

Book Review: Sunnie D. Kidd and James W. Kidd, *Experiential Method: Qualitative Research in the Humanities Using Metaphysics and Phenomenology* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990).

It is not too much to say that this is a highly conscientious piece of scholarly work; it is one full of ingenuity, originality and insight. It serves for any and every *human* as the subtitle indicates, for both the academic and non-academic alike. It may seem to be deceptively lucid and clear in the way of exposition; yet for those who look beyond the surface into what stands behind, it is enlighteningly thought-provocative. Had it not been for the writer's modesty, the work itself could well have been subtitled as the "Applied Logic of the Humanities," a work reminiscent of Cassirer's "*zur Logik der Geisteswissenschaften*" decades ago.

While sampling its features, I am, first of all, impressed with the carefully, deliberately well-chosen key-concept "experiential" in the title. Taken in the full sense of the term, it is equivalent to what the Germans might call "*Erlebnis*" rather than "*Erfahrung*." The "experiential" approach to method serves as a kind of "open sesame," so to speak, to all thinking people the world over, ancient or modern, East or West.

Next, with regard to its distinctive features, I should like to call attention to the subtle but important distinction that the writers have drawn between the "reflexive" and the "reflective." The emphasis obviously is laid on the former, thus by-passing the use of expressions like "pre-reflective," so frequently found in modern writings in the philosophy of mind or consciousness. For the prefixes "pre-" or "post-" carry alike more or less a dualistic undertone, as it were, in term of temporal priority. What is at stake here is not a matter of temporal priority in terms of sequential series; rather it is a matter of axiological primacy that concerns us above all. We need a different model for guidance: that of "radiation," instead of the "linear progression." The latter has misled the Western mode of thought for over two thousand years!

Closely related to the above observation is the third one: that the writers have treated "intuition" in a new light, in that it is used in a sense far broader and deeper than the one given by Kant or even by Bergson: without the Kantian disparaging implication on the one hand and the Bergsonian dichotomy of "intuition vs. intellect" on the other. It echoes the Popperian view that intuition is the alpha and the omega of all knowledge and experience. Even with Cassirer, the unsympathetic critic of Bergson, the primacy of "primary fusion" of the symbolic must be duly recognized. The idea of "primary fusion" fits in best with the writer's contention on the *primacy of intuitionality* over intentionality. This is a theme that might sound rather disturbing, especially for those orthodox phenomenologists à la Husserl; yet nevertheless it is exactly where the writer's ingenuity resides;

for such an apparently radical reversal of stress would make people think on the fundamental issues of what makes human knowledge possible. The underlying motif that runs through the pages parallels the Hartmann thesis that metaphysics and epistemology imply each other. From the fusionist perspective in the form of “merge and emerge,” intuition is to be treated neither as infra-rational, nor supra-rational but trans-rational. It is integral. Such an interpretation transcends the Kantian view while enriching and completing the Bergsonian. The status of primacy allowed intuition, rather than intention, is one of the revolutionary contributions the writers have made to the bulk of existential phenomenological literature since Husserl. On this account among others, I assume, the writers deserve high credit. They have touched upon the boundary of meta-metaphysics and meta-phenomenology as well.

The six presuppositions herein explicitly formulated and systematically traced out stand as the best witness for the intrinsic worth of the work itself. In sum, it is a highly valuable research project painstakingly carried out, theoretically sound in groundwork and practically easy to apply, despite or just because of the deceptively lucid and clear style of presentation. It will make a significant contribution in the area of the Humanities.

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