

Foreword

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It is my honour to introduce this fifth volume of the Stellenbosch Socratic Journal. The SSJ was created in 2021 to give students in the Department of Philosophy at Stellenbosch University the opportunity and guidance to publish in a peer-reviewed academic journal. To further that goal, the SSJ is now hosted on Journals.ac.za. This brings our publication practices in line with industry standards, and articles published in the SSJ will now form part of the global academic network. We are grateful to the Stellenbosch University Library for this opportunity.

In recent years, the humanities have faced escalating threat as Large Language Models — or their vendors' marketing — give the impression that they can fulfil more and more niches of knowledge work. It is thus heartening to see stellar work done by young scholars, a selection of which is compiled in this volume. The collaborative effort of review and editing has been a rewarding endeavour. The articles span a variety of topics, which the editorial team and I believe will interest both the academic and the interested lay reader.

In "From Decolonising Sexual Violence Discourse to Investigating Primate Coexistence", I interview Louise du Toit on the occasion of her professorial inaugural lecture. In this wide-ranging discussion, Du Toit reflects on her journey into philosophy, how she became the first woman full-professor in the Stellenbosch University Philosophy department, and how her philosophical interests have grown over the years. She describes a career punctuated by philosophical provocations that shaped her thoughts and work, from the rape crisis identified in the wake of South Africa's political transition, to the intriguing phenomenon of two neighbouring towns with radically different interspecies relations.

In "Temporal Finitude, Embodied Perception and Ethical Call", Michael Lasker presents a way towards a bridge between three core thinkers of Phenomenology, whose philosophies have generally been considered largely incompatible, despite probing the same question — the encounter with "the Other". Lasker lucidly describes the perspectives of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas, including both the differences and similarities among these philosophers. He argues that these perspectives are complementary rather than conflicting, and points the way towards a possible synthesis.

With "From Deficiency to Difference", Tiffany Candice Lee offers an enlightening corrective to the study of Autism. She describes the limitations of Classical Phenomenology, and how the same limitations of this approach also manifest in Autism research. In particular, Classical Phenomenology and the traditional medical model both neglect the influence of social structures on individual lived experience. Lee argues for the value of Critical Phenomenology as a lens through which the Autistic lived experience can be better understood not as pathology but as difference.

Abigail Iris Backman-Daniels, in "Science Fiction as a Guide for AI, Personhood, and Moral Consideration", explores the moral dilemmas of the possibly-near future using a suitable but oft-neglected tool, science fiction. She draws on case studies from well-known works of science fiction, including works by Isaac Asimov and the popular television series *Black Mirror*, to illustrate some pitfalls of more conservative, human-centred notions of personhood. Backman-Daniels provokes us to reflect on the contradictions in our moral intuitions regarding non-human intelligence and sentience.

In “Feminism (Also) for Men”, Berno van Zijl presents Adriana Cavarero’s *In Spite of Plato*, a feminist re-reading of Plato in which she critiques the Western philosophical male–female and soul–body hierarchies. He describes Cavarero’s re-readings of characters such as Penelope (*The Odyssey*) as well as the philosophy of Socrates/Plato, which equates the male with the soul and female with the body, and which unjustly elevates the former and denigrates the latter. Van Zijl argues for the relevance of this work for philosophy as a whole, specifically *also* for men, who might otherwise be inclined to dismiss feminism as “for women”.

Finally, in “The strategic role white victimhood narratives play in maintaining white supremacy”, Francis-Lynne Raper offers a topical and urgent analysis of the Afrikaner “refugees” welcomed by the Trump administration to the USA. She argues that the maintenance of whiteness and white supremacy is the principal motivation for this phenomenon, and that it is political gain, not genuine concern, which is the ultimate goal.

I would like to thank the co-editors, as well as the reviewers, for their valuable contributions to the journal. It is through their expertise in a wide range of philosophical fields that the compilation of this volume was at all possible. The co-editors, in particular, were essential in maintaining a high standard of quality. I would also like to thank each author for granting us the privilege of editing their work, and congratulate them on a successful publication.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my inspiration for the cover of this and previous years’ volumes. The cover pattern of Volume 3 (2023) was inspired by the Arabic Square Kufic script, which I could only hope to approximate. The cover pattern of this volume is based on a motif in Palestinian Tatreez, a variant of the carnation/clove branch pattern.

