

# Mediation

**Guest Editors: Richard Stone and Takeshi Morisato**

**Deadline: August 31, 2019**

Is there anything that is truly given immediately? This question seems to be of crucial importance for Phenomenology, a field perhaps known most principally for its attempt to return directly to the “things themselves.” The seeming simplicity of the idea is appealing: after all, where better for us to start in any philosophical investigation than with things as they appear to us in their most pure or “immediate” state? When put in its historical context as well, Husserl’s phenomenological project could even be interpreted as a breath of fresh air in the midst of the environment of early 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy in comparison with the seemingly constructive philosophy of its Neo-Kantian contemporaries. Indeed, rather than starting with a merely systematic account of our cognition and reality, is it not better for us to first return to the world just as it is given to us in perception or intuition in order to have a more faithful account of these issues?

Even if we say as much, however, the truth of the matter is not as simple as to allow us to assume such an immediately given perception or intuition of the things themselves. In this sense, we find within the earliest developments of the phenomenological tradition Heidegger’s criticism of Husserl and his subsequent insistence that the act of interpretation cannot be ahistorical points to this fact. Indeed, in this sense, even our understanding of what is meant by the things themselves must be mediated by a specific historical or cultural tradition. Outgoing from this, we furthermore find a long tradition of hermeneutic phenomenologists, as exemplified by those like Gadamer or Ricoeur, and their attempt to more explicitly spell out how the intermediary act of interpretation makes philosophy itself possible. Moreover, we can see that – in spite of the criticisms that he faced from both within the phenomenological tradition and from some modern scholars – it is not fair to claim that Husserl merely assumed that the idea of the immediately given is unproblematic. Indeed, as can be seen in Husserl’s discussions of what given-ness and intuition mean, a careful discussion of what is entailed by these words is central to any phenomenological investigation, and thus cannot be taken for granted.

This is not at all to imply that these problems only manifested themselves in the phenomenological tradition. To the contrary, we find that the all-encompassing work of Hegel provided the most extensive theory of mediation in all of its possible declinations. Furthermore, debates between the dialecticians who followed him concerning the nature and meaning of mediation – found in the work of, to name but a few scholars, Marx, Lukács, Horkheimer, and Adorno – impacted 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century social, political, and scientific theory at a profound level. Outside of the Western tradition as well, we find in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan an attempt to work out the problems of immediacy in intuition at both an epistemological and ontological level that was synchronic to (and partially reliant on) the phenomenological work done in Europe. Indeed, in modern Japanese philosophy, beginning with Nishida Kitarō’s early philosophical attempts to start from “direct” or “pure” experience in order to describe or access reality itself, and including Tanabe Hajime’s attempt at a theory of “absolute mediation,” we can find a long and detailed process to rethink some of the “current” issues of the phenomenologists while simultaneously struggling with the issues left by Hegel, all the while continuing to look back to traditional Japanese sources for help.

Nor is this to imply that the problem of immediacy and mediation is not a current issue. This is clearly

evident when we consider the importance of Sellars' attempt to bring analytic philosophy from its "Humean" stage to a "Kantian" one by ridding it of the so-called "Myth" of immediate and pre-linguistic meaning of given sense-data as the source of empirical knowledge. More recently, the analytic turn towards Hegel at the hands of authors like McDowell and Brandom has taken this discussion of immediacy and linguistic mediation to an even higher level. Yet, in the ranks of both modern analytic philosophers and phenomenologists, we still find many scholars who have attempted to demonstrate that there is a need to admit a pre-linguistic or pre-conceptual dimension of experience.

This debate furthermore has wide-ranging practical consequences. For instance, we can ask quite clearly if I can have an immediate experience of other minds, as would be the case for Scheler. Otherwise, do such experiences require linguistic or theoretical mediation? Thinking differently, should we follow Levinas in trying to reject the language of directness and mediation altogether when discussing other minds? Is this even possible? Even before discussing *other* minds, can I even have a direct experience of my own mind, or do I need some kind of theoretical or psychiatric mediation to understand myself? Otherwise, is my self-understanding reliant on my socio-political environment? We could imagine, for instance, that the influence of one's political systems or local media systems influence their self-understanding, but in what ways could this be the case? In the opposite direction, how does the mediatory step of information filtration through news agencies affect our ability to grasp that political environment itself? Moreover, how is our attempt to participate in this political environment mediated by representative or local forms of government? Or otherwise, how does our culture, linguistic, or historical background (in the most broadly conceived sense), mediate our perception, attitudes, or understanding of what is given to us "directly"? How does this effect our ability to communicate effectively, particularly with those of other backgrounds?

This issue of *Metodo* invites authors from different philosophical fields (epistemology, metaphysics, political philosophy, etc.), as well as from different philosophical traditions and perspectives (the phenomenological, the dialectical, the analytical, etc.), to discuss the multi-faceted issue of *mediation*. Both contributions that consider one specific aspect of this problem as well as contributions that approach the topic from a multi-disciplinary standpoint are welcome in this issue.

Contributors are invited to consider some of the following sample, but not exhaustive, topics below:

- Mediation, immediacy, intuition, and the "myth of the given"
- Hermeneutic/interpretive mediation
- Mediation in communication theories
- Mediated self-consciousness/self-awareness
- Mediated knowledge of other minds
- Mediation and political theory

Abstracts and papers must be submitted to the following e-mail addresses:

[metodo@sdivigpress.org](mailto:metodo@sdivigpress.org)

Submitted papers (in English, German, French, Spanish or Italian) must follow the basic principles of *Metodo* and follow all Author Guidelines. The editorial board highly suggests all authors writing in a non-native language to have their texts proofread before submission. All contributions will undergo anonymous peer-review by two referees.

The final deadline for submissions will be August 31, 2019.