

# preface

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The Society for Phenomenology and Media has grown rapidly in the last three years, but growing pains have been minimal. Most likely the society's success stems from its neutrality in academic ideological disputes, refusal to become involved in the contentious backbiting and personal rivalries that degrade the contemporary pursuit of philosophy and make the notion of a "phenomenological movement" pretentious, and its policy of accepting work from a cross-section of phenomenological approaches—even though these approaches are at times contradictory and mutually exclusive. Although there are no plans to limit inclusiveness, this openness has been at the expense of the society's focus.

SPM does not meet as a collection of jousting intellectuals. This is not to say that members agree on fundamental issues, but our general purpose of providing colleagues a *glimpse* into what is being done individually has been exceptionally valuable as we try to sort out media issues and approach them from a broadly phenomenological perspective.

Based on conference success, SPM now needs to provide an avenue for follow-up among members and longterm project. If we are unable to begin work on an on-going phenomenological project together, then we are not, in fact, a society at all, but simply another occasion where academics air their pet concerns, fulfill their publication requirements, socialize with buddies, and day trip—all of which is fine, though falling somewhat short of grandiose claims made for phenomenology from Husserl to the present. This work should be developed as an addition to, not a replacement of what the society is already doing—and serve to bring us together as scientists and researchers.

Radical differences in member's approaches have resulted in little hostility, backbiting, or grandstanding. In the three annual conferences the society has held, participants have only occasionally entered into hostile exchange. It is my believe that these incidences would have occurred with those individuals at any conference they attended. In these cases, the exchanges were short-lived, the overwhelming number of participants simply moving on to what we had gathered to accomplish: make comments, observations, and ask questions of clarification and reason.

Despite my contempt for such talk, as the president of the society I am privy to the soft words of those who would attempt to maneuver against others. When such matters come up in private (rumor loves darkness), I understand these incidents of flaring ego-bursts as what they appear to be. Assuredly, I am not talking about the small talk that goes on over beer and whose pettiness defines our common humanity, shop talk that delights me as much as it does others, chitchat that does not aim to be destructive. But the society can do much more.

The hope to discover truth, not manufacture it, need not be a difficult childbirth. In order to address the needs of SPM to gain cohesion, the Outis Project has been initiated. Regular, annual SPM conferences will continue as before, former success mandating that they continue in the same format and manner as the past three. There is no need for change, only one to grow. To that end, next year's conference in Puebla, Mexico, will add an additional day, making a total of four.

The general topic of next year's conference is "global communications: transnational and multinational considerations." Other than adding one day, the informal delivery of "presentations" of papers, limiting papers to 20 minutes, followed by 20 minutes of discussion in a symposium setting, will be maintained. These papers, for the most part, are scholarly and academic investigations that rely on or elucidate the work of well-know phenomenologists, although there are also papers that attempt phenomenological investigation of media experience. Conference planning is now also well underway for 2003, where the society will meet just outside of Helsinki in Arcata, Finland, May 14-May 17. The general topic of that conference is "mobile communication."

The problem of focus still remains. In order to address that need, a second annual conference is being added for the Outis Project. The idea for this project came up after the second SPM conference in 2000, when members noted that, despite the success of the conferences, the society had no long-range goal.

The Outis Project is a group of SPM members who will work together in the study of deception in all its facets. *Outis* is Greek for "nobody," taken from Odysseus' name-trick in the cave of Polyphemus. It was chosen for no other reason than I consider The Odyssey to be the root work on deception in Western civilization—and Odysseus the seminal liar of Western culture.

Although I have written on this topic, developing a line of thought and cluster of ideas around the notion of "the Odyssean Complex," my interest in deception goes back to studies with J. V. McGill in San Francisco. This interest was reinvigorated with the publication of Alison Leigh Brown's *Subjects of Deceit: A Phenomenology of Lying* in 1998. What began as an idea for a review of the work resulted in the creation of the Society for Phenomenology and Media, of which Alison is today vice president.

At present, Outis Project coordinators have been selected for Eastern and Western Europe, North America, Mexico and South America. Regional conferences are now being planned for Cracow, Poland in September, 2002, and Kiev, Ukraine in June, 2003. Additional conferences are being planned for South American, Mexico, and Asia. Although each of these conferences is "regional," they are international in character, open to all SPM members. The purpose of these conferences is to present first drafts of encyclopedia entries, approximately 3000 words, so

they must be regionally convenient as well as international. North American and Western European members need to remember that the economic differential between their own income and that of colleagues in other parts of the world is enormously wide, meaning that a genuine international approach to the topic must, above all, consider the convenience of the pocketbook. The same differential exists between senior faculty and junior faculty and graduate students. Of course, all SPM members are welcome to attend any or all of the society's conferences.

The Outis Project is a long-term investigation with a publication, *The Encyclopedia of Deception*, as its goal. Entries from a broad spectrum of disciplines in the humanities, arts, and sciences are to be included. The scope of these pieces by philosophers, literary, film, art scholars, medical scientists, and others is intended to be as international as possible, yielding an encyclopedia that will serve as a unifying research tool for further investigation as well as contributing new work on the philosophy of deception.

SPM is now in the process of establishing a complex website that includes not only all of the routine functions and links (membership, registration, events, on-line editions of past volumes of *Glimpse*, etc.), but also two post-graduate seminars available to members as part of the Cyber-Institute for Phenomenological Studies. The first seminar, "Intersubjectivity and Interactivity," is planned to open in January, 2002. The second seminar deals with deception and is scheduled to begin in July, 2002. These seminars are intended to further fulfill the need for the society's focus and direction.

Beginning with the 2002 publication of *Glimpse*, the SPM annual publication will become a Spanish-English bilingual publication. The focus of phenomenologists in the United States on German and French philosophy to the neglect of other traditions is regrettable, the attention to other ideological traditions long overdue. The invitation of Professors Bina Gupta and J. N. Mohanty as keynoters at this year's conference was an important step in this direction, one that broke with the Eurocentrism that has so distorted our views of the world, reducing conference after philosophical conference—not only those of SPM—into weak and rather narrow versions of German and French cultural studies. The inclusiveness of this move does not only nor essentially mean that SPM is becoming more diverse and more multicultural, which it is, but that the search for universals and essential meaning needs to step outside of the European-North American imperial narrative altogether—again, not because the society will become simple another example of "multicultural diversity," at best an ideological eclecticism, but that understanding and investigation of universality and essentiality is not one restricted to Europe. It is but another example of European-North American chauvinism to consider "post-colonial" rejection of their own former colonial and imperial erroneous claims of universality as a

philosophical or political breakthrough or “clearing of the air.” While it is evident that former European-North American claims of universality and essentiality were illegitimate efforts to prop up their own cultural peculiarities and fetishes, these are hardly reasons to throw out the universal intellectual baby with the dirty colonial-imperial water. In this sense, post-colonial studies is better called “neo-colonial studies.” What universals and essences are to be discovered in the traditions and narratives of former colonies remain to be seen. It is my belief that these discoveries will come not only from contemporary traditions and cultures, but also from those that have passed out of existence but have left a legible record, as in the cases of the Maya and Inca peoples that confront us.

Paul Majkut, President