

Review of Stephen Käufer and Anthony Chemero, "Phenomenology. An Introduction"

Citation for published version (APA):

Doomen, J. (2023). Review of Stephen Käufer and Anthony Chemero, "Phenomenology. An Introduction". *Philosophy in Review*, 43(1), 25-26. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1098276ar>

DOI:

[10.7202/1098276ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/1098276ar)

Document status and date:

Published: 05/02/2023

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

<https://www.ou.nl/taverne-agreement>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

pure-support@ou.nl

providing details and we will investigate your claim.

Downloaded from <https://research.ou.nl/> on date: 04 Nov. 2024

Open Universiteit
www.ou.nl



Stephen Käufer and Anthony Chemero. *Phenomenology: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition. Polity Press 2021. 288 pp. \$69.95 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781509540655); \$24.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781509540662).

This is the second edition of *Phenomenology: An Introduction*, which has been significantly expanded, and includes new material; the book has also been reorganized. Stephen Käufer and Anthony Chemero do not explore phenomenology in isolation from other disciplines, and in particular explore cognate issues in (cognitive) psychology. This has two advantages: first, some of the origins and development of phenomenology are explained and clarified, and second, the contributions of phenomenologists are made clear to those readers who are skeptical of phenomenology's relevance beyond philosophy.

The extensive discussion of psychological theories and ideas distinguishes the book from many other introductions to the field, which limit themselves to phenomenology. Käufer and Chemero concentrate on Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, but they complement their overview with said scientific excursions, although this term is not to imply that what is said is insubstantial, as individual chapters are devoted to Gestalt psychology, ecological psychology and (artificial) intelligence. This does mean that some compromises are necessary insofar as the book's scope is concerned. 'Minor' thinkers – Meinong and Twardowski, for example – do not receive attention in the short treatment of non-existent objects (122-3). The book differs significantly, then, from an exposition such as Dermot Moran's *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2000).

Fortunately, the authors' choices do not come at the expense of what their book purports to be, namely, an introduction to phenomenology. True, it is not possible to give specific attention to the differences between Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* and his *Ideen*, for example, but this is a general introduction, which does not require such in-depth analyses, which might overwhelm those who are new to phenomenology, so precisely those who are the intended audience.

The authors manage to get to the point, not wasting time on unnecessary information (biographical or otherwise), and to present matters straightforwardly, using helpful examples as illustrations, which are necessary to elucidate the ideas of the phenomenologists that the book presents. Those ideas are not invariably easy to grasp, due to their oftentimes abstract nature, which is compounded by jargon of phenomenologists' own making, and the given that the differences between phenomenologists' individual theories are often slight and thus not always easy to distinguish. Fortunately, the style of the authors themselves is far easier to follow than that of the philosophers they discuss. Käufer and Chemero sometimes repeat certain points, but this is not problematic and may even be welcome for those who have never read anything about phenomenology before. Such readers need not have any particular background in philosophy or psychology to be able to appreciate the book, although it will presumably not be read by many students who have no acquaintance of the basic ideas of thinkers such as Descartes and Kant, who have, in different ways, influenced phenomenologists but are at the same time phenomenologists' intellectual adversaries. If the book is to be used in curricula, it would be advisable to make it reading



material for students who have completed (at least) the first year, as they are (presumed to be) able to place the ideas they encounter in the context of the history of philosophy. The beginning of the book identifies these students as the intended readers (1).

The book might have benefited from a critical discussion of some phenomenological perspectives, so as to present a balanced account, but this is a minor issue since the authors do not truly promote phenomenology (thus reducing the need to raise critical points by way of counterbalance). Moreover, an introduction is not the proper place for a detailed inquiry, which is rather to be undertaken by readers themselves (among others), if they are willing and able to do so. The authors have rightly been restrictive in making their own views with respect to the phenomenological and psychological analyses apparent, with the exception of chapter 11, where they engage in Dreyfus's criticism of interpretations of artificial intelligence stemming from cognitive science.

Given the attention devoted to psychology, which covers approximately half the book, a more apt title would have been *Phenomenology and Phenomenological Psychology: An Introduction*, or even *Phenomenological Psychology: An Introduction*, in line with the following remark: 'The distinction between philosophy and psychology is relatively recent and phenomenology blurs the lines between the two' (140). Because of the close relation between philosophy and psychology (or phenomenology and psychology proper), the book does not read as a 'typical' introduction to phenomenology (like an introduction to, for example, rationalism or German idealism), which may be justified by pointing to the multidisciplinary character of phenomenology that has already been mentioned. In any event, this makes the book stand out in comparison with other introductions, and as such it is an interesting read for those who are looking for an exposition of phenomenology that pays as much attention to psychology as to philosophy.

Jasper Doomen, Open University of the Netherlands