase the EEG — and are thus called the ‘excitatory pathway to unconsciousness’. Unconsciousness can arise from either depressive or excitatory brain states.

### *The State of the Science Behind Anaesthesia*

We do not fully understand how general anaesthetics ‘suppress the mind’ — which include ‘consciousness erasing’ sedation/hypnotic effects and ‘memory erasing’ anterograde amnesia — because we don’t understand what makes the brain conscious and allows it to store and recollect events *and* we do not know exactly how anaesthetics interfere with these functions. We do understand memory better than consciousness. We also have a marginally better understanding of how anaesthetics prevent mobility in response to a painful stimulus. More understanding is crucial because it has been traditionally assumed that consciousness is lost when motor response is absent — and yet motor response is based on the capacity and motivation to respond, as well as on conscious sensory perception. The ‘dissociative’ anaesthetics are so named because they dissociate between perceptual and volitional consciousness.

### *Anaesthetics Science Contributes to and Learns from Consciousness Science*

Since anaesthesiologists remove and restore human consciousness and memory daily, their methods and experience are crucial to a scientific understanding of consciousness and memory. Chapters 2 through 7 deal with the erasure of consciousness by general anaesthesia and sleep. In turn, understanding key mechanisms in consciousness and memory can help in developing novel drugs with the essential effects but with fewer side effects, as well as in developing novel anaesthetic depth monitors. Lacking a rigorous definition of consciousness, we are not sure what it is that anaesthetics remove. Does the removal of a particular type of brain activity invariably imply the removal of conscious experience? In this book, ‘consciousness’ is variously defined

as specific traits that include physiological and behavioural measures; as subjective experience based on cortical information exchange; and as a state transition in neuronal population activity.

**Sleep:** understanding the brain mechanisms involved in various states of consciousness, such as wakefulness, REM, and slow-wave sleep can help in the development of anaesthetics — because of the similarities and dissimilarities between anaesthesia and sleep. The deep sleep brain is similar to a light plane of anaesthesia — suggesting that anaesthesia uses sleep induction mechanisms — *plus*. Watson *et al.* hypothesize that anaesthetics work by altering the systems that regulate sleep and wakefulness — involving the cortex and a subcortical ‘enabling system’ which includes portions of the thalamus (central medial nucleus), hypothalamus, brain stem (pontine reticular formation, raphe nuclei, and locus ceruleus), and basal forebrain (nucleus basalis, etc.) The interaction between these subcortical circuits and the cortex are crucial for consciousness and memory. Thus it is crucial to understand anaesthetic disruptions of these mechanisms.

**Wakefulness versus Consciousness:** Hudetz states the current neurological distinction between wakefulness and consciousness. Wakefulness derives from arousal, while consciousness assumes subjective experience. Patients in a vegetative state become periodically awake, but probably remain unconscious.

**Synchronization:** there are complex forms of synchronization, de-synchronization, and hyper-synchronization involved in wakefulness versus sleep or anaesthesia, and awareness versus unawareness of stimuli during wakefulness. A deep-sleeping or drowsy brain has *global hyper-synchronization*; an alert brain shows *general de-synchronization* but *patterned gamma-oscillation* synchronization of the functionally related neural areas which carry specific perceptual percepts. Anaesthetics generally increase hyper-synchronization, which disrupts the *patterned synchronization* needed for percepts and general consciousness — so that high frequency oscillations (in gamma and beta range) change to low frequency oscillations, which show greater coherence locally, but disruption of frequency between hemispheres and from anterior to posterior areas of the brain.

**Sensory Stimuli Under Anaesthesia:** several chapters deal with the extent to which the brain preserves primary reactivity to sensory stimuli under anaesthesia. *Feed-forward* projections represent and analyse incoming sensory data; *feedback* selects and interprets information. While anaesthetics alter sensory information input from thalamus to cortex, much of that information makes it to early stages of cortical processing; but changes in synchrony and the disruption of

higher cortical *feedback* to sensory areas leave some cortical processing intact, but without access to consciousness: 'information received but not perceived'. General anaesthetics basically shut down the top-down information flow — which is a hallmark of unconscious sensory processing.

**Subcortical versus Cortical:** there is lively discussion in this book on the extent to which anaesthetics disrupt consciousness by interrupting (a) subcortical *activation* of the cortex; (b) the subcortical role in *cortical integration*; (c) direct suppression of cortical integration at the cortex level — consciousness is lost at about 30–60% reduction in brain metabolism — similar to that found in deep sleep; and/or (d) cortico-thalamic feedback, in which the cortex 'returns the favour' and activates the thalamic areas. Some general anaesthetics have a stronger thalamic effect, while others (such as the volatile anaesthetics) show a stronger cortical effect. The authors tilt toward a 'cortico-centric' approach, but acknowledge the complexity of this issue.

**Cortical integration** is emerging as a major mechanism of consciousness — with its disruption key to general anaesthesia and sleep. Two major approaches to that appear in this book. One is that there may be a specific set of associative cortical areas crucial for consciousness, which is disrupted by anaesthetics: seemingly the posterior parietal association areas involved in multisensory integration, attention, and resting state activity. These are the 'default' areas which have been focused on in recent consciousness conferences. Yet this default system is reduced, but not eliminated, under anaesthesia. The other approach to cortical integration relates to the 'top-down' cortical feedback mechanisms. *Bidirectional* activity between primary sensory and higher association regions are disrupted by general anaesthesia — with the *feedback* direction disrupted first. Yet Hudetz suggests that the frontal cortex may not be crucial for consciousness itself, but for voluntary movement and self consciousness. This statement addresses a long-standing debate in consciousness science.

**Gradual or Sudden Onset:** another way in which consciousness science and anaesthetic science synergize relates to the transition between states of consciousness. Is consciousness suppressed gradually as a 'dimmer switch' or abruptly as an 'on/off switch'? Patients wake up suddenly after anaesthesia; but show a transition of degree of complexity of responsiveness to external stimuli.

*Anaesthetics Science Contributes to and Learns from Memory Science*

A transitional issue between consciousness and memory aspects of ‘suppressing the mind’ is the issue of ‘anaesthesia awareness’ — where the mind is not fully suppressed during anaesthesia. This can refer to cases where ‘consciousness’ and perhaps ‘pain awareness’ were not sufficiently erased (‘intra-operative awareness’); but also refers to post-operative memory of some event during the surgery (‘post-operative memory’). This phenomenon is of great clinical interest.

**Neuronal Plasticity:** the key to memory encoding — and anaesthesia’s disruption of said — is neuronal plasticity, whereby enduring memories are encoded by the patterns of synaptic connections formed as a consequence of experience. The medial temporal lobe (with the hippocampus and its neo-cortical input and output areas) is crucial for episodic memory formation.

**Long Term Potentiation:** anaesthetics impair LTP in the hippocampus at dosages which impair hippocampal-dependent learning and memory. LTP is due to persistent changes in synaptic strength. (The synapses are, of course, connecting spaces between neurons in a sequence. Think of the analogy of throwing a switch that directs a train from going in path A to going in path B. While the switching is done in the hippocampus, with memory consolidation the new pathways are created back in the input perceptual and thought brain areas. New trains — stimuli or thoughts — come along and they are more likely now to be switched onto path B. Converging pathways make up an episodic memory.) There is a three-fold path for changing synaptic strengths, and thus increasing the likelihood of input going in new paths: a) a large barrage of 100 or so stimuli can change synaptic strength; b) a medium barrage of about 20 stimuli in patterns that mimic neuronal activity, such as bursts in the theta frequency (about 5 Hz), also change synaptic strength; and c) a single burst of two to four stimuli which are provided to an active circuit, that is itself generating theta oscillations, can change synaptic strength.

**Theta Rhythm and Memory Encoding:** modest natural and experimental changes in the theta rhythms of the hippocampus impact memory. Anaesthetics have profound effects in shutting down *excitatory* NMDA-glutamate and *enhancing* GABA-A hippocampal receptors — the probable amnesic mechanism for anaesthesia. The working hypothesis now is that at low anaesthesia doses memory is encoded but not consolidated — this seems to be the case under

propofol; while at higher doses, conscious memory is never even encoded.

**Consciousness and Memory:** a mechanism linking ‘consciousness’ and ‘memory encoding and consolidation’ include the following. By shutting down excitatory glutamate and enhancing inhibitory GABA-A circuits, anaesthetics may silence consciousness by affecting *gamma*-wave synchronization in the cortex — and may stop memory-formation by affecting *theta*-wave in relationship to *gamma*-wave synchronization in the hippocampus.

### Final Reflections upon the Book

**Stuart Hameroff:** while the most famous anaesthesiologist at consciousness conferences, Stuart Hameroff, does not have a chapter in this book, he is mentioned a few times — as are some of the components of his explanation for the basis of consciousness. Banks cites him, along with Tononi and Hudetz in terms of a recent convergence of research in anaesthetic mechanisms and the neural basis of consciousness. Banks and Sleigh *et al.* also mention networks of GABA neurons interconnected via chemical inhibitory and electrical synapses (‘gap junctions’) capable of generating synchronous oscillations. Also that high *gamma* (80–200 Hz) is a good predictor of arousal level. Hudetz mentions Hameroff’s quantum phenomena. However, no quantum mechanisms are invoked by these authors.

**Under Hypnosis:** while this book talks about the ‘hypnotic’ effects of anaesthesia — as being ‘put to sleep’ or rendered unconscious — it would be interesting to have an additional chapter (in the second edition) on surgery under hypnotic trance. What does THAT say about consciousness, pain, and memory?

**A Technical Read:** the editors express the hope that even the heavy technical information in the book is written in the style for a wider audience — such as the *JCS/Tucson* toward-a-science-of-consciousness crowd. I would agree, but caution that those trying to get the wider ‘consciousness’ picture need to wade through some very technical chapters. Yet, it is worth the wade!

**A Publication Suggestion:** Having waded through the technical chapters, and having attempted to paint the wider picture from my wade, I have a publication suggestion for Hudetz and/or Pearce. Perhaps they should write an even more unified-view follow-up book that covers the same basic territory but without the gaps and redundancies that come from 10 chapters written by 18 authors. I am not suggesting a ‘For Dummies’ book, but one that expands their Chapter 1 into a

unified book with the broader 'consciousness' and 'memory' communities in mind. Anthologies and single-voiced books have different values.

**Beata Stawarska**

*Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology*

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ISBN: 978-0-8214-1886-4

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Beata Stawarska's insightful book, *Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology*, explains how philosophy, sociolinguistics, and developmental psychology have failed to adequately address the importance of second-person relations for subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Phenomenology has a rich tradition of attention to the primacy of intersubjectivity. However, Stawarska argues that the manner in which it explores intersubjectivity has remained too wedded to a transcendental and thus solitary and egocentric perspective. In order to understand the I–you connection, philosophers must accept the relevance of natural experience. *Dialogical Phenomenology* is an important work; it demonstrates not only a compelling thesis about the need for dialogical phenomenology, but is also a compelling example of the best of interdisciplinary research.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one, Classical Phenomenology, surveys the traditional Husserlian phenomenological approach to the ego and intersubjectivity. Importantly, Stawarska underlines the strong tradition in Husserlian phenomenology that separates natural and transcendental phenomenology. The 'I' in transcendental phenomenology does not permit everyday communications with others as being relevant to the philosophical project. Contemporary phenomenologists such as Dan Zahavi (2001) have argued that Husserl's work gives us a powerful account of primary intersubjectivity and thus avoids the charge of solipsism laid against some of Husserl's texts. However, Stawarska argues that such a move does not avoid the problems with the line drawn between natural and transcendental phenomenology. Without an approach that allows for the natural world, face-to-face communication remains part of psychology, anthropology, or sociology and is not part of the philosophical project. Zahavi is

critical of limiting intersubjectivity to being a matter of linguistic exchanges, but Stawarska notes that dialogical phenomenology is not solely about linguistic I–you relations. Dialogical phenomenology concerns itself broadly with relations that require a certain communicative position. Ultimately, Stawarska argues that Husserl’s phenomenology remains rooted in a view where intersubjectivity can only be seen as a community of I-subjects and cannot discuss the I–you relationship meaningfully.

The second and more extensive part, *The Multidiscipline of Dialogical Phenomenology*, helps to bolster dialogical phenomenology as a path out of the isolation of transcendental phenomenology. Ignoring the primacy of I–you relations has seriously limited the scope of our understanding of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Since the sharp division between natural and transcendental phenomenology is rejected, Stawarska appeals to other disciplines to provide further evidence and examination of I–you communication.

The first chapter of the second section is devoted to sociolinguistics; it draws upon the polycentric tradition. A sense of placement, both temporal and spatial, accompanies the use of deictic pronouns. The polycentric tradition argues that one should avoid thinking this placement is primarily an ego situating itself first and then placing others. Rather, the use of ‘I’ and ‘you’ is always about the relationship between the two. When ‘I’ and ‘you’ pronouns are used they produce roles for the speaker and addressee and do not refer to a pre-existing reference. Although not a universally agreed upon interpretation of pronoun use in sociolinguistics, this view highlights how it is in the act of speaking and communicating that the ‘I’ is created and not that language is merely a set of signs referring to non-spoken thoughts of the speaking subject. Citing Émile Benveniste and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Stawarska demonstrates that the I–you, the second person, is often lost in the first- and third-person discourse that dominates philosophical discussion of our relations to others. Too often, we reduce the living, second-person speaking relationship to one of an ego and an alter-ego. Thus, Jean-Paul Sartre and others are right to note that the other is objectified by being made into a third-person — a type of thing — for the ego to consider. However, according to Stawarska, Sartre is mistaken in thinking that this is the only way we relate to others. Stawarska’s project is to demonstrate that if theoreticians liberate themselves from thinking solely in first- and third-person terms, intersubjectivity is primarily about face-to-face second-person relationships and not a matter of a set of solitary egos forever doomed to objectify the other. This discussion foreshadows

the chapters on Martin Buber and the epilogue where dialogical phenomenology is described as being not just an epistemological project, but also a political and ethical one.

As in the earlier discussion, the following chapter on developmental perspectives both critiques some of the traditional perspectives for isolating the individual in an egocentric, first-person perspective and elaborates on research that upholds the dialogical phenomenological project. Developmental psychology has long focused on tracing an individual child's development, due in large part to Jean Piaget's long shadow. Although there are some social-centred theories of development, such as in Lev Vygotsky's work, these remain marginal to the bulk of developmental theory. Stawarska highlights important experimental research on early sociality that shows how critical pre-linguistic face-to-face interactions are for development. Early infant studies, such as those in neonate imitation, indicate that primary intersubjectivity is connected to the I-you relations we engage in from birth. Stawarska ties this research in with work on language acquisition building upon the previous chapter. She writes of how the child's sense of self does not belong to some kind of inner sensation or awareness alone, but is 'consistently monitored, interpreted, and influenced by the others' (p. 133). She continues to note that 'organic *self-awareness* and *being addressed* by the other in the context of the shared social world intersect and intertwine with such promiscuity that no inner private realm could be neatly separated from the other public world, and no purely mental self could be effectively severed from the mundane materiality of communication' (p. 133, emphasis in original).

The next two chapters return to philosophy by primarily focusing on Martin Buber's work and the philosophy of dialogue. Stawarska draws our attention to the need to think about sociality in a non-subjectivist manner. The tendency in philosophy is to think that grammar based on logic and thought guides our social relations. Avoiding a discussion of living speech in philosophy has caused philosophers to begin all philosophical projects from the solitary first-person perspective. Buber highlights how a primordial duality is different from both an egocentric view and an intersubjective discussion of a community of egos. Buber's work demonstrates that the I-you relation is primary in human life and in human thought. Some critics, such as Emmanuel Levinas, suggest that Buber's accounts objectify and reduce the other to sameness, but Stawarska argues that this criticism is based in the philosophical prejudice that assumes that discussion of the other is always objectifying and thus totalizing.

Stawarska concludes with some provocative comments on the prescriptive value of dialogical phenomenology. Its value is not just for our understanding of intersubjectivity, language, and development but also underscores the ethical need for the dialogic perspective. For example, feminist theorists explore how, in discourse, a seemingly neutral, third-person perspective often forecloses the possibility for the speech of the other and reinforces the status quo. If we draw more attention to living speech where the I–you relationship takes place in the second-person we provide a real space for living exchange.

*Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology* moves beyond the tradition of Cartesian-Kantian philosophy through one of its progeny, transcendental phenomenology, toward an interdisciplinary project, dialogical phenomenology. Rather than critiquing the traditional modern subject on philosophical grounds alone, Stawarska indicates how part of the problem is both the isolation of the solitary ego in philosophy and the method of philosophy, psychology, and linguistics. This book is highly recommended as an important beginning for a new tradition that of multidisciplinary dialogical phenomenology.

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