

**Saulius Geniusas, *The Phenomenology of Pain*** (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019).

*The Phenomenology of Pain* is a remarkable book, which relaunches and renews the phenomenological approach to the irreducible facticity of embodied suffering. There is a plethora of literature on pain, yet little has been written on pain experience. In effect, we now know a great deal about neurological mechanisms correlated with pain, and this knowledge often enable us to weaken or even eliminate pain, yet we know little about pain experience. *The Phenomenology of Pain* aims to counteract this limitation. The book is guided by the three tasks. It aims to 1) establish a phenomenological methodology, which would be appropriate to the study of pain; 2) give an account of what the experience of pain is, and 3) demonstrate the relevance of this explanation for philosophical anthropology.

Methodologically, the book is grounded in classical phenomenological principles: phenomenological epoché, the phenomenological reduction and imaginative variations. In an original and hermeneutically relevant way, the author supplements the method of imaginative variations with that of factual variations. Such a supplementation allows the author to identify his phenomenological approach as *dialogical phenomenology*. “Phenomenology need not be the victim of its own purity: it must be open to the developments in other sciences—natural, social, and human—as well as to the advances in literature, poetry, cinema, and fine arts. Insofar as phenomenology is cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural, it merits being called *dialogical*” (12).

Building on the basis of such a methodological orientation, Geniusas develops a new phenomenologically oriented conception of pain: *pain is an aversive bodily feeling with a distinct experiential quality, which can only be given in original first-hand experience, either as a feeling-sensation or as an emotion*. This conception entails many components and throughout the study, Geniusas carefully explicates their meaning. What does it mean to claim that pain is embodied? What can be said about the temporality of pain? What does it mean to qualify pain as a feeling? These are the questions that guide his analysis.

According to Geniusas, the concept of the *person*, as developed in classical phenomenology, provides a solid basis to conceptualize embodied subjectivity (and not the physiological body) as the subject of pain, and even more importantly, it enables us to analyze the de-personalizing and re-personalizing nature of pain experience. Moreover, the study demonstrates that a phenomenological approach, which recognizes the life-world as the ultimate horizon of pain experience, enables us to conceptualize such processes as somatization and psychologization, which so often affect the human experience of chronic pain.

Such a way of conceptualizing pain experience carries a number of important implications. First, it enables us to recognize that philosophical reflections on pain can provide us with fundamental insights into the nature and limits of human existence. Second, it enables us to pursue a dialogue

between phenomenology and other disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, cultural psychopathology, history, psychoanalysis, sociology, etc.

Geniusas is the first to have developed a systematic and comprehensive phenomenology of pain, only fragments of which had been available before the publication of this book. Any future philosophical investigations of pain will have to pay very serious attention to this study. *The Phenomenology of Pain* is an original, thorough and subtle book, which articulates its deepest philosophical presuppositions, and which spells out the fundamental phenomenological principles that must guide phenomenologically-oriented pain research. It sets a new standard for philosophical and phenomenological reflections on our own experience and marks Geniusas as a leader in the area of phenomenology of pain.