



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

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Spring 2001

We would like to thank readers who have renewed their subscription since last issue. Again, we list readers who made an extra donation. Thank you.

This issue includes a variety of items, including publication items, membership news, and an extended book commentary by philosopher Ken Maly on philosopher Ingrid Leman Stefanovic's *Safeguarding Our Common Future*.

We have just learned of the death of Christian Norberg-Schulz—a founding figure of research in environmental and architectural phenomenology. In tribute, we reprint three passages from his posthumous *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*—see p. 8.

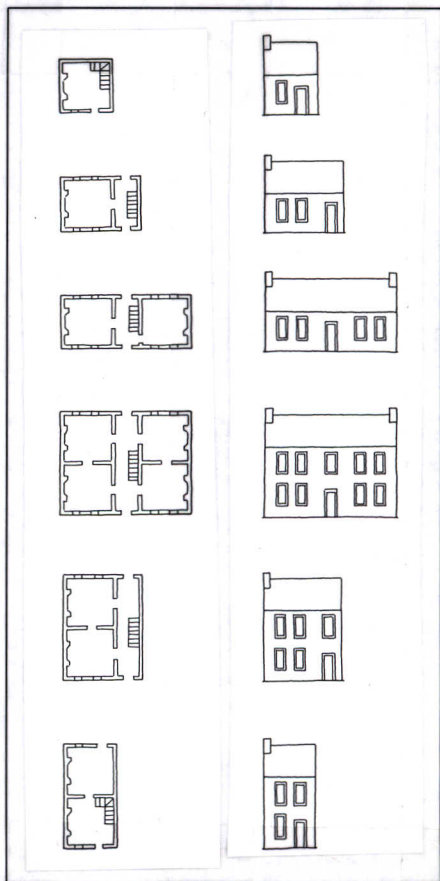
ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

The International Association for Environmental Philosophy presents its fourth annual program on 7-8 October 2001, at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, immediately following the annual conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP).

IAEP embraces a broad understanding of environmental philosophy, including not only environmental ethics but environmental aesthetics, ontology, theology, the philosophy of science, political philosophy, ecofeminism, and the philosophy of technology. IAEP welcomes a diversity of approaches to these issues.

Call to Earth, IAEP's journal, is available to members and offers a forum for wide-ranging philosophical discussion on earth/nature and the human relation to the natural environment. Everyone is invited to submit essays and book reviews for publication. Please send (a) short essays of 2400 words or less, or (b) book reviews of 700 words or less, briefer "critical comments" on new books. Contact: K. Maly, Dept. of Philosophy, UW-La Crosse, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601 (maly.kenn@uwlax.edu.).

Below: From Henry Glassie's *Vernacular Architecture* (2000)—see p. 4. The drawings are part of an illustration, "The System of Segmentable Symmetry" (p. 127), which portrays some relationships between vernacular house plans (left) and facades (right).



MORE DONORS, 2001

Since our listing in the winter issue, we've received additional reader contributions. Thank you.

Semra Turley Aydinli	Suzanne Bott
Mike Brill	Anne Buttner
Peter Callahan	Gary Coates
Andrew Cohill	Linda Carson
Matthew Day	L. S. Evenden
Cathy Gonoe	Tom Jay
Jim Jones	Juhani Pallasmaa
Doug Paterson	Carol Prorok
Ted Relf	Enice Row
Hanalei Rozen	Thomas Saarinen
David Saile	Derek Shanahan
John Sherry, Jr.	Susanne Siepl-Coates
Ingrid Leman Stefanovic	Ray Weisenberger
Justin Winkler	

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The **Ecosa Institute** will sponsor a "Total Immersion Program in Sustainable Design," 27 August—14 December, 2001 in Prescott, Arizona. The program is an intensive semester program for college-level design students. It is specifically designed to provide a small group of exceptional students an experience that is complimentary to that offered in other design programs.

Ecosa guest lecturers in the fall of 2001 will include James Wines, Paolo Soleri, Will Bruder, Sym Van der Ryn, and Pliny Fisk as well as educators and representatives from a wide spectrum of ecologically-focused organizations. The 2001 semester includes projects with the Hopi Tribe of Northern Arizona and travel to ancient and modern regional sites including Canyon de Chelly, Wupatki, and Grand Canyon National Parks. Contact: Bob Israel, Ecosa Institute, 123 E. Goodwin St., Prescott, AZ (520 541.1002; ecosa@mwaz.com).

The 4th interdisciplinary conference **Greening of the Campus** will be held at Ball State University, 20-22 September, 2001. The main aim is to provide a context for sharing information on environmental issues and university communities. Topics range from "the practical day-to-day management of the physical plant to 'green' curriculum development and 'green' utilization of campus resources." 765-285-2385; www.bsu.edu/greening.

The 15th annual **Conference on Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies** will be held at 3-5 January, 2002, at the University of Georgia in Athens. Some questions to be considered include: How do theoretical perspectives influence how we represent our data? What contributions are various disciplines and professions making to the future of qualitative research? How do various forms of data representation influence qualitative researchers to reconceptualize the process of research?

Presentation proposals are due 15 May 2001. Contact: QUIG, 325 Aderhold Hall, Univ. of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 (www.coe.uga.edu/quig; quigconf@arches.uga.edu).

The **Environmental Writing Institute** will have its annual program at the Teller Wildlife Refuge in Montana, 30 May-June 4, 2001. Nature writer Scott Russell Sanders and 14 other nationally-known environmental authors will speak and direct the proceedings. The institute is open to both beginning and published writers. EWI, Environmental Studies Program, Rankin Hall, Univ. of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812.

Experience in Design-Build is a conference that will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, 21-22 November 2001. Sponsored by the American Institute of Architects Design-Build Professional Interest Area and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, the focus is "opportunities and challenges that design-build poses to architectural education & practice." Contact: George Elvin, 212-333-5807; elvin@uiuc.edu. www.arch.uiuc.edu/conferences

Kinship with All Life is a conference sponsored by the San Francisco chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in June, 2001. The focus is the "profound and essential relationship between human beings and other animals" and consideration of "the intrinsic spiritual and emotional value in animals and all of nature." 800-862-7538; www.kinshipconference.com.

The Phenomenology of Childhood was a conference held at the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center of Duquesne University, 9-10 March, 2001. Speakers included Wilfried Lippitz ("The Child in [Auto-]biographical Perspective") and Max van

Manen ("Naming Childhood"). 600 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15282.

CITATIONS RECEIVED

Mari-Jose Amerlinck (ed.), 2001. *Architectural Anthropology*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

The eight essays, all by anthropologists, include: "The Meaning and Scope of Architectural Anthropology" (M. Amerlinck); "Architectural Anthropology or Environment-Behavior Studies" (A. Rapoport); and "The Deep Structure of Architecture: Constructivity and Human Evolution" (N. Egender).

Anne Buttner & Luke Walling, eds., 1999. *Nature and Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

These 20 essays discuss "nature, home, and horizon," "official vs. folk versions of nature," and "narrative imagination in the landscape."

Christopher J. Duerksen & R. Matthew Goebel, 1999. *Aesthetics, Community Character, and the Law*. Washington: American Planning Association.

A useful discussion of local communities' building a national movement for scenic conservation. Includes guidelines for writing laws that protect a special sense of place.

Luis Vernáñez-Galiano, 2001. *Fire and Memory: On Architecture and Energy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

This Spanish architectural critic "reconstructs the historical and theoretical relationship between architecture and energy." The book begins "with the mythical fire at the origins of architecture and [moves] to its symbolic representation in the 20th century."

Karsten Harries, 2001. *Infinity and Perspective*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

This philosopher examines our civilization's discontent in terms of two key figures: The Renaissance architect Alberti, whose interest in perspective and point of view is said to offer a key to modernity; and the 15th-century cardinal Nicolaus Cusanus, whose work is said to show that such interest cannot be divorced from speculations on the infinity of God.

Peter H. Kahn, Jr., 1998. *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

A study of how a range of cultural and social groups value nature and how they reason morally about environmental degradation.

Malcolm Miles, 2000. *The Uses of Decoration: Essays on the Architectural Everyday*. London: Wiley.

Though the title suggests a phenomenological approach, this art historian instead draws on the structuralist work of Henri Lefebvre to examine "the seemingly small and insignificant ways in which people occupy the built environment." Includes a chapter on Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy and his village of New Gourna.

Cliff Moughtin, Taner Oc, & Steven Tiesdell, 1999 (2nd ed.). *Urban Design: Ornament and Decoration*. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann/ Architectural Press.

These authors discuss the use of ornament and decoration as one way to heal the contemporary city. Organized by environmental scale with chapters on facades, corners, skylines, outdoor floors, landmarks, and color.

Christian Norberg-Schulz, 2000. *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*. Milan: Skira [distributed by Abbeyville Press, NY].

This architectural theorist seeks to provide architecture with an existential foundation, starting from human being-in-the-world, particularly its spatial and environmental aspects. Published posthumously [see p. 8].

Richard Padovan, 1999. *Proportion: Science, Philosophy, Architecture*. NY: E. & F. N. Spon/Routledge.

A useful historical and philosophical analysis of the importance of proportion systems in architecture

Andrew Pierssené, 1999. *Explaining Our World: An Approach to the Art of Environmental Interpretation*. NY: E. & F. N. Spon/Routledge.

This author aims to "help anyone who attempts interpretation, professional or amateur, to think more clearly about what he or she is doing, and why." Emphasizes such themes as understanding the visitor, site conservation, modes of presentation, first impressions and ambience, and financial angles.

Sarah Quill, 2000 [ed. & compiler]. *Ruskin's Venice: The Stones Returned*. London: Ashgate.

Published to mark the centenary of English art and architectural critic John Ruskin, this book is a stimulating compilation of his writings on and drawings of Venice. The volume also includes Quill's remarkable contemporary photographs, which illustrate the "degree to which the city's architecture has survived (or, in some sad cases, changed) since the middle of the 19th century." Ruskin has been called a "proto-phenomenologist," and many of his descriptions of place and buildings remain some of the most powerful evocations of environmental and architectural experience ever written.

Samuel Todes, 2001. *Body and World*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Drawing on Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, this philosopher examples how independent physical nature and experience are united in bodily action. Todes emphasizes the complex structure of the human body—front/back symmetry, the need to balance in a gravitational field, and so forth—and the role that structure plays in producing the spatiotemporal field of experience.

James L. Watson, 1997. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*. Stamford: Stamford Univ. Press.

Probes the cultural implications of McDonald's in Asia, examining reaction to American fast food in Hong Kong, Beijing, Taipei, Seoul, and Tokyo. Argues that the restaurant has become a local institution for an entire generation of Asian consumers.

Robin Whalley & Anne Jennings, 1998. *Knot Gardens and Parterres*. London: Barn Elms/Museum of Garden History.

These horticulturalists and garden designers present a history of the knot garden and how to make one today.

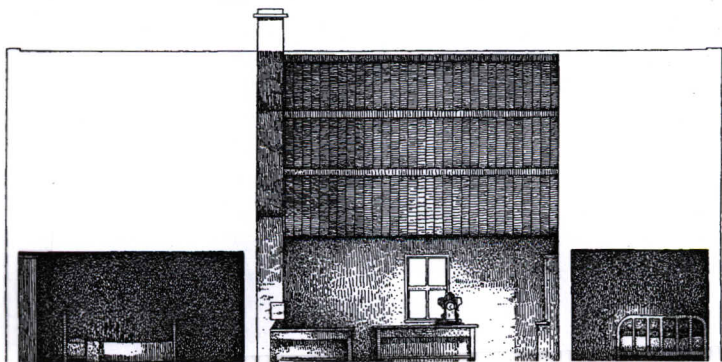
VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

We've just been sent word of the 2000 publication of folklorist Henry Glassie's *Vernacular Architecture*. The book is in the series, "Material Culture," published by Indiana University Press. In the form of an extended version of a chapter originally published in Glassie's 1999 *Material Culture* (Indiana Univ. Press), the book is beautifully illustrated with photographs, both colored and black-and-white, and line drawings. We reprint from the book's blurb:

"In *Vernacular Architecture*, Glassie focuses on the United States, on the way that common buildings can contribute to a more democratic history, but his range is wide. Drawing on experience in Ireland and England, in Sweden, Turkey, and Bangladesh, he lays out the general principles of research and presents the conclusions won from a life of close study in the field.

"Those conclusions challenge the elitist assumptions of a history based solely on writing. They celebrate the flexible genius of the men and women who have, in their daily labor, built the world."

Below: Longitudinal section of a house in Ballymenone, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, 1773. From Glassie's Vernacular Architecture, p. 57.



JUHANI PALLASMAA'S ARCHITECTURAL PHENOMENOLOGY

In response to our request for additional references relating to environmental and architectural phenomenology, Finnish architect and architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa has kindly sent us copies of his most recent publications.

*Pallasmaa's work is central to phenomenological research on architecture, landscape, and the material environment. For those interested in studying his writings, perhaps the work to begin with is *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (London: Academy, 1996). His *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema* is forthcoming from Helsinki's Rakenmustieto Press. A list of the work he sent us follows. We also reproduce a passage from one of his recent articles, which focuses on the lived-symbolism of stairs.*

"Stairways of the Mind," 2000. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 9, pp. 7-18

"One of the most potent images of architecture is the stair, which possesses a wealth of metaphoric and symbolic connotations. The stair is the symbolic spine of the house, whereas ascending a stair in dream imagery signifies copulation. The qualitative differences of ascending and descending derive from the images of Heaven and Hell" (p. 7).

"Hapticity and Time: Notes on a Fragile Architecture," 2000. *The Architectural Review* (May), pp. 78-84.

This essay argues that "Materials and surfaces have a richly complex language of their own that evolves and changes over time." The case is made for a "haptic, sensuous architecture."

"Lived Space in Architecture and Cinema 1999-2000." *In Situ* [the architectural journal of the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary], vol. 2, pp. 11-21 [to be included as 1st chapter of *The Architecture of Image*; see above].

"...both architecture and cinema articulate lived space. These two art forms create and mediate comprehensive images of life.... Both forms of art define the dimensions and essence of existential space; they both create experiential scenes of life situations" (p. 11).

"Logic of the Image," 1998. *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 3 (winter), pp. 289-299.

This essay focuses on the work of Finnish architect Alvar Aalto and examines his "synthetic and inclusive architecture as landscape, as typology, as tactile experience, as rational structure, as episodic sequence, as 'haptic experience'" (p. 289).

"The Geometry of Feeling: A Look at the Phenomenology of Architecture," 1996. In Kate Nesbitt, ed., *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, pp. 447-53. NY: Princeton Architectural Press.

An essay developing "a theoretical position about [architectural] experience's reliance on memory, imagination, and the unconscious."

"Space and Image in Andrew Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia*: Notes on a Phenomenology of Architecture," 1994. In *Chora I: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, Alberto Pérez-Gómez & Stephen Parcell, pp. 143-66. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press.

Director Andrew Tarkovsky's films "contain some of the most touching and poetic images of space and light ever created in any form of art. They touch upon the existential basis of architecture, which is saturated by memories and experiences lost in childhood. The images in his films *Mirror*, *Stalker*, and *Nostalgia* exhibit the poetics of space—a poetry that does not require construction or function. Through images of space, they evoke an experience of pure existence, the poetry of being. Tarkovsky's images appear fresh and innocent, as if they had never been exposed to the human eye before" (p. 144).

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF THE STAIRCASE

Juhani Pallasmaa

The fundamental imagery of stairs has remained practically unchanged since prehistoric times. Although its dimensioning is severely restricted, the architectural stair ensembles of history project a surprising variety.

Just think of the range of staircases from medieval castles, and Renaissance and baroque palaces to the designs of contemporary masters like Mies van der Rohe, Arne Jacobsen and Alvar Aalto.

The imagery of stepped streets is equally varied, from the Mediterranean vernacular towns to the Lipetta and Spanish Steps, and the stairways of Santa Maria in Aracoeli and the Capitoline Hill in Rome. A stepped street gives a feeling of safety; our body knows that these are streets solely for pedestrians.

The mental significance and symbolic connotations of stairs are deeply rooted. "The staircase is the symbolic spine of the house," writes the British-American film critic and semiotician Peter Wollen. Stairs have the same significance to the vertical or-

ganization of the house as the spine to the structure of the body.

Do we not experience today's office blocks, in which the staircases are concealed and used only for emergencies, as unreal and dreamlike as if they were devoid of the proper physiognomy of a house? Are not these buildings without their proper spines? There are also buildings with externalized spines, for instance Alvar Aalto's *Baker House* dormitory in Boston (1947-48) and the *Pompidou Centre* in Paris (Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, 1970).

According to Gaston Bachelard, the "oneiric house" of the mind has three or four storeys; the middle ones are used for the normal activities of daily life, the attic is reserved for the purpose of storing pleasant memories, which we occasionally wish to revisit, whereas the cellar is meant for hiding unpleasant and frightening memories that we wish to bury forever. The stair mediates between the different metaphysical realms of the house of our dreams (p. 9).

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Architect **Thomas Barrie** sends word that his firm **Thomas Barrie Architects** recently received an American Institute of Architects Detroit Honor Award for the firm's design of the EIS-ROST Studio in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. The studio is also featured in *Designing with Spirituality*, a book recently published by PBC International. Thomas Barrie Architects, 922 N. Washington Ave., Royal Oak, MI 48067 (Tlgbarrie@aol.com).

Naturalist **Paul Krapfel's** newsletter *Cairns of H.O.P.E.* continues to be inspired reading. His aim is: "to make visible the larger relationships we live within—relationships that inspire visions of wonder and works of hope." The newsletter is free through e-mail; contact: paul@krapfel.net. Back copies are available at: www.krapfel.net.

Krapfel includes the following "Neat Thought" in the current issue:

Gregory Bateson said that 'the map is not the territory'. However, the map is *part* of the territory. And what an interesting part it is—in at least two ways.

First, think how different a mapped territory is from an unmapped territory. A territory without a map is very different from one containing a map. The process of producing a map of the territory changes the territory in fundamental ways.

A second interesting characteristic of a mapped territory is that a tiny piece of the territory—the map—is a scale model of the rest of the territory. The map is a high-density, self-similar representation of the territory. It is a fractal part of the territory.

Deborah MacWilliams is a Ph.D. student at the Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her research interests include the "human psychological relationship to place and the things of place. I am especially inter-

ested in knowing place through and with the body. A fellow student suggested that your newsletter would be of interest to me." 1683 NW Albany Blvd., Bend, OR 97701.

The review of music scholar Joachim-Ernst Berendt's work in the winter 2001 issue of *EAP* provoked the following comments from soundscape researcher **Justin Winkler**.

Dear *EAP* Editor:

I would like to deepen Berendt's Mont Ventoux story [reprinted in the winter 2001 *EAP* issue]. It is now known that Petrarch's Ventoux ascent has a strong fictitious aspect. We have learned that the Ventoux letter had been written 17 years after the pretended hike, the addressee then having already been dead for ten years. Yet the question is not if Petrarch really climbed Mont Ventoux but whether the "turning point"

that Berendt identifies as "epoch-making" hike is in fact a good date.

Gebser's idea and Berendt's use of it reflects a widespread stance in soundscape circles: condemning modern visual dominance and erecting an aural counter-system. This judgment is certainly not the intention of the founders of soundscape studies but represents, on one hand, an understandable compensation effect, and is due, on the other hand, to the unreflected-upon use of recording and recomposing devices.

I would like to contrast Berendt's prejudice against vision with a phenomenological project of synaestheses—the cooperation of the sense and thinking modes [see Winkler's essay in the same issue of *EAP*]. This integrated approach would be most adapted within the environmental sciences, which are, in fact instrumentalized in a very visual way. In addition, this approach would free soundscape studies from the "New Age and Esoteric" connection it unfortunately has for many people.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF COMMUNITY: PHENOMENOLOGY, SPRAWL, AND THE INTERNET

Michael M. Kazanjian

Kazanjian is a philosopher currently working with the Publications Group at DePaul University, where he has also taught in the School of Education. His many writings include Phenomenology and Education (Rodopi, 1998) and Learning Values Lifelong (Rodopi, forthcoming). He sent the following commentary.

Researchers in comparative religion point to the Hindu-Buddhist tradition as an example of the pendulum swing from Hindu ritualism to Buddhist a-ritualism. In the West, we think of Pre-Reformation Catholic ritualism and Reformation Protestant simplification of ritual. Both Eastern and Western examples show a ritualism that fragments space, rejects phenomenological wholeness of the environment, and tells us to merely "do." Both examples then show an a-ritualism where wholeness rejects any ritual, and a simplification is cautious but does not deny ritual.

Let us turn to contemporary America. Sprawl fragments space and rejects phenomenological environment. We need to get from here to there quickly because fragmentation has cut up space. The internet reacts, perhaps overreacts. With the internet, there is suddenly no "here" vs "there." We communicate instantly with everyone. Instant communica-

tion is the opposite of travel and communication ritualism in sprawl.

My *Phenomenology and Education* (Rodopi, 1998), and *Learning Values Lifelong* (Rodopi, forthcoming) demonstrate that we must reintroduce objectivity and environment into subjectivity. I deny neither ritual nor community. They are continuous. Ritualism and a-ritualism are extremes. The former fragments the environment, while the latter denies environment. Smaller cities and towns provide the opportunity for people to know each other and travel by foot and maybe vehicles in reasonable time and speed. No need to rush from a distinct "here" to a distinct and distant "there."

Rejecting phenomenology, we get lots of traffic, the need for more and more parking lots, and bigger garages. The environment is fragmented as we build roads for quicker travel and buildings simply for parking. A holistic environment preserves pedestrian travel, habitats, and human dignity.

CHRISTIAN NORBERG-SCHULZ (1926-2000)

The architectural historian and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz passed away in April, 2000. He was a major figure in explicating a phenomenology of architecture and landscape, particularly in books like *Existence, Space, and Architecture* (1971) and *Genius Loci: Toward a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1985). In the latter book, he emphasized that a work of architecture is not "an abstract organization of space. It is a concrete figure, where the plan mirrors admittance, and the elevation, embodiment. Thus it brings the inhabited landscape close, and lets people dwell poetical, which is the ultimate aim of architecture" (p. 117).

Born in Oslo in 1926, Norberg-Schulz received a degree in architecture at the Zurich Polytechnic in 1949. He studied the history of architecture at Harvard University and in Rome. In 1966, he became a professor of architecture in the Department of Architecture at the University of Oslo.

Norberg-Schulz's last book, published posthumously, is *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place* (Milan: Skira, 2000). At the end of its preface, he writes:

When, in the pages that follow, I try to set forth a critique of science, this should be understood neither as an underestima-

tion of the importance of scientific achievement, nor as a revisionist view of the role played by the Enlightenment in overcoming superstition and facile existential solutions.

My goal is simply to point out the universal nature of present-day knowledge, based entirely on the quantification of data and facts. In order to counter the new wave of mysticism and speculative visions, we need more information of a qualitative nature. This is possible only through a phenomenological approach.

This book constitutes a contribution to our understanding of modernism, and it is written in the spirit of a new tradition, which is something that I feel bears pointing out, since the qualitative approach is often rejected as something smacking of romanticism and nationalism.

Instead, the qualitative is what we all share, regardless of where we live, and the art of the place is what brings us closer to the qualitative. I therefore wish to be open to all places, through a qualitative understanding so that we may learn to respect the places of others and take better care of our own (pp. 16-17).

One of Norberg-Schulz's great gifts was his ability to capture the experiential core of a particular building, landscape, or place. Below, we present passages from his last book—first, an account of Barcelonan architect Antoni Gaudí's remarkable public park, Parque Güell, in Barcelona (1900-1914); second, an insightful critique of 1990s buildings by architects Frank Gehry and Taddeo Ando.

GAUDÍ'S PARQUE GÜELL

Parque Güell... is an image of the world that comprehends diverse zones of quality.... Gaudí did not intend to underscore an ideal geometry or the very distinctive forces and atmosphere of nature; he wanted, if anything, to reconquer the basic features of place, and he therefore recognized himself in the intentions of modern art as described by Gideon: "The architecture of our time has had a difficult path to travel. Like painting and sculpture, it had to begin again from scratch and reconquer the original terrain as if nothing had been done up till that moment." Gaudí in fact created an image of earth and sky that opens the world to modern man, victim of alienation.

From the "subterranean" environment on the interior of the gates, the terrain climbs up toward

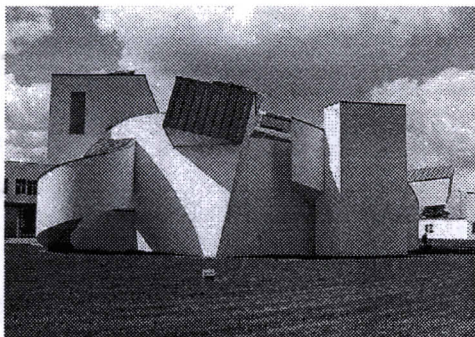
the large "celestial" terrace on the roof of the layout. The subterranean, with its forms and the impression transmitted by the materials, awakens associations with the bottom of the sea, while that which is related to the earth is presented in a dense "welter" or "tangle" of anthropomorphic Doric columns.

The tangle continues all around the park, where vivid and symbolic vegetation interacts with an open and cavernous space. The celestial terrace assembles everything within a glittering horizon, where fragments of little enameled tiles with the colors of the rainbow revealed the interminable richness of light.

The undulating parapet also comprehends the snugly fit bench, giving the possibility of using the

place, whether alone or in a group, with the terrace itself, which is both a theatre and a playing field. Here, life truly takes place "on the earth and under the sky" and spending time there offers clarifying and liberating possibilities.

It is important to underscore how Gaudí distinguished the three zones of the layout with different treatment of the built form. Both the "subterranean" and the terrace are dematerialized by water and by light, while the intermediate zone is characterized by the color of the earth and by its plasticity; one therefore gains the impression that one truly is in the midst of things, while on the terrace one is elevated far above things.



FRANK GEHRY'S VITRA MUSEUM

It seems important to me to conclude my observations about post-[Louis] Kahn architecture with a few examples of the tendencies that have imprinted the production of the past few years. I would therefore like to "tour" Vitra, the furniture factory at Weil am Rhein north of Basel, a company that from 1957 on has built an empire that fulfills the needs of such clients as Mercedes-Benz, Lufthansa, Apple, and Coca-Cola. In this complex, [American architect] Frank Gehry has built a sensational museum to display the furniture of the company, while [Japanese architect] Tadao Ando has built a conference center that is equally "interesting."

On the exterior, the museum presents itself as a set of relatively well-defined volumes: prismatic, circular, and pointed. Their placement in space also appears to be clear, inasmuch as they express the different positions of "resting," "opening," "curving," and "rising."

And that this might happen through the direct participation of man is a European concept, far different from the more abstract Hispanic/Islamic geometry based on the geometry of light.

As it appears to us today, the Parque Güell invites one to a phenomenological understanding of the world, both as an individual place and for its basic ways of being. According to the original plan, it was meant for a more comprehensive use, as part of an integral urban development, in which nature and architecture were meant to be connected more intimately (pp. 78-82).

But when they encounter each other nothing happens; here there are no configurations of divisions, there appear no transitions, and no color enriches the entirely white configuration. The same is true of the earth-sky relation; in fact, base and cornice are reduced to the minimum necessary.

There are no windows and the entrance door is arranged without the slightest affirmation of interaction between interior and exterior. The only reference is a baldachin overlooking the door, which instead of emerging from the interior seems to be "hung" over the entrance.

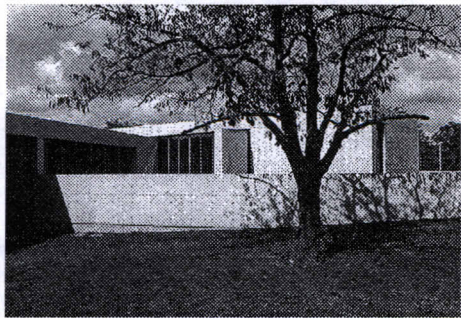
In general, the exterior tends to indicate that on the interior there exists complexes and stimulating spatial relations, and it therefore comes as a surprise that the interior should consist only of a conventional addition of rectangles, with the occasional slightly livelier roof in the places where light penetrates. For that matter, the building structure never

appears, so that both exterior and interior are abstract and devoid of substance.

By observing that the building as a whole is unstructured, I mean to say that there is no emphasis on axes and centers, and there does not even exist any form of regular organization. The whole is if anything characterized by a "restless indifference" that happens without concretizing into "something," with an occurrence that is not a building process and not even an entity in course of "configuration."

One has the impression that an original unity was "deconstructed," or better that it has simply gone to pieces. One cannot even perceive the "encounter of interior and exterior forces," and therefore one naturally tends to wonder: what can a building tell us when it is neither "functional" nor "conditioned by place"?

Despite these strange shortcomings, the museum by Gehry has a dynamic imprint. The grouping of the volumes does not placate itself, even though it can be described as a "dynamic equilibrium." This *dynamis* represents in any case a break from the traditional form that from Aristotle onward expressed the diverse nature of things; it has no reference and so it remains in the "generic" area.



TADDEO ANDO'S VITRA CONFERENCE CENTER

The convention center by Ando works in a completely different manner. Everything appears well defined and clear. The restless indifference of Gehry is replaced by a static composition in which nothing is accidental. It comprises "known" architectural elements: directional walls, determined spaces, open walls, a lowered gathering atrium, and clear roofs.

Gehry probably wanted to indicate that nowadays we live in a dynamic world in which there is no peace, even if we continue to live in the same spot. In this sense, the building does not lack "relevance"; it is natural to wonder whether such a general dynamic proves to be interesting. Isn't the capacity for communication of a building based upon the implementation in loc of the building task through the material of construction, and doesn't its making present depend on the encounter between external and internal forces?

The general is never present as such, inasmuch as we do not know "the thing per se." In other words, the museum by Gehry is actually nothing, or better only the reflection of an idea, which unlike Plato's shadows, does not even tend toward an "ideal" form. With its generality, it opposes the general, in a case in which the term is understood both as idea and *dynamis*. This sort of opposition takes concrete form in a finding that is devoid of identity and denomination, which in the final analysis represents the nihilist position, and thus expresses the extraneity that is so typical of our times (pp. 346-49).

The whole is structured in accordance with an elementary geometry that is based on the square, the rectangle, and the circle. The two chief elements of the plan are turned one with respect to the other in order to make way for a spatial "tension."

The use of cement, so typical of Ando's work, with formwork slabs that are square or rectangular, gives the surface a smooth and unified imprint,

which is propagated throughout the whole complex. In general, the whole is less "original" than the museum by Gehry, but it is at any rate personal and it is possible to recognize it immediately as a design by Ando.

While the first encounter with Gehry may provide food for thought, the encounter with Ando is disappointing. What could have been described in the work of the earliest modernists as an expression of liberty, here has been stiffened into a perfection that is completely lacking in that presence that, despite the inevitable breaks with tradition, had marked the most important expressions of the movement, from Le Corbusier to Mies van der Rohe, all the way up to Van Eyck and Utzon. In the case of Ando, the vitality of the form has become a

THE TWO BUILDINGS TOGETHER

In the final analysis, the museum and the conference center prove to be the "same," even though they do not appear as identical. The difference consists in the fact that Gehry hides the void, while Ando displays it.

Gehry and Ando present other similarities as well. Both work at the behest of economic power, they are summoned to various places around the planet for numerous jobs, they always produce the same sort of solution, even though the place and the structural functions may change.

They thus confirm that "architecture is no longer a something for a something. But merely a personal something." In other words, they have become representative of a global consumer society, where a building is on the same level as a Mercedes-Benz or a Coca Cola, with the result that over the passage of time all places have the same appearance because all self-respecting cities have to be able to show off a Stirling, a Botta, a Meyer, a Gehry, and an Ando. Thus they will be turned into museums of contemporary finding, which will be endlessly updated, since the splendor of the stars of the media does not last: a sudden sparkle that immediately dies out to make way for another (in fact, we must wait to see who replaces Gehry and Ando).

Wasn't it this way in the past as well? Weren't Bramante and Michelangelo invited to Rome as the stars of their era? In their case, of course, the idea

remote formalism that does not even give the impression of functionality.

If we ask what a conference center should be we certainly do not visualize a place in which every inspiration is suffocated by a formal straightjacket. It might seem that Mies's "less" was not a "nothing" but an "almost nothing" as it exists in German (*bainae nichte*). That "almost" is important because it collaborates in the realization of an art of building.

In Ando's work, the "almost nothing" has become "nothing," and it has pushed to an extreme like that which Venturi described as "less is a bore." One might ... say that the work of Ando is an expression of modern-day nihilism (pp. 349-50).

was not merely to be seen, but to solve tasks that were intrinsically bound up with the place; they therefore became Roman architects, even though Rome was not their birthplace. The same happened with Mies in Chicago and with Utzon and Pietilä in Kuwait.

Before becoming superstars, Gehry and Ando too had their own roots. [For example, Gehry took] his inspiration from the simple smooth cubes of Los Angeles, of Mexican origin, and, in treating them in an original way, he attempted to point out and bring out the possibilities that are hidden in the local "dumb box." In other words, his intention had been to make the best use of the "most common."

But then what happens to lots of architects happened: when the work starts to come in, all they do is repeat themselves without the slightest attention to where and how they are supposed to build. This was also Meyer's destiny and in a certain sense Gehry's. And so roots were devalued into "manners" and architecture took the path of a new mannerism, which unlike the original Mannerism of the 16th century had no common base.

At this point it seems useless to add that Ando too was victim of the same process; in fact his Japanese formal precision lost all creative irregularity and became a scheme devoid of localization (pp. 350-51).

FINDING A WAY TO RETHINK SUSTAINABILITY

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, 2000. *Safeguarding Our Common Future*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic asks her questions of “sustainable development” within the context of the *Brundtland Report*, written by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 and published as *Our Common Future*. In developing the notion of “sustainable development,” the Brundtland Report defines it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Safeguarding Our Common Future asks of sustainability these crucial questions: Is the distinction between deep ecology and shallow ecology useful? How can we think sustainability that is not anthropocentric? What kind of ethics of sustainability can there be if one calls into question the dominant notions of ethics: objectivist ethical norms rationally conceived and subjectivistic valuing-willing (exemplified in two dominant paradigms of contemporary moral theory: utilitarianism and rights-based individual justice)? And how can phenomenology—specifically, Heideggerian phenomenology—offer a way to think the “ethics of sustainable development” that is more inclusive and “implaced” than the usual ethical theories?

This book is out to find answers, to clarify the philosophical issues, to see how phenomenology can inform an environmental ethic, and to demonstrate how a phenomenology-based ethic can be applied to specific projects for environment and sustainability.

Stefanovic is impatient with any theory that puts humans and the natural world into a hierarchical order—whether it is “earth first, humans second” or the subjectivistic, individualistic rights-obligation paradigm that takes little account of the natural world as such. She wants to explore the question of how to think sustainability in such a way that *both* our natural and built worlds are sustained.

Stefanovic’s book shows careful work in thinking. It is useful, provocative, and stimulating to any environmental thinking that recognizes the limits of merely quantitative research and analysis and conclusions and takes the qualitative into account. It undoes

and redoes notions of “sustainability” and “sustainable development.” Its major contribution is showing how the undoing and redoing of “originative thinking” informs specific projects in “sustainability.” In this context it is an admirable work, one of a kind.

Using Heidegger’s way of phenomenological thinking, Stefanovic unravels a way of dealing with the natural world in its relation to human beings that is non-calculative, relational (not mechanistic), even non-subjectivistic. Her thinking moves *away from* calculative representation of entities as objects, away from the world (including the natural world) as parts of a machine, away from thinking what is in the world as “disposables” and “replaceable components” in a standing reserve, waiting for further disposal.

Her thinking moves *toward* thinking things in place, toward the context in which things are “gathered” for their full import, toward things’ belonging to earth, “grounded” in their “origin,” an origin that does not itself manifest and a ground that includes and shares the space said by the “not.”

With all of these thoughts in place, is there a way to rethink sustainability? A sustainability that is not humanistic, not rights-based and individualistic, and not primarily economic? She says: Yes, there is!

Stefanovic calls this possibility *originative thinking*, a phrase by which she tries to avoid the misconstruals that accompany the translation of Heidegger’s “meditative” thinking, namely, that if thinking is not calculative and scientific, it is passive and merely receptive. Originative thinking, on the other hand—in line, actually, with what Heidegger means by “meditative thinking” and with what Heidegger says about this thinking when he calls it: *Besinnung*, mindfulness, engaged mind—is active, uncovers the otherwise taken-for-granted *origins*, and suggests openness and creativity of thought (p. 51).

A useful place to start is in thinking originatively the non-reductionist *experience* of connectedness of the natural world and humans with it. If we pay attention phenomenologically, we will take in the natural

world, not as merely quantifiable empirical data or as a merely social construction, but rather simply there in the experience of connectedness.

Stefanovic calls this thinking "holistic," a thinking that sees the natural world in a way that is not separatist—with the "things" in nature seen as isolatable and disconnected parts—but rather organismic, expanding, and connecting. In this originaive thinking of the whole, of eco-holism, she recognizes the danger of thinking the whole as a metaphysical unity with universality. Heeding this danger, she offers a useful summary of the arguments *against* holistic thinking, along with a phenomenologically grounded holism that does not fall prey to the "dangers" of holistic thinking that some see.

The various critiques of holism, or ecoloholism, assume that this "whole" of nature in its connectedness (a) is a metaphysical substance, (b) comes from a thinking that is willful, (c) is stable and unchanging, and (d) crushes and undermines *any* individuality. But these critiques of eco-holism all take place within a thinking that dichotomizes: Holistic thinking *or* The skeptics of ecoloholism see it as a thinking that is *either* holistic *or* no connection whatsoever, holistic *or* mere parts *or* different wholes, holistic *or* ongoing change, holistic *or* individual. But never both! I find this chapter rich in implications, such that it leads one to think this holism beyond or underneath the usual dichotomizing: Seeing the natural world and the humans within it as holistic without being a universal, objective substance-whole, holistic without static stability, holistic without giving up the individual.

She thinks holism away from these pitfalls by thinking, phenomenologically, "a referential whole *within which we are situated*" (p. 63). Such a situatedness is a ecoloholism away from a totalizing paradigm but within a context, away from an objective, observing standpoint but engaged with attention.

Having set the stage for this holistic, originaive thinking within situatedness, Stefanovic turns to environmental thinking, stating that ecoloholism and holistic thinking is less about "imposing a static, unified structure upon a diverse and variegated world" than about "illuminating an implicit order and integrity of what Heidegger calls the *functional contexture*" of the world in which we are. (p. 66) This world is complex, contextual, dynamic, *given*, and one that withdraws—recognizing that "nature unfolds beyond my control" and involves the "mystery of self-concealment" (p. 76).

In a statement that gathers up these various moments in holism directly applied to the environment (eco-holism) she says:

To deny one's beholdenness to nature through large-scale environmental destruction threatens to deny a relation between human beings and their world that should include care and respect for the mystery—understood not as something yet to be conquered through knowledge, but as the ever-more of the source of existence itself. To bear witness to the self-emergence of the natural world is to acknowledge that I belong to this world, not as conqueror but as protector and even servant (p. 77).

The respect, reverence, and reticence implied here turn thinking away from the ethics of "how one *ought* to act" toward an "illumination of the fundamental ontological relation" (*ibid.*) between humans and the natural world, or humans within the natural world, or the natural world of humans and nonhumans. But can "ethics" make this jump, or must "ethics" itself be left behind with this illumination?

Having opened up the region for a more holistic, originaive way of thinking—beyond reductionist and "objective" paradigms—Stefanovic (in Part III, "Phenomenological Guidelines for Sustainability") outlines and describes a "place-based environmental ethics." She does this by working through the several key components of such an ethic.

First, she rethinks "development" unto a sense that is alternative to the dominant meaning of "economic development," i.e., "understood simply in narrow terms of utility, resource distribution, and traditional paradigms of economic growth" (p. 138). In the alternative sense, "development" involves promotion of growth, actively engaged in "uncovering that which is essential to its unfolding" (p. 140), "authentic self-development" (p. 141). Given that this alternative sense of "development" says more than material growth, it can be heard as a radical re-saying of development in terms of unfolding in possibility.

Second, she rethinks the notion of "needs" unto a sense that is alternative to the usual "economic needs" of an individual, solipsistic human subject. As she rethinks this notion of needs to include environmental needs and constraints, she turns her attention to human finitude (our being limited within *any* given, human or otherwise), to human immersion-in-the-world (earth or natural world), and to the human being's "concernful dealing" (her translation of Hei-

degger's word *Sorge*) with things that are not human. With this understanding of how humans are in the world, what we call "need" is enlarged, to encompass the "needs that announce themselves from the context of the situation as a whole" (p. 144)—thus always including and involving needs of the earth community in its holistic inter-being.

Here Stefanovic enlarges and rethinks sustainability by drawing upon Heidegger's notion of what "saving the earth" means. In "Building Dwelling Thinking" Heidegger says that "saving/rescuing the earth means: to free something into its own, its ownmost [*in sein eigenes Wesen*]." And in "The Question concerning Technology" Heidegger writes:

What does "saving/rescuing" mean? Usually we take it to mean merely to grab hold... of something that is threatened, in order to secure it in his present continuance. But "saving/rescuing" means more. "Saving/Rescuing" is: bringing something into what is its ownmost, in order thus to bring what is its ownmost first of all to the shining/appearing that is proper to it.

This remarkable passage by Heidegger opens up a vast possibility for thinking sustainability of the earth community and human beings within it. The needs that announce themselves in the earth community as a whole (including humans as part therein) call for humans to engage with it in such a way that the earth community as a whole is "saved," i.e., brought into what is its ownmost as earth community. *This is a whole new way to think environmental ethics!*

Third, she introduces the notion of "place" into environmental ethics. Saying that a place-based ethic "aims to guide us in our actions, not through the imposition of static principles and rules but, instead by teaching the meaning of *attunement* to a balanced, *fitting relation* between human beings and their world" (p. 117), she sees place as dwelling, as rootedness, as relatedness, as where we are "implaced." This ethics, then, is about being attuned to being-in-place, about an awareness of prereflective being-in-the-world—or being-in-the-earth-community.

A place-based ethic calls for "thoughtful deliberation about converging ethical images, contextual references, and common, human needs" (p. 135). Such a place-based ethic "respects the bonds that tie us to our dwelling places but one that allows for continuing dialogue as we collectively reflect on environmental questions of right and wrong" (pp. 135-136). Hidden in these words are two tensions: one, the issue of "right and wrong" and its relation to a

code of ethics; two, the issue of human needs—the primacy of socio-cultural values regarding these needs within the context of the natural world *versus* the essential needs of the earth community as such (which always includes humans).

At the end of her book Stefanovic gives examples of how phenomenology informs specific projects relating to sustainability. I call this "applied phenomenological environmental ethics." She shows how phenomenology can play a role (a) in exposing pre-thematic, implicit judgments that underlie indicators/values of what sustainability is and what specific projects call for in terms of sustainability and (b) in actually generating qualitative indicators/values for specific projects (cf. p. 147). As she writes, "The special task for phenomenology becomes one of promoting awareness of ontological relations and grounds of shared meaning so that sustainable development is not pursued haphazardly, with a focus on arbitrary, ontic realities" (p. 175).

Having enjoyed a careful reading of the whole text and having learned much, my questions back to Professor Stefanovic include the following.

QUESTION 1. Is Arne Naess—or deep ecology in its impetus—really some form of "Earth first, humankind second" (p. 42)? Whereas much popularizing of the "ecocentric" philosophy implies such a hierarchy, I would question whether this hierarchy is at the core of deep ecology in its essential possibilities.

Is deep ecology not about the interconnectedness of all life-forms and the co-emergent co-equality? Dare one really talk of human settlements as having "priority"? For what is a human settlement if it is not *also* the natural world? If we do not abstract from human places, do we necessarily give priority to human places? If not, then how not?

QUESTION 2. Can any sustainability be round enough unless it calls for humans to be measured by non-human "earth" or "land" awareness? As humans actively participate according to what is ownmost to them as humans, do they not necessarily take into account how the earth (in ecogenic thinking) manifests what is ownmost to humans?

How do we think "essential human needs" in relation to "essential needs of the earth community," which *include* essential human needs? Stefanovic

notes that, whereas what the Brundtland Report lists as “essential human needs” for food, employment, energy, housing, water supply, sanitation, and health care are “central,” they must be pursued within the broader context of the earth community and the needs that manifest from the “whole” situation of earth.

Does “central” here mean “having priority”? If so, how can human needs continue to have priority over the needs of other earth-community members? If human needs are “central,” is that not anthropocentric? If thinking attends to the “needs that announce themselves from the context” of the earth community “as a whole,” is it possible that “essential human needs” are no longer central or prior? How *does* one think the two together: “essential human needs” within “essential needs of the earth community”?

QUESTION 3. How can one avoid the dangers of thinking holism with images like “universal,” “immutable forms,” “universal principles”? (pp. 53-61) If one returns from “situated thinking” to the origina-tive, holistic world, must one perhaps no longer use these words, ensconced as they are within the meta-physical, mechanical paradigm of separate parts be-longing to a universal, “objective” unity? So how does one think the “what” of holistic thinking away from the universal, the objective, the immutable—and more as ongoingness, as creative unfolding, as ongoing *energeia*? If these “parts” are not stable, me-chanical parts, then how shall we say this? Is holism perhaps a synergistic works—“parts” in the sense of nodes within a whole that is at-work and not really “there” at all? So that we would no longer talk of the ecosystem as a “substantive whole” (p. 60)?

QUESTION 4. Can Heidegger’s ontology, by which he critiques all “ethics of values” as a “blasphemy against being” ever open out upon *any* ethics? Are all ethics necessarily anthropocentric and subjectivistic? Rethinking “ethics” in terms of *ethos*, dwelling, hu-mans in earth as “abode,” is more about comportment and being than it is about rights and obligations. Only in that sense can it be called “original ethics.” But then, if we really rethink ethics, away from objectivistic values or subjectivistic (individualist) valuing/willing, can it still be called “ethics”?

Can the word *ethics* ever say what *ethos* means and says? Indeed when we *say* something, we partici-pate in the coming forth and granting of that “thing.”

The same may be true here for the word *ethics*, so that the naming of the word may require that a differ-ent word be brought to bear. If the issue is paying at-tention to what is and responding appropriately—can the word *ethics* still say that? If *ethos* names how humans are in the world, “their way of dwelling” (p. 151), does the English word *ethics* say that?

Regardless of how this question is resolved, it is clear that such words as “value judgments” (p. 149), “converging moral values” (p. 134); “moral order,” even if it is “implaced” within a society through its culture (p. 129); “articulation of moral guidelines” (p. 165); “code of ethics,” even if it is “evolving” (p. 168)—all of these words become suspect when rec-ognizing that “ethical discernment is less a matter of intellectual construction than it is one of attunement to a particular way of being-in-place” and involves “ethical awareness” of “implacement” (p. 128). This “ethical discernment” and “ethical awareness” does not come from a code of ethics or a moral order or moral values. The “ethical” in these words is about *ethos*, not *ethics* as we normally take that word.

QUESTION 5. There is an implicit “given” that runs throughout this book and, as far as I can see, is never itself put into question: that humans will not or cannot surrender the “higher quality of life” through technol-ogy and economic development (including consumer-ism). It seems to me that, in any discussion of sus-tainability, this question needs at least to be ad-dressed. Simplistically said: Is it possible that the “original ethics” of sustainability call for simplicity—and *not* economic development at all?

QUESTION 6. In understanding the role of phe-nomenology—and specifically Heideggerian phe-nomenology—is there a role for phenomenology that goes *beyond* awareness of what is, of val-ues/indicators, beyond understanding the “reali-ties”—beyond ... to the ownmost possibilities inher-ent in a phenomenological thinking of the earth community, thinking the earth community (and hu-mans within that community) unto *its* ownmost pos-sibilities? What, then, would be the role for phe-nomenology in “saving the earth”?

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