



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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This *EAP* begins 36 years of publication and includes regular *EAP* features of “items of interest” and “citations received.” We present book notes on geographer **Paul Merriman’s** *Space* (2022); philosopher **Timothy D. Mooney’s** *Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception* (2024); theologian **Benjamín Valentín’s** *Touched by This Place* (2024); and a reprint of naturalist **Paul Krafel’s** *Shifting* (2024).

We learned late last fall that archeologist and anthropologist **Christopher Tilley** died in London in March 2024. In part, he was known for his highly innovative efforts to use first-person phenomenological method to picture how ancient peoples experienced and understood the landscapes and places in which they found themselves. He emphasized material and corporeal aspects of moving through everyday landscapes. In memoriam, we publish excerpts from his writings and folklorist **John Billingsley’s** review of Tilley’s 2012 *Interpreting Landscapes*. This review originally appeared in the spring 2015 *EAP*.

Longer entries begin with independent researcher **Stephen Wood**, who introduces the possibilities by which aquatic life may have lived connections to the dialectic of darkness and light via such phenomena as water depth and terrestrial location.

Next, Israeli architect **Nili Portugali** discusses her design efforts to implement the theory of wholeness developed by American architect and architectural theorist **Christopher**

Alexander, whose ideas are featured regularly in *EAP*. Portugali’s real-world focus is her design of an apartment house in Tel Aviv, Israel (image, right). She considers how her envisioning and building this structure are grounded in and actualize Alexander’s understanding of making environmental and place wholeness.

We remind readers that we are always seeking out items related to topics covered in *EAP*. Send us citations, conference events, publications news, and so forth. Also, we are always looking for new contributors to *EAP*, particularly younger researchers and designers just beginning their professional careers. Contact information is on the last page of this issue.

Below: A model of an apartment house in Tel Aviv, Israel, designed by Israeli architect **Nili Portugali**, who draws on the envisioning and construction methods of the late American architect **Christopher Alexander**. For images of the finished project, see her essay beginning on p. 22.



Conference update

Because of the continuing fluidity of conference formats, we are not providing specific information on 2025 events. Readers should check organization webpages for dates, procedures, and virtual, real, or hybrid formats. In the past, we have regularly covered the following conferences:

Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Forum (ACSF) [see “items of interest” below];

Back to the Things Themselves! (BT!!!);

Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA);

Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists (ICNAP);

International Association of Environmental Philosophy (IAEP);

International Human Science Research conference (IHSR) [see “items of interest” below];

International Making Cities Livable conference;

Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP);

Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS).

Book series continuing

Toposophia: Thinking Place, Making Space, a book series originally begun by the late **Robert Mugerauer**, continues to be published by Lexington Books, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield and recently acquired by Bloomsbury. The editors of the series are philosophers **Jeff Malpas** and **Jessica Dubow**, who aim for the series to become a “major forum for the publication of work on place and space, including monographs and edited collections, as well as general works and those with a more specific focus, and encompassing a wide range of disciplines and approaches.” Proposals should be sent to the editors:

Jessica.dubow@lancaster.ac.uk.
jeff.malpas@posteo.net.

The website for the series is available at www.rowman.com/Action/SERIES/ /TOP/Toposophia:-Thinking-Place-Making-Space.

Alexander archive

The **Archive of Christopher Alexander and Center for Environmental Structure** is now live at:

<https://christopher-alexander-ces-archive.org/>.

This website provides access to some 50 years of work by Alexander and colleagues at the Center for Environmental Structure in Berkeley, California. One aim is to share Alexander’s work “with all who wish to build and repair living environments in which people thrive.” In total, the Archive includes some 29,000 items, of which about fifty percent have been catalogued and listed on the website. Some 6,000 items have been digitized and are now available from the website as downloads. As funding allows, entire collection will be available digitally.

CES Staff have worked on this project since 2018. Individuals playing a major role in assisting this project include **Artemis Anninou**, **Kleoniki Tsotropoulou**, **Hajo Neis**, **Howard Davis**, **Susan Ingham**, and staff at the **Athens [Greece] Technology Center**.

Items of interest

The fall 2024 newsletter of the **International Human Science Research Conference (IHSR)** is available at the link below and includes several links to useful publications, events, conferences, and groups. The 2025 conference of the group will be held August 11–25, in Roskilde Denmark. The conference theme is “Grasping Lived Experiences—What, Why, and How.” See the newsletter for details. [IHSR Newsletter, Fall 2024 | 2024 | Arts & Sciences Newsroom | College of Arts & Sciences | Seattle University](#).

The 2025 **Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Forum (ACSF)** will be held in Chicago, June 26–28, 2025. The meeting will incorporate a “salon format,” with shorter and less formal events in several different city locations.

<https://acsforsymposium.org/acsf-chicago-salon-2025/>; ACSFChicagoSalon@gmail.com.

Phenomenology, Religious Experience, and Spiritual Practice is an international conference to be held in June 2025 at Fordham University, Rose Hill Campus, in Bronx, New York. The conference aim is to explore “ritual, devotional, or ascetic

practices that orient people to the divine and enable them to receive revelation.” A major focus is to consider the relationships between spiritual experience and human religious practices and whether one can prepare for spiritual revelation. [Phenomenology, Religious Experience, and Spiritual Practices 2025](#).

Natural Beauty and the Good Life is an international workshop to be held September 19–20, 2025, at the University of Basel, Switzerland. The workshop aim is “to investigate how experiences of natural beauty can contribute to the good life of people. Though many people might agree with the claim that natural beauty’s complete destruction or unavailability would be an existential loss for humanity, few thinkers have addressed natural beauty’s meaning for human flourishing.” Key questions include how natural beauty affects the human relationship to environments, and whether there are existential insights available in the encounter of natural beauty. For further information, contact Prof. Stephanie Schuster at: stephanie.schuster@unibas.ch.

Architect **Sarah Robinson** has established **SITUATED**, a Spotify podcast “exploring how our surroundings shape us.” Individuals interviewed so far include architect **Juhani Pallasmaa**; sociologist **Galen Cranz**; and neuroscientists **Kate Jefferey** and **Andrea Chiba**. [Situating podcast](#).

Citations Received

Lama B. Abuhassan and Rawn M. Majzoub, 2024. Urban Shift and Dwelling Practices Impact on the Identity of Amman’s Public Stairs: Jordan’s Cinema Steps as a Case Study, Journal of Urbanism.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2024>.

These designers consider the significance of stairways in Amman, Jordan. Historically, the city’s seven hills made stairways vital for navigation. As the city grew, stairways, especially Jordan’s Cinema Steps, became social hubs rather than just functional paths. This research examines the transformation of these steps, asking how

stair interactions shape the place's authenticity and identity.

Nicolai Bo Andersen, 2024. *New Phenomenology in Architecture: Embodied Environmental Communication for Meaningful Situations. Architectural Research Quarterly*, Vol. 27, Issue 4.

This architect considers the value for architecture of the ideas of New Phenomenology, as developed by the German philosopher Hermann Schmitz, who distinguishes between the *physical body* that can be seen and touched, and the *felt body* that is the place of *affective involvement*. Anderson argues that *New Phenomenology* “can draw attention to human and environment as intrinsically connected. As such, understanding architecture in terms of embodied communication and meaningful situations may be one way to activate environmental awareness.”

Julio Bermudez and Thomas Barrie, 2019. *Spirituality and Architecture. The Routledge International Handbook of Spirituality in Society and the Professions*, Laszlo Zsolnai and Bernadette Flanagan, eds. London: Routledge, pp. 345–355.

These architects review lived relations between buildings and sacredness by highlighting three themes: how architectural materiality contributes to spiritual presence; sacred experiences arising from sacred architecture; and social and cultural aspects of sacred architecture.

Julia Mary Binney, 2024. *“Does it Matter Where You Pray”: Relating Christian Spiritualities to Theologies of Place*, Doctoral Dissertation, Theology and Practice, University of Winchester, UK.

This theologian considers how the Christian lived experience of place impacts a person's prayer life. The author evaluates

the relationship between place and prayer by investigating the effect places have on prayer both individually and socially. Binney contends that places can be of vital importance in Christian encounters with God. The research context is Abbey Baptist Church located within the precinct of the ruined medieval Abbey of Reading, UK. The thesis examines what it means for a church to be a place of prayer and how the experience of historic sacred places influences the practice of prayer.

Shawn Boddon, Hayden Lorimer, Hester Parr, and Chris Williams, 2024. *SAD Geographies: Making Light Matter. Progress in Human Geography*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325241252846>.

These geographers consider the lived relationship between light and mental health via the contested condition of “Seasonal Affective Disorder” (SAD). The authors include discussion of the importance of light in human wellbeing.

Carreras, Piero, 2024. *Rubicon Crossings: Working at the Margins of Ecotheology and Ecophenomenology. Religions*, Vol.15; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101275>.

In proposing “an integral ecology,” this theologian considers the constructive relationships among eco-theology, eco-phenomenology, and cultural anthropology. The focus is “crossing the Rubicon” via a fruitful linkage between theological and phenomenological possibilities.

Edward S. Casey, 2024. *Place in Painting. Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691640-12341535>

This philosopher considers the role of place in painting. He argues that “this role is multiple—at once attracting our look but also locatory of whatever is displayed in

the painting itself and attracting our attention to it as a place distinct from the place where we are painting it or viewing it.” In his study, Casey interprets one of his own “placially oriented” paintings as well as one by de Kooning. The aim is to illustrate “the multivalence of place in painting.”

Scott D. Churchill, 2024. *Essentials of Existential Phenomenological Research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association [a volume in “Essentials of Qualitative Methods” series].

This psychologist describes the stages in doing existential phenomenological research (EPR), a philosophy-based, qualitative method examining how individuals are “thrown into” situations in life and how, within those situations, individuals find “avenues of choice.” Elements of EPR are “an evidence-based method examining individuals’ psychological lives; researchers who bring [them]selves to the evidence; reliance on first-person descriptions of experience and researchers’ reflections on those experiences; and the cultivation of empathy and a sensitivity to meaning and a sense of empathy.”

Emily Cockayne, 2012. *Cheek by Jowl: A History of Neighbours*. London: The Bodley Head Press/Random House.

This social historian presents the “story of the British neighbor through nine centuries—spanning medieval, Tudor and Victorian periods, two world wars, and up to today’s modern, virtual world.” She defines neighbors as “those people who live either next door, opposite, in the nearest five or six houses, or possible (at a stretch) on the same street, but no further. Neighbors live only a slipperable distance away.” Cockayne argues that neighbors “form a shrinking proportion of the people with whom we are in regular, daily contact.” She aims to consider “the delicate balance between people’s determination to protect their privacy and their wish to cultivate contact with those who live close by.” See sidebars, next page.

Trombones of contention

[Musical instruments can cause] problems between some neighbors, especially when practiced by children on Sundays.... In 1891, a philanthropist based in Liverpool called Lee Jones wrote to his neighbor asking for a piano to be moved to the other side of their dining room. The neighbor, Mr. Moores at “Westleigh,” obliged, remarking that “the walls are not very substantial that is certain.” He assured Jones that he “may rely on our care in the matter and trust that as long as we are neighbors our relations will always be kindly & neighborly.”

In a letter to his sister, British novelist George Gissing growled: “O Dear, there is some individual next door who practices hymns on the piano all Sunday with *one finger*. I am fond of music, but”

In 1919, *The Times* outlined the types of neighbor noise—“piano playing, dog barking, and cock-crowing, with motor crank groaning and gramophone grinding thrown in.” These years saw a peak in the production of pianos: an estimated 75,000 in 1910. *The Times* complained that the notion “every man’s house is his castle,” was more likely to safeguard the right to *make* noise than to be protected from it” (Cockayne, pp. 113–14).

Neighbors and digital media

The consequences on neighborliness of technological innovation and the centralization of work are hard to predict. Home-working may bring about a revival in neighborly relations. Walk down the streets of Britain during the day and you increasingly see teleworkers typing emails to colleagues around the globe while keeping half an eye on the comings and goings of their neighbors; acknowledging them, greeting them, and occasionally seducing them.

Other technological changes may have undermined neighborliness. The anthropologist Kate Fox has argued that the mobile phone has replaced the garden fence Fox sees mobile phones promoting socializing across

distances in a fragmented and isolating world.

Nowadays, many people have a more dispersed circle of friends, and we keep up with them online and through texts. A 2010 YouGov poll showed that 41 percent of those surveyed thought that online communications mean people have more contact with friends abroad than with the person next door. The Facebook wall has replaced the garden fence (Cockayne, p. 224).

Mark DeKay and Gail Barger, 2023. *Experiential Design Schemas*. Navata, CA: ORO Editions.

This architect and building scientist present 45 “experiential design schemas” that, in four pages each, discuss the design element, overview its experiential possibilities, and provide architectural precedents. These schemas are arranged according to six experiential themes: contrast, gradient, rhythm, flux, sequence, and narrative. The ten contrast aspects include, for example, thematic hues, haptic connection, scintillating sun, tempered pathway, and thermal enclave; the eight rhythm aspects include, for example, aperture engagement, biorhythmic radiance, dawn + dusk places, habitat fringe, and cooling conversions.

Daniele De Santis, Burt C. Hopkins, and Claudio Majolino, 2021. *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*. London: Routledge.

The 75 chapters of this edited collection emphasize phenomenology’s “historical and systematic dimensions” and is divided into five major parts: phenomenology and the history of phenomenology; issues and concepts in phenomenology; major figures in phenomenology; intersections; phenomenology in the world. Concepts covered include aesthetics and art; body; horizon; intentionality; lifeworld; and world. The sidebar below is from Pierre-Jean Renaudie’s first chapter, “The History of the Phenomenological Movement.”

Constant redefinition

The philosophical commitment to experience that [phenomenologists] share unites the members of the phenomenological movement in a way loose enough to let them spread their wings and to embrace Husserl’s famous claim to bring philosophy “back to the things themselves” without being prevented from opening new paths and discovering original ways of accounting for the richness of lived experience.

Consequently, rather than a school of thought, phenomenology needs to be understood as a broader philosophical movement ..., whose nature essentially involves its transformations and constant redefinition. Comparing the phenomenological movement to a river giving rise to various different streams, [Herbert] Spiegelberg emphasizes several characteristic features of the phenomenological tradition, which sprang from a common source but gave birth to several parallel currents that do not necessarily join in their final destination, and which is fundamentally characterized by its intrinsic dynamics and its moving and exploratory dimension

.... Spiegelberg’s metaphor stresses that, far from jeopardizing the unity and coherence of the movement, the plurality of these currents demonstrates the vitality of the phenomenological tradition as long as the different currents do not annihilate but complement each other (Pierre-Jean Renaudie, Ch. 1, “The History of the Phenomenological Movement,” p. 12)

Madalina Diaconu, 2024. *Aesthetics of Weather*. London: Bloomsbury.

This philosopher presents an aesthetics of weather, considering “our fascination with, and cultural interpretations of, weather phenomena in our everyday lives.” She attempts to “reinvent” phenomenology to “explore the importance of aesthetic practices in shaping our experience of weather and climate.”

Timothy Kirk Evans, 2024. *Discovering Our Place*

through Environmental Education in Elementary Science Classrooms: A Phenomenological Inquiry, Doctoral dissertation In Curriculum and Instruction, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Tx.

Using phenomenological inquiry, this educator examined the process of creating a place-based environmental education curriculum, drawing on place-based environmental concepts, lessons, and ideas via teaching in a traditional elementary science classroom. Phenomenological writing, poetry, timelines, and maps were created to explore place attachment, place-identity, place consciousness and to develop a deeper understanding of environmental literacy.

Rudolf Gassenhuber and Robert J. Kozljanič, 2024. In Search of Lost Liveliness: Nature, Dominance, Sense of Heart. Milan: Minesis International [No. 15, “Atmospheric Spaces” series].

These two philosophers engage in a dialogue focusing on the pre-civilization foundations of Western culture, giving particular attention to alienation and how human beings might re-realize a being-with-nature.

Maximilian Gregor Hepach, 2018. A Phenomenology of Weather and Qi, Journal of Japanese Philosophy, Vol. 5, pp. 43–65.

Drawing on German philosopher Günter Figal’s concept of *inconspicuousness*, this geographer discusses parallels between phenomenological accounts of *qi* from Japanese philosophy with his account of the phenomenology of weather. *Qi* is said to relate to such phenomena as “air, weather, climate, and atmosphere as well as moods.” Hepach focuses on the role of weather in “disclosing the world in certain moods.” Hepach writes: “weather oscillates between its changing properties and

the places and experiences it opens and occludes. Weather is not found in anything but appears in varying degrees of (in)-conspicuousness. To describe weather phenomenologically means to trace weather’s play with possibilities of spatiality.”

Renée Hirschon, 2018. Enduring Bonds of Place: Personhood and the Loss of Home. In C. Raudvere. ed., Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe, Modernity, Memory and Identity in South-East Europe; https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71252-9_9

This anthropologist examines the regional problems of population disruption in Southeastern Europe in the larger context of global migration, a major characteristic of the last 50 years. The author emphasizes the concept of personhood in its material relation to physical space. The argument is made that “space and place are intimately bound up with the person, a human subject involved in a social and cultural milieu This nexus of elements lies behind the phenomenon of yearning for home and long-term nostalgia.”

Taehee Kim, 2024. Phenomenological Study of Islandness as a Global Sense of Place: Focusing on the Animated Film Moana. Kritika Kultura, Vol. 44, pp. 177–199. <https://ajol.ateneo.edu/kk>

This mobility scholar considers the question of what “islandness” is and how it might be defined. He draws on a cinematic example, *Moana*, which pictures the protagonist’s “search for connection beyond the island isolation while maintaining its sense of place.”

Randall S. Lindstrom, 2024. An Architecture of Place: Topology in Practice. London: Routledge.

This architect argues that too often today the idea of “placemaking” is an empty cypher not really understood by the academics and professionals who use the term. Drawing largely on the interpretations of philosophers Edward Casey, Jeff Malpas, and Martin Heidegger (oddly, Merleau-Ponty is not included), Lindstrom aims to provide a thorough explication of place and its centrality in opening the designer to authentic placemaking. He writes that “place is *inextricably* connected to architecture—its very origins and substance—and therefore [is] as *inescapable* in architecture’s mainstream practice as in its theorization.”

Stefano Marino and Iulian Apostolescu, 2022. Varieties of the Lifeworld: Phenomenology and Aesthetic Experience. Continental Philosophy Review, Vol. 55, pp. 409–416. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-022-09576-x> [open access].

These philosophers “sketch an outline of the concept of lifeworld,” tracing back the origin of the concept to Husserl’s late phenomenology, “although explaining ... that the development of Husserl’s phenomenology ... was gradual and connected ... to the question of the natural world of experience.” The authors emphasize “how the question concerning the lifeworld is still capable today to open a great variety of perspectives and plurality of paths for thinking.” This entry is the introduction to a special issue of *Continental Philosophy Review* devoted to “varieties of the lifeworld.” This issue is open access and an important contribution to lifeworld research.

Emma-Kate Matthews, Jane Burry, and Mark Burry, eds., 2024. The Routledge Companion to the Sound of Space. London: Routledge.

The 34 chapters of this collection consider “conceptual and practical relationships between sound and space across various disciplines, providing insights from technical, creative, cultural, political, philosophical,

psychological, and physiological perspectives. The content spans a wide range of spatial typologies, from large reverberant buildings to modest and intimate ones, from external public squares to domestic interiors, and from naturally formed environments to highly engineered spaces.” The editors explain that “these compiled insights and observations explore the vast diversity of ways in which sonic and spatial realms interact.”

Marzieh Mosavarzadeh, 2024. Making-Place A/R/Tographically: Invitations to Framing and Threading and Bridging. Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Univ. of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

Drawing partly on the phenomenological work on place (Casey, Malpas, Seamon, etc.) this dissertation “explores the artistic, methodological, and pedagogical aspects of placemaking through walking with a/r/tography alongside companions.” The study presents nuanced insights into the intricate interplay of art, pedagogy, and placemaking, unfolding via the lived experiences of a/r/tographers as they consider place experiences and placemaking.

Ned Redmore, 2024. A Phenomenological Methodology for Inclusively Researching the Views and Experiences of Autistic People with Profound Learning Disabilities. In H. Bertilsson Rosqvist and D. Jackson-Perry, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Research Methods and Ethics in Neurodiversity Studies*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan, pp 257–278.

This chapter presents a phenomenology of autistic people with profound learning disabilities within the context of their everyday lives via the researcher’s in-depth participation.

Mark Riegner, 2024. Flight of Shimmering Light: Exploring Insights into Hummingbird Biology from Comparative Morphology. *Jahrbuch für Goetheanismus* 2024. DOI: 10.18756/jfg.2024.129.

This ecologist considers how hummingbirds display extreme characteristics, from their tiny size to their shimmering coloration, from their highly elaborated wing structure and advanced flight mechanics to their disproportionately large brain and hyper-neurosensory emphasis, and from their super-rapid wingbeats, enabling an ability to hover in place in three-dimensional space, to their racing heart and fast breathing rate, thus enabling these birds to exist at the edge of physiological possibility for an endothermic vertebrate. To contextualize these features more broadly, Riegner compares and contrasts hummingbird features with, for example, those of the ostrich—the largest living bird—as well as with characteristics of swifts, presumably the closest living avian relatives of hummingbirds. Illustrated with many colored photographs of hummingbirds.

Tiny feathered jewels that embody extremes

[T]here is something magical about hummingbirds that speaks to our imagination. Clearly, their minute size, shimmering iridescence—over 50 species are named after gemstones—relative boldness when visiting our flower gardens or artificial feeders, buzzing flight, and ability to appear mysteriously from nowhere and then instantly zip away and vanish, are features that invite us to contemplate the wonders and mysteries of avian life.

In addition to the activities mentioned in the opening paragraph of this article, hummingbirds have inspired websites that share natural history information, migration news, photos, videos, art, conservation updates, and tips on how to attract these feathered jewels to our gardens.

There is even a National Hummingbird Day recognized in the United States (celebrated the first Saturday in

September), and an International Hummingbird Society that manages an educational website, sponsors an annual three-day conference in Sedona, Arizona, and whose membership supports international conservation projects. Regarding this last point, according to the 2024 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 53 of 373 species of hummingbirds have populations under some level of threat, some listed as critical.

While some species have naturally extremely restricted ranges ..., the main threat to many hummingbirds is habitat destruction due to agriculture at varying scales, especially small-scale farming, as well as ranching, mining, and road construction. However, with education and financial incentives, there is hope to conserve habitat for threatened hummingbirds. A case in point involves the Marvelous Spatuletail, one of the most spectacular species of hummingbird The spatuletail is found only in a small, restricted area of northern Peru. Habitat destruction due to forest clearing for both agriculture and illegal extraction of wood had a major impact on this little hummingbird’s population, and consequently it has been designated as Endangered.

Fortunately, and none-too-soon, the local community has witnessed the monetary value that Ecotourism can generate and, with initial outside financial support, locals have now created a conservation easement, planted Marvelous Spatuletail native food plants, and built accommodations for international tourists, together developing a sustainable income-generating conservation initiative. Small-scale, community-based projects like this, specifically in the tropics, as well as larger-scale habitat protection and restoration in the temperate zone, will ensure that hummingbirds—the tiny feathered jewels that embody extremes—will have the natural habitats they need to secure their future in this world we share (Riegner 2024, digital copy).

David Seamon, 2024. Ways of Understanding Wholeness: Place, Christopher Alexander, and Synergistic Relationality. *World Futures: Journal of New Paradigm Research*. DOI: 10.1080/02604027.2024.2330288.

This article considers architect Christopher Alexander’s work in relation to a broader body of research and design focusing on phenomenologies of place and placemaking. Seamon demonstrates how Alexander’s approach involves *synergistic relationality*, a way of understanding that interprets wholes as dynamic, generative fields that sustain and are sustained by intensive parts that integrally belong to and support the whole. The argument is made that, in terms of synergistic relationality, places can be envisioned as interconnected fields of intertwined relationships gathering and gathered by a lived intimacy between people and world. Seamon illustrates how Alexander’s approach to wholeness assumes a synergistic relationality and contributes to understanding, envisioning, and making places that are whole, robust, and life-enhancing. The table, above right, is reproduced from the article and summarizes synergistic relationality and its conventional opposite, analytic relationality.

Ali Shobeiri, 2021. *Place: Towards a Geophilosophy of Photography*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Leiden Univ. Press.

This photography scholar considers the multi-dimensional presentation of place in photographs via a six-part outline directed to photographer, camera, photograph, image, spectator, and genre. The author argues that these six photographic aspects “manifest inactive, contingent, unlocalizable, liminal, evental [sic], agential, and exigent features” and demonstrate that place “resists being restricted to where it is (the photographer), to what it is (the camera), to where it goes (the photograph), to what it encloses (the photographic image), to how and where it occurs (the spectator), and to what it represents (the genre).” The author

Wholeness as analytic relationality	Wholeness as synergistic relationality
The whole is a set of correspondences and linkages among parts.	The whole is self-organizing in that each part enters into the constitution of every other part.
The reality of the whole is grounded in the individual identities of separate, self-contained, interacting parts.	The reality of the whole is grounded in the quality of whole and parts being mutually present together, the parts integral to each other and to the whole.
The parts of the whole remain separate, even as they are assembled into the whole; the significance of any part is associated with interactions that mark changes in some or all the other parts of the whole.	The parts of the whole gain significance from their presence in the whole; their identities as individualized parts are transposed into and by the identity of the whole.
Ontologically, the whole is not a thing-in-itself but a collection of extensive, interlinked elements and processual connections arbitrarily determined by the researcher; the whole is only whole secondarily.	Ontologically, the whole is whole and a coalescence of its parts integrally together; this integrality of the parts gathers their separateness into wholeness; the whole and parts are wholly present as one.

draws partially on phenomenological work relating to place, particularly philosopher Edward Casey’s *The Fate of Place* (1996).

Ola Sigurdson, 2024. *Atmospheres in Everyday Life: On Existential Spatiality*. Milan: Mimesis International [“Atmospheric Spaces” series, Vol. 14].

The author explains that “I am someone who is surrounded by atmospheres, and I want to try to understand them and also relate to their concrete manifestations in a more critical and constructive way.... In the spirit of phenomenology, I will turn not only to the atmospheres themselves but also to my own experiences, even when dealing with more categorical, philosophical questions.” The book’s chapters include “Literary evocations of atmosphere”; “Atmosphere and phenomenology”; “Living with atmospheres”; “Atmosphere and architecture”; “Living with atmospheres”; “Numinous edifices”; and “Walking in the City.”

C. M Stapleton, H. Zhang, and B. Missey, 2024. Searching for Home in Young Adult Grief. *Qualitative Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000298>

These psychologists draw on the phenomenological notions of homeworld and alienworld to examine the experience of home for young adults navigating grief after the loss of an elder family member. Twenty participants wrote about their experiences of grief, and the researchers identified five underlying themes that included “placing the self in relation to home,” “borderlands,” “possibility of returning home,” “last moments between then and now,” and “generous exchanges between home and afar.”

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, ed., 2024. *Water*. Libertyville, Illinois: Humans & Nature Press.

Edited by eminent phenomenological philosopher **Ingrid Leman Stefanovic**, this volume is one of several in a series on “elementals” sponsored by the Center for Humans and Nature (other volumes are on earth, air, and fire). In her introduction, Stefanovic writes that “Lived experience brings with it a multi-dimensional, kaleidoscopic array of visions, narratives, and worldviews around the element of water. This book presents some of those diverse stories in the hopes that the reader will begin to ponder their own traditions, perspectives, and aspirations around this vital, existential element of life.” Contributors include **Cliff Atleo** (“Reflections of a Coastal Indigenous Scholar”); **Mark Riegner** (“The Many Faces of Water”); **Elizabeth Bradfield** (“Learning to

Swim”); **Geffrey David** (“The Fidelity of Water”); and **Stefanovic** (“Are Rivers Persons?”).

Phillip James Tabb and Lahra Tatriele, 2025. *Wellness Architecture and Urban Design*. London: Routledge.

This architect and wellness expert review “planning and design strategies” relating to wellness and organized, chapter by chapter, via environmental scale, moving from urban design, architecture, and interiors (then back to landscape). Two case studies are included: The Mado wellness neighborhood at Serenbe, Georgia, USA; and the Fivelements Retreat in Bali [Fivelements is said to be “an integrated wellness lifestyle company” headquartered in Mambal, Indonesia].

Ted Toadvine, 2024. *The Memory of the World: Deep Time, Animality, and Eschatology*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

This philosopher draws on phenomenologists to critique “end of the world” imagery by arguing how this “apocalyptic imagination forgets the sublime and uncanny dimensions of the geological past and far future.” He contends that “reconciling our embodied lives with the memory of the earth” might transform our connections with the future and with material and living environments. He looks toward a new philosophy of time “that takes seriously the multiple, pleated, and entangled temporal events spanning cosmic, geological, evolutionary, and human durations.”

Tyrrell, Roger, 2018. *Aalto, Utzon, Fehn: Three Paradigms of Phenomenological Architecture*. London: Routledge.

This architect offers one phenomenological interpretation of the work of Nordic architects **Alvar Aalto**, **Jørn Utzon**, and **Sverre Fehn**. Tyrrell uses the three themes of “origin,” “revealing,” and “poetic con-

junction” to ground the “experiential disposition” of the three architects. See the sidebar, following.

A reinterpretation

It is fascinating to reflect upon how the phenomenological project, which has its genesis in Europe, has been developed and reinterpreted within the Nordic world and provides a philosophical context that surrounds our three protagonists.

It is also interesting to reflect that this particular intellectual heritage now extends beyond the shores of our Nordic world and is now inhabited and extended in turn in Australia by those such as Glen Murcutt, Richard Laplazier, and Peter Stutchbury and in America by Rick Joy and Steven Holl drawing simultaneously upon the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Kahn (Tyrrell 2018, pp. 38–39).

Pablo Fernandez Velasco, 2024. Ecological Grief as a Crisis in Dwelling. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1–16

This philosopher defines “ecological grief” as “the sense of loss that arises from experiencing environmental destruction.” He argues that ecological grief involves “the loss of the life possibilities sustained by dwelling.” ecological grief is said to relate to “a crisis in dwelling—a disturbance in the way we inhabit our home environment.”

Christy Wampole, 2016. *Rootedness: The Ramifications of a Metaphor*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

This philosopher examines the metaphor of the *root*—the human propensity to imagine human life as bound to the earth. Wampole considers the philosophical, historical, and political aspects of rootedness, particularly its history in France and Germany. She argues that there are a few basic “metaphorizations” of the root: “root as home, root as genealogical origin, root as miniature person, root as the past, and root as a severable connection to any phenomenon, particularly the environment.... This metaphor’s broad applicability to such a variety of circumstances reveals a meaningful pattern in the human psyche: Continuity is preferable to discontinuity. The root is an integrating metaphor, one that allows for connections to be made between past, present, and future, between remote geographic spaces, between neighbors, between the human and its ecosystem. To be rootless is to lack context. What becomes clear in the incessant reliance on the metaphor of rootedness is that the desire for temporal, spatial, epistemological, and ontological continuity is an elementary human need” (pp. 14–15).

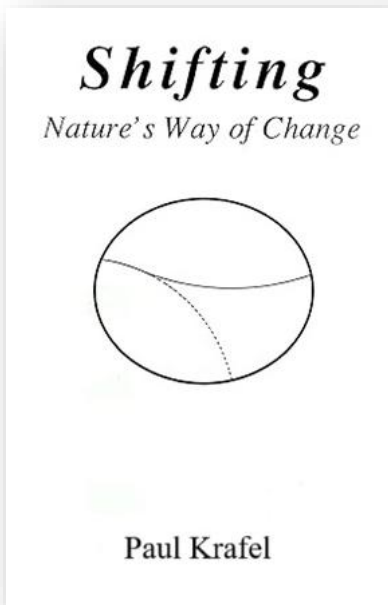
Rachel K. Wray, Robert Paul, Elizabeth Stamp, Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson, and Philip Hurst, 2024. “At Least You Got to See People When You Went Out for a Walk”: Older Adults’ Lived, Embodied Experiences during COVID-19 Times in the United Kingdom. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2024.2382430>.

These sports researchers consider the “‘felt’ impact of the pandemic on older adults’ health experience and wider social life,” drawing on interviews from 18 adults 65 years of age or older. Important themes included physical-activity engagement; health experiences; the role of family and friends; and technology.

Book reprinted

Paul Krafel, 2024. *Shifting: Nature's Way of Change*, third edition. North Palm Beach, Florida: Winking Matter Press.

Naturalist Paul Krafel's *Shifting* has been reprinted. First independently published by the author in 1989, the book was published as *Seeing Nature* in 1999 by Chelsea Green. Now using its original title, the book has been reprinted by Winking Matter Press. Krafel's study is a wonderful example of what might be called perceptive first-person phenomenological study of the natural world. Because it is such a thoughtful, eye-opening work, we reprint David Seamon's original review of the book, published in the spring 1992 EAP.



Written by a naturalist, this book is a valuable contribution to environmental ethics. Using stories and perceptive observation and thinking, Krafel tells how he gradually became aware of the experiential and ethical implications of the two laws of thermodynamics, the first of which says that energy is neither created nor destroyed; the second of which says that all activities, left to their own devices, tend toward greater disorder and fewer possibilities.

As Krafel comes to understand the second law of thermodynamics more deeply, he comes to wonder whether human beings can do nothing but consume and destroy the earth: "I despair at not being able to do more than live at the expense of the world" (p. 107). His book depicts his personal efforts to find ways to be more attuned to the second law so that he less often consumes possibilities faster

than they are created, especially in regard to the natural environment.

Krafel describes this style of conduct by contrasting it with its opposite—a style of excess and entropy that dominates environmental action today and divides the landscape into incompatible and conflicting "zones":

It is easy to start on the path of taking too much [from nature] because the rewards are immediate and can be spectacular.... The more we harvest the more we think we will have. But this is true only in the short run. The living things we harvest are more than just resources for us.... They maintain balances which sustain the environment. If we harvest too much, relative balances shift, and the environment begins to shift. Possibilities diminish....

As resources diminish, more areas must be sacrificed. The sacrificed areas must expand and draw closer to the areas of benefit. As the discrepancy between the two areas increases, maintaining the border between them requires more energy. Neighborhoods are built with walls and gates. People begin thinking in terms of "us" versus "them" to rationalize the sacrifice that permits one's own luxury (p. 172, pp. 173–74).

As expressed by the book's title, Krafel's aim is a shifting whereby human beings increase, rather than decrease, the possibilities of the world through intentional, caring actions grounded in firsthand awareness and understanding. Much of his book describes ways to facilitate this understanding, which begins, he claims, with efforts to see in new ways. Most generally, these "tools for seeing" involve ways whereby there are shifts in one's taken-for-granted assumptions and perceptions.

Chapter by chapter, Krafel relates different ways whereby he has taught himself to shift his sense of the world—for example, seeing through the eyes of animals, recognizing edges as indicators of gradients, or understanding flows as a relationship between inflow and outflow and between individual parts and the parts as a whole. Krafel illustrates each principle with firsthand life experiences—for example, the technique of finding commonality between near and distant patterns by alternating attention:

Shifting back and forth between a distant view and the immediate world around me becomes a technique for seeing more. While gazing into the distance one day, I noticed that the distant clouds had flat bottoms. This was easy to see because I was seeing the distant clouds from the side. I tried seeing if the closer clouds overhead had flattened bottoms but the shape of a cloud's bottom is not obvious from below; it is best seen from the side. However, as I studied a cloud's mosaics of greys and whites, I realized that the greys were shaded portions lying within the cloud's own shadow while the bright white surfaces caught the full sunlight. When I considered the Sun's position and the direction it cast shadows, the clouds ceased to be fluffy shapes against the blue sky. They took on their true shapes within the sky and I could see the flattened bottoms of clouds overhead.

.... The more flat bottoms I could see, the more easily I could see this layer extending through the atmosphere. As my eyes followed the layer toward more distant clouds, I saw this layer curving over the horizon. Rarely can I see the curve of the solid Earth itself because the Earth curves out of sight to form a horizon. But the cloud-marked layer in the transparent air revealed the

curve of the atmosphere embracing our planet (pp. 75–76).

Perhaps the most powerful part of the book is Krafel's efforts to transform his understanding into action by struggling to heal an overgrazed field badly eroded by six-foot gullies near a school where he taught in suburban Los Angeles. Krafel seeks to create a series of dams that will split the large torrents of rain-fed water and weaken their erosive power. How he slowly learns to work with the water and, eventually, to transform the field into stretches of green teeming with

plant and animal life is an inspirational lesson in firsthand doing and understanding.

Especially, his depiction of a "spiral of learning" between person and environment appears to be a central starting point for any phenomenological environmental ethics that would somehow find practical ways whereby environmental awareness and concern could be transfigured into practical, effective ecological action like Krafel's.

Shifting is written from a deep love for nature and an informed hope for the future of the earth and humankind. The book asks each reader to consider *personally* how *he or she*

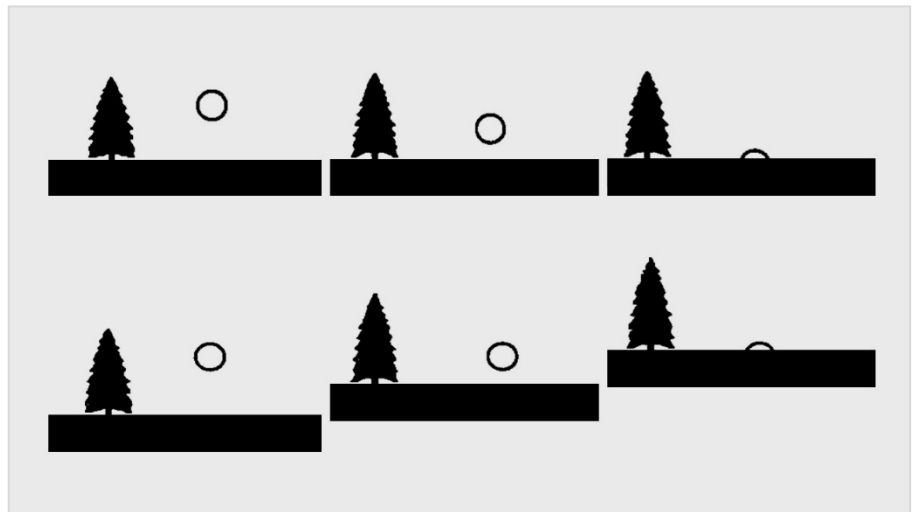
relates to the environment and how *he or she* might find ways to contribute order, rather than disorder, to the world. In this sense, the book says much about a phenomenology of the laws of thermodynamics—a topic that must be a foundation for any environmental ethics that would *really* seek to shift human attitudes and actions toward nature, place, and environment.

—David Seamon

Seeing the horizon rising

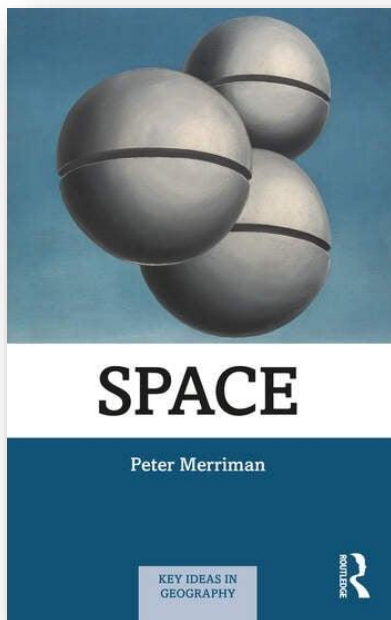
In reviewing *Shifting* in the Spring 1992 issue of *EAP*, we reproduced, on the cover, Krafel's description of the earth-sun relationship. He wrote about the drawing, right,

One evening I saw the Earth turning. Before that night, I had always seen the Sun setting toward a stationary horizon [upper drawing, right]. But when I saw the Sun, instead, as stationary, then I saw my horizon rising toward the Sun [lower drawing]. In the first view, the Sun moves. In the second view, my world moves. My eyes see the same thing—the gap between Sun and horizon closing. But what is moving? My brain must make an assumption. Shifting that assumption changes the world I see (p. 12).



Book note

Paul Merriman, 2022. *Space*. London: Routledge.



This geographer claims to present “the first comprehensive account of the development of key western traditions of thinking on space and spatiality in the social sciences and humanities ...” (p. xii).

In organizing the eight substantive chapters of the book (plus an introduction and short conclusion), Merriman draws on contrasting conceptual understandings of space and spatiality: (1) Euclidean; (2) Cartesian; (3) absolute; (4) relative; (5) mental; (6) lived and existential (his discussion of phenomenological perspectives is included here); (7) social; and (8) relativist (which he associates with current fashionable post-structural, post-humanist writings).

Merriman’s book is a useful overview of these eight differing points of view, which are more or less organized historically so that the last perspective covered is the currently dominant way of understanding and assumed by Merriman mostly as the “correct” way forward for understanding space and spatiality. As he writes in his conclusion:

I am sympathetic to ... calls for an attention to processes and practices of ‘spacing’, folding, differing, and representing. Drawing on such accounts, constructions of space as a noun (absolute, relative, or dimensional) can best be thought of as circumstantial, immanent, atmospheric effects which emerge through particular events of enfolding, relating, and differing that are facilitated through a range of embodied practices and analogue and digital technologies.

Of course, the challenge is that such constructions or performative effects appear to become partially materialized and gain durability, stability, and structure in various ways. A popular response to such processual, differential, relational and non-representational accounts of spacing is that they defy or deny common-sense perceptions and experiences of materiality, structure, determination, and movement (p. 289).

This “relativist” style of understanding may produce clever phrasings, but there remains the nagging question of whether such dense, complex accounts depict real phenomena or conjure arbitrary, inaccurate constructions of fantastical thinking mostly out of touch with any real reality. One is reminded of Husserl’s dissatisfaction with late-nineteenth-century philosophy and his call, “Back to the things themselves.” It is curious how philosophical history repeats itself.

The sidebars, following, are passages from Merriman’s book.

—David Seamon

Space as a keyword

In scholarly debate, ‘space’ has long been an important concept in academic fields such as philosophy, physics, mathematics, geography, and architecture, but there has also been more than a century of scholarly engagement with the concept in sociology, psychology, and anthropology ...

What these different disciplinary interests reveal is that space is not simply an extended, dimensioned, or absolute

realm that may be studied or measured in an objective manner by scientists, engineers, or architects. Subjective, imagined, hypothetical, lived and dynamic social, political, and arithmetic spaces ... are now seen to be produced, performed, diagramed, and experienced through a myriad of creative embodied movements, practices, and calculations, by a diverse array of practitioners.

What’s more, such distinctions and divisions as subjective/objective, real/imagined, and material/immaterial are rendered problematic by both theoretical approaches to space and spatiality and the everyday practices by which we all produce, reshape, and perform spaces in our daily lives.

Today, space serves as a keyword across a wide array of social science, humanities, natural science and physical science disciplines with commentators having identified ‘spatial turns’ in disciplines as diverse as literary studies, cultural studies, history and anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s (pp. 3–4).

Human spatiality

In this chapter [entitled “phenomenological and existential spatialities”] we focus on a number of traditions of thinking where there has been an explicit development of concepts of human spatiality, lived space, existential space and place in order to understand the intimate involvement or entanglement of individual humans ... with their worlds.

The primary focus is on the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and existentialism which have had an important impact in a range of humanities and social science disciplines, from human geography and architectural theory to anthropology and sociology.

While scholars embracing phenomenology and existentialism have often

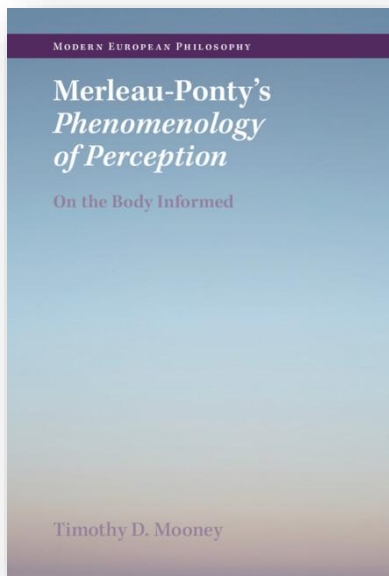
favoured concepts of place, landscape, milieu, and environment rather than space, philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty had a lot to say on the concepts of space and spatiality.

When demarcating their philosophical perspectives from geometrid traditions and seeking to distance themselves from abstract and absolute notions of space, they advanced highly sophisticated embodied and earth-

bound conceptions of space, spacing and spatiality, framing spatialities as emergent from movement, embodied action, and life itself (p. 127).

Book note

Timothy D. Mooney, 2024. *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: On the Body Informed*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.



The three most eminent phenomenologists remain Edmund Husserl, Martin, Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the last holding particular prominence in environmental and architectural phenomenology because of his emphasis on the lived body's prominence in enmeshing people in their worlds.

The literature on Merleau-Ponty is extensive, and philosopher Timothy Mooney's new book is a concise, well-organized overview, giving central attention to *Phenomenology of Perception*, the primary themes of which are summarized and related to other philosophers' thinking and to Merleau-Ponty's other texts. Particularly instructive is Mooney's discussion of how the philosopher's perspective compares and contrasts

with conventional intellectualist and empiricist points of view.

Mooney begins the book with Husserl's original phenomenology, including his understanding of the lived body and Merleau-Ponty's revisions and clarifications. Particularly useful is the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's explication of the lived body via the themes of skills, motor intentionality, and actions-in-life. Mooney counters the criticism that Merleau-Ponty's perspective is ageist and ableist, since the broad ideas about body schema and intercorporeality can readily become a valuable starting point for human otherness and difference

Mooney continues with the use of the term "body schema," which has more often been labelled in the environmental-phenomenology literature as "body-subject," since the former perhaps too readily intimates associations with a self-conscious, representational, cognitive phenomenon that has little relation to the unselfconscious, out-of-sight taken-for-grantedness of lived body and body-subject.

Maybe I'm partial to body-subject because this is the label that one of the earliest English studies used—Mary Rose Barral's *Merleau-Ponty: The Role of Body-Subject in Interpersonal Relations* (Duquesne University Press, 1965). This book had a huge impact on my writing *A Geography of the Lifeworld* (St. Martin's, 1979) where I used the term too. In fact, I have drawn on the term in all my writings, simply because I think it speaks so much better to the unselfconscious, pre-predicative, bodily intelligence of the lived body. I don't think this sense comes through "body schema," particularly today when the cognitive scientists so much dominate discussion.

Like most other philosophers, Mooney says little about how the concept of body schema can have regular extended expression spatially and environmentally, generating in supporting physical environments lively spaces with a strong sense of place. One example is Bill Hillier's theory of space syntax, which demonstrates how this place regularity is highly dependent on the spatial configuration of pathways. This intimacy of lived bodies and pathways is one remarkable instance of the lived immersion of human life in place.

It is surprising (and disappointing) that few philosophers and other researchers have yet considered these connections, which offer such a powerful demonstration of phenomenology's central claim that human being is always human-being-in-the world. Below are reproduced three passages from Mooney's book.

—David Seamon

A manifold of opportunities

For Merleau-Ponty, the habitual body is my repertoire of readily available motor skills, or skills available immediately and unthinkingly. In its development, it enlarges the world of practical possibilities appearing within and pointing beyond my perceptual field of movement. The latter becomes a manifold of opportunities, of things and pathways to be taken up towards the genuinely and for the most part proximally realizable.

Putting it another way, the gaining of skills enlarges the transcendental field, though only so many possibilities will be salient at any one time, namely

those pursued in my current project or imagined in a future one.

Once I acquire the skill of using something, its significance bears chiefly on my body. Ordinarily it comes before my eyes for my hands or my feet, as we see when a craftswoman is working at her bench. Her hands and fingers are centre-points of the intentional threads linking her to the things she is employing. She has approached and taken them up in a certain manner, zoning in on particular features to achieve the desired outcome.

Thus the thing is not neutrally for the body as an intersection of physical causalities or as a representational unity. Rather, “it is inwardly taken up by us, reconstituted and lived by us insofar as it is linked to a world whose fundamental structures we carry with ourselves” (*PP*, p. 341).

The habitual or skilled body constitutes an internal relation between the agent and the articulation of the thing (p. 115).

An unobtrusive character

Though the body’s spatiality envelops its parts, Merleau-Ponty stresses that its unobtrusive character is equally dependent on its movements intermeshing with the world as they unfold, forming a practical system with things in evolving orientations.

The body must take an appropriate direction to constitute “the darkness in the theatre required for the clarity of the performance” (*PP*, p. 103). When I move to realise a goal, my body is not with me as its neutral executor, for it is following on and shaped by an immanent plan.

In pursuing a prior project or in responding to an invitation, I depend on a schematizing intentionality that works with and beyond my visual articulations of the phenomenal field. In this field, certain orientations and figures are privileged against indifferent backgrounds.

If my privileging body is polarized by its tasks, existing towards their completion, then it is in focusing on the course of its movements that its spatiality of situation is to be uncovered (*PP*, p. 103, 105) (p. 130).

Vectors of force

The milieu and its things for use or avoidance are polarized within vectors and lines of force that constitute a [shifting] spatiality of situation as against an objective spatiality of absolute and indifferent position (*PP*, pp. 102-03, 115).

My friend achieves all this setting off on his bicycle. The machine is incorporated into his schema when he puts it to use, and in gaining speed he keeps it close to the sidewalk to avoid cars. After some seconds he looks back and gives me a jaunty wave, maintaining his balance and distance from neighbouring vehicles. Without representing or objectifying body or machine or sidewalk, he is combining practical movements with those expressing cheerfulness and exuberance.

A player in a game of football does more again in his dynamically shifting environment. The touch-lines of the pitch, the penalty area and the movements of opponents have their places as immanent terms of an evolving orientation with which the player is at one in seeing and taking up and opportunity to score.

The game is a fast-moving illustration of motor intentional gearing into the world though our simpler and prosaic actions through the day do their own duty.

Remembering a helpful critical commentary in the course of my writing, I reach up for this particular book, which is leaning at the end of the stack on the shelf above my laptop computer. ... I do not have to find my limb before initiating the action. Just as importantly, I

do not have to plot out the route or trajectory that my arm is taking from the keyboard toward my target.

I am not trying to follow any kind of formula because my eyes and attention are focused wholly on the book. In my moving of my arm, its final position is immanently anticipated, such that “I have no need of directing it toward the goal of the movement, in a sense it touches the goal from the very beginning, and it throws itself toward it” (*PP*, p. 97).

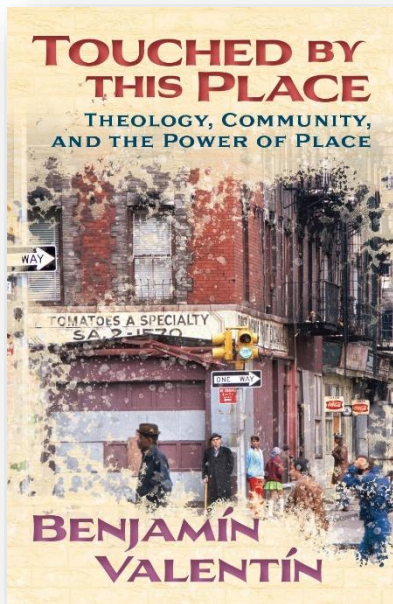
Nor is there any need for me to plot out the way my approaching hand is opening so as to take hold of the book, adapting itself to the latter’s shape and size before it has actually reached it. My hand is preparing to move around the thing to be touched “by anticipating the stimuli and by itself sketching out the form that I am about to perceive” (*PP*, p. 78).

There is a pre-comprehension of what is to be achieved in the moving limb, an outcome orientation manifested in and through it. The operation of raising and shaping and grasping proceeds directly and shows the continuity of explicit intention and action, of the thought of finding the helpful paragraphs and its actual execution.

All these movements are realizing the motor intentional plan that runs ahead of them as “something like a seed of movement that only grows later through its objective trajectory” (*PP*, p. 96). Having taken hold of the book, I open it and flick through its pages. On finding the desired information, I go back to my writing and then put the book back up on the shelf (pp. 141–42).

Book note

Benjamín Valentín, 2024. *Touched by This Place: Theology, Community, and the Power of Place*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.



In the last two decades, the themes of place and lived emplacement have become central conceptual and empirical emphases for a wide range of disciplinary and professional specialties including geography, sociology, anthropology, literature studies, architecture, planning, urban design, and environment-behavior research. Theologian and cross-disciplinary scholar Benjamín Valentín's *Touched by This Place* considers the value of place for theological studies; the author identifies five ways in which place can be important (p. 49):

- Place is an integral condition for human life;
- Place grounds a sense of personal and group identity;
- Place contributes to our perceptions, feelings, and world views;
- Place plays a role what our future becomes, "influencing the fates of individuals and groups";
- Place "matters by reason of the grievous experience of displacement endured by numerous individuals and groups."

As a way to focus his interest in place, Valentín centers his book on New York City's Spanish Harlem, his home place. He explains:

The whole point of grappling with the complex history and multifaceted materiality of the place I called home for twenty-seven years of life is to highlight the agentic contributions of the places from which we come. I want to do this before attempting to decipher the ways in which that place echoes through my subconscious and informs my understandings of thought and belief. For me, this involves the effort to give thought to the geographical location, the historical processes, the wider and more local social forces, the physical features, the associated meanings and practices, and the memories and narratives that have played a part in the construction of a place known variously as East Harlem, Spanish Harlem, or El Barrio (p. 53).

There follow four sidebars that reproduce passages from *Touched by This Place*.

A vital source of identity

It is entirely possible that some of us may not be ... ready to announce that the places from which we come or the places we inhabit are the most influential factor or power in our lives and identities. Still, we cannot deny that the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, and the places where we have had particularly moving experiences are a vital source of our sense of identity. Philosopher Jeff Malpas rightly notes that "the stuff of our inner lives is to be found in the outer places in which we dwell" and that those places without are always incorporated within us one way or another (p. 30).

A constitutive role

... I feel confident that if we reflected on the matter more regularly and more

observantly, we would discover that the places from which we come echo through our subconscious, informing our understandings of thought and belief some way or another.

We would discover that the places in which we dwell and through which we move contribute something to the knowledge and truth claims we make. In some cases, we might even find that the places we are from have played a constitutive role in our process of thought and writing even if unbeknown to us. In this instance, we may suddenly realize that the character of our thinking and writing has been sustained and guided by something that has remained mostly unspoken—namely, the perceptual and epistemic agency of place.

In either case, the discovery should lead to an important conclusion: places are not passive or ornamental backdrops for person and social life. Places are not mere settings for the human story. Even if they might be unacknowledged points of beginnings for our work, places are actors in life and agents of life with affective and life-shaping power, power influencing what we know and what we say about the world.

Places are one of the primary factors of our story if we recognize them in this light. As such, places play an important cognitive role in our lives and must be considered in any adequate account of our knowing and of our writing (p. 112).

A tracing of who we are

If we simply assume that who we are is something deep inside us, we ignore the furtive, vital, and shaping interaction that exists between our brain, bodies, and our physical environments. We ignore the multiple ways in which all

the physical material around us, including the built and natural environments, acts upon our bodies and minds.

Our physical environment has such a constant moment-to-moment influence on who we are physically and cognitively that any tracing of who we are needs to look inwardly and outwardly—out toward the physical localities of significance that comprise some of the important factors relevant to who we are physically and cognitively (p. 142).

The children of Spanish Harlem

I suppose that the changes in both the physical landscape and the social community [of Spanish Harlem] were to be expected. As places, neighborhoods are subject to change, shifting over time and space through interactions with flows of people and constantly evolving networks that are social, cultural, and environmental. Still, it is proper to worry about and to interrogate the changes. The matter of punishing rents, of housing's emergence as a symbol of inequality, and the displacement of low- and middle-income residents from their long-standing neighborhoods

should concern everyone who has a social conscience and sense of morality. The annihilation of historic districts, whether by reason of urban renewal or gentrification, should occasion sorrow as well. In this case, there is also the matter of the social and cultural meanings of El Barrio of East Harlem as a place in and through which diasporic Puerto Ricans and other Latino/as contented against the reaches of colonialism and social inequality, amassing a vast trove of struggles, achievements, cultural traditions, stories, and cherished memories.

Much is at stake here, in other words. The possible erasure of a significant communal past and present that are deeply embedded in this place called Spanish Harlem or El Barrio is not merely a matter of nostalgia. It is about historical awareness, about ethnic or race-related respect, about recognition of cultural achievement and political action, and about the right of groups, especially of less-advantaged and marginalized groups, to put down roots and have synergies with a place....

Whatever happens to El Barrio of East Harlem, I am certain that it will

live on in the hearts and minds of countless natives and longtime residents, the children of Spanish Harlem, I call them. Whether they continue to reside in it or have chosen or been forced to move on, I am sure that the neighborhood endures as a subtle force, acting with them and upon them in untold ways.

I am convinced of this because I've discovered it to be so. I am one of the children of Spanish Harlem ... and, by virtue of my growing interest in the centrality of place in human experience, I've arrived at a deeper understanding of its hold on me—of its hold on my understandings of thought and belief particularly (pp. 103–04).

In Memoriam: Christopher Tilley (1955–2024)



Archeologist and anthropologist **Christopher Tilley** died March 10, 2024 after a long illness. He received his doctorate in Archeology from the University of Cambridge in 1983. He was one of the first researchers to consider the lived aspects of archeological materials via the method of first-person phenomenology, particularly experiencing landscapes and places via direct sensory experiences.

In 1994, he published *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford, UK: Berg), which emphasized the need to consider how ancient peoples might have experienced everyday landscapes and human constructions. This work was followed by other phenomenologically-inspired studies that included *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2004); *Interpreting Landscapes: Geologies, Topographies, Identities. Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 3* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012); and, with **Kate Cameron-Daum**, *An Anthropology of Landscape* (London: University College London Press, 2017; reviewed in the winter/spring 2018 *EAP* issue).

In Tilley's memory, we reprint his "fundamental principles" of a phenomenological approach to landscape, published in his 2004 *Materiality of Stone*, which he described as "an innovative approach to understanding human

experience through the tangible rocks and stone of our past."

In this study, he worked to present "a radically new way of analyzing the significance of both 'cultural' and 'natural' stone in prehistoric European landscapes." The aim was to "interpret human experience in a multidimensional and sensuous human way, rather than through an abstract analytical gaze." The specific landscapes he studied in the book included megalithic standing stones

(*menhirs*) of Brittany; Neolithic temples of the Maltese islands; and rock carvings and cairns in southeastern Sweden.

As with so many of the best phenomenologists studying place, Tilley emphasizes that a central aim is coming to appreciate and care for places in general and the specific places one hopes to study and understand. He poignantly writes:

To be a good phenomenologist is to try both to think through and to develop an intimacy of contact with the landscape akin to that between lovers. In so doing, we may develop not only a better understanding of our present-past but also of ourselves and our relationship to others (Tilley, 2012, p. 490).

The following sidebar includes his "phenomenological principles" and is followed by a reprint of John Billingsley's 2015 *EAP* review of Tilley's 2012 *Interpreting Landscapes*. This review is followed by sidebars with passages from the 2012 book.

Some phenomenological principles

A phenomenological perspective provides an ontological ground for the study of things, places and landscapes, a means of approach and a way of thinking through the body in its participatory relation with the

world. I summarize some fundamental principles:

1. A phenomenological approach to landscape and place... is not a philosophical approach emphasizing the personal and subjective. It is an approach emphasizing the intertwining of subject and object, things and persons, mind and body, places and being-in-the-world. The rejection of any possibility of an objective approach does not mean that we pass into a realm of personal subjectivity, because meaning is grounded in the sensuous embodied relation between persons and the world, an invariant ontological ground for all feeling and all knowing taking place through persons with similar bodies.

2. Any study begins with lived experience, being there, in the world. It must necessarily be embodied, centered in a body opening out itself to the world... The exploitation of basic bodily dyads provides one entry point into the study of place and landscape. A concentric graded sense of place and landscape provides another basic way in which meaning may be explored. Both originate in the body and extend outwards.

3. Perceptual meanings of place and landscape are constituted as gestalts, themes against horizons, to which the human body and the external world both contribute, a lived structure of experience formed through engagement and interaction in which the body-subject and the world flow into each other and form part of each other. The body is concretely engaged in the world from a particular point of view that is always unfolding and changing in time-space....

4. This involves a dehiscence, an opening of my body to things, a reversible relationship between touching and being touched, myself and other, the effect of myself on things and those things on me.

5. In an experiential relationship with things, there is always a chiasm,

an intertwining between ‘outside’ and ‘inside’, which mediate each other but never totally fuse. So my body is in contact with the world but still separate from it. My body experiences from the inside but opens itself to the outside. Since, as an embodied observer, I perceive the world through a set of frameworks which are habitual and grounded in the body, to a certain extent anonymous, these frameworks cease to be mine alone and are not therefore ‘personal’. They are, however, both objective and subjective insofar as they simultaneously stem from my own body. First-person experiences can be used to gain access to the experiences of other persons because of the incarnate and sensuous opening out of the ‘primal’ embodied subject to the world.

6. Our primordial experience is inherently animistic, disclosing a field

of phenomena that are all potentially animate and expressive because our perception involves the reversibility born out of our participation in the world.

7. Direct prereflective perception is inherently synaesthetic, disclosing the things and elements that surround us not as inert objects but as expressive subjects of experience, born out of our multidimensional sensorial participation in the world.

8. There is a fundamental temporal dimension to the body, place and landscape carried through movement and sedimented into what places and landscapes are and how we experience them.

9. Persons do not passively receive information and knowledge about the world but always act in accordance with practical projects, values, needs, desires, and interests.... The manner

in which we experience place and landscape is, however, forever unfinished, uncertain, and therefore ambiguous....

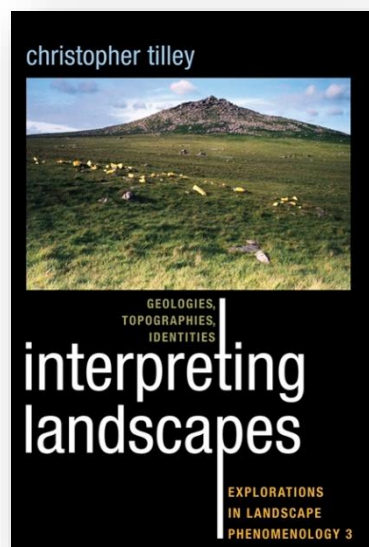
10. The aim of a phenomenological analysis is to produce a fresh understanding of place and landscape through an evocative thick linguistic redescription stemming from our carnal experience. This involves attempting to exploit to the full the tropic nature of our language in such a way as to seek the invisible in the visible, the intangible in the tangible. The mode of expression must resonate with that which it seeks to express (Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 2004, pp. 29–30).

Photograph, Michael Shank, and used with permission.

Book Review

Christopher Tilley, 2012. *Interpreting Landscapes: Geologies, Topographies, Identities—Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 3*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Reviewed by **John Billingsley**



British archaeologist Christopher Tilley seeks a kind of empathy with the past—not an archaeology of artifacts and sites so much

as one of contexts and connections, embracing psychology rather than materialism. His workplace is not a laboratory, computer desk, or excavations, but a first-person immersion in the physical geography of prehistoric sites—contexts that demonstrate, perhaps more in Britain than elsewhere, that “no predictive model based on one landscape works for another” (p. 460). This claim means no grand schemes replicated as patterns across varying cultures but local monuments for local people with their own local priorities.

In this third volume of his “landscape phenomenology” series [see *EAP*, spring 2015], Tilley puts his approach into extensive practice, linking together various research projects that take the reader on a tour from Wessex to South West England, via the familiar landscapes of Stonehenge to the less-regarded barrows and cross-dykes to beach-pebbled hilltops, the sandstones and slates of Devon and Exmoor that evoked such different responses among site-builders, to Cornwall's granite environs that seem

to have invoked a supernatural negotiation between land and people from the start.

As Tilley tours, he walks, looks, and reflects on what the site-builders might have seen and how they might have construed their surroundings into the visible traces they have left. This manner of interpretation is complemented by more customary archaeological reports with resulting deductions that are almost “Sherlock-Holms”-like.

What readers get, in other words, is a kind of guided walk around a large tract of South West England, with our attention directed not just to celebrated places like Stonehenge (which opens the volume and which, because of the intensity of research, may be more vulnerable to revision) and the comprehensive megalithic landscapes of Cornwall, but also to the kinds of sites that are so low-key and impassive that they are often overlooked by “megalith-maniacs.” Tilley argues, for example, that round barrows and cross-dykes—even Exmoor's intimate stone groupings—would have played

a synthetic role in how their builders saw and interpreted (and re-interpreted) their homeland, in a creative matrix with the natural landscape.

Tilley contends that study of individual sites is of limited value because interaction is multi-layered: “Monuments and places are within landscapes, but these landscapes are part of them... Past actions, events, myths and stories are embedded in landscapes” (p. 39). This claim introduces the element of human perception as another layer in the matrix, and in decoding it—or at least attempting to do so—the keywords are metaphor, mimesis and mnemonic.

As well as the temptation to see constructed places as individual entities, a common contemporary perceptual trap is to unconsciously imagine that the prehistoric landscape sprang fully formed into the hands of the mapmakers and didn't take millennia of changing worldviews to evolve. The prehistoric environ is sequential, cumulative and self-referencing throughout history: a barrow, say, makes reference not only to the land and the society that constructs it but also to pre-existing remains perhaps produced by other societies with radically different worldviews. In short, one must picture and hope to understand an evolving palimpsest.

Another contemporary misperception of the prehistoric landscape is unconsciously to see it as it is today, whether in its wild state or in careful curation. In returning the human eye to the land, Tilley's work countermands this reflective hiatus. His fieldwork is “feet-on” rather than “hands-on” and aims to return sites to the founders' eyes. He attempts to locate insights that would otherwise be elusive “without personal physical experience and knowledge of place... impossible just using a map” (p. 100).

There are many fascinating inquiries in this book, and space allows just one example, involving the East Devon pebble beds—a natural curiosity in that riverine pebbles occur on hilltops. Metaphorically, this unlikely situation as an inversion of the natural order is as obvious today as it no doubt was in prehistory, but I suspect we may be less amenable today in seeing it as a meaningful basis for insight. Tilley, however, chases out an observation of color, sensory perception, nearby archaeological sites, archaeo-astronomy and mythological

inference. In so doing the subtly visible landscape becomes the visionary landscape.

It is easy for empirical commentators to criticize Tilley's method and conclusions, arguing that deduction about bygone perceptions in the absence of material evidence is immune to external verification and tantamount to elevating imagination to research. Certainly, landscapes change, monuments decay, artifacts perish, and we have no quantifiable evidence on what symbolically motivated the construction of prehistoric sites.

Tilley argues, however, that one thing has not changed significantly over the last several thousand years—the human brain and its sense-making apparatus. If, therefore, human beings are sensitive to metaphor today, then they were also in prehistory. Thus, it is through engagement with metaphor that we might seek understanding of ritual landscapes. Indeed, the sough of metaphor can be heard in the theorizing of a ceremonial route that led to the Stonehenge Riverside Project's discovery of a previously unknown henge between Stonehenge and the River Avon.

For many researchers, metaphor has less empirical quantifiability than the wind, and the only understanding of human relationship with place to be trusted is one constructed on solid foundations. In this sense, one might say that Tilley's phenomenological approach in archaeology offers a homeopathic antidote to empiricist sterility. His method is a horizontal engagement as contrasted with the vertical, layered approach of excavation. His method is also mobile and itinerant rather than static—negotiation rather than investigation, thereby invoking a dialectical socio-political inference. These “horizontal” and “vertical” approaches are complementary, not competitive, and each better with an ear inclined to the other.

Tilley's interpretations of how ancient sites pattern the landscape and what that patterning might imply for lifeworlds not only sheds light on the past but also implicitly illuminates how we see our world today. What is *sine qua non* is presence.

Billingsley recently retired from Editorship of Northern Earth, a quarterly journal focusing on such topics as megalithic sites and sacred landscapes. www.northernearth.co.uk.

[erneath.co.uk](http://www.northernearth.co.uk). This review originally appeared in the spring 2015 issue of EAP, pp. 4-5.

Materiality of Landscape

Landscapes have a profound effect on our thoughts and interpretations because of the manner in which they are perceived and sensed through our bodies. We cannot, therefore, either represent or understand them in any way we might like. This approach stresses the *materiality* of landscapes: landscapes as real and physical rather than as simply cognized or imagined or represented. The physicality of landscapes acts as a ground for all thought and social interaction. It profoundly affects the way we think, feel, move, and act.

The phenomenologist is a figure immersed within the ground of landscape. Landscape is fundamental for human existence because it provides both a medium for and an outcome of individual and social practices. The physicality of landscapes grounds and orients people and places within them; it is a physical and sensory resource for living and the social and symbolic construction of lifeworlds.

A phenomenological study takes time.... [T]he longer one experiences a landscape the more that will be understood—first of all, because only familiarity can produce a structure of feeling for the landscape that a phenomenological account attempts to evoke.

Second, landscapes, unlike their representations, are constituted in space-time. They are always changing, in the process of being and becoming, never exactly the same twice over. Places alter according to natural rhythms such as the progression of seasons, time of day, qualities of light and shade, and so on. The weather, for which an entire archeology might be developed, is a fundamental medium surrounding and affecting both people and their landscapes....

Temporality is thus at the heart of a phenomenological study, in which we must learn how to see and how to experience and try to learn about the experience of others (Tilley, p. 26).

Imagining via the body

In carrying out the fieldwork for this book, I was struck by the manner in which the landscape itself changes so radically within a short walking distance.

In relation to the Pebblebed landscape of East Devon...., I walk from where I dwell toward the east, crossing the river Otter, climb up the East Hill Ridge, and pass over its flat top. I leave the smooth multi-colored pebbles behind, walk over red sandstone, which I can see exposed in the river cliffs, encounter brittle grey and yellow chert and small cairns made of the same material.

I descend to the valley below. My journey takes several hours. The topography is now totally different. Ahead is a ridge very different from the ridge that I have just passed over. The aspect of the East Hill ridge seen from the east is a ragged affair, broken up by numerous valleys and spurs. Seen from the west, the line is smooth, continuous and unbroken.

I have entered a very different sensuous and experiential world. I feel lost and uneasy in this landscape that I have not walked or studied. My relationship with the earth and the sky has changed; all the landmarks and water courses that were familiar to me have gone, my knowledge has vanished.

In order to dwell here, rather than over there, I need to find myself again, establish a new embodied relationship with place, establish a new kind of identity with the land. I have maintained throughout the book that something of value can also be inferred from this kind of view of the people of the past, an imagining taking place through the medium of the body rather than through a text (Tilley, p. 470).

Stages of phenomenological research

1. Familiarizing oneself with the landscape through walking within and around it, developing a feeling for it, and opening up oneself to it.
2. Visiting known places of prehistoric significance and recording the sensory affordances and contrasts they provide. This requires *writing* and then visually recording, through still or video photography, these experiences in the place, creating a written and visual text (rather than a series of abbreviated notes) because the very process of writing is a primary aid and stimulus to perception.
3. Revisiting the same places during different seasons or times of the day as far as is possible, experiencing them in and through the weather.
4. Approaching these places from different directions and recording the manner in which their character alters as a result.
5. Following paths of movement through the landscape and recording the manner in which this activity may change the manner in which places within it are perceived in relation to one another. Paths of movement will usually be suggested by features of the landscape itself, for example, following the lines of ridges or the course of valleys or prehistoric moments within it—for instance, walking along the line of a stone row, a Cursus Monument, a cross-ridge dyke, a Roman road, or between nearby groups of barrows or settlements.
6. Visiting and exploring and recording ‘natural’ places within the landscape for which there is little or no archaeological evidence of human activity.
7. Drawing together all these observations and experiences in the form of a

synthetic text and imaginatively interpreting them in terms of possible prehistoric lifeworlds: how people in the past made sense of, lived in, and understood their landscapes (Tilley, pp. 30–31).

Cherishing the land

Phenomenological approaches attempt to explore landscapes on the basis of the full depth of their human sensory experience. The process of dwelling in these landscapes and developing an understanding of them is not a value-free exercise. It is part of a radical politics whose imperative is to teach us to respect and to value, love, and cherish the land on which we dwell and the planet on which we live—and to challenge capitalist values in which everything and its worth becomes measured in terms of money, as well as the “rationalist” and calculating logic associated with such an evaluation.

[This perspective] encourages thought about these landscapes that may allow us to emotionally re-connect with them, through an alternative poetic and metaphoric logic, rather than to destroy them. It is to further develop an understanding that, if we destroy these landscapes, we destroy not only our past but also our present and our future.

To be a good phenomenologist is to try both to think through and to develop an intimacy of contact with the landscape akin to that between lovers. In so doing, we may develop not only a better understanding of our present-past but also of ourselves and our relationship to others (Tilley, p. 490).

A Walk to the River Loup

Stephen Wood

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Today is the last day of November, and I have decided to take a walk to the river Loup. The time is close to 4 pm and the light already subdued. The air is damp and the sky cloudy. The earth underfoot is muddy. The river has been swelled by weekend rain and spills noisily over weathered rocks in a little cascade downstream from my path.

Walking from my house, I have come down the *chemin des Adrechs*. The *adrechs* (or *adret* in its more usual spelling) is the sunny side of the valley. On the other side of the river Loup is the *ubac*, or shady side. Even on a sunny day, if I continue up the farther side, the contrast is striking. The vegetation changes and the atmosphere becomes one of dampness and shade.

On my walk, I experience a polarity between light and darkness, warmth and coolness, dryness and dampness. The year turns, and the warmth and bright light are left behind. The colors of vivid green soften to yellow and copper. The leaves are a damp, muddy carpet for my steps, and the branches of the trees are increasingly stark against the cloudy sky.

The Sun lightens the clouds only a little, in contrast to the bright light of last night's full Moon, casting moon shadows on the terrace beneath my bedroom window. We are approaching the shortest day. The Sun wanes and the Moon grows strong in contrast.

On this little point on Earth, I feel the presence of the Sun, giving me still the feeble light to write these words. The Earth turns on its axis, and soon my little point will be in the shadow of the night.

The tilt of the Earth's axis brings me closer to the Sun's rays in summer and farther away in winter. The fact that my geographical location is a distance from the

equator means that the Sun's day lengthens and shortens. Times of light, heat, and dryness correspond with one another, as do the times of darkness, cold, and dampness.

The polarity of light and dark is an inevitable consequence of the Earth's place in space. The great cosmic cycle of the seasons is rooted in polarity, which Goethe described as "the eternal systole and diastole, the eternal *synkrisis* and *diakrisis*, the breathing in and out of the world in which we move and have our being" (Naydler 1996, p. 53). To Goethe, we owe "the recognition of polarity as a basic feature of all creation, a principle permeating and animating the infinite range of phenomena" (Naydler 1996, pp. 57-58).

There can be no light without darkness. An object illuminated by the Sun will here cast a shadow for most of the day. Light and shade go hand in hand. The slopes of a river valley are similarly sunny on one side and shaded on the other. This observation was the origin of the Chinese polarity of yin and yang, yin standing for the shaded side and yang for the sunny side.

As Ted Kaptchuk, practitioner of Chinese medicine, explains, yin and yang as "complementary opposites are neither forces nor material entities ... Rather, they are convenient labels used to describe how things function in relation to each other and to the universe. They are used to explain the continuous process of natural change" (Kaptchuk 2000, pp. 7-8).

In Chinese thought, natural processes emerge from the polarity of complementary qualities: "When the ... Yang comes forth itself, things naturally come to life and grow. When the ... Yin arises of itself, things naturally mature and are stored up. ... Originally no result is sought, and yet results are achieved" (Kaptchuk 2000, p.

14, citing the 1st century Taoist scientist and philosopher, Wang Chong).

At the water's edge, I see easily to the pebbled bottom. The shallow, fast-moving stream speaks loudly and vigorously of cold. In contrast, the Rhône River in Avignon is muddy, filled with weed and moves slowly toward the sea. The light-filled stream in the mountains gives way to the darker, slow-flowing river on the plains. There is a contrast of light and dark along the length of the river.

The trout living in fast-flowing mountain streams are fast swimmers. They require a high concentration of oxygen and cannot tolerate warm water. In contrast, the slow-moving tench and deep-bodied carp and bream are unable to make headway in heavy currents and prefer the slow-flowing rivers of the lowlands. They can tolerate the lower oxygen concentrations of slower moving, even stagnant waters (Léger 1945; Huet 1949). Trout are complementary to tench, carp, and bream. Polarity brings out complementary forms of living nature, creating a delicate ecological balance. The contrasting forms are drawn together in *mutual adjustment* and interdependence (Bennett 1961, p. 50).

As water absorbs light and heat, the deeper layers are darker and colder. There is a difference in a river between the surface and the darker bottom. In the vastness of the sea, there are whole realms where light never penetrates. The warm, tropical waters are a riot of life, light, and color, whereas the deep is a cold, dark desert, where the denizens must make the best of any edible morsel that comes their way.

The warmth and brightness of the tropical waters express themselves in the beautiful, vivid colors of the tropical fishes, corals and other invertebrate animals. Goe-

thean naturalist Ernst Michael Kranich describes how tropical fishes respond to light and warmth: “the fish can turn itself to the environment with intensity—its body becomes a high flat disc. With this surrender to the forces of the sun, the desires retreat—the mouth becomes small” (Kranich 2004, author’s translation).

The disc-shaped butterflyfishes, parrotfishes, and surgeonfishes delicately flap their pectoral fins to maneuver among the corals, moving deftly to nibble with their narrow mouths or scrape at the hardened skeletons with a birdlike beak.

As Kranich explains, fishes respond to the darkness and the enormous pressure of the deep sea with an almost demonic voracity: “From the interior of its organism the destructive forces of the digestive tract penetrate to the outside” (Kranich 2004, p. 226, author’s translation). The gulper eel has an enormous mouth and the viper fish’s is filled with many sharp teeth. In the black swallower, the stomach is so large that it greatly distends the body wall and can hold prey longer than the fish itself. Deep sea fishes may move sluggishly, hanging in the

water, waiting for prey to arrive. The anglerfishes, for example, are equipped with a lure to entice passing fishes toward their waiting mouth.

The warmth and light of tropical waters, or the darkness and pressure of the deep sea, impress themselves on the denizens of the respective realms, giving each a distinctive quality. The extremes of light and dark create places of contrasting character, or *common presence*, which emerges as the togetherness of entities in a certain region of space (Bennett 1961, p. 48).

For animals and plants, the experience of contrast via light and dark is a necessary part of their existence in space. The polarity of light and dark is not an abstract scheme imposed on Nature but emerges inevitably from our planet’s place in relation to the Sun. The differences in form, scale, and proportion between light-loving and dark-loving organisms manifest the influences of this spatial dimension (Bennett 1961, p. 46).

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Architecture Made for People

A Residential Building in Tel Aviv

Nili Portugali

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In this essay, I present my interpretation of the holistic-phenomenological world view in theory and in practice that I have sought to implement in over 45 years of professional design and planning efforts that incorporate a process fundamentally different from conventional practice. I demonstrate how this approach was implemented in a residential building I designed and built in the city of Tel-Aviv, Israel (image, right). For 21st-century architecture, I raise the challenge as to how we should intervene in a moral way within an existing environment, whether urban or natural, when integrating within it a new building.

Architecture made for people

As I see it, the purpose of architecture is first and foremost to create a *human environment for human beings*. Yet modern society has often lost the value of human being and created a feeling of alienation between people and the environment. Buildings affect our lives and the fate of the physical environment in which we live. I refer to the great buildings, temples, and villages in which people feel “at home—the ones we want to return to again and again. These structures have timeless relevance, touch our hearts, and have the power to create a deep emotional experience (photo, right).

An apartment building is much beyond shelter. The residential project in Tel Aviv that I designed and present here was built on a site assigned for an ordinary apartment building (image, upper left). As opposed to typical apartment buildings typically designed today, my intention was:

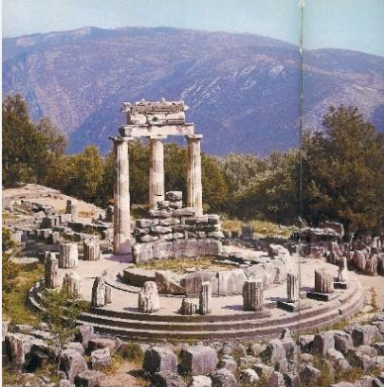


- First, to create a place where the tenants feel at home and a sense of belonging from the moment they enter the site until they reach their private apartment (photos, top, next page);
- Second, to create a building that contributes significantly to its wider public space—i.e., to the street that the building abuts. As in any organic system, each building has its own uniqueness and power, but at the same time always functions as part of a larger environment for which it is responsible.

A timeless quality

There are different ways to describe buildings that have a timeless quality and convey an inherent spiritual experience. Frank Lloyd Wright called them “the ones which





take you beyond words.” Christopher Alexander described them as “The buildings that have spiritual value [and] are a diagram of the inner universe or the picture of the inner soul” (Grabow 1983). H.H. The Dalai Lama (1997) calls this timeless quality “The great self” or the “nature of reality.” Although this timeless quality exists in buildings rooted in different cultures and traditions (photos above), the emotional experience they generate is common to all people, no matter where or from what culture they arise (e.g., in photos, above).

Thus, Christopher Alexander’s basic assumption was that behind all architecture there are universal qualities, and that beauty and harmony in architecture and in human-made works of art are objective properties inherent within the structures themselves, reflecting “innate patterns” already structured in our mind from the outset, thus common all human beings.

My personal experience creating in multidisciplinary fields of the arts allows me to claim that there is no essential difference between designing a town square, a building, a chair, a layout of a book, or creating a film. The same set of rules that sponsors the correct relationship between parts and whole and gives a sense of architectural unity and beauty also applies broadly to anything else comprising matter, form, and

color, at any level of scale. The difference lies in the content, the components, and the level of complexity.

Contemporary architecture and art too often aim to dissociate themselves from the world of emotions. Instead, they connect the design process to the world of ideas, thus creating a rational relation between buildings and human beings, devoid of emotion. My argument is that to change the feeling of the environment and to create places and buildings where we really feel “at home,” what is needed is not a change of style or fashion, but a transformation from a mechanistic to a holistic world view.

Mechanistic vs. holistic views

There is a huge difference between the mechanistic worldview that dissociates people from their physical worlds and the contrasting worldview that considers people to be an integral part of their physical worlds. I chose this second, organic, holistic school of thought for grounding my professional work.

The mechanistic worldview is dominant in Western thinking today and underlies most contemporary architecture that separates elements and creates an imposed environment of autonomous fragments—for example, Brazil’s Brasilia (image next

page); India’s Chandigarh; England’s satellite towns; Ramat Gan, Israel’s diamond stock exchange district in Ramat Gan (image next page); or Jerusalem’s new neighborhoods that incorporate a structured disconnection between buildings, streets, and larger city—a fragmentation that arouses a feeling of detachment and alienation (image next page).

Buildings are treated as a random collection of objects; and streets as a random collection of buildings that do not create together a meaningful urban place. Sometimes, prefabricated factory houses are superimposed artificially on the site (image next page).

This approach was most notoriously used by renowned architects such as Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer, whose iconic buildings were no more than environmental installations, generated totally from arbitrary visions of their creators. This school of thought is directly responsible for the many disasters we witness in today’s human-constructed environments.

As opposed to this mechanistic approach to design is an effort by architects to be immersed in *the thing itself* and *thinking about users*. These architects understand that urban design does not start and end via arbitrary sketches on a scale of 1:1000. Rather, the focus is the scale of human being, grounded in the dialogue between pedestrians and buildings—for example, the sight of decorated iron railings for stairs and balconies; or the smell and sight of fruit trees at flats’ entrance courtyards (photos above, top).

The holistic-organic approach that I draw on was originally envisioned and applied in architecture by Alexander and his Center for Environmental Structure in Berkeley California. As in any organic system where each element has its own uniqueness and



power but always acts as part of a larger entity to which it belongs and which it complements, the socio-physical environment at all levels of scale is a system—a dynamic whole the existence of which depends on appropriate, ever-changing interrelations between the parts.

One continuous, organic system

Having adopted this approach to design, I do not regard architecture, interior design, landscape design, and urban design as independent disciplines but as *one continuous organic system*. The building is not perceived as a collection of designed fragments but as one hierarchical presence in which street, buildings, and interiors are one continuous whole (photos, p. 22 and p. 23).

This overall feeling of inner wholeness evolves from proper interrelations between parts. The Dalai Lama (1997) claims that an understanding of these expressions of dependent arising, cause and condition, and cause and effect is a fundamental insight of Buddhist philosophy.

If we return to the apartment in Tel Aviv that I designed (image, p. 22), one notes that the walk from public street to private

apartment is through a continuous system of open spaces that opens one into another, leading gradually from an *internal outdoor street* that separates apartments from a busy street alongside the site (images, top, p. 23). There is no isolated internal lobby or private entrance balconies for upper apartments. Rather, balconies are connected to the open stairs, which creates a sense of connectedness to the ground.

Essential ornamental detail

The secret of architectural beauty lies in spatial order and detailing. Every design detail, at any level of scale, is derived from the larger whole to which it belongs, which the detail enhances and is responsible for. I do not perceive the details of a building as a collection of designed elements but as a structural system derived from a hierarchical language in which surroundings, building, and interior are one continuous system. Each detail—down to light fixture, door handle and choice of wall color—is an inseparable part of my planning and creating “the whole.”

In modern society, beauty has too often become an abusive term, associated with such other negatives as inefficiency, impracticality, and high cost. That manner of beauty is true if applied to buildings where ornamentation is used for its own sake.

The early American religious community of Shakers noted that the wholeness and beauty of a household object are products of pure functionalism. The Shakers claimed that there is no room for beautiful forms that do not flow from a functional need. At the same time, however, the Shakers did not interpret the term “pure functionalism” in the narrow sense of the modernists, who linked “form follows function” only to the physicality of buildings. The Shakers understood “functionalism” by connecting it both to the physical and the spiritual-emotional experience that one feels in a building.

Note, for example, the apartment building’s iron decorated balustrades of stairs and balconies (photo, right). They are painted gold, and when the sun hits them, they cast beautiful silhouettes on building surfaces.

Beauty as objective

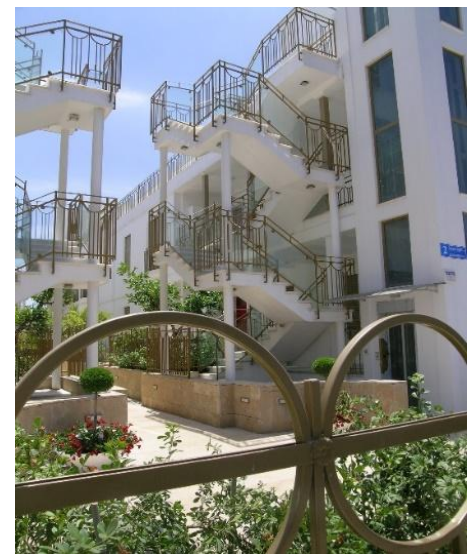
Based on research conducted at the Center for Environmental Structure, Alexander

concluded that beauty and harmony are objective properties related to inherent geometrical properties. In turn, these properties evoke feelings that are an objective fact. In his 1979 *The Timeless Way of Building*, Alexander explains that places of organic order may seem unplanned and disorderly but are in fact a direct expression of order at a deep, complex level. This order is based on geometric rules that determine the quality and beauty of a place. These rules are the source of any vibrant, pleasant feelings.

There is a direct connection between the “pattern of events” that occur in a place and its “patterns of space.” These patterns are archetypes of structures that repeat themselves in an infinite variety. Although the specific forms of these patterns vary from place to place and time to time, there is an underlying structure—an *archetype that remains the same*.

When, for example, we encounter an unfamiliar species of tree, we still know that what we see is a tree. According to Alexander, this certainty is so because we do not identify the tree as a specific visible form but as an *underlying structure*—the relationship among parts that makes a tree. Although the form of “tree” repeats in an infinite variety, the pattern of relationship remains the same.

The value of the 253 patterns in Alexander’s *Pattern Language* is that they constitute a system that generates an entire language at all levels of scale. Each pattern is related to other smaller and larger patterns so that each pattern is a *matrix of relationships*. Moreover, Alexander assumes that





people from different cultures share similar experiences, no matter from what place or social environment.

The planning process

In designing the Tel Aviv apartment house, it was important to determine the patterns of space relevant for this residential project. These patterns arose from the location of the site (facing two main streets) family needs, and common needs required by all human beings—for example, daylight being essential for all buildings anywhere, whether house, school, senior center, or offices (photo, above).

The planning process I propose here is fundamentally different from conventional planning approaches where planning first takes place in the office and then is transferred to the site via drawings often out of touch with the site itself. For the apartment house, once its pattern language was established, all planning decisions concerning the physical structure of the building complex were taken on the site directly. The aim was a dynamic planning process whereby the plan of the building was created via a dynamic balance between the project's pattern language and the living reality of the site.

The unpredictable conditions continuously developing on the actual site triggered openings for new design possibilities. The order by which planning decisions were taken was guided by the order of the patterns in the building's pattern language. Decisions were first made on matters affecting larger-scale concerns followed by other decisions raised by those concerns. The planning process was not conceived as an additive but as a *differentiating* process in that each new element was differentiated gradually from previous decisions. Each planning addition taken on the site and marked on the ground changed



the configuration of the site as a whole, forming the basis for the next addition toward the final plan.

In envisioning the apartment house, I first made the decision to use the pattern *entrance gate*—an entry to the site and a threshold connecting the building to the street. This entry was designed to be immediately visible once entering the street. (photo, above). The easily identifiable location of this entry is critical and contrasts with the more standard entries of modernist architect whereby pedestrians cannot readily find building entries and literally get lost. Experience has shown me that placing the *entrance gate* in a deviation of even 10 centimeters can confuse users. For this reason, the precise location of a building entry can be ascertained only by the architect's being on the site itself.

Another decision important in site design was drawing on the two patterns of *entrance transition* (a passage between the street and the site) and *internal street* (a sense of transition to entrances of private apartments) (photos, p. 24 and p. 25). Next, I incorporated the pattern of apartments' *main entry door*, which was placed to be immediately visible from the *internal street*.

Reconstructing traditional architecture?

One criticism of my apartment-house design is whether it is a "reconstruction" of similar traditional buildings of the past. This criticism assumes that iconic architecture must dissociate itself from its surroundings and architectural history. The assumption is that a building supporting pleasant feeling and well-integrated with its surroundings cannot possibly be a new building.

Let me be clear, I do not aim to reconstruct the past or nostalgically reproduce this or that style. The similarity between the buildings I design and past building styles (that respect the environment and facilitate a feeling of "at homeness" for users) originates in my use of fundamental patterns of space and a planning process as real today as it was in the past.

This approach aims at fulfilling timeless values and is in no way a reaction against contemporary design. Rather, my approach is a genuine attempt to fully use the potential inherited in modern technological society available today, but not as a value in itself but as a tool to create a friendly, human environment that satisfies basic needs common to all human beings.

The real challenge of architectural practice is to make the best use of the potential inherent in our modern technological age. We currently pinpoint this possibility via "trademark" labels such as "sustainable development," "green building," "ecological design" and the like.

Unfortunately, these approaches too often reduce down to saving energy, saving water, saving electricity, and recycling material. There is minimal reference to the number one environmental resource—the *human being*. What is good for people will necessarily be good for the environment and consequently will save energy and reduce cost—for example incorporating natural daylight for physical and mental well-being.

I hope that the holistic approach described here might be used by other architects and planners. I believe that it can lead us collectively to create buildings, streets, neighborhoods, and cities in which we really want to live, whatever the culture, time, or place.

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Image captions

p. 22: N. Portugali, model for apartment house, Tel Aviv, Israel.

p. 22: Streetscape, Paros, Greece.

p. 23, top: N. Portugali, apartment house, Tel Aviv. Left to right: Access progression from site entrance to private apartments.

p. 23: Left to right: Tholos, 4th century, Delphi, Greece; Great Gander Pagoda, 7th-8th century, Hsi-an-Fu, China; Yosef Karo Synagogue, 16th century, Safed, Israel.

p. 24: Brasilia, Brazil; Diamond Exchange, Ramat Gan, Israel; mass-produced dwelling units, Modiin, Israel.

p. 24, bottom: N. Portugali, apartment house, Tel Aviv, decorated iron railings.

p. 25, top, left: N. Portugali, apartment house, Tel Aviv; building designed as “long wings of day light.”

p. 25, top, right: N. Portugali, apartment house, Tel Aviv; entrance gate as “threshold” connecting site and street.

Questions relating to environmental and architectural phenomenology (from *EAP*, 2014 [vol. 25, no. 3, p. 4])

Questions relating to phenomenology and related interpretive approaches and methods:

- What is phenomenology and what does it offer to whom?
- What is the state of phenomenological research today? What are your hopes and concerns regarding phenomenology?
- Does phenomenology continue to have relevance in examining human experience in relation to world?
- Are there various conceptual and methodological modes of phenomenology and, if so, how can they be categorized and described?
- Has phenomenological research been superseded by other conceptual approaches—e.g., post-structuralism, social-constructionism, critical theory, relationalist and non-representational perspectives, the various conceptual “turns,” and so forth?
- Can phenomenology contribute to making a better world? If so, what are the most crucial phenomena and topics to be explored phenomenologically?
- Can phenomenological research offer practical results in terms of design, planning, policy, and advocacy?
- How might phenomenological insights be broadcast in non-typical academic ways—e.g., through artistic expression, theatrical presentation, digital evocation, virtual realities, and so forth?
- What are the most important aims for future phenomenological research?
- Do the various post-structural and social-constructionist criticisms of phenomenology—that it is essentialist, masculinist, authoritative, voluntarist, ignorant of power structures, and so forth—point toward its demise?

Questions relating to the natural world and environmental and ecological concerns:

- Can there be a phenomenology of nature and the natural world?
- What can phenomenology offer the intensifying environmental and ecological crises we face today?
- Can phenomenology contribute to more sustainable actions and worlds?
- Can one speak of a sustainable lifeworld?
- What is a phenomenology of a *lived* environmental ethic and who are the key contributors?
- Do the “sacred” and the “holy” have a role in caring for the natural world? For places? For lifeworlds broadly?
- Can phenomenology contribute to environmental education? If so, in what ways?

- Can there be a phenomenology of the two laws of thermodynamics, especially the second law claiming that all activities, left to their own devices, tend toward greater disorder and fewer possibilities? Are there ways whereby phenomenological understanding of lifeworld might help to reduce the accelerating disordering of natural and human worlds?

Questions relating to place, place experience, and place meaning:

- Why has the theme of place become an important phenomenological topic?
- Can a phenomenological understanding of place contribute to better place making?
- Can phenomenology contribute to a generative understanding of place and place making?
- What roles do bodily regularity and habitual inertia play in the constitution of place and place experience?
- What are the lived relationships between place, sustainability, and a responsive environmental ethic?
- How are phenomenological accounts to respond to post-structural interpretations of space and place as rhizomic and a “mesh-work of paths” (Ingold)?
- Can phenomenological accounts incorporate a “progressive sense of place” argued for by critical theorists like Doreen Massey?
- Can phenomenological explications of space and place account for human differences—gender, sexuality, less-abledness, social class, cultural background, and so forth?
- Can phenomenology contribute to the politics and ideology of place?
- Can a phenomenological understanding of lived embodiment and habitual inertia be drawn upon to facilitate robust places and to generate mutual support and awareness among places, especially places that are considerably different (e.g., different ethnic neighborhoods or regions)?
- Can phenomenology contribute to mobility, the nature of “flows,” rhizomic spaces, the places of mobility, non-spaces and their relationship to mobility and movement?

Questions relating to architecture and environmental design and policy:

- Can there be a phenomenology of architecture and architectural experience and meaning?
- Can phenomenology contribute to better architectural design?
- How do qualities of the designable world—spatiality, materiality, lived aesthetics, environmental embodiment etc.—contribute to lifeworlds?

- What are the most pertinent environmental and architectural features contributing to a lifeworld’s being one way rather than another?
- What role will cyberspace and digital technologies have in 21st-century lifeworlds? How will they play a role in shaping designed environments, particularly architecture?
- What impact will digital advances and virtual realities have on physical embodiment, architectural design, and real-world places? Will virtual reality eventually be able to simulate “real reality” entirely? If so, how does such a development transform the nature of lifeworld, natural attitude, place, and architecture?
- Can virtual worlds become so “real” that they are lived as “real” worlds?

Other potential questions:

- What is the lived relationship between people and the worlds in which they find themselves?
- Can lifeworlds be made to happen self-consciously? If so, how? Through what individual efforts? Through what group efforts?
- Can a phenomenological education in lifeworld, place, and environmental embodiment assist citizens and professionals in better understanding the workings and needs of real-world places and thereby contribute to their envisioning and making?
- Is it possible to speak of human-rights-in-place or place justice? If so, would such a possibility move attention and supportive efforts toward improving the places in which people and other living beings find themselves, rather than focusing only on the rights and needs of individuals and groups without consideration of their place context?

Questions relating to Covid-19:

- Will demands of Covid-19 have a lasting impact on physical places and bodily sociality?
- Can social media and virtual realities effectively replace face-to-face presence and physical places?
- Will human beings return to physical place and firsthand intercorporeality once the pandemic ends?
- Can human life really survive if people lose their direct lived relationships with other human beings and an entrenched physical involvement in real-world places?
- Does the crisis of Covid-19 demonstrate the central phenomenological principle that human beings-are-inured-in place? If that inurement collapses, is human life at risk?



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Published digitally twice a year, **EAP** is a forum and clearing house for research and design that incorporate a qualitative approach to environmental and architectural experience, actions, and meanings.

One key concern of **EAP** is design, education, policy, and advocacy supporting and strengthening natural and built places that sustain human and environmental wellbeing. Realizing that a clear conceptual stance is integral to informed research and design, the editor emphasizes phenomenological approaches but also gives attention to related styles of qualitative research. **EAP** welcomes essays, letters, reviews, conference information, and so forth. Forward submissions to the editor.

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Exemplary Themes

- The nature of environmental and architectural experience;
- Sense of place, including place identity and place attachment;
- Architectural and landscape meaning;
- The environmental, architectural, spatial, and material dimensions of lifeworlds;
- Changing conceptions of space, place, and nature;
- Home, dwelling, journey, and mobility;
- Environmental encounter and its relation to environmental responsibility and action;
- Environmental and architectural atmospheres and ambiances;
- Environmental design as place making;
- Sacred space, landscape, and architecture;
- The role of everyday things—furnishings, tools, clothing, interior design, landscape features, and so forth—in supporting people's sense of environmental wellbeing;
- The progressive impact of virtual reality on human life and how it might transform the lived nature of "real" places, buildings, and lifeworlds;
- The practice of a *lived* environmental ethic.

For additional themes and topics, see the preceding page, which outlines a series of relevant questions originally published in the 25th-anniversary issue of **EAP** in 2014 (vol. 25, no. 3, p. 4).

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