



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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This *EAP* completes 23 years. We enclose a renewal form and appreciate prompt responses so there will be fewer reminders to send in the winter 2013 issue. As some readers know, we have decided to distribute *EAP* in digital, open-source format available at the website above and at the alternative website listed on the back page. In this sense, *EAP* is now “free,” though we continue to have editing, printing, and distribution expenses. We will continue to mail paper copies to subscribers. We would appreciate that readers continue to subscribe or donate.

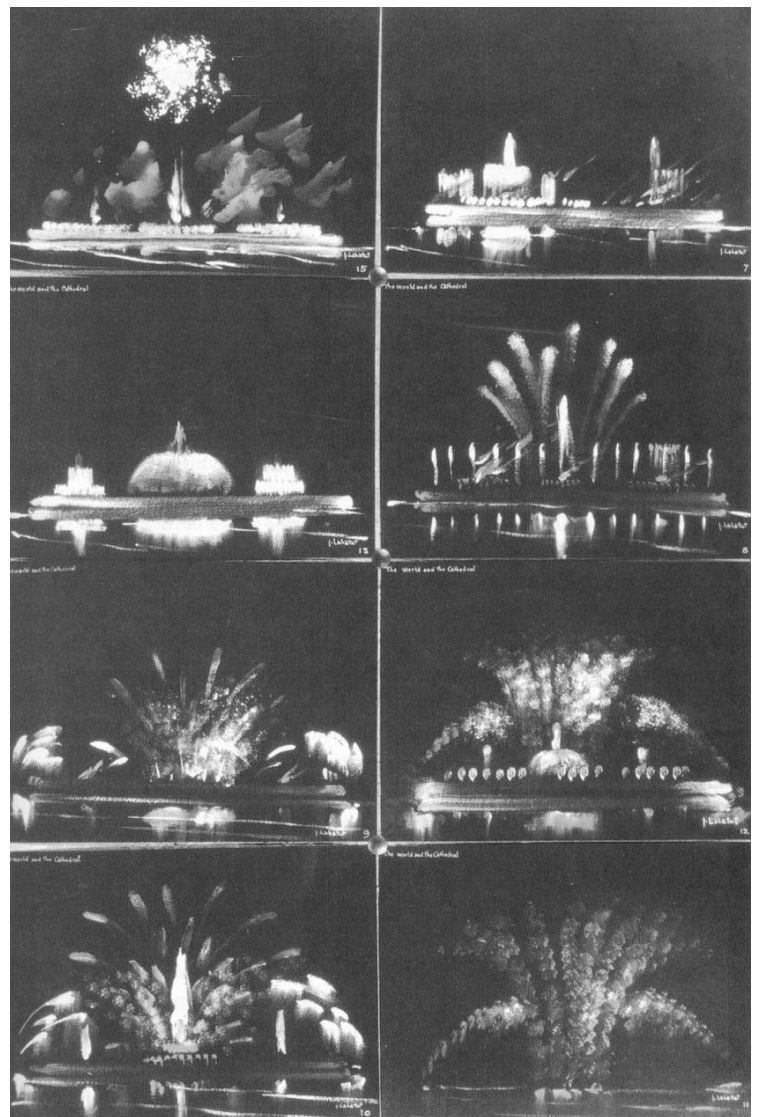
Three of the four entries this issue discuss “architectural phenomenology”—its professional and academic past as well as its scholarly future. One major focus is architectural theorist **Jorge Otero-Pailos’** 2010 *Architecture’s Historical Turn*, which argues that architectural phenomenology played a key role in establishing American Architecture programs as viable university units of scholarly research. *EAP* Editor **David Seamon** and French architectural historian **Benoît Jacquet** review Otero-Pailos’ book. Seamon examines Otero-Pailos’ claims in regard to broader trends in architectural and environmental phenomenology, and Benoît places the book in relation to French academic developments.

We also include architect **Reza Shirazi’s** essay evaluating the present state of phenomenology and architecture. Shirazi seeks to locate an accurate description of current phenomenological research and concludes that the most precise label is “discourse”—i.e., a mode of study and design initiated mostly by individual researchers and designers who share “some common concerns and intentions” and “interpret the possibilities and results of phenomenological investigation in a wide array of ways, both conceptually and practically.”

The last essay in this issue is educator **John Cameron’s** “eighth letter from Far South,” which

considers attention as it relates to place—in this case, Cameron’s rural home on Tasmania’s Bruny Island.

Below: Architect Jean Labutut’s sequence of pastel sketches depicting the visual movement of “The World and the Cathedral,” a water-and-light spectacle created for the “Lagoon of Nations” a fountain he designed for the 1939 New York World’s Fair; from Otero-Pailos’ Architecture’s Historical Turn, p. 49—see pp. 3–10.



Items of Interest

The 34th annual **Humanities and Technology Association Conference** will be held at Maryland's Bowie State University, October 4–6, 2012. The **Humanities and Technology Association** is an interdisciplinary scholarly society examining the impact of technology on human life from a broad range of perspectives. gsochan@bowiestate.edu.

The conference, **Experiencing Light 2012**, will be held November 12–13, 2012, in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The central focus is the relationship between light and lighting design on human well being. www.experiencinglight.nl.

The conference, **Place and Displacement**, will be held at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, November 21–23, 2012. www.communityidentity.com.au.

The conference, **Time, Space, and Body**, will be held February 11–13, 2013, in Sydney, Australia. www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/making-sense-of/time-space-and-the-body/call-for-presentations/.

The 15th annual conference of the **Society for Phenomenology and Media (SPM)** will be held in Puebla, México, February 20–23, 2013. www.wix.com/societyphenmedia/socphenmedia.

Bollnow's *Human Space*

After much delay, the German philosopher **Otto Bollnow's** influential *Human Space* is finally available in English translation published by London's Hype Press. Originally released in German as *Mensch und Raum* in 1963, this book is a phenomenology of space as experienced, partly through Bollnow's own observations and partly through reference to other phenomenologists, including Bachelard, Eliade, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Minkowski, and Straus.

The book's first chapter examines the experienced nature of space, and the second and third chapters consider the lived dialectic between "the wide world" and "the security of the house." The fourth chapter considers various experienced aspects of space, including night vs. day, moods of space, and the spatiality of "human coexistence." The last chapter explores the "spatiality of human

life" and emphasizes the lived space of body, house, and "free expression." The sidebar, below, reproduces Otto's last-chapter summary of the "modes of human space" as he examines them in the book.

Modes of Human Space

Concerning the question of the relationship of man [sic] with space or his attitude to space, in the course of discussion various successive forms have emerged, which are not mutually exclusive but rather overlap each other and are possible in combination with each other, and which one can thus designate as modifications of human spatiality. It therefore seems appropriate, in conclusion, to put them together once more in a schematic simplification.

1. First there is a naïve trust in space, a childish sense of shelter, which can then continue in later life as a natural or thoughtless sense of shelter in one's house and home. Here we are merged with our space, directly incarnated in it.

2. Secondly there is a state of homelessness or houselessness. Here space manifests itself in its uncanniness and strangeness. We feel lost in this space.

3. This results in, third, the task of reconstructing security by building a house, as discussed in detail in the third part of this book. Through this a sheltering inner space is created, separated from the outside world. Menacing space does not disappear as a result, it is only pushed out of the centre and to the side.

4. But because every house created by humans provides to be tangible (and because, further, menacing space still continues to lurk, hidden, even within the house), a further final task arises to overcome once more the withdrawal into a fixed housing and to regain a final security in a space which is no longer the individual space of the house, based on man, but overall space in general.

We must therefore, beyond the rigid appearance of an artificially created and always deceptive security, reach the other, open security in which naïve spatiality is reconstructed on a higher level. But to reach this is not easy and demands from us the special effort of freeing ourselves from the deceptive security.

—Otto Bollnow, *Human Space*, pp. 285–86.

Citations Received

Benoît Jacquet & Vincent Giraud, eds., 2012. *From the Things Themselves: Architecture and Phenomenology*. Kyoto: Kyoto Univ. Press; Seattle: Univ. of Wash. Press.

The 21 chapters of this volume were presentations at the 2nd Phenomenology and Architecture conference, held in Kyoto, Japan, in 2010. Contributors include Ross Anderson, Karan August, Jason Crow, Sylvain De Bleckere, Hubert L. Dreyfus, Fujimori Terunobu, Phoebe Giannisi, Karsten Harries, Lena Hopsch, Takashi Kakuni, Rachel McCann, Santiago de Orduña, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Fernando Quesada, Gilad Ronnen, Adam Sharr, Kiyoshi Sey Takeyama, Dermott Walsh, Joanna Wlaszyn, and Yue Zhuang.

Eran Ben-Joseph, 2012. *Rethinking a Lot: The Design and Culture of Parking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

This city planner asks if parking lots can be aesthetically pleasing and environmentally and architecturally responsible. He provides “a visual history of this often ignored urban space, introducing some of the many alternative and non-parking purposes that parking lots have served—from RV campgrounds to stages for “Shakespeare in the Parking Lot.” He argues that, with purposeful design, “parking lots could be significant public places, contributing as much to their communities as great boulevards, parks, or plazas.” The result:

“New uses for urban spaces traditionally considered banal and devoid of culture.”

Hernan Casakin & Fátima Bernardo, eds., 2012. *The Role of Place Identity in the Perception, Understanding, and Design of Built Environments*. Bussum, The Netherlands: Betham Publishers [e-book format].

Edited by environmental psychologists, this volume’s 15 chapters emphasize “the role played by place identity with regard to architecture and the city.” Contributions include: “Place Identity and Religion” (Shapa Mazumdar & Sanjoy Mazumdar); “Place Identity Principles and Cultural Metaphors in a Mexican Environment” (Hernan Casakin & Esi Abbam Elliot); “Place and the Politics of Local Identity: Belonging and Immigrant Settlement in American Suburbia” (Debra Lattanzi Shutika); “Identity and Identification: The Role of Architectural Identity in a Globalised World” (Robert Adam); “Wither Genius Loci? The City, Urban Fabric and Identity in Perth, Western Australia” (Felicity Morel-Edniebrown); and “Place, Place Identity, and Phenomenology” (David Seamon).

Anat Geva, 2012. *Frank Lloyd Wright’s Sacred Architecture: Faith, Form, and Building Technology*. NY: Routledge.

This architect examines Frank Lloyd Wright’s religious architecture, of which there are more than 30 projects, ten of them built. The author interprets these works around the three major themes of nature, democracy and freedom, and holistic design.

Two Book Reviews

Jorge Otero-Pailos, 2010. *Architecture’s Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Whither “Architectural Phenomenology”?

David Seamon

This architectural theorist’s historiography of theory in American departments of Architecture is a useful contribution and provocative challenge to phenomenological research dealing with architectural and environmental concerns. Otero-Pailos delineates the academic rise and fall of what he calls “architectural phenomenology”—a field of research and practice perhaps best

likened to current phenomenological writings on environmental and architectural embodiment, particularly its perceptual, sensuous, and motility dimensions (for example, work of architects Juhani Pallasmaa, Rachel McCann, and Thomas Thiis-Evensen, none of whom are discussed in Otero-Pailos’ book).

Nowhere in *Architecture’s Historical Turn* does Otero-Pailos explicitly define “architectural phenom-

enology” (henceforth **AP**), though he associates it with such descriptions as:

- “authentic, original human experiences” (p. xi);
- “the primacy of lived experience” (xii);
- “an experiential source of intellectuality” (xiii);
- “sensory experience as an essentialist, ahistorical, antitheoretical, irrational, and subjective flight from all scholarly conventions” (xiv);
- “experiencing... primordial form” (xiv);
- “recognizable patterns of experiencing buildings” (xiv);
- “the body and flesh as sites of borderline spiritualist and mystic experiences” (xviii);
- “a certain kind of experience, at once of the moment and timeless” (xxiii);
- “an elemental language of basic bodily experiences” (xxxii);
- “the deeper prelinguistic experiential language that... was the organizational principle of every building ever built” (xxxiii);
- “a timeless sensual ‘language’ of immediate experiences that architects could intuit across the spans of time” (11);
- “the direct experience of buildings” (11);
- “direct experience as the historic content of buildings” (12);
- “a bodily communion with architecture” (26).

Otero-Pailos argues that **AP** played a major role in establishing American Architecture departments as viable university units of *scholarly research* (in addition to their more conventional role as centers for professional architectural training). “[T]here is no mother tongue to architectural communication,” he writes. “Rather interpretations [in this case, **AP**] function as seizures of power, as ways to gain cultural capital and to take up a position within politically charged disciplinary multiplicities” (7).

To demonstrate the “seizure of academic power” that **AP** provided American Architecture departments, Otero-Pailos devotes a chapter each to the academic careers of four “architect-scholars” (10): French-born architect **Jean Labutut** (1899–1986), who founded the first American Architecture doctoral program at Princeton in 1949; American architect **Charles Moore** (1925–1993), who completed in 1957 one of Princeton’s first Architecture doctoral dissertations, which focused on a Gaston-Bachelard-inspired “Water and Architecture” (105); Norwegian architectural theorist **Christian Norberg-Schulz** (1926–2000), well known for his several books outlining a phenomenology of architecture and place; and British-born New Left architectural theorist **Kenneth Frampton** (b. 1930), most familiar for his

theory of “critical regionalism” (and seemingly, because of his structuralist ties, at least partly out of place in terms of any comprehensive phenomenological lineage).

In reviewing the careers of these four architect-scholars, Otero-Pailos is not so much interested in clarifying or extending the reader’s understanding of **AP**. Rather, drawing on the structuralist theory of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Otero-Pailos argues that these four men provided a platform, either directly or indirectly, whereby **AP** undermined the academic power of art historians, who until the 1950s, were the only academics with sufficient scholarly weight and prestige to advance any “theory of architecture.” Otero-Pailos seeks to demonstrate that his four architect-scholars, drawing on philosophical phenomenology loosely (and sometimes incorrectly, according to Otero-Pailos), wrestled from the art historians the academic right to produce and sanction architectural theory. This move, according to Otero-Pailos, did much intentionally and unintentionally to facilitate both postmodernist design and also the poststructuralism and social-constructivism that dominate architectural theory today—much of it, ironically, hostile to **AP** [1].

Dead or Alive?

Otero-Pailos is ambivalent about the current state of **AP**. Twice, in different ways, he claims its demise. In his chapter on Norberg-Schulz, he marks its death via the 1987 publication of Chilean historian Victor Fariás’s *Heidegger and Nazism*, which concluded that Heideggerian philosophy was inherently fascistic and “dealt a final blow to architectural phenomenology, which was already under the pressure of new post-structuralist approaches to the questions of history and theory” (23). Later in the book, Otero-Pailos points to a different moment of **AP** demise: the 1988 issue of the *Pratt Journal of Architecture*, which contained articles by both the **AP** “old guard” (including Dalibor Vesely, Paul Schneider, and John Lobell) as well as younger anti-phenomenological theorists like John Knesl, Hilde Heynen, and Mark Wigley, who “began instituting a ‘nonfoundational’ approach to phenomenology, which prepared the ground for the introduction of poststructuralist theory” (259) [2].

If through these two moments of attack, Otero-Pailos seems to conclude that **AP** is dead, at other points in the book he recognizes that it is still alive but offers unclear reasons for mostly disregarding this more recent work. For example, he explains the absence in his text of architect and phenomenology proponent Steven Holl because he and unnamed related “others” are “less concerned with questions of historiography” (20), though what this explanation for omission means, Otero-Pailos doesn’t elaborate. And in his epilogue, he grudgingly recognizes that recent architect-scholars like Alberto Pérez-Gómez, David Leatherbarrow, and Helen Powell have produced phenomenological work that helps build “a mantle of resistance to the poststructuralist revision of architectural phenomenology” (259).

In other words, Otero-Pailos largely ignores the well-documented production of current phenomenological thinking and research in architecture and allied disciplines. Instead, because of his Bourdieuan historiographical framework, he is much more intent on highlighting the broader professional and societal failures and misfires of **AP**, which, if we accept Otero-Pailos’ claim, are benumbing in their range of unintended consequences, including a return to a neo-modernism that is the puppet of global capitalism:

[The] indecisiveness and inability [of architectural phenomenologists] to completely break with modernism produced unintended results after deconstruction, when we witness a neo-modernist return to formalism and a turn away from the post-modernist concepts of history and theory. In the new neomodernist context, Frampton’s figure of the master-mason became the model for architects interested in controlling construction costs through rapid prototyping and in eliminating the skilled craftsmen that Frampton cared so much about. Norberg-Schulz’s “spirit of place” was less a path to preserving “rooted building” than an expeditious aesthetic enabling multinational corporate architecture firms to compete with local architects. Moore’s exaltation of the body as the path to intense communal experience eased the transition to corporate architecture, which catered to the culture of private exuberance and turned a blind eye to public squalor in places like Dubai and Shanghai. Rooted in a reaction to the collusion of secularism, capitalism, and aesthetic austerity, architectural phenomenology nevertheless adapted premodern symbols to modern ends, eased the adjustment to new modes of production, and aided the transformation of modern architectural practice into the bureaucratic administration of the built environment (23–24).

To hold **AP** responsible for these many aesthetic and ideological blunders and misdirections is ques-

tionable and in many ways unreasonable. In this sense, Otero-Pailos’ Bourdieuan historiography has much less to do with “an unprejudiced account of [**AP**’s] history” (xv) and much more to do with an arbitrary, selective effort to brand **AP** as the dominant but flawed conceptual vehicle via which American architectural programs gained academic and intellectual currency to the point where, in some programs, theory and ideology have come to impede, and even cripple, design and practice.

A Valuable Addition

In spite of an incomplete historiography, Otero-Pailos’ book is a valuable addition to the phenomenological literature on environmental and architectural matters because it reviews some early innovative efforts to generate theories and designs that arose from and sought to enhance human experience. The architectural and environmental works created by Labutut to evoke a sense of participatory exhilaration and architectural sacredness through visual, acoustic, and tactile encounter are fascinating, particularly as illustrated in the photographs that Otero-Pailos includes. These works—for example, Labutut’s 1,400-nozzle fountain, “Lagoon of Nations,” designed to create a nightly spectacle for the 1939 New York World’s Fair—are an important but largely unknown example of early design efforts seeking to widen and deepen environmental experience [see sketches, p. 1].

Similarly, Charles Moore’s work on Gaston Bachelard and the experiential qualities of water could be put to much more detailed phenomenological explication and extension as could Norberg-Schulz’s innovative efforts to use complementary texts—writing, photographs, and drawings—to more thoroughly evoke and understand *genius loci* and environmental ambience (an approach that Otero-Pailos attacks as an “instrumental misuse of Heidegger” [147] and a “hypostatization of the invisible as the origin of history” [161]). Otero-Pailos occasionally points toward the creative, expansive possibilities of these architect-scholars but, because of his focus on institutional power structure, this work does not receive the empathetic attention a more purely-inspired phenomenological interpretation would provide.

As someone who lived through the latter phase of the first wave of phenomenology’s infusion in the

architectural and environmental disciplines in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I would argue that **AP** as Otero-Pailos presents it was actually part of a much broader academic interest in phenomenology that arose from the overwhelmingly palpable ethos of the 1960s that impacted almost everyone in the Western world in one way or another, both professionally and personally. Not only architects but also many geographers, psychologists, and other social scientists called into question the positivist, reductive mindset that at that time dominated the academy. Otero-Pailos says nothing about the powerful “environment-behavior” movement that penetrated environmental and design programs beginning in the early 1960s, driven by the compelling work of Jane Jacobs, Edward Hall, Robert Sommer, Kevin Lynch, Oscar Newman, and Christopher Alexander, to name a few.

Some of this research remained objectivist and limited to the cognitive dimensions of architectural and environmental behavior, but other scholars, especially geographers like Edward Relph, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Anne Buttner, rejected positivist science and looked toward Continental traditions, including phenomenology. One important model was the empirical phenomenological research conducted by psychologists at Pittsburgh’s Duquesne University and promoted in four edited collections, *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology*, published by Duquesne University Press between 1971 and 1983. I still remember vividly the pleasure and relief I felt as a doctoral student when I discovered the series’ first volume because it provided a range of methodological possibilities for doing real-world, “empirical” phenomenology. This work demonstrated convincingly that *phenomenology need not only be done by philosophers*, a point about which Otero-Pailos seems ambivalent, particularly in his harsh criticism of Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of Heidegger.

Another important event relating to **AP** was the founding in 1968 of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA), which provided a remarkable interdisciplinary exchange, with architects, planners, and social scientists joining together in common ground to better understand peoples’ lived relationship with buildings and places. The behavioral and experiential support and emphases of this group eventually provided one institutional founda-

tion for more explicit phenomenological work dealing with environmental and architectural concerns, including the 1990 founding of *EAP*, which was originally provided an organizational base by EDRA.

The Current Situation

I don’t disagree with Otero-Pailos’ conclusion that a first phase of **AP** had wound down by the late 1980s as deconstructivist, poststructural, feminist, and critical perspectives came to dominate theory, not only in architecture but in philosophy, the social sciences, and planning as well. But beneath the conceptual hubbub of these relativist, power-grounded theories, the much quieter voice of phenomenological research continued to speak, especially through the writings of phenomenological philosophers like Edward Casey, Bruce Janz, Jeff Malpas, Robert Mugerauer, and Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, who all wrote book-length studies of the phenomena of place, dwelling, and environmental embodiment and materiality.

Additional phenomenological force propelling these topics was provided by architectural theorists Juhani Pallasmaa and Thomas Thiis-Evensen; religious scholars Ronald Engel and Belden Lane; and anthropologists Tim Ingold and Christopher Tilley. Geographer Edward Relph’s seminal 1976 *Place and Placelessness*, the first phenomenology of place, was reprinted, with a new introduction, in 2008; and philosopher Edward Casey’s influential *Getting Back into Place* was reprinted in an expanded version in 2009. Philosopher Otto Bollnow’s classic *Human Space* finally appeared in English translation in 2011. The first international “Architecture and Phenomenology” conference was held in Haifa, Israel, in 2007; and a second conference was held in Kyoto, Japan, in 2009. All these accomplishments indicate that “architectural phenomenology” is alive and well.

For the most recent efforts in phenomenological research, one useful impact of the much more dominant critical-theory perspectives has been their motivating phenomenologists to widen their recognition of human experience. For example, the traditional phenomenological emphases on rootedness, center, home, dwelling, emplacement, stasis, and real places (criticized by poststructuralists, as Otero-Pailos points out [263, n. 12]), are being complemented with work on peripheries, mobility, not-at-homeness, dis-

placement, placelessness, environmental dynamism, virtual places, and so forth. In arguing against the social-constructivist criticism that phenomenological research is essentialist, phenomenologists have worked to probe specific human situations and life-worlds, demonstrating the approach can deal as well with human difference, hybridity, and alterity as it can with human commonalities and lived foundational qualities. As witnessed by *EAP* entries, there is a continuing interest in phenomenological method and discoveries, especially among younger scholars who have come to realize the muddled emptiness of much of the social-constructivist and critical research.

Otero-Pailos provides some superb new material on early practitioners of “architectural phenomenology.” One must emphasize, however, that the historiography of **AP** delineated in his book is a partial point of view. Environmental and architectural phenomenology remains robust. Its most important contributions to architectural theory and practice may yet lie in the future.

Notes

1. One assumes that Otero-Pailos’ book arises from his 2001 MIT Architecture dissertation, “Theorizing the Anti-

Avant-Garde: Invocations of Phenomenology in Architectural Discourse, 1945–1989.” One advisor for this thesis was MIT architectural theorist Mark Jarzombek, whose 2001 *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History* (Cambridge Univ. Press) is highly critical of how artists and architects drew on phenomenological and hermeneutic ideas. He writes: “Works by Heidegger and Gadamer were especially valued, especially once it was known that Gadamer claimed that we can experience every work of art ‘immediately, without further mediation’. Once again, among artists and architects, the issue was not so much what the European philosophers were really trying to convey... but how to mine their work for quotes. This is not to critique the aestheticness of the resultant theorizations for being superficial (that presupposes a more correct way of understanding, which I also reject) but rather to outline the reasons for its power.... Unfortunately, ‘phenomenology’ and ‘existentialism’ became little more than buzz words hiding perfectly conventional inspirationalist attitudes toward the aesthetic” (202). One finds the seeds of Otero-Pailos’ historiographic approach in Jarzombek’s definition of historiography as “the site of an intellectual functionalism that banishes unwanted realities in the name of a clarified field of operation” (9).

2. In our first issue of *EAP*, we included a brief review of this 1988 issue, recognizing that its poststructural essays were a serious challenge to conventional phenomenological work (vol. 1 [1990], issue 1, pp. 6–8).

Seamon is the Editor of Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology.

The State of Architectural Phenomenology

Benoît Jacquet

Before discussing Jorge Otero-Pailos’ *Architecture’s Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern*, I want to explain briefly how I’ve come to write this review. After the first international conference, “Architecture and Phenomenology,” held in 2007 at the Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, a second conference was organized in 2009 in Kyoto, Japan. For that second conference, some 120 scholars submitted papers. I was asked, as head of the Kyoto branch of the *Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient* (French School of Asian Studies, or EFEO), to provide logistical support for the conference. After the event, EFEO Kyoto produced an electronic version of the proceedings (some 2000 pages!) that garnered much attention, and we later decided to produce an edited volume including 21 papers. This volume is entitled

From the Things Themselves: Architecture and Phenomenology (Kyoto University Press/EFEO, 2012) [see “citations received,” p. 3].

The 2007 and 2009 “Architecture and Phenomenology” conferences were organized before the publication of Otero-Pailos’ *Architecture’s Historical Turn*. In fact, we did not know of its publication when we were preparing *From the Things Themselves*. The success of the two conferences and the appearance of Otero-Pailos’ book indicate that, for architects (and for many artists too), phenomenology is a major theoretical influence and that so-called “architectural phenomenology” has a certain historical momentum.

Even if, however, phenomenology is currently one of the leading conceptual trends in the field, it is obviously not the only available theory. It has never

been nor will it ever be the only theoretical tool for architects. In both the first and last chapters of his book, Otero-Pailos suggests that phenomenology is no longer the favored philosophy among architects and has been usurped by more current ways of thinking. Nonetheless, in the early part of this decade, the term “phenomenology” still appears regularly in architectural book titles, albeit with a more “classical” connotation. Indeed, the very last words of *Architecture’s Historical Turn* are “we are not entirely free from its grasp.”

Phenomenology represents so many things for architects today that it is difficult to define exactly the meaning of “architectural phenomenology,” or even, “phenomenology” itself. As pointed out at the Kyoto conference by philosopher Hubert Dreyfus, architectural historians have produced most of the discourse on “architecture and phenomenology,” providing many illuminating insights. But one may also suggest that this architectural “filter” has resulted in a certain distance from the original purpose of phenomenology.

Jorge Otero-Pailos’ book provides some explanation of this particular evolution of phenomenology in architecture. I myself am an architectural historian but, in editing the conference papers, I felt it important to collaborate with a trained philosopher, Vincent Giraud, who was a student of Jean-Luc Marion at the Sorbonne, to return to the philosophical roots of phenomenology. The purpose and contents of our jointly edited *From the Things Themselves* have little in common with Otero-Pailos’ argument in his book, but *EAP* Editor David Seamon invited me to do a review, partly because I have not been educated in the United States and perhaps have a certain distance from the American scene as described in *Architecture’s Historical Turn*.

“Architect-Scholars”

I would say that Otero-Pailos’ main thrust is demonstrating that phenomenology is an adequate medium for bringing theoretical support to the teaching of architectural essence, for both designers and theorists, including historians. Otero-Pailos demonstrates amazingly well how architects have adopted phenomenological approaches to establish a certain type of scholarship that tackles directly more conventional

and academic teachings, blazing a new path for the architectural historian. We can thus imagine how Jean Labatut, Charles Moore, Christian Norberg-Schulz, but also Kenneth Frampton, have assimilated this philosophical background to create a new profession, that of “architect scholar.”

Otero-Pailos admirably renders how phenomenological language fits well with the architect’s mind, helping to bridge dualities that have plagued both philosophy and the sciences since the classical period—for example, the gap between the sensible and the intellectual. In its original form, phenomenology discovered that the senses can precede reason, that sensitivity can be applied to sensibility, that illusion can also be a form of truth, and that practical experience can be a source of theoretical knowledge. Phenomenology offers a way to reconnect design to textual analysis and things to words.

In my opinion, phenomenology and, in particular, the phenomenological sources that have been popular among architects, are far from representing a non-intellectual, or even an anti-intellectual standpoint. Rejecting the intellect *per se* was never Husserl’s intention. Similarly, Heidegger and Bachelard’s hermeneutical approaches, excavating the essence of literature and poetry, are far from representing an anti-intellectual attitude. One of the reasons phenomenology is most attractive to architects is its power to “gather”—and even give “intellectual” legitimacy to—many aspects related to architecture and spatiality that are not apprehended by other philosophical or professional perspectives. In this sense, phenomenology relates well to architects’ “interdisciplinary” minds and their desire to bring together sensitivity and sensibility to the applied, real-world processes of design and construction.

Interdisciplinarity

David Seamon’s review of *Architecture’s Historical Turn* [see pp. 3–7] highlights the fact that, at some points in his discussion, Otero-Pailos criticizes architectural phenomenology and its possible decline, or “death.” This interpretation generates a certain amount of ambivalence that can lead to extreme, entrenched views, something I hope to avoid here. I can readily guess that, possibly for political reasons, some people may be more inclined to pronounce the

“death of phenomenology,” leaving the path open for other forms of thinking. It is not my intention here, however, to outline who may be in a position to take advantage of phenomenology’s potential demise (“*à qui profite le crime?*”). Instead, I would rather claim that a phenomenological approach is compatible with many other theoretical, intellectual, historical, and social traditions. The writings of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, Derrida, and Ricoeur have inspired architectural students for more than half a century, but phenomenology has never been the only way of thinking used by architects.

For instance, Nietzsche, the “artist philosopher,” has been popular among architects as have philosophies allowing architects to imagine conceptual interpretations—for example, Deleuze and Guattari’s “thousand plateaux,” “desiring machines,” “rhizomes,” and “fold”; Foucault’s “heterotopia”; Barthes’ “mythology”; and so forth. Architects do not necessarily need to adhere to only one form of thinking and to only one school of philosophy. On the contrary, the process of creation requires a form of intellectual “pottering”—in reference to Levi-Strauss’ notion of *bricolage*. Architectural concepts arise through a complex process of thinking and intuition, and architects can draw on whatever is available, within hand-reach or mind-reach, to complete their ideas and visions.

For example, in seminars I attended in the late 1990s at Paris’ EHESS (*École des hautes études en sciences sociales*), students were queuing to see Derrida, and Koolhaas was lecturing for free in front of an audience of 50. In a logical, coherent way that was far from surrealistic, philosopher and Orientalist Augustin Berque was dealing, in two hour segments, with the thought of Plato, Leroi-Gourhan, Bergson, Heidegger, Henri Lefebvre, and Japanese philosophers Nishida and Watsuji.

This environment was not just limited to one institute. In French schools of Architecture, the departments of History are not separate from those of Architectural Theory. Rather, they compose one sole academic section of History and Architectural Theory. Historians work closely with sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, and linguists. For instance, I remember that Jean-Louis Cohen would often refer to various psychoanalytic concepts. He always encour-

aged students (at least myself) to explore and extend philosophical interpretations. Jean-Louis also insisted on the necessary use of images and photographs for strengthening architectural discourse.

Back to Experiencing Things

Rather than focus on the possible decline of phenomenology among young architects, it may well be that there is a larger issue involved—the seeming decline of “theory” within current architectural education. As argued by Mark Jarzombek in “The State of ‘Theory’” (in L. King, ed., *Architecture and Theory: Production and Reflection*, Junius Verlag, 2009), “Architecture’s messy disciplinarity, which was the result of the theory and history movements, is being cleaned up, sanitized, and simplified.” The main issue is not related to the fluctuation of ideologies—post-structuralism, feminism, neo-Marxism, post-colonialism—but due to the fact that, sometimes, “thinking” loses some fundamental motivations. As theorist Sanford Kwinter suggested in the 1990s, technical modernity has created an environment that is “far from equilibrium” because, in many respects, virtual worlds can become more exciting than actual lifeworlds. The end of the city (and of architecture) arrives when social networking, shopping, and playing in front of a computer screen become more interesting than going outside into the “real” world.

In this regard, let me tentatively postulate some possible solutions or avenues of thought. Perhaps we ought to sometimes go back to the things that we used to do, even be “old-school”: Re-read books; re-practice handwriting and hand drawing; even day-dream and re-experience “boredom” as Bachelard recommends in his *Poetics of Space*. More concretely, Otero-Pailos, who is also well known for his work as an artist, describes what postwar architect-historians brought to the classroom and even outside the classroom. We learn that Jean Labatut painted on his students’ faces to teach them the experience of camouflage (photograph, p. 27) and that Charles Moore encouraged students to paint on buildings so that architectural design was experienced “as something immediate by removing the intermediary step of technical drawing” (p. 127).

Immediate “experience,” “embodiment,” and “tactility” can also be a form of “architectural re-

sistance” to technical modernity—a social and political engagement proving, as Kenneth Frampton’s research shows, that architectural phenomenology does not only deal with an elitist aesthetics.

Intellectual History’s Past & Future

In his book, Otero-Pailos adopts a particular methodology that avoids mere historical periodicity, insisting that “the individual, and indeed the social, experiences of time” (p. 4) are redefining the term “contemporary,” which “[r]ather than a stable period of time ..., is an unstable category whose contents are constantly changing in relation to the tensions and power relations between different generation of architects” (p. 6). Adopting what Seamon, in his review, labels as a “Bourdieuian historiography,” *Architecture’s Historical Turn* is also a book of social and intellectual history, and I can see some similarities in its sociological approach with, for instance, François Cusset’s *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Architecture’s Historical Turn shows the influence of European scholars (of continental philosophy) on American schools of Architecture. This comparison is obviously radical, and as such, Otero-Pailos’ book is much more focused than *French Theory*. Otero-Pailos examines the fundamental thinking and intellectual strategies of four generations of architect-scholars who have invented a genuine form of teaching architecture. He explains how practicing architects have used phenomenology (and philosophy in general) for finding an alternative to pure historical studies, thus becoming leading architectural theorists.

Compared to the French academic system, we can see that American graduate schools of Architecture have been very efficient in establishing doctoral programs after World War II. In contrast, French schools of Architecture did not have doctoral programs before the late 1990s. Even now, most French architects get their doctorates outside graduate schools of Architecture—from faculties of Letters, departments of History, Geography, Urban Planning, Liberal Arts, Sociology, Anthropology, and so forth.

Returning to the present and asking the future state of phenomenology for architects, I cannot help thinking that the work of Norberg-Schulz has influ-

enced many Architecture students, especially in the 1980s. For many, books like *Genius Loci* encapsulate the core of “architectural phenomenology.” I can guess that this is also Otero-Pailos point of view, since he states in the opening sentence of his book: “When I entered Cornell University’s undergraduate architectural program in the 1980s, an older student handed my classmates and me a copy of Christian Norberg-Schulz’s *Genius Loci* and told us to read it if we wanted to get through school.”

When I studied architecture in France in the 1990s, the first book I was advised to read was Le Corbusier’s *Towards an Architecture*; the first time I heard of Norberg-Schulz, some years later, his discourse was then already considered to be “out of fashion,” although Sigfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture* was still a “must read.” In most French Architecture schools, modernists had more power than post-modernists, and architectural theory could easily refer to Heideggerian phenomenology without ever referring to Norberg-Schulz’s writings.

The renewal of “architectural phenomenology”—in particular, the reinterpretation of Merleau-Ponty by architects like Juhanni Pallasmaa and Steven Holl—indicates the polyvalence of phenomenology for architects. Architects also refer to Jean-Luc Marion’s notion of “givenness,” to Anthony Steinbock’s generative phenomenology, to David Leatherbarrow’s architectural and phenomenal “descriptions,” to David Seamon’s environmental phenomenology, to Karsten Harries’ environmental insights on ethics, and to thinkers such as Dalibor Vesely, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Rachel McCann, Adam Sharr—just to mention a few of many architect-scholars who draw on phenomenological approaches.

Otero-Pailos’ book is a milestone for the historiography of architectural phenomenology and reveals what this discipline has accomplished and generated. Moreover, the next generation has already emerged, and is spreading over the world like a rhizome.

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On Phenomenological Discourse in Architecture

M. Reza Shirazi

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Phenomenologist Herbert Spiegelberg (1982) argued that there is neither a system or school called “phenomenology” nor is there a definitive body of work that gives an exact answer to the question, “What is phenomenology?” He suggested that any claim of a unified phenomenological philosophy is an illusion: “Phenomenologists are much too individualistic in their habits to form an organized ‘school’” (p. xxvii).

This individuality is so strong, he claimed, that “There are as many phenomenologists as there are phenomenologies.” He suggested that “It is certainly true that, on closer inspection, the varieties exceed the common features” (*ibid.*). He concluded that:

1. Phenomenology is a dynamic philosophy that advances in relation to intrinsic principles as well as to the “things” it studies—in other words, in relation to the typical territory it encounters;
2. Like a stream, phenomenology incorporates parallel currents, all related but by no means homogeneous or moving at the same speed;
3. These phenomenological currents have a common point of departure but need not move toward the same destination; rather, many of these currents branch out in different directions that, collectively, can be considered as a “phenomenological movement” (*ibid.*, pp. 1-2).

The question I ask here is whether Spiegelberg’s formulation of a “movement” is appropriate for phenomenological work in architecture. Are architectural phenomenologists as various as philosophical phe-

nomenologists? Can we call the phenomenological approach to architecture a “movement” in the same way that we speak of modern architecture as a “modernist movement”? Are there common “themes” and “concerns” in architectural phenomenology? Or do differences outweigh any commonalities?

Architecture & Phenomenology

The lack of a common definition of “phenomenology” is confirmed by many phenomenologists (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Moran and Mooney 2002; Moran, 2005). Whether defined as “a return to the things themselves” (Husserl), as “a way of seeing” (Heidegger), or as “the essence of perception” (Merleau-Ponty), phenomenological approaches have been employed in both architectural theory and practice. Moran (2000, p. 4) suggests that phenomenology is more “a practice rather than a system.” Probably because of this “practical” character, phenomenology is of interest to architects, who sense a concrete potential in its more philosophical conceptions and themes.

From the conceptual side, architectural theorists claim that phenomenology might provide a true, reliable way of comprehending architecture. They argue that phenomenology can locate the essence of things and phenomena and thereby might bring us nearer to existential being. These theorists have not only developed phenomenological approaches for interpreting architecture but—whether consciously or unconsciously—have sought various criteria to evaluate architectural works, styles, and movements.

One such phenomenological theorist is Christian Norberg-Schulz, who emphasizes that phenomenology is “a method well suited to penetrate the world of everyday existence” (Norberg-Schulz 2000, p. 15). Drawing especially on Martin Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz presents phenomenology as a “method” whereby one might understand the world, including the world of architecture.

As a second representative of phenomenological theory in architecture, Juhani Pallasmaa presents phenomenology as “‘pure looking at’ the phenomenon, or ‘viewing its essence’” (Pallasmaa 1996, p. 450). He claims that, by means of a “naïve seeing,” we are able to approach the “essence of things unburdened by convention or intellectualized explanation” (Pallasmaa 2001, p. 21). In contrast, philosopher Karsten Harries (1991, p. 12) is uncomfortable with a classical understanding of phenomenology as a pure and firm ground. Instead, he argues that, in regard to dwelling and authentic thinking, phenomenological investigation does not necessarily assume a strict goal or unshakable foundation but, rather, provides a “way” or journey through “history” into the future.

Drawing on a perspective closer to Pallasmaa’s, architectural theorist Eduard Fühler (1998) suggests that phenomenology enables us to understand architecture “as a part of our lifeworld” and thus brings us nearer to architectural phenomena. In a similar way, theorist David Seamon (2000) explains that the phenomenological aim is locating underlying commonalities that mark the essential core of the phenomenon: “the phenomenologist pays attention to specific instances of the phenomenon with the hope that these instances, in time, will point toward more general qualities and characteristics that accurately describe the essential nature of the phenomenon as it has presence and meaning in the concrete lives and experiences of human beings” (p. 159). He understands phenomenology as a “kindly seeing,” “seeing with new eyes” (Seamon 1993), and a “revelatory seeing” (Seamon 2000) that allows for a “careful description” of the phenomena (Seamon 2007).

In a broader philosophical vein, theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez argues that, in an era when architecture has lost its metaphysical dimension and is no longer a privileged form of people-world reconciliation, only phenomenology can rediscover the primacy of per-

ception and overcome the fundamental dilemma that modern philosophy inherited from Descartes:

By revealing the limitations of mathematical reason, phenomenology has indicated that technological theory alone cannot come to terms with the fundamental problems of architecture. Contemporary architecture, disillusioned with rational utopias, now strives to go beyond positivistic prejudices to find a new metaphysical justification in the human world; its point of departure is once again the sphere of perception, the ultimate origin of existential meaning (Pérez-Gómez 1983, p. 325).

One must also emphasize that phenomenology has been an important groundstone for practicing architects involved with real-world design. Studying architectural themes phenomenologically can enable architects to think deeply about these themes and evoke helpful images and details. One example is architect Steven Holl (1996, p. 11), who explains:

Phenomenology concerns the study of essences; architecture has the potential to put essences back into existence. By weaving form, space, and light, architecture can elevate the experience of daily life through the various phenomena that emerge from specific sites, programs, and architectures. On one level, an idea-force drives architecture; on another, structure, material space, color, light, and shadow intertwine in the fabrication of architecture.

These theoretical and applied understandings of phenomenology’s value for architecture point to its potential for clarifying thinking about buildings and for facilitating design ideas. Though often quite different in their thematic emphases, these interpretations point toward the value of phenomenology as a “way,” a “method,” or an “approach” by which architectural problems can be better identified and clarified. The suggestion is that phenomenology offers one pathway toward a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of architectural themes and problems.

The Situation Today

As Spiegelberg emphasized, phenomenology in philosophy is not understood as a sedimented dogma or system. In this sense, there is no phenomenological “school” or “circle” in philosophy. But what about phenomenology as it has been drawn upon in architecture? Should one speak of it as a school or a circle or a movement or something else?

We should not probably speak of a school of phenomenology in architecture. “School” points to a group of affiliated persons who draw on a precise doctrine, and this is not found in architecture because of the variety of approaches and intentions pointed out above. Nor can phenomenology in architecture be considered a “circle” in the sense that there is a less formal group of thinkers sharing common perspectives, aims, and conclusions. It would be more accurate to argue that phenomenology in architecture arises more or less from common concerns of unaffiliated individuals rather than from a cooperative group sharing collective aims intentionally translated into specific actions.

One example is “Questions of Perception, Phenomenology of Architecture,” a special 1994 issue of *Architecture and Urbanism*, which presents some key texts and projects linking phenomenology and architecture. Though this edited work points to some common ground, contributors Pérez-Gómez, Pallasmaa, and Holl present their understanding of phenomenology in varying ways. In this sense, the volume offers no suggestion of a phenomenological school or circle.

Nor is it probably correct to associate phenomenology in architecture with a “movement.” Spiegelberg argues that, in philosophy, phenomenology is a movement in the sense that participants share a clear point of departure but move at different speeds in different directions toward different destinations (Spiegelberg, 1982). As with “school” and “circle,” however, “movement” is not really applicable in architecture, partly because phenomenology has never gained the strong influence that one sees in philosophy. At this point, there are a number of independent figures involved with architectural phenomenology, but their number is not sufficient to be labeled as a movement.

To specify this point further, we can compare phenomenology in architecture with the profession’s “modernist” movement, which is now powerful enough to totally dominate contemporary architectural discourse and practice. Competing trends like post-modernism, high-tech, and deconstruction have not been able to break free from the modernist vision. In contrast, even though one can identify a considerable body of work in architectural phenomenology, none

of these efforts have become a significant movement challenging the modernist legacy.

In the end, “discourse” may be the best label to describe the current state of phenomenology in architecture: a manner of investigation and design conducted mostly by individual researchers and designers who, sharing some common concerns and intentions, interpret the possibilities and results of phenomenological investigation in a wide array of ways, both conceptually and practically. In this sense, we can use the description “phenomenological discourse in architecture,” which can incorporate a broad spectrum of theoretical and practical discussions that highlight such common architectural themes and concerns as place, space, perception, movement, nature, lived body, and so forth.

As this range of thematic possibilities suggests, phenomenological discourse is *on-going* and, in that sense, a process rather than a product. At some future time, phenomenological discourse may be able to transform itself into a movement or a circle or even a school. But that cannot occur until phenomenology in architecture is better known, worked with, and formally organized. If this is to happen, there is required an on-going effort to clarify current shortcomings and to deepen longer-term possibilities. One need is a critical reading that self-critically and creatively evaluates the existing literature. In the last part of this essay, I suggest some possible directions in which this evaluative process might move.

Major Trends

Most broadly, phenomenological discourse in architecture is grounded in two major figures: philosophers Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty [1]. While Heidegger’s ideas on dwelling, place, space, and being-in-the-world demonstrate the significance of ontological concerns for architecture, Merleau-Ponty’s thought on perception, body, and the sensible dimension of human experience provides an important perspective on more practical, applied architectural issues. Christian Norberg-Schultz, for example, confirms explicitly that “the philosophy of Heidegger has been the catalyst” for his thinking on architecture (Norberg-Schulz, 2000, p. 5), particular-

ly Heidegger's interpretations of being, world, truth, thing, fourfold, and dwelling.

In contrast, Juhani Pallasmaa is more indebted to Merleau-Ponty, especially his attention to themes like lived body, perception, and mobility. Pallasmaa writes: "Merleau-Ponty is free of the cultural conservatism I sense in Heidegger's perspective; the Black Forest hut of Heidegger directs architecture backwards, I think, whereas Merleau-Ponty points my thought forward" (Pallasmaa, 2005, p. 18). Similarly, Steven Holl has been much influenced by Merleau-Ponty and claims that the philosopher played a major role in fundamentally shifting his approach to architectural design (Holl, 2000).

Other architectural phenomenologists highlight the same philosophical influences. Karsten Harries explains that "Heidegger has presided over much of my thinking, especially my thinking on architecture and on space" [2]. As a geographer and environment-behavior researcher, David Seamon utilizes phenomenological ideas as a means to examine environmental behavior and experience. He explains that

The phenomenological perspective I represent is ... a way of phenomenology developed by such thinkers as Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty that moves away from phenomenological founder Edmund Husserl's focus on pure intellectual consciousness (Seamon 2000, p. 158).

In this regard, Seamon's emphasis on lifeworld (Seamon 1979, 2000) and belonging (Seamon, 1990) are Heideggerean, but his focus on body-subject relates to Merleau-Ponty (Seamon, 2007). In his effort to integrate phenomenological and architectural concerns, Alberto Pérez-Gómez draws on Heidegger and hermeneuticist Hans-Georg Gadamer. One exception to a common interest in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty is architectural historian and theorist Kenneth Frampton, who is deeply influenced by Heidegger, who he supplements with the non-phenomenological perspective of the Frankfurt School of philosophy. Frampton writes:

Anyone who is familiar with my writing will at once detect the influence of two different lines of critical thought which in the main are German in origin—lines stemming from Hegel and Marx and culminating in Gramsci and the Frankfurt School; and another line, stemming from Nietzsche and Husserl, the school which encompasses in its range both phenomenology and exis-

tentialism and stretches to the writings of Heidegger and Hannah Arendt (Frampton 1989, p. 79).

An Ongoing Tension

This brief sketch of the state of phenomenology in architecture suggests that current efforts are best described as an ongoing discourse relating to human being-in-the-world as it incorporates architectural, spatial, environmental, and material dimensions. Borrowing from Karsten Harries, one might say that this discourse oscillates between *Fernweh* and *Heimweh*—in other words, between a future grounded in dreams of freedom and cosmopolitanism vs. a future grounded in dreams of rootedness and home:

The opposition of *Fernweh* and *Heimweh*, centrifugal and centripetal longing, is constitutive of human being: in all of us a longing to journey, literally and metaphorically, beyond what is all too comfortable and familiar, challenges and is challenged by nostalgia, a longing to finally settle down and call some place home (Harries 2006, pp. 75-76).

In this sense, phenomenological discourse in architecture contributes to an ongoing tension: On one hand, it stands for place, dwelling, and commonality but, on the other hand, offers a constructive dialogue with space, mobility, and otherness. This tension addresses one lived dimension of human experience that can neither be resolved nor elided but respected and understood through phenomenological discourse in architecture:

It is in this need that both architecture and the architectural metaphors of philosophy have their origin. The antinomy that joins place and space will not be resolved. Nor should it be resolved. And architecture, too, should affirm and seek to embody it (Harries, 2006, p. 85).

Notes

1. Though not discussed here, the contributions of other philosophers like Gaston Bachelard (1964) and Otto Friedrich Bollnow (1963/2011) are also significant.
2. In an email to the author, September 16, 2007.

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Eighth Letter from Far South

Attention, Interiority, and Place

John Cameron

This essay is one of a series of “occasional letters” that retired environmental educator John Cameron writes from his Blackstone home on Bruny Island, just off the southeastern coast of Tasmania, the island state to the south of mainland Australia. For earlier letters, see EAP, winter and fall 2008; spring 2009; winter and fall 2010; spring 2011; and winter 2012. These letters are available digitally at: <http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1522>. The accompanying images by Vicki King are: “40 spotted pardolotes,” p. 16; and “sumi-e ink drawing,” p. 19. jcameronblackstone@gmail.com. © 2012 John Cameron and Vicki King.

From time to time at Blackstone, I have become familiar with different ways of attending to the land [1]. Usually this attention has been a background phenomenon, easily lost in the tumult of daily activity. Spraying thistles this season, however, I’ve given much thought to “paying attention” in the context of Blackstone placemaking and my past involvement with spiritual practices of mindfulness.

We had a wet, windy spring this year. I saw thistles and other weeds poking their prickly heads through the grasses and knew it was time for spraying. But each morning I’d watch the scudding gusts of wind across the d’Entrecasteaux Channel, feel the sting of driven rain on my cheek, and comment ruefully to Vicki, “I don’t think it’s a spray day today” [2].

One week in October we finally had a still, dry day. I shouldered my 35-pound backpack of specialized thistle-spray solution and started up the hill toward the worst thistle infestation. I marked out my first traverse, pumped up the tank, and set off. Backpack spraying is an odd physical experience. The breathing filters on the facemask mean that each outbreath is accompanied by a rubbery, flapping noise,



making me acutely conscious of the sound and force of my breath.

Because the mask and rubber gloves are designed to keep out chemicals, they cause my face and hands to perspire. To keep the spray from penetrating my walking boots and trousers, I wear knee-high Wellington boots, which make hillside movement difficult. My physiotherapist advised that I wear knee braces, since there is no ankle or knee support in “wellies.” These knee braces impede my ability to bend or flex my legs, and the heavy backpack pulls on my shoulders

and its liquid contents slosh about as I turn or bend. I also wear tight back and wrist braces to support other weak parts of my 60-year-old body. The combined effect creates a strange, constrained world in which I am self-conscious of my breathing and my sweating skin bound up in Velcro and rubber.

I am making progress in discouraging thistles and weeds and encouraging native grasses and trees, but the consequence is that hand spraying has become trickier. No longer are there expanses of the same thistle and little else. Now there are five species of thistle and four common weeds dotted throughout the resurgent grasses. Each intruder has a different

habitat. The slender thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*) tends to merge with the tall grass until I can spot the pale purple flowering head, while capeweed (*Arctotheca calendula*) creeps along the ground between grass stalks. If I keep my eye too much at ground level, however, I can miss the rosettes of Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), which are most visible at mid-height.

When I spray, I systematically cover an area in three-meter-wide traverses, which is the width of ground that the tip of the spray gun covers in a sweep from left to right. Keeping track of where I have just sprayed is essential. Unfortunately, the only environmentally-friendly, water-soluble dye is deep blue, not easily recognizable against dark green weeds and thistles. As I carefully look for the blue, I must also remember the tree, rock, or stake that marks the end of the traverse.

The year before, my left shoulder had become so painful from spraying that I consulted a physiotherapist, who noted I was hunching my shoulders forward as if I were pushing myself to get across the slope faster. “Drop your shoulders back, keep your body upright, stay relaxed and in touch with your mental posture and attitude,” she advised. Easier said than done! I didn’t have the luxury of practicing body-mind scanning—thistles were in blossom everywhere and required elimination before they set seed.

I was tottering across the slope equally weighed down by backpack and mental injunctions (“Remember the tops of the grasses,” “Don’t forget the peripheral vision,” “What are your shoulders doing?”), oblivious to the fact that it was a superb day to be out in the fields. The pressure of imminently seeding thistles couldn’t become another burden to carry but had to remain part of my awareness. I needed to keep attention between thistles, markers, back and shoulders, and internal state of mind.

In mid-traverse, I stopped for breath. Standing in waist-high grass and weeds, I realized I was near a knoll where a few days before I had paused in the wind. Encumbered in protective gear and support braces, my head full of all the things I needed to keep track of, I remembered that feeling of expansiveness with a laugh, and suddenly it all seemed very familiar. My inability to keep relaxed attention on my mind, body, and surroundings reminded me of how at

spiritual retreats I seemed to sometimes master the multi-focused attention and mindfulness practices I was taught but could never maintain them in daily life once I was out of the environment in which they were introduced [3].

I was an active member of spiritual groups of various persuasions for decades. I’ve received advanced teachings on training the mind and Buddhist philosophy from Tibetan lamas, spent hundreds of hours in meditation learning mindfulness and visualization techniques. Before that for many years, I was a member of a Gurdjieff group. In the inspirational environment of a long Buddhist retreat or in the highly-charged daily meetings of a small Fourth Way group, I had occasional moments of mental clarity, but they seldom lasted long.

In all these traditions, working with attention was acentral to training the mind. To begin we focused on an object of attention—the movement of breath or a mandala—and kept returning to the object whenever thoughts strayed. Then we moved to gently taking one’s attention off the particular object and onto the quality of awareness itself. In theory, this effort led to developing an all-encompassing attention that is continually aware of all outer and inner phenomena without reacting to them. I can say, however, that I never approached this state.

I thrived in retreats and group meetings, and I was asked to do some teaching. But none of this directed work ever seemed to make a difference to how I was in the everyday world or to my habitual reactions to situations. In retrospect, in Gurdjieffian terms, I was a “weak yogi”—the person who “has insights and who can conceptually connect everything with everything... but when one looks at the quality of their personal lives, they are just as dumb and neurotic as all the rest of us, in spite of saying all these incredibly wonderful insightful things” [4].

Throughout those years, I wrestled with what was variously described as “integrating the teachings” or “the practice of daily life.” Training the mind should lead to an enhanced, more malleable capacity to pay attention, but in my case it did not. When I was meditating two or three hours a day after long retreats, I would feel great clarity during the meditation and visualization sessions. I sometimes felt more connected with the world afterward. At other times,

however, it was as though I was in an invisible bubble separated from the everyday world and “not quite here.” Were my problems in the fields at Blackstone part of the same difficulty?

As I pondered these matters, I was gradually able to recognize the different weed species among the grass more readily—what is commonly called “getting your eye in.” It’s not just “seeing,” however. At a field day in a local reserve, Bruny Island’s resident-expert bird guide, Tonia Cochran, led us on a walk into forty-spotted pardalote territory [5]. She listened for the elusive birds as intently as she looked. When she heard a soft double note that I could barely distinguish from other chirrups, peeps, and squawks, she swung her binoculars and spotted the diminutive olive form of the pardalote from among the silvery green eucalypt leaves. Clearly, you have to activate your ear as well as your eye and get both working together. As I thought about these well-honed skills of the experienced “birder,” I realized that I tended to let the soundscape wash over me as an undifferentiated immersion experience. I rarely listened for particular clues about the life around me, the “sound-signs” of their presence.

Paying attention does not come naturally to me. At primary school, one of my kinder nicknames was “Absent-minded Professor” because of the thick glasses I wore from the age of three and my tendency to have my mind on things other than what was in front of me. I remember native plantswoman Desley Kippax first suggesting to me that I cut the seed heads off our native powa grasses and scatter them on bare ground [6].

“When do they go to seed?” I asked, reaching for my pocket notepad and pen to write it down.

“Oh, usually December or January, but you don’t need to worry about that—just keep an eye on them, you’ll know.”

I didn’t trust myself to know so wrote it down anyway as an *aide memoire*. The stalks of mature seeds on the powa grass are obvious to me now, but at the time I didn’t have either the eye for them or the trust that I ever would.

A significant part of the process is recognizing self-imposed barriers to being more attentive. Over a year ago, Vicki pointed out some young weeds above the long grass in an area just above our neighbor

Archie’s thistle-free paddock. She suggested I spray them, but I thought, “Oh God, I’ve got my hands full of thistle spraying. If I start worrying about every weed on this place, I’ll go crazy. I’ll just let them come and go and it will be all right.”

A month later, Vicki mentioned them again as more appeared. To humor her, I spent a morning spraying, feeling slightly virtuous for heeding what probably wasn’t a big deal. Thereafter these weeds disappeared from my mental consideration.

The following month I was out in the field when Archie drove by in his Land Rover.

“You’d better get after that dock that’s spreading through your fields.”

“Oh,” I replied, pleased to have the weed identified by name. “I’ve sprayed it already, it should be okay.”

“I don’t think so. You’ve got a whole load of seed about to drop. It’s a nasty seed, too—triangular and it spreads everywhere.” He was good enough not to say that he didn’t want all that seed washing down onto his land, but the implication was clear.

Archie has been on Bruny Island for 40 years, while I have been here for only six, so he has credibility. I walked over to the slope he had mentioned and was staggered to see how much dock there was—luxuriant auburn seed heads ready to burst. When I reported this to Vicki, she wasn’t impressed, considering the work I’d have to put into collecting all the seed heads, whereas if I had sprayed at her first mention, the plants wouldn’t have gone to seed at all. We agreed that for a man who has spent many years on his meditation cushion, I can be remarkably unaware.

I had plenty of time to reflect as I began the arduous task of snipping off each of the thousands of seed heads with secateurs and placing them in garbage bags, taking care not to shake the seeds loose. Ruefully, I recalled the old saying, “There’s none so blind as those who will not see.” Because I had resisted the notion that there was yet another noxious plant to pay heed to, I had not wanted to see the dock and so didn’t register that it was spreading in front of my eyes. I chastised myself for spending too much effort seeking to maintain the spacious quality of the occasional morning’s meditation or thinking about the subtleties of “withness action” [7] rather than the

more prosaic work of attending to what is physically right in front of me [8].

The remnants of the “bubble” I sometimes encountered after meditation sessions were coming back to haunt me. I was grasping after that quality of simplicity that so easily dissipated when meditation ended. Also I suspect I was still prone to the subtle self-inflation that was an undercurrent at retreats, a sense of specialness in undertaking esoteric practices for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Such ruminations on the relationship between meditation and land stewardship sent me back to the literature on attention, where I found two contrasting emphases. In what I would call the “discontinuity view,” held by most commentators, there are two distinct kinds of mutually exclusive attention. The first kind is called by Philip Novak *ordinary attention*, which is discursive, intermittent and passive: “It is not a quality of mind we bring to experience, but something that occurs to us as we become temporarily interested in some inner or outer phenomena” [9]. In contrast, commentators speak of *contemplative attention*, which refers to sustained, active, non-discursive attention often developed as part of rigorous spiritual discipline. In Hubert Benoît’s view, ordinary attention is stuck on its object: “I am lost, identified with what I am doing without being aware of why I am doing it, whereas in absolute attention we are aware of what we are doing and why” [10].

A contrasting approach is the “continuity view,” which de-emphasizes distinctions among attention modes and instead understands attention as a comprehensive phenomenon that can lead to a deeper experience of reality. As William Segal explains, “Through the simple act of attending, one initiates a new alignment of forces.... [O]pening to the force of attention evokes a sense of wholeness and equilibri-



um” that moves beyond reactive mechanisms and distractions. He notes that “attention is not mine. Its source is surrounded by mystery.... [O]ne needs to be at the service of conscious attention; one prepares for its advent through active stillness” [11].

How is attention to be developed? In the discontinuity view, one must first recognize the limitations of ordinary attention and the associated, false self. Second, as presented by Novak, the automatic processes of the false self are starved by not reacting positively or negatively to the objects of attention. For Benoît, the key is to retain

awareness of one’s purpose in any action, in all attentiveness. On the other hand, Segal writes more of the process of deepening ordinary attention progressively through such means as anchoring the attention in the sensations of the body, “providing it with a kind of habitat” [12].

Because attention is such a diffuse notion, different emphases cannot be taken too far, though they became quite relevant as I tried to better attend to my daily life at Blackstone. For example, in its practice of mindfulness, Buddhism makes much of the distinction between ordinary mind and what is sometimes described as “absolute mind,” “big mind,” or “nature of mind.” According to Buddhist master Sogyal Rinpoche, the nature of mind is like the sky: “a primordial, pure, pristine awareness that is at once intelligent, cognizant, radiant and always awake” [13].

Some Buddhist literature on mindfulness and spiritual enlightenment appears aligned with the continuity perspective on attention. For example, Stephen Batchelor notes that “to stop and pay attention to what is happening is one way of snapping out of such fixations [the surge of habitual impulses and

worries]. It is also a reasonable definition of meditation” [14]. He goes on to outline the process of deepening self-awareness that comes with slowly expanding attention to one’s body sensations, feelings, thoughts, and the surrounding world.

Similarly, the Gurdjieffian system of self-transformation aims at a balanced development of a person’s physical, emotional, and intellectual capacities. As Charles Tart explains, Gurdjieff’s path is primarily “a matter of mindfulness in everyday life” [15]. Although the Gurdjieffian starting point is similar to Novak’s view that ordinarily people are oblivious much of their waking life, there is emphasis on direct attention to bodily sensations as a way of living in the present moment rather than recapitulating past events or fantasizing about the future. Tart is one of the few researchers who has had extensive practical experience in both Buddhism and the Gurdjieffian system. He concludes that “I personally find Gurdjieff’s techniques for creating mindfulness in daily life much more practical and successful than Buddhist ones” [16]. He points out that, though Buddhist teachings emphasize mindfulness in daily life, not just in meditation, they provide few practical techniques for actualizing meditative presence to everyday actions and situations.

According to the literature, then, I needn’t feel too badly about my struggles with attention, meditation, and daily life. The gap between what Buddhists call the “ultimate nature of mind” and the sad reality of mental habits is integral to human nature. A key implication of the discontinuity view is that little can be done with the sort of rigid, limited attention I experienced in the paddocks. Rather, this is the typical nature of ordinary mind. The long process of ceasing to react to whatever phenomena I encounter and not identifying with success or failure would be very difficult outside a spiritual tradition. Developing sustained contemplative attention would be even more arduous.

In contrast, the continuity view emphasizes a persevering with ordinary attention, whereby bodily awareness seems particularly central [17]. When we first came to Bruny Island, we had envisaged that we would establish a retreat here, with much more time for spiritual practice than our previous home offered. In retrospect, this was as misguided a hope as my ini-

tial thoughts of leisurely bicycle rides, tennis matches, and cricket games.

What actually happened was, because we were living more remotely and self-sufficiently, we faced far greater everyday demands that, if met with inattentiveness, led to painful consequences. In other words, issues of spirituality and attentiveness have much more often involved mundane needs and actions unfolding in the context of a deepening place relationship. This situation raises questions about the interaction between place and attention. Does the process of re-inhabiting place necessarily require closer attention to one’s surrounds? Is there something about the very nature and structure of places that transforms one’s attention or one’s ability to be attentive?

Even at a mundane level, I’ve noticed how our house and its location—a small dwelling with a large veranda 40 yards from the ocean shore—affects the quality of my attention. After dinner and dish washing, I carry the saved rinse water out to the garden around the house. Most times, being outside brings me to my senses a bit, breaking through my rambling thoughts or the world news on our wind-up radio. Last night, my attention was focused by tree martins shuffling about in their nests in the veranda roof and a moonlight shaft piercing storm clouds and illuminating wet, silver trunks of white peppermint trees.

During the day, if I walk halfway down the path to the shore, there’s a bare, rocky point where my attention is drawn outward over the water and to the salt taste of the wind. Down on the shore, my attention moves to the soundscape of Channel breezes and waves. The final transition is into the water for a brisk invigorating swim or snorkel. Floating motionless on my back, arms widespread, I feel fully immersed and present. Back on the shore, I notice my entire skin tingling, and I feel renewed.

The morning I stopped in the midst of backpack spraying points toward another aspect of the spectrum of attention. What was required of me that day was very close to the Gurdjieffian exercises of sensing and self-remembering. Tart emphasizes the importance of “simultaneously making the small effort of will to keep your attention deliberately divided... You never let all of your attention go into listening or just into seeing, but keep it divided, just a little bit in

touch with your body sensations, the arms and legs, looking actively, listening actively” [18].

To spray effectively and not strain my body, I needed to keep my attention divided between several different things, staying in touch with the sensations in my shoulders and back, as well as keeping track of where I was going on the traverse. The structure of the paddocks and the distribution of weeds and grasses provided the ongoing opportunity to practice the sort of multi-focused attention that had previously eluded me. Unlike the artificiality of trying to maintain in ordinary life something developed in workshops or on retreat, this effort is practical and down-to-earth. Once again, I learn the power of embracing necessity [19].

Blackstone has been an ongoing source of inspiration. Over the years, my Buddhist practice has changed from a rigidly regular group schedule of meditation, mantra, and visualization to an intermittent, essentialized practice on my own. There have been occasions, sometimes on the shore at first or last light, when a few lines of a daily prayer come unbidden into my mind. One evening last month, as the setting sun turned the rock pools into burnished mirrors and filled the sandstone caves with honeyed light, I was stopped in my tracks by the stillness. Putting down the oysters just collected, I felt weak-kneed and sat on a nearby mushroom-shaped rock [20]. Spontaneously, I broke into a Buddhist chant. As my voice reverberated in the sandstone hollows and traversed the water, I felt I was singing out a heartfelt thank you to the Channel’s rocks, waters, and mountains in gratitude for their simply being there.

As the echoes receded and tears flowed, I felt to be part of the ongoing processes of this place, doing something as natural as the gull’s mew or the waves’ lapping. Just as the mushroom rock radiated its particular “rock-ness” and Mount Wellington radiated its particular “mountain-ness,” so I sat there radiating my own “human-ness.” All three things had an interior aspect, and I felt a sense of spaciousness opening up within me and beyond me.

It might seem odd that I broke into a Buddhist chant, given everything I’ve said about the difficulties of sustained practice. Maybe all I needed was to sit quietly in the fading light. The difference is that

this experience was a spontaneous response to light flooding the shore rather than some formalized even-ing practice. Even if the hours and days spent in meditation or on retreat have not directly seemed to strengthen daily awareness or contemplative attention, they have left me with an expressive vocabulary and rhythmic chants that this place seems to draw forth [21].

Attention plays a crucial role in the flux between my external perceptions of the place and internal states of mind, as I discovered in a very prosaic way when backpack spraying. Charles Tart calls it a paradox—the more you become aware of your external world and your physical body, the more aware you become of your inner life [22]. His explanation is simple: You don’t get so caught up in your psychological reactions, fantasies, hopes, and fears if you can keep some space from them by maintaining part of your attention on your body and sensing the outside world.

Perhaps my situation runs deeper. In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, philosopher David Abram describes a subtle dependence of so-called “interior” mental phenomena on taken-for-granted aspects of the “exterior” world. He quotes Rilke: “The inner—what is it? If not intensified sky.” This depiction resonates strongly with the Buddhist conception of the skylike nature of mind [23]. In this sense, our mental world is inextricably linked with the world in which we find ourselves: “each terrain seems to have its own particular intelligence, the unique vernacular of soil and leaf and sky. Each place has its own mind, its own psyche... a place-specific intelligence shared by all the humans that dwell therein, but also by all beings who live and make their way in that zone”[24]. To evoke his own Pacific Northwest vernacular, Abram draws upon “Douglas fir, red-tailed hawk, serpentine in the sandstone, and fog offshore in the summer.” Following Abram’s lead, I offer my first attempt at a Blackstone vernacular:

A sibilant wind in the *casuarinas*
Heron poised at Channel’s edge in the mist
The briny seaweed tang of cool air at low tide
Wedge-tailed eagle, wingtip feathers fully extended, soaring
upslope
The wallaby’s gaze, ears alert, above a tussock of *powa* grass

Mushroom-shaped rocks and the circular sandstone hollows
they leave
Scarred grasstree sentinels above the shore

In subsequent work, Abram contends that the instrument with which one enters the intelligence of a place is not the rational intellect but the whole sensing body. One does not translate the local vernacular into verbal language but, rather, attends closely to the body's response to place: "The body subtly blends itself with every phenomenon it perceives" [25]. In this way, one enters into mind-at-large—in other words, mind not as a human possession but as "a power proper to every part of the elemental field" [26]. Qualities of thought and even particular thoughts can spring from the landscape and creatures that live there.

This way of viewing the mind sheds light on my recent glimpse into the inner-ness of rock and mountain. Abram claims that our sense of a unique interior mindscape to which each of us alone has access arises from the modernist destruction of the indigenous view of the universe as an immense enclosure, a "huge interior" that humanity inhabited. In the wake of the Copernican revolution, Europeans found themselves on the outside, in space. Only then did the modern idea of the mind as "a wholly private interior" arise [27]. From this perspective, my propensity for being outside is, paradoxically, a way of seeking the inside of things [28].

Relavant here is Simone Weil's claim that "Attention taken to its highest degree is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer" [29]. Weil contrasts attention, requiring an opening of one's whole being in receptivity, with the work of will, which only involves "a few muscles." After my convolutions over meditation, mindfulness, and different types of attention, her words feel like a blessing.

Weil uses strong qualifiers when she writes about attention: "Taken to its highest degree" and "absolutely unmixed attention" do not sound like the everyday attention necessary for washing the dishes or spraying thistles. According to the discontinuity view, these contrasting modes of attention are indeed two different things, though Weil's terminology suggests more a matter of degree than distinct type.

In any event, I have already made key choices. I no longer spend the recommended hours in meditation each day. I get out to the fields, learning practical skills, trying to pay more attention to what I do and what happens around me. The continuity view seems to resonate more with my experience here, and I feel ready to say that really paying attention *is* prayer—to the indwelling spirit in all things and to deep listening for the underlying language of this place. As Abram explains, prayer springs from the practice of directly addressing our animate surroundings, and there is the same quality of respectful attention, whether one is speaking to a divinity or to the sentient world [30].

Having said that, I find much in accordance with the discontinuity view. Novak's depiction of ordinary attention is an accurate account of the mental states I commonly encounter, and Benoît's emphasis on remembering one's purpose in bringing attention to everyday life is important to me. I'm not doing it simply to do a better job of backpack spraying. Rather, it's a way to help me wake up out from the deep "sleep" of habitual action and to participate more consciously in this place's unfolding life. Even this effort can be tricky because, if one is not careful, remembering one's aim can lead to the psychic inflation of a supposedly higher purpose.

I'm left with a new set of questions. How do I develop a robust practice of everyday bodily awareness out of the debris of exercises I have accumulated from years of spiritual practice, yoga, and physiotherapy? How can I discriminate between those processes of mindfulness and visualization that promote attention to daily life, and those that perpetuate the bubble of separation and specialness? What bearing does attending more closely to the local place vernacular and my subtler bodily responses have on our everyday place-making activities here? What does it really mean to have one's awareness be part of something so much larger—a place-specific intelligence shared by all the beings that inhabit Blackstone?

I head to the shore after a wild, windy day and find myself in a place I don't usually go to—a small rock shelf beneath a spreading *casuarina*. The Channel's whitecaps have subsided to a lazy slap and an occasional reverberating shudder as a wave comes in under the semi-submerged rock platform. The after-

noon sun has warmed the sandstone. Maybe I need to relax more about this matter of attention and hold these questions more lightly. It all seems to be pointing in the same direction—working with mental habit patterns and embracing practical necessity. Embodied mind. *Emplaced* mind. Attention. Remembering my aim. Prayer.

The breeze sighs through the *casuarinas*. A wave slaps the shore. Boom! The heron skims the water's surface, silhouetted in the late sun.

Notes

1. The very first encounter was seeing a heron poised on the shoreline and the effect this sighting had when we first arrived at Blackstone. See my "First Letter from Far South." This and other letters are available at: <http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1522>.

2. Spraying requires relatively calm, dry conditions so spray remains on the thistles and isn't washed off the leaves.

3. My life partner Vicki and I have had many conversations regarding our experiences of spiritual practice and paying attention. In 2009, we published a co-authored chapter exploring some of these issues; see John Cameron and Victoria King, "Spirit Place: Being Present in the Land," in *Spirituality, Mythopoesis and Learning* (Brisbane: Post Pressed Press, 2009), pp. 197-205.

4. Charles Tart, *Living the Mindful Life* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), p. 24. He describes the weak yogi as one who "knows everything and can do nothing."

5. As described in "Seventh Letter from Far South," the forty-spotted pardalote is a small endangered bird endemic to Bruny Island.

6. Desley Kippax is an experienced native plantswoman and friend—see "Sixth Letter from Far South."

7. Used by some commentators on Goethean science, this term refers to action taken in partnership with other life forms rather than doing things to them—see "Fifth Letter from Far South."

8. Neuroscientists term this situation "inattention blindness," which refers to the fact that the brain has a very limited supply of attention. Focusing on one thing can make one oblivious to other things that would otherwise be obvious (see *New Scientist*, vol. 20, December 27, 2008, pp. 43-45). This does not imply, however, that nothing that can be done about a lack of attention.

9. Philip Novak, "The Practice of Attention," *Parabola*, vol. 15, No. 2 (1990), p. 8.

10. Hubert Benoît, "Acceptance and Attention," *Parabola*, vol. 15, No. 2 (1990), p. 61.

11. William Segal, "The Force of Attention," *Parabola*, vol. 15, No. 2 (1990), p. 77.

12. Segal, *ibid*.

13. Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (NY: Random House, 1992), p. 47.

14. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism without Beliefs* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), p. 59.

15. Tart, p. 35.

16. *Ibid*, p. 36.

17. As well as the sources I've referred to, there is a long tradition of thought about bodily awareness within phenomenology, starting with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962) and his notion of "body-subject." David Abram provides a cogent summary of the interdisciplinary study of the embodied mind in *Becoming Animal* (NY: Pantheon, 2010), p. 103-06.

18. Tart., pp. 56-57.

19. In "Fourth Letter from Far South," I wrote of the paradoxical freedom that arises from accepting necessity, especially in regards to our dependence upon the sun and the wind for power.

20. See "Second Letter from Far South," for a description of my encounters with the "mushroom rocks" on the shore.

21. I recently encountered an account by an eminent Buddhist scholar very much in sympathy with what I had experienced. Stephen Batchelor, author of such classics as *Buddhism without Beliefs* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 1998) and *The Awakening of the West* (Berkeley, CA.: Parallax Press, 1994) spent ten years as a Buddhist monk in Tibetan and Korean monasteries. In his most recent book *Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist* (NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2010), he describes how he progressively became disenchanted with the orthodoxies of belief and unproductive practices in both traditions. After many years of dedicated practice, he describes himself ironically as "a Buddhist failure," noting at one point that all the visualizations and mantras he had been doing "had no discernible effect on the quality of my lived experience" (p. 55).

22. Tart, p. 77.

23. Rainer Maria Rilke, quoted in David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, p. 262.

24. Abram, 1997, p. 262.

25. Abram, 2010, p. 251.

26. *Ibid*, p. 216.

27. *Ibid*, p. 155.

28. I don't mean to imply here that finding "the inside of things" is simply a matter of returning to some quasi-indigenous state, for that would be neither possible nor desirable. However, as I commented in my previous essay on "the gift" ("Seventh Letter from Far South"), one can gain inspiration from a different worldview and seek to apply it within one's own cultural context. In this regard, I have also drawn on ideas arising in the Western philosophical tradition, such as phenomenology and Goethe's *bildung*, the schooling of the intuition and the senses, which seem to be pointing in a similar direction (see "Second" and "Fifth Letter from Far South").

29. Simone Weil, "Attention and Will," in *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 1952).

30. Abram, 2010, p. 170.

Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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