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Foreword

RICHARD KEARNEY

The title of this work comes from a closing line in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. He is speaking of the future of phenomenology as a promise of things to come—a sentiment already anticipated in an opening claim of the book: "In phenomenology possibility stands higher than actuality." For Heidegger this spelled a revolutionary reversal of the old metaphysical paradigm of being as presence, substance, and act and a radical openness to new kinds of questioning.

The first generation of French phenomenologists was deeply influenced by this opening. Or, to be more precise, by the momentous legacy of the three Hs: Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. Lévinas and Sartre were the first to translate the exciting philosophical messages arriving from Germany in the late twenties and early thirties. Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty took up the running in the forties and fifties, with Derrida, Irigaray, and others refining and refashioning the legacy of the three Hs well into the sixties and seventies. If the first great wave of phenomenology was decidedly German, the second was ingeniously French. But the promise of phenomenology was far from exhausted by these two extraordinary generations. A third was soon to follow, as the current volume powerfully demonstrates. Covering an important span of thinking and writing from the 1980s to the present day, the authors interviewed in this volume show how phenomenology's "quiet power of the possible" had unsuspected strengths and resources that mobilized a whole new set of philosophical conversations. Surviving both the structuralist and poststructuralist challenges, this emerging generation
of French thinkers, extending well into the third millennium, has managed to open doors to hitherto undeveloped areas of questioning—theological, anthropological, analytic, and aesthetic.

Jean-Yves Lacoste speaks of phenomenology as a form of “hospitality” and this volume certainly bears this out. There is a remarkable readiness in the interlocutors featured here to engage with what might be called “limit questions”—those of Life (Barbaras and Henry) and Death (Da-tur), of God (Lacoste, Chrétiens, Falque) and Gift (Marion), of Language (Benoist) and Being (Romano and Courtine). And to do so in new and interdisciplinary ways unwatched in previous generations, with the possible exception of Paul Ricoeur. This interdisciplinary character lends itself to a dialogical approach—not only between French and German voices over three generations of phenomenology but also between Continental and Anglo-American thought (Romano and Benoist), between hermeneutic ontology and the philosophy of language, and, more generally, between the claims of reason (phenomenology as science) and imagination (phenomenology as art). Indeed, one of the things that have distinguished contemporary French phenomenology since the 1980s has been a willingness to embrace a philosophy of problems rather than proper names. And this is yet a further indication of how the new generation of phenomenologists remains hospitable to the possible. Defying the restriction of metaphysical rationality to a priori normativity—of subjectivity or objectivity—those engaged in dialogue here keep the phenomenological conversation open to ever-new ways of hosting and responding to the “things themselves.” This is phenomenology at the frontiers—that is, at its best.

Tarek Dika and Chris Hackett have done sterling service in bringing these novel developments and assessments of phenomenology to our attention. And in doing so in a manner less disputatious than conversational, less abstract than engaging, thus translating what are often highly complex, dense, and even imponderable speculations into the accessible language of question and answer. The editors have succeeded in making these remarkable French thinkers more available to an English-language readership in a timely and compelling fashion.

Note