Review of Borghi, M., De Gennaro, I. and G. Zaccaria, *Science Under the Yoke of Value: A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Evaluation Machinery*, London: Routledge, 2026, 234 pp.*

Reseña de Borghi, M., De Gennaro, I. y G. Zaccaria, *Science Under the Yoke of Value: A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Evaluation Machinery*, Londres: Routledge, 2026, 234 pp.

When was the last time a philosophy book made you spontaneously mutter "yes, precisely" at a phrase? For me, it happened somewhere around the third chapter, while reading the word "temporicide". The term, coined by the authors, captures something so instantly recognisable—the relentless evaluation machinery with its cycles of reporting, impact-tracking, and productivity assessment—that it feels less like an invention and more like a discovery. It does not merely consume time; it destroys it, annihilates it, transforming lived, qualitative duration into a purely quantitative resource to be accounted for. This is a book that manages to be both erudite and urgent, a rare combination that deserves an attentive reader.

Science Under the Yoke of Value arrives at a moment when complaints about academic bureaucracy are so routine they have become white noise. Maurizio Borghi (Professor of Commercial Law at the University of Turin and Co-Director of the Nexa Center for Internet & Society), Ivo De Gennaro (Associate Professor of Moral Philosophy at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano), and Gino Zaccaria (Senior Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at Bocconi University) are not interested in adding to that noise. Their opening move is to dismiss the familiar language of "bureaucratisation" and "corporatisation" as superficial. These terms, they argue, describe symptoms at the level of administration. The real problem is deeper. It is conceptual, metaphysical even: the very idea of value that drives the system remains unexamined. Why, the book asks, do we devote enormous resources to evaluation without ever asking whether these values truly serve science or society? And why does the system so effectively prevent that question from being asked at all?

The book's central thesis is stated with bracing clarity: science today is fundamentally governed not by an autonomous quest for knowledge and truth, nor by the advancement of society, but by coercion to cater to a machinery that feeds on, and in its turn produces, self-implicating values of "quality", "impact", or "productivity", with disruptive consequences for scientific life as a whole. This is not merely a matter of metrics distorting behaviour. The claim is more radical: the evaluation system has become a self-perpetuating mechanism that subjugates scholarly pursuits to non-scientific values, transforming academia into a system where scholars labour under what the authors term "the yoke of value".

The method is phenomenological. The authors draw on a constellation of thinkers spanning two and a half millennia—Plato, Aristotle, Galileo, Kant, Husserl, Einstein, Heidegger, Arendt—not as ornamental citations but as conceptual resources for diagnosing the contemporary crisis. The book is structured into eight chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion, moving from a theoretical anatomy of "the machinal trait of evaluation" to concrete chapters on temporicide, the figure of the scholar under the yoke, the technicization of science, its societization, and the phenomenon of "anonymous enforcers".

If the book has a hero, it is time—not clock-time, not calendar-time, but the lived, qualitative temporality that phenomenology has taught us to recognise. The chapter on "Time and Value

* Received: 13 May 2026. Accepted with revisions: 20 September 2026.
Metatheoria 17(1)(2026): 47-48. ISSN 1853-2322. eISSN 1853-2330.
© Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero.
© Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.
Publicado en la República Argentina.

(Temporicide in the Evaluation Machinery)" is the philosophical core of the work. Drawing on the ancient Greek temporal notion of *scholè* (σχολή), the authors show how genuine spaces of scientific creation are besieged by the urgency and pressure of evaluative demands, culminating in what they term "temporicide". The argument proceeds in three steps. First, the evaluation machinery imposes a uniform, measurable, and exchangeable conception of time, reducing qualitative duration to quantitative increments. Second, this transformation is not accidental but structural; evaluation requires comparability, and comparability requires the reduction of time to a common metric. Third, and most devastatingly, this process does not merely reorganise time—it kills it. Genuine inquiry, the kind that follows unexpected leads, dwells with problems, and allows itself to be transformed by them, cannot survive in an environment where every hour must be accounted for and justified in advance.

This is where the book is at its strongest and, perhaps, at its most frustrating. The diagnosis is vivid, philosophically sophisticated, and deeply persuasive. The concept of "temporicide" deserves to enter the lexicon of academic criticism. Yet the authors are less forthcoming about what follows from this diagnosis. The conclusion, titled "A Dialogue on an Evitable Evil: or, Soothingness", gestures toward a way out without fully articulating it. The book is clearer about what must be resisted than about what might take its place. This may be a deliberate choice—phenomenology is better at describing experience than at prescribing programmes—but it leaves the reader with a sense of unfinished business.

A more troubling limitation concerns the book"s intellectual genealogy. The authors are steeped in the continental tradition, and Heidegger in particular looms large. The phenomenological analysis is conducted almost entirely within the parameters of this tradition. There is little engagement with the analytic philosophy of science, with pragmatism, or with the extensive STS literature on metrics and governance. The result is a book that speaks fluently to readers already sympathetic to its philosophical commitments but may struggle to persuade those outside that fold. This is not a fatal flaw—no book can do everything—but it is a limitation worth noting.

For whom, then, is this book intended? The back matter suggests STEM scholars, philosophers, and social scientists concerned with scientific integrity and research autonomy. This is accurate, though perhaps too broad. The book will be most rewarding for readers who already have some familiarity with phenomenological concepts and who are prepared to follow the authors into the philosophical depths. For those seeking a practical toolkit for resisting evaluation regimes, the volume offers rich conceptual resources but few concrete strategies.

Science Under the Yoke of Value is a valuable and exasperating book. It is valuable because it diagnoses a genuine pathology in contemporary scientific life with a clarity and philosophical rigour that sets it apart from the usual laments about managerialism. The concept of "temporicide" is a genuine contribution to our critical vocabulary. Yet the book is also, in its way, a product of the very pressures it describes—it arrives in a hurry, it has a clear "impact" argument, and it leaves the reader wanting more in the way of practical alternatives. For readers seeking to understand why the evaluation machinery feels so oppressive, this volume provides a rich and unsettling answer. For those seeking the way out, it offers the first few steps—but only the first few.

José Luis Granados Mateo
Universidad del País Vasco, España
joseluis.granados@ehu.eus

References

Borghi, M., De Gennaro, I. y G. Zaccaria (2026), *Science Under the Yoke of Value: A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Evaluation Machinery*, London: Routledge.