Environmental & Architectural
Phenomenology Newsletter

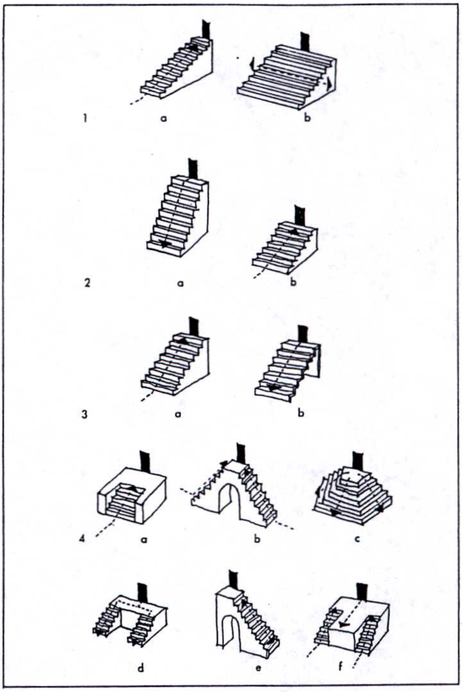
Vol. 1, No. 2 Spring 1990

The Editors of EAP are gratified by the considerable response to the first issue of the newsletter. Once again, we want to emphasize that environmental and architectural experience is the heart of the research and design supported by *EAP*. We very much ask for readers' contributions, whether in terms of reviews, commentaries, experiential descriptions and interpretations, graphics, designs, information on groups and events, and so forth. In this issue, we include news of individuals, organizations, conferences, journals, and publications. We thank the readers who forwarded these items to us.

We are particularly grateful to have received several experiential descriptions and interpretations--one on the experience of northern California's recent earthquake, a second on the memories and meanings of a house no longer lived in, and a third on the phenomena of rocking chairs and "rocking."

In this issue, we publish the earthquake account, written by Elizabeth Behnke, Director of the Study Project in Phenomenology of the Body (see *EAP*, no. 1). Though Behnke emphasizes that her explication of the earthquake is by no means complete, her "field notes" provide a lucid picture of how a disruption of lifeworld can illuminate taken-for-granted dimensions of human experience.

Also in this issue of *EAP*, we highlight Norwegian architectural theorist Thomas Thiis-Evensen's *Archetypes in Architecture* (1987), one of the most significant works published in the last few years contributing to a phenomenology of architectural form and space, which Thiis-Evensen examines through the three themes of *floor*, *wall*, and *roof*. In this issue, David Seamon overviews the author's discussion of "floor." Thiis-Evensen's illustrations say much about a graphics of architectural and environmental experience, and we feature several drawings in this issue,including, below, a graphic that seeks to illustrate how the human experience of stairs is related to breadth, slope, form and so forth.



Thomas Thiis-Evensen's *Archetypes of Architecture* (see p. 6) is a major contribution to an experiential graphics. In this drawing, he illustrates the four qualities that contribute to how one experiences a particular stair: breadth--narrow (1a) or wide (1b); slope--steep (2a) or gentle (2b); attached (3a) or free-standing (3b); form--plateau (4a), frontal (4b), fan (4c), divided (4d), side (4e), or overlapping (4f).

CONFERENCES

The Ninth International **Human Science Research Conference** will be held at Laval University, Quebec, Canada, June 9-13, 1990. A key theme of the conference is the role of intersubjectivity in understanding. Further information is available from: Continuing Education, Pavillon Jean-Charles-Bonenfant, Rm. 2379, Cite universitaire, G1K 7P4, Quebec, Canada (418-656-3202).

The Human Science Research group involves social and behavioral scientists interested in qualitative approaches to human behavior and experience. To receive the group's newsletter, contact Prof. Steen Halling, Psychology Department, Seattle, WA. 98122.

The **Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences** (see "organizations") will hold its annual meeting at Villanova University in Philadelphia, October 11-13, in conjunction with the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP). Deadline for papers has passed, but information on attending can be had from Prof. Jeffrey Cinnamond, College of Education, 206 Stouffer Hall, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705 (412-357-2306).

The California American Studies Association announces an interdisciplinary conference on **Place in American Culture** to be held 4-6 May 1990 at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Contact Michael Steiner, American Studies, California State Univ., Fullerton, CA 92634.

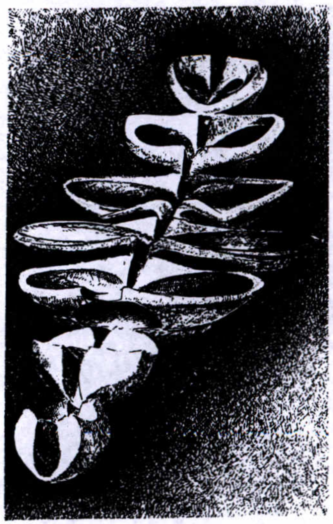
A symposium, **Vision, Culture, and Landscape**, was held at the University of California, Berkeley, March 2-3, 1990. Qualitative scholars who presented papers included Catherine Howett and David Lowenthal. For further information, contact Cultural Landscape Symposium, Dept. of Landscape Arch., 202 Wurster Hall, Univiversity of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTES

The **Ecological Design and Research Institute**, a New Zealand organization, seeks to foster more accurate ways of environmental seeing and understanding. A central aim is environmental and architectural design more in harmony with nature.

Currently, much of the Institute's research focuses on qualitative studies of water and landscape design that supports and enhances the essential movement patterns of water as first studied in Theodore Schwenk's **Sensitive Chaos**, a phenomenology of water and other fluids. One result of this design research, created by sculptor John Wilkes, is **flowforms**, fountain-like vessels through which water flows in rhythmic movement (drawing below).

The Institute is especially interested in Goethean science, one style of phenomenological investigation that has value for a qualitative understanding of nature, landscape, and place. The Institute publishes a newsletter and seeks financial contributions for its work. Contact Iain Trousdell, Director, Ecological Design and Research Institute, Box 1255, Hastings, New Zealand.



The **Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences** (SPHS) is an organization of social and behavioral scientists interested in providing a forum for phenomenological research. The group helps support the journal ***Human Studies*** and sponsors, usually in conjunction with the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), an annual meeting, which in 1990 will be held in Philadelphia (see "conferences"). SPHS also publishes a newsletter, "Phenomenology and the Human Sciences: Journal of Reviews and Commentary." Annual dues are $10 and should be sent to Prof. Gisela Hinkle, Sociology Department, Bricker Hall, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

The **Center for Experiential Notation** works to generate recording methods for describing human environmental encounter, particularly the experience of movement through environments. The Center publishes an occasional newsletter. Contact Philip Thiel, Director, 4720 7th Avenue North-East, Seattle, Washington 98105

JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Phenomenology + Pedagogy is "a human-science journal dedicated to interpretive and critical studies of a broad range of pedagogic relations and situations." The journal has regularly published articles and reviews relevant to a phenomenological environmental and architectural education. In the past published three times a year, the journal is now annual. The 1989 issue includes a translation of several of Dutch philosopher Otto Bollnow's educational writings, including a selection on "Ceremonies and Festive Celebrations in the School." This journal particularly emphasizes phenomen-ological interpretation arising from concrete experiential description. For information, contact Max van Manen, **Phenomenology + Pedagogy**, 4-116 Education North, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5.

Published by the Public Resources Foundation, **Earth Ethics** is a quarterly newsletter that considers the basic assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that underlie peoples' relationship with the natural world. An important effort to link environmental ethics with practical concerns. To subscribe, send at least $10 to Public Resource Foundation, 1815 H Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20006.

CITATIONS RECEIVED

Russell Ellis & Dana Cuff, eds. *Architects' People*. New York: Oxford, 1989.

Thirteen essays, most of them qualitative and interpretive, that discuss various aspects of the architect-client relationship.

Karen A. Franck & Sherry Ahrentzen, eds. *New Households, New Housing*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989.

Essays, several of them interpretive, on non-traditional housing needs; sections on collective housing, housing for single-parent households, and single-room occupancy housing.

Arne Naess. *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, translated and edited by David Rothenberg). New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, softcover to be published shortly.

The Norwegian philospher who coined the phrase "deep ecology" lays out its philosophical principles. The emphasis is on a way of conceiving the intrinsic value of all of nature and life.

David J. Nemeth. *The Architecture of Ideology: Neo-Confucian Imprinting on Cheju Island, Korea*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

This book demonstrates how a "Neo-Confucian state ideology...created and conserved Cheju Island, Korea's historic island of exile, as a viable habitat by using geomancy--a powerful medieval science of surveying--to shape the island's built environment...."

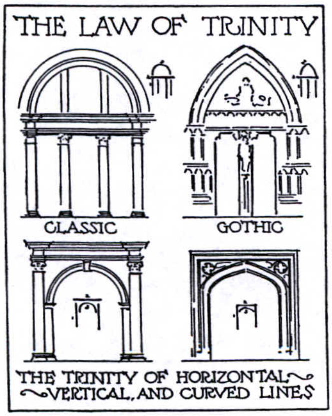
James A. Swan. *Sacred Places in Nature*. Santa Fe: Bear & Company, 1989.

A "spiritual psychology of place" that examines environments of sacredness and what their meanings might offer a modern Western society.

JOURNALS

Parabola, a "magazine of myth and tradition," is a mass-circulation journal that examines the themes of spirituality and symbol through thoughtful essays, interviews, and graphic presentations. The magazine has provided useful contributions toward a phenomenology of sacredness. Each issue focuses on a particular theme--for example, environmental topics have included "sacred space" (vol. III, 2) "pilgrimage" (IX,3), and "mountain" (XIII,3). Write: *Parabola*, 656 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-2317.

The winter 1989 issue deals with the "triad"--the qualitative and experiential significance of three-ness. Included is Claude Bragdon's "An Architecture of Changeless Change," originally published in his 1922 *Beautiful Necessity*, a study of architecture as experienced symbol. Bragdon argues that three is "pre-eminently the number of architecture, because it is the number of our space, which is three-dimensional" (p. 39). He examines three-ness in various ways--for example, the curve as the reconciliation of vertical and horizontal; and the frequent division of buildings into three related parts. Below are two of Bragdon's illustrations, which make an important contribution to a graphics of architectural experience--a key concern of the newsletter.

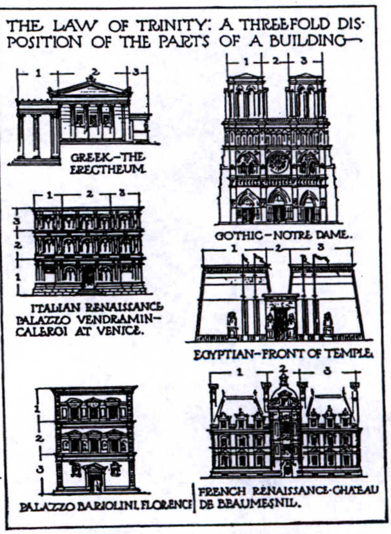


NOTEWORTHY PUBLICATIONS

Patrick A. Heelan, 1983. *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press (first softcover ed. 1988).

This philosopher uses a phenomenological-hermeneutic perspective to argue that modern Western peoples tacitly perceive the world in terms of a Euclidian-Cartesian perspective that organizes space in terms of rules of mathematical perspectives. Through a non-Euclidian geometry known as "hyperbolic Riemannian," Heelan demonstrates that one can establish a perceptual model that helps one understand why, for example, the vault of the sky appears to be at an infinite distance and to be shaped, not as a hemisphere, but as a flattened dome closest to us directly overhead.

To demonstrate this mode of non-Euclidian perception, Heelan develops a phenomenological interpretation that draws on three kinds of evidence: (1) everyday experiences that, besides atmospheric phenomena like the sky vault, include city canyons, building interiors, and the flow of shapes perceived when one moves by auto or train; (2) well-known opitical illusions; and (3) artistic presentations of space, particularly as presented in the paintings of Cezanne and van Gogh.



An important book for those researchers interested in a phenomenology of environmental encounter, though incomplete because, like the positivist psychologies he criticizes, Heelan continues to reduce encounter to perception.

Robert Burch, 1989, On Phenomenology and Its Practices, *Phenomenology + Pedagogy, 7:* 187-217.

This Canadian philosopher's essay is one of the clearest and most accessible discussions of phenomenological method in the last several years. The main question that Burch addresses is how can there be a reliable balance between phenomenological looking and phenomenological understanding, phenomenological practice and phenomenological theory.

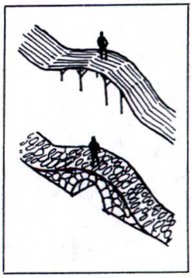
His efforts to answer this question were motivated by difficulties in teaching phenomenology to his philosophy students, who responded in two contrasting ways. First, there were conceptually-oriented students who saw phenomenology "as an artifact and orientation in the history of philosophy," yet who lacked "any direct experience of doing phenomenology, or any sense of the existential needs that might impel one to try" (p. 188). In contrast was a second group of students who, because of various life encounters, *did* have a need to explore experience more deeply, yet who typically lacked "a systematic and critical understanding of the deeper consequences of their own assumptions and discoveries, or the place of their research in the panoply of competing perspectives" (ibid).

For all instructors who have attempted to teach phenomenological method, this tension between theory and practice, between thinking and experiencing, is readily recognizable and difficult. As Burch explains the dilemma more generally: "How can phenomenology be at once grounded in lived experience and faithful to it, yet transcend lived experience to comprehend it, and in comprehending it, alter it essentially?" (p. 194).

Burch provides a reasoned, measured discussion of this central phenomenological dilemma. He has a gift for translating difficult conceptual issues into sensible statements that one wants to paste up on the wall. Two examples:

"[P]henomenology is *possible* only if, in some sense, we are always already involved essentially with the truth of things, and are thus able through our thinking to make this involvement explicit and to work out its implications. At the same time,... phenomenology is necessary only if, in some sense, this truth is as a rule concealed, distorted, or misapprehended. Thus phenomenology does not garner new information, nor provide knowledge hitherto simply nonexistent, but appropriates and interprets a meaning already implicit to lived experience as its truth. Without this experiential relation, phenomenology would be groundless. Yet phenomenology does not simply iterate what is already given and understood in lived experience in the way that it is given and understood. It seeks a transcending theoretical understanding that goes beyond lived experience to situate it, to judge it, to comprehend it, endowing lived experience with new meaning. Without this transcendence, phenomenology would be superfluous" (pp. 191-92).

"[P]henomenology never purely coincides with lived experience in itself, but by probing its ultimate horizons and seeking to grasp the englobing sense of what appears within them, renders lived experience anew. The subject matter is the *intelligibility* of lived experience, which phenomenology realizes essentially; and it is in rendering this 'intelligibility' that the faithfulness of phenomenology to lived experience lies" (p. 195).



TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM: THOMAS THIIS-EVENSEN'S *ARCHETYPES IN ARCHITECTURE*

Originally published by the Norwegian University Press in 1987 as a revised version of the author's 1982 doctoral dissertation, **Archetypes in Architecture** is a major contribution to the phenomenology of environmental and architectural experience.[1] The book's Norwegian author, architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen, studied under the architectural and phenomenological theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz, whose ideas and influences run as an undercurrent throughout.

Thiis-Evensen's aim in *Archetypes* is to understand "the universality of architectural expression" (p. 8). His vehicle is what he calls *architectural archetypes*--"the most basic elements of architecture" (p. 8), which for Thiis-Evensen can be identified as *floor*, *wall*, and *roof*. After a brief introduction, the book explores each of these three archetypes in detail, drawing on illustrations from architectural history and describing how the archetypes support particular kinds of architectural and environmental experience. Especially effective are Thiis-Evensen's efforts to present graphically the experiential qualities of the three archetypes. In this issue of *EAP*, I discuss Thiis-Evensen's conceptual framework and the archetype of *floor*. In following issues, I will review *wall* and *roof*.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Thiis-Evensen emphasizes architectural archetypes because he believes that one can establish "a more reliable basis for the emotional content of architecture" (p. 9). He argues that a phenomenological understanding of architectural form might lead to a more thoughtful and accurate architectural aesthetics to replace both professionals and laypersons' "generally subjective 'feelings' about buildings" (p. 9).

Thiis-Evensen borrows the idea of archetype from Paul Zucker's *Town and Square* (1959), which identified five general types of urban open space and illustrated them historically. Thiis-Evensen seeks similar general types in regard to buildings. Through an exhaustive descriptive study of architecture from many different times and places, Thiis-Evensen concludes that any building can be interpreted experientially in terms of floor, wall, and roof. His main aim is to describe the kinds of environmental experience that different variations of each of these three elements sustain and presuppose. The result, he claims, is "a common language of [architectural] form which we can immediately understand, regardless of individual or culture" (p. 17).

Thiis-Evensen argues that the three elements of floor, wall, and roof are not arbitrary because they have as their common existential ground the relationship between inside and outside. Each element, just by being what it is, automatically separates the architectural lifeworld into interior and exterior, though in different ways: the floor, through "above" and "beneath"; the wall, through "within" and "around"; and the roof, through "under" and "over."

Different architectural styles and cultural traditions may interpret this insideness/outsideness through different degrees of *opening* and *closure* (e.g., the medieval fortress's impenetrable walls versus the Renaissance palace's walls of many windows). Regardless of the particular stylistic or cultural expression, however, floors, walls, and roofs evoke the same result in that they protect an interior space from an exterior space and thus provide shelter, a prerequisite for all human life and dwelling.

Thiis-Evensen claims that the relative degree of closure or openness for floors, walls, and roofs can be explored through the three experienced qualities of *motion*, *weight*, and *substance*--the three "existential expressions of architecture" (p. 21). *Motion* refers to the sense of dynamism or inertia of the architectural element--i.e., whether it seems to expand, contract, or rest in balance. *Weight* involves the sense of heaviness or lightness of the element and how it relates to gravity. Last, *substance* refers to the material sense of the element--whether it is soft or hard, coarse or fine, warm or cold, and so forth. The result, which Thiis-Evensen illustrates through architectural photographs and drawings, is an intricate set of tensions between architectural elements and architectural experience:

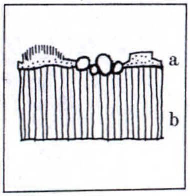
> What is it that the roof, the floor and the wall do? As a motion, the roof rises or falls. The walls stand up or sink, the floor spreads out, climbs or descends. In this way, weight is also implied. That which rises is light, that which falls is heavy. And if the roof is bright and soft as a sail, it is open. If it is dark and of stone, it is closed. If the openings in a wall are tall and narrow, they ascend, if they are short and wide, they sink. A soft and fine floor is warm and open, but if it is hard and coarse, it closes and is heavy (p. 23).

THE FLOOR

In the first major section of *Archetypes,* Thiis-Evensen explores the existential significance of the floor. He argues that the floor serves existentially in three ways: first, it can *direct* people from place to place; second, it can *delimit* a space from its surroundings; third, it can *support* by providing a firm footing.

Of these three themes, support is most important, since "firmness is a precondition for our existence on earth, imbedded within us as a fundamental background for our entire feeling of security " (p. 37). To describe support experientially, Thiis-Evensen begins with peoples' relationship with the ground, which includes both a surface and mass (upper right, *a* & *b*). The existential meaning of the ground involves the interplay between surface and mass, particularly whether the surface is experienced independently of, dependently upon, or a part of the underlying mass.

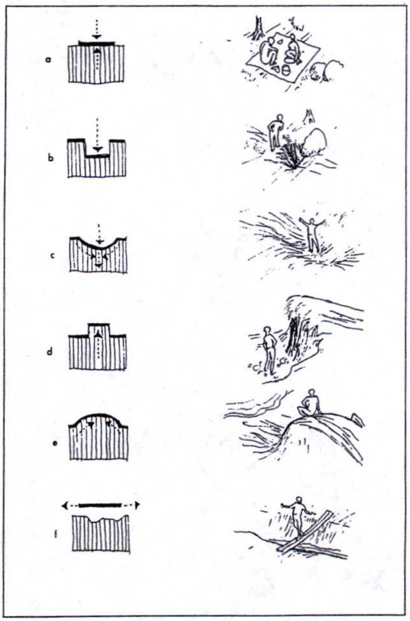
One of Thiis-Evensen's accomplishments in *Archetypes* is to present such subtle relationships in simple drawings like his summary of the surface-mass interplay reproduced in the drawing on the right. Example *a* expresses a surface *upon* the mass. Here, the surface is a part of the ground and one feels safe and secure.



The examples *b* and *c*, on the other hand, illustrate a surface *below* the mass. Here, the person is dependent on the ground's mass and becomes aware of its presence as a surrounding. Whether involving an abrupt (b) or gradual (c) shift, this sense of being below means that "we have left the near and familiar which is above ground to enter a lower region unknown and confining" (p. 39).

Yet again, there are examples *d* and *e* in which a surface rises *up out of* the mass. If the surface breaks away sharply (d), it will be isolated and limited, but if the surface rises gradually, there is continuity and a sense of underlying upthrust (e).

Finally, there is situation *f*, a surface *above* the mass. Here, we are more or less independent from the ground below and feel a sense of freedom or non-involvement.



STAIRS AS DIRECTIONAL FLOOR

The rest of Thiis-Evensen's section on the floor examines the three themes of *directing*, *delimiting*, and *supporting*. Since the floor, first of all, involves firmness and the surface-mass relationship, he gives most attention to the supporting theme, which, in turn, relates primarily to the floor's expression of weight and substance:

> Every floor, no matter what type, may seem heavy or light, be sunk into the ground or hover above it, be soft or hard. There is, therefore, a great difference in the way we perceive its borders if the same floor is at one moment sunk into the ground and at the next raised above it.

Drawing on his interpretation of the surface-mass relationship, Thiis-Evensen argues that the floor as support is expressed in terms of six *motifs*, as he calls them:

1. the *attached* floor (a floor resting firmly on ground);
2. the *sunken* floor (a floor physically beneath the ground's surface);
3. the *open* floor (a floor the sunkenness of which is visual only);
4. the *rising* floor (a floor that rises from below);
5. the *detached* floor (a floor above the ground);
6. the *directional* floor (a floor that provides spatial guidance).

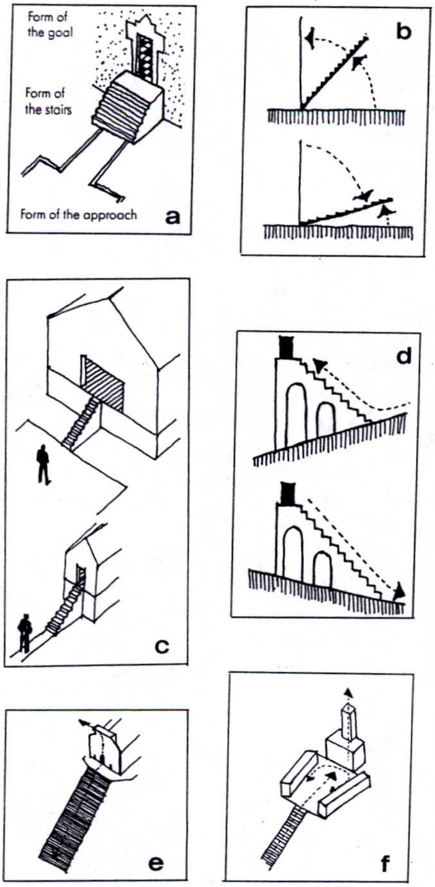
Thiis-Evensen describes each of these six motifs in detail, mostly through illustrations provided by photographs and drawings of different architectural styles and different historical and cultural contexts. Particularly striking is his discussion of stairs as an example of the directional floor. He points out that stairs are crucial in architectural history "as an intermediary between inside and outside, between the building and its environment" (p. 89). The key question he asks is: "in what way do the stairs prepare us to ascend and to enter? Is climbing a narrow flight of stairs different from climbing a broad one? What about stairs which are shallow compared to those which are steep or the stair flight firmly attached to the ground compared to one which spans lightly over it? Or, what is the important of the stairs' plastic form, whether it is straight or arched, symmetric or asymmetric?"(p. 89, 91-92).

In answering such questions, Thiis-Evensen again provides several remarkable drawings, the central one of which is highlighted on the front page of this issue of *EAP*. As this drawing illustrates, the human experience of stairs is primarily established by *a sense of motion*, which in turn relates to, first, the human impulse to climb and, second, the form of the stairs themselves. Thiis-Evensen's drawing summarizes four *motifs* that support different stair experiences: breadth (*1a* & *b*), slope (*2a* & *b*), attachment (firmly fixed versus free-standing stairs; *3a* & *b*), and form (*4a-f*).

In regard to breadth, for example, Thiis-Evensen demonstrates that narrow stairs relate to privacy and make the user move over them more quickly than over wide stairs, which are associated with publicness and ceremonial expression. Similarly, steep stairs express struggle and strength, isolation and survival--experienced qualities that frequently lead to steep stairs' use as a sacred symbol, as in Mayan temples or Rome's Scala Santa. In this regard, Thiis-Evensen compares the two major stairways leading up to the Capitoline Hill in Rome--the steep stairs leading to St. Maria in Aracoeli and, just a short distance away, the more gradual stairs going up to the Michelangelo's Campidoglio. Thiis-Evensen's discussion is a striking example of how formal qualities of the designed environment can support and reflect particular kinds of human experience.

COMMENTARY

Because floor, wall, and roof are taken-for-granted elements of the architectural lifeworld, many of Thiis-Evensen's discoveries and interpretations seem familiar, readily acceptable, and--perhaps to some critics opposed to phenomenological study--patently obvious. The seminal aspect of his work is that he explicates and orders this tacit familiarity and gives it powerful resonance through his many historical examples, photographs, and drawings.



a. Elements that relate to the stair's expression of motion.
b. The ascent impulse and the angle of the stairs: steep stairs, as if pushing downward, resist one's ascent, while shallow stairs allow a calm, leisurely movement and invite ascent.
c. The way that surrounding scale relates to the narrow stair.
d. The relationship between a narrow stair and inclining ground.
e & f. The difference in stairs leading to a sacred and secular place: the Church of St. Maria in Aracoeli (e) and Michelangelo's Campidoglio (f), adjacent to each other on Rome's Capitoline Hill. Climbing the stairs to Aracoeli "is a physical self-conquest." In contrast, "one 'glides' lightly up the Campidoglio stairs."

Particularly for architectural and environmental education, this book is a landmark because it provides another way, besides through history, to enter into buildings and to realize in what ways and how they work or do not. One can readily imagine design students first studying each archetype and then exploring their own built environment to find examples and to record them through written and graphic descriptions.

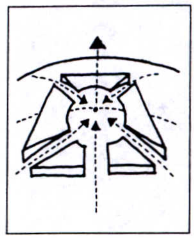
Thiis-Evensen's book is grounded in architecture but also has ready application to interior design, landscape architecture and environmental disciplines like geography and environmental psychology. Like all good phenomenology, **Archetypes** journeys into the lifeworld to reveal taken-for-granted patterns and relationships of which we were unaware before. Through Thiis-Evensen's perceptive interpretation, we see the built world in a new and fresh way.

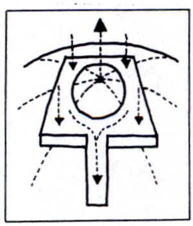
Next issue: Thiis-Evensen's discussion of walls and roofs.

David Seamon

NOTE

[1]Thomas Thiis-Evensen, **Archetypes in Architecture.** Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987. [First softcover edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, ISBN 0-19-520819-6, $29.95.]





FIELD NOTES:
LIVED PLACE AND THE 1989 EARTHQUAKE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Elizabeth Behnke

Shortly after five p.m. on October 17, 1989, an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale shook much of Northern California. Though the following "field notes" fall far short of completely describing the earthquake experience phenomenologically, they can serve to indicate some ways in which my own sense of place and environment was affected.[1]

When the earthquake struck, I was at home--a rented cabin in a redwood canyon in the Santa Cruz Mountains a few miles from the epicenter of the quake. When I think back to the event itself, one thing that strikes me is that the world shook as a whole. There was no sense that a geological object, "the earth," was shaking and therefore "causing" other objects "on" the earth to move about violently and erratically. Instead, everything--houses, cars, trees, people, rocks, dirt, water, structures, driveways, artifacts, and so on -- was shaken together by a strong vertical juddering and jolting. The "whole place" shook.[2]

In addition, the wholeness of place was shaken, disrupted, and fragmented. My immediate environment ceased to be the safe, familiar, taken-for-granted place where I live. At lease temporarily, it became strange and dangerous.

After making sure that friends and neighbors were unhurt, our first concern was our cats, which had scattered in all directions. Later, after they had all come home and we were able to observe their behavior during aftershocks, it seemed to us that what had most frightened them during the main quake was the immense noise as houses slid off their foundations, chimneys collapsed, windows shattered, and things inside houses fell and broke. The huge, fallen chimney at my neighbor's cabin (a tiny dwelling built around a fireplace left standing when a large house burned down many years ago) was not initially a sign of "damaged property." Rather, it was something we feared had killed our pets as it fell. Only after we knew that all the cats were safe did the heap of stones become mere "rubble" and the missing wall of the cabin mere "damage" to be repaired.

A FOCAL PLACE

During the days immediately following the main earthquake, a new focal place began to develop as four of us--all women on our own and cat lovers--joined forces and shared immediately needed resources (water, food, flashlights, batteries, fuel, blankets, camp stoves, toilet paper, and cat food), luxuries (coffee and wine), and other potentially crucial equipment (fire extinguishers and first aid supplies).[3]

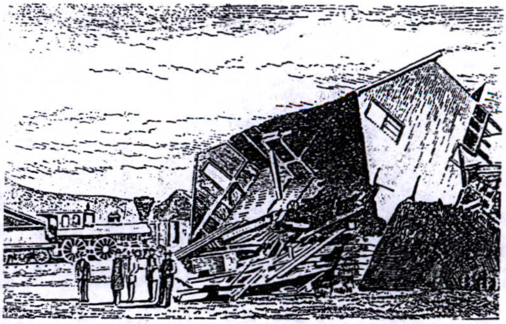
What centered and defined this focal place is suggested in the phrase "home and hearth," for it was "home and hearth" that the earthquake most disrupted and it was "home and hearth" that our temporary focal place provided. Many of us in this area, where heating with wood is common, found that the parts of our houses most affected by the quake were our kitchens, on the one hand,

and our fireplaces or wood stoves, on the other. Chimneys toppled, woodstoves slid out of place, and kitchens were completely disordered. Moreover, there was no electricity and no guarantee that the gas lines running from propane tanks to homes were intact. Many families were without running water as well. Normal patterns of cooking and heating were disrupted for everyone--not just for those of us whose homes literally include a hearth.

During the period of time I am describing, the weather stayed warm, so heating a living space did not become a major problem.[4] In spite of the good weather, however, our temporary, shared focal place became a hearth in at least two ways: First, it was a shared kitchen in that it served as the center for communal food storage, preparation, and eating; second, it was the shared circle of light around which we gathered after the sun set and darkness fell, where we talked, listened to the latest news reports on a battery-powered radio, and waited together for the last missing cat.

Several factors contributed to the way one particular spot in space became our focal place. The location was to some extent a "neutral" zone in that it was not uncomfortably close to the "territory" each of us living on the property had already claimed as her own, although it did impinge upon one person's normal path to her home. Moreover, this spot was at the edge of our driveway, safely out of the main traffic patterns. In addition, the position of the sun in the sky played a role, as did the architectural features of the main house on the property around whose northeast corner we gathered. During October, the sun is relatively low in the southern sky, and the shadow of the house's northern side was available much of the day to protect perishable foods and combustible fuels.

The design of the main house also offered a ready-made, well articulated place to serve as hearth and larder. At the front of the house is a small, low deck roughly two feet above the ground and reached along the whole length of two of its sides by three steps. Although room was left for getting up and down these steps, they primarily became "shelves" on which things were stored or



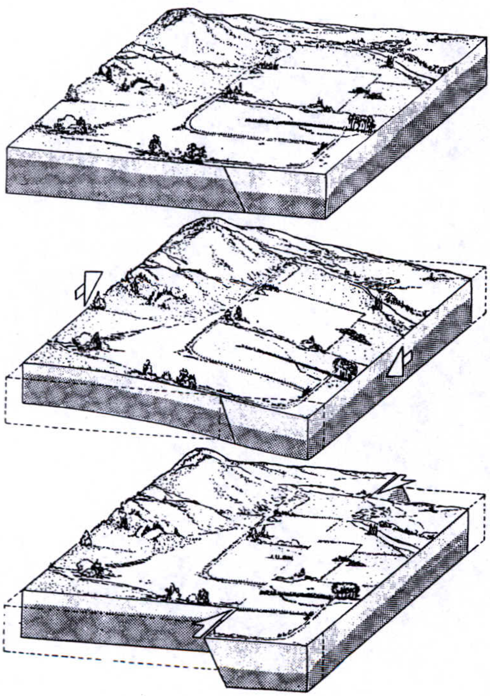
kitchen "counters" on which the small propane campstove was set up and vegetables were cut. It was here, too, that the battery lantern and radio were placed in the evenings. Between the two sets of "shelf"/"counter" steps, another short side of the deck proved to be the perfect place to put large drums of water to wash with, as well as smaller containers of drinking water, since there was room to put a bucket or cup under the spigots projecting over the edge of the deck.[5]

REFLECTIONS

Recalled well after the event, these arrangements seem makeshift and the details almost too trivial to describe. What stands out for me, however, is the very strong sense of experienced "functional place"--of a place that was an effective focal place and a genuine communal hearth.

Perhaps this feature can be brought out by an anecdote. A few days into the experience, a neighbor came home after dark, having visited a friend's house. Walking by as we were all gathered around the fire, she began rhapsodizing about how the friend's electricity and water had already been restored. "They're *fully functional*," she said. Spontaneously, I proclaimed that I did not need power or water to consider myself a "fully functional" human being!

What is at stake here, I think, is a lived experience of autonomy, as contrasted with the experience of being at the mercy of anonymous others and authorities whose job it is to maintain the network of technological devices that contribute to transforming the "natural" environment into a "civilized" place to live. When the network of services broke down, some people felt helpless and angry. Others of us, however, felt good and strong about "providing for ourselves."[6] As I look back, the earthquake experience helps me realize the extent to which functional lived place is relatively dependent upon, or relatively independent from, the usually unnoticed, taken-for-granted web of things like pipes, pumps, wires and water tanks (to say nothing of larger things like bridges and roads).



Other usually unthematized features of the built world were also brought into prominence through the earthquake. Homes, for instance, that were formerly simply assumed to be safe shelters, suddenly became structures, the safety of which was open to question. Quite a number of people who were not actually made homeless by the quake did nevertheless sleep outdoors for the first few days following the main quake. There was a fear of aftershocks, since even houses that had no visible damage were seen as potential hazards as aftershocks continued.[7]

The earthquake did not simply recede into the past as an event that was over and done with, but cast its shadow over the future, making any apparent stability fragile, precarious, and open to question at any moment.It was as though by "shaking the foundations," the earthquake became the unplanned occasion for a kind phenomenological "epoché"--a "radical distancing from everyday acceptances," a suspension of the usual that made what is normally taken for granted stand out in its own right, "conspicuous by its absence."[8] But for most people, this period of lucidity, in which, say, the built, electrified lifeworld was thrown into a prominence of its own rather than simply functioning as the unnoticed background of daily life, quickly gave way to a return to "normalcy."

This fact raises the question of what lasting changes the earthquake brought about in the lived experience of place. Those people who lost loved ones or whose homes were destroyed have obviously undergone a qualitatively different earthquake experience than those people undergoing only minor and temporary disruption.[9]

Further, there are undoubtedly many variations in the way members of the latter group experienced the quake and its aftermath. I observed at least two general patterns as friends and acquaintances set about putting their homes back in order after the quake. Some people seemed intent in returning everything to its usual place as soon as possible, as though restoring the customary articulation of their everyday lived space to provide some measure of comfort and security during an otherwise unsettled, unsettling time. Other people responded by evaluating the way they had originally set up their living spaces and taking steps toward improving their arrangements. In my own case, I find that it is less a matter of "putting the place back in order" than it is of rethinking just how one can create a safe and comfortable living space on terrain that is only a few miles from the San Andreas fault and even closer to the Zayante fault. What does it mean to dwell on *this* earth that can shift and slide, that is now, here in Lompico Canyon, a couple of feet higher above sea level than it was before, as well as a few feet further north?

CHARLES DARWIN'S DESCRIPTION OFAN1835 CHILEAN EARTHQUAKE

Februrary 20th. This day has been memorable in the annals of Valdivia, for the most severe earthquake experienced by the oldest inhabitant. I happened to be on shore, and was lying down in the wood to rest myself. It came on suddenly and lasted two minutes, but the time appeared much longer. The rocking of the ground was very sensible. The undulations appeared to my companion and myself to come from due east, whilst others thought they proceeded from soutwest. This shows how difficult it sometimes is to perceive the direction of the vibrations. There was no difficulty in standing upright, but the motion made me almost giddy. It was something like the movement of a vessel in a little cross-ripple, or still more like that felt by a person skating over thin ice, which bends under the weight of his body.

A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations: the earth, the very emblem of solidity, has moved beneath our feet like a thin crust over a fluid. One second of time has created in the mind a strange idea of insecurity, which hours of reflection would not have produced.

Charles Darwin, **The Voyage of The Beagle**, 1869.

IMPLICATIONS

Such reflections suggest that an event like an earthquake can motivate a reevaluation of the way one lives one's everyday life--a reevaluation not confined to lived place, but reverberating through many, many aspects and domains of human existence. As Ruah Bull wrote in a local newsmagazine a few weeks after the earthquake, "There is much talk about returning to normal. Therapists trained in post-traumatic stress help us relax, release, heal--get back to the way it was." But, she goes on to say--and I find myself in agreement--"I don't want to 'normalize.' I am still afraid, less of the aftershocks than of forgetting what I learned during those very long 15 seconds and the weeks that followed."[10]

I feel that it is crucial to question our inherited "normality" rather than blindly to maintain or to reinstate it. Yet without challenging the insight that a natural disaster can teach us many things by rupturing, violating, or at least bringing up for inspection what is usually tacit and taken for granted, I find myself asking: Why should it take a catastrophe to bring the silent background of everyday life into view and into question? Does not phenomenology accomplish this more gently, without loss of life or limb, without shattering glass or splintering wood or crumbling mortar and brick or crashing concrete down upon whatever lies below, be it steel or iving flesh?

Perhaps the kind of research an organization like the Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Network is meant to encourage can help us to achieve some lucidity about lived place, about the interplay of built world and terrestrial environment, about dwelling wisely on such an earth, without needing this earth to shake us up in order to get our attention. But an event like an earthquake can also remind us--or at least has reminded me--how much of my everyday environing world I still do take for granted even as I, the practicing phenomenologist, place selected phenomena into question, deliberately "making the familiar, strange" in order to discern the styles and structures of experience as we live it. Perhaps phenomenology, too, must rely upon its zone of safety, stability, and trust--fragile and precarious though this zone may ultimately prove to be--even as it submits any merely naive trust to the most radical questioning.

Elizabeth Behnke is Director of the Study Project in Phenomenology of the Body, Box 0-2, Felton, CA 95018.

NOTES

[1]I wrote this text several weeks after the earthquake but base my description on undated notes made closer to the event itself. For another, more formal, effort to explore the earthquake experience phenomenologically, see David Rehorick, "Shaking the Foundations of Lifeworld: A Phenomenological Account of an Earthquake Experience," *Human Studies 9*, (1986), 379-91.

[2]I subsequently learned that in my area at least, vertical motion was felt by those residents whose homes were built on sandstone, while other people experienced more of a rolling motion. Houses on sandstone apparently suffered less structural damage, as though the soft stone acted as a shock absorber, perhaps cracking rather than transmitting the full force of the vibrations to the buildings above.

[3]I would like to thank Chris Gove, Laura White and Debbi Hill, not only for sharing their memories of this time with me as I worked on this report, but also for being there during the earthquake and its aftermath. It may have been that our ability to work together as an "extended family" during a time of crisis was based on the fact that we were already functioning as an extended family before the quake, at least to some extent. Our common link was taking care of each other's cats when others of us were away.

[4]Many of us found our time sense distorted during this period; we would suddenly realize, for example, that several days had passed, though experientially it felt like less time had gone by. My memories of the focal place well after the event, however, make it feel that our communal time together was longer than it "really" was in calendar time (October 17-20).

[5]The lack of running water also affected our toilet facilities. We women designated one specific spot in the woods behind my cabin for this purpose. The location was deliberately chosen not only because it was reasonably private, but because it was in fact the place I dump used kitty litter.

[6]We were prepared for emergencies partly because the Lompico Canyon had been isolated by landslides on the only access road in 1982 and again in 1983.

[7]At least 94 quakes measuring 3.0 or more on the Richter scale were recorded in the first two months after the October 17 earthquake. Several of us found we were able to guess the Richter reading later announced on the radio solely on the basis of direct experience.

[8]Charles W. Harvey, "A Note on the Existential Foundations of Phenomenological Reduction," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, 17* (1986), 195.

[9]Many residents who experienced only minor problems at their homes nevertheless found themselves deeply shocked by the major damage to the Pacific Garden Mall, Santa Cruz's major commercial area. Many merchants have relocated to adjacent undamaged areas or to large tent-like "pavilions" erected behind the gaping holes marking the places where we once shopped, browsed, met for coffee, and so forth. The physical place has been unalterably changed, with many landmarks gone forever. But conscious efforts are underway to restore the same kind of social life that the original physical place once harbored.

[10]Ruah Bull, in the November, 1989, issue of *Matrix*, a women's newsmagazine published in Santa Cruz, California.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

As of March 26, 1990, The Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Network had 68 members from 27 states and 2 Canadian provinces. New York has 7 members, followed by California (6), North Carolina (5), and British Columbia (5). Of the 68 members, 21 belong to EDRA. By the way, we received a membership from **Wendy Pullan**, who lists her address as 20 Arnon Street, Jerusalem, Israel. Her newsletter has been returned to us twice, marked with "incorrect address." If anyone knows the correct address, please send it along.

Several members included information or news about themselves. Please forward material, and we will publish it as we have space.

Paul Gobster is a Research Social Scientist doing work on urban and high-use recreation settings for the U.S. Forest Service in Chicago. He writes: "I have been exploring phenomenology and other qualitative approaches for describing the subjective experience of natural environments. We are admitted novices but are finding that new ways of thinking are necessary complements to our traditional qualitative methods. We are organizing a symposium at EDRA '90 on the experience of natural landscapes." Address: Forestry Sciences Laboratory, 5801 Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL. 60646.

David Rothenberg is a graduate student at Boston University where he is writing his dissertation on the philosophy of technology. He has lived in Norway for several years, working with the ecological philosopher Arne Naess. Rothenberg has translated and adapted Naess's **Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle** into English (see p. 3). Address: David Rothenberg, 351 Harvard Street, #2F, Cambridge, MA. 02138.

David Abrams teaches in the Art Department at the University of Nevada, Reno. He writes: "My own current research takes up the challenge to a phenomenological outlook that has been offered by post-structuralist and deconstructionist theory, as founded by Derrida and carried on by many others.... I feel the need to work through the explicit criticisms Derrida made of Husserl and, to some extent, Heidegger, to reestablish my philosophical/epistemological basis for interpreting art and design. Derrida, for example, criticizes the philosophical validity of the universals-and-particulars distinctions you make in your *EAP* statement of purpose. I have heard of several formerly phenomenological art writers who have "converted" via Derrida. Though I am still oriented phenomenologically, I am going to "test" those principles against Derrida's arguments in as open-minded way as possible..." Address: David Adams, Art Department, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89557-0007.

Russell Mroczek has begun a new design firm that focuses on research and design of exhibitions for historical societies and museums. Services include writing, concept development, design, and limited curatorial. Address: Russell Mroczek, Context Design Associates, 1004 Marquette Avenue, #210, Minneapolis, MN. 55403.

HASSAN FATHY
(1900--1989)

Architect, teacher, and implicit phenomenologist. Best known for *Architecture for the Poor*, in which he described his efforts in the late 1940s to design and to build a village for 7,000 displaced Egyptian peasants. Fathy sought to empathize with the lifeworld of these people and to find architectural means which in the new village would sustain the peasants' traditional lifeways. Fathy's book is a significant example of an effort to look, to see, and to design thoughtfully.

Randi Horner is a graduate student in geography at East Carolina University. He is doing thesis research on "the meaning of home as it is portrayed in Barbadian literature." He would appreciate information on recent studies dealing with the following themes: the use of phenomenological theory as a psychotherapeutic method; recent phenomenological studies exploring human experience through literature; and the incorporation of landscapes into identity, especially the creation and maintenance of home landscapes as they pertain to identity. Address: Randi Horner, Geography Department, East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C. 27858.

David Valbracht is a landscape architect interested in the value of Goethean science for environmental design. At the recent meetings of the Society for Ecological Restoration, he presented a paper that argues that care for the landscape requires "an integration of artistic and scientific approaches." He demonstrates that one start for such an integration is Goethe's scientific work, which demonstrates "how observation of nature can lead to artistic expression. This approach results in an aesthetic based upon a comprehension of nature rather than upon abstract principles."

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF DESIGN

Another EDRA subgroup that EAP readers may find of interest is the **Cultural Aspects of Design Network**, which seeks a fuller understanding of the impact of social and cultural issues on environmental design. One aim is research leading to culturally appropriate and responsive design solutions. Emphases include: vernacular architecture, symbolism and meaning in the built environment, design in the Third World, cross-cultural design variations, and the socio-cultural context of design.

This network was founded by anthropologist Setha Low, one of those exceptional people whose broadmindedness and many interests draw together a wide variety of people, backgrounds, professions, styles, and methods. In fact, Setha was a major stimulus for the creation of EAP, and the editors are grateful. To become a member, send a subscription for $5 to: Setha Low, 2940 Guilford Avenue, Baltimore, MD. 21218 (301-243-6952). Members receive an annual directory and newsletter. Useful information and contacts.