



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Vol. 21 • No. 1

ISSN 1083-9194

www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/EAP.html Winter • 2010

This *EAP* marks the start of our 21th year. We begin with philosopher **Dylan Trigg's** review of the Merleau-Ponty Circle's "Flesh and Space: Intertwining Merleau-Ponty and Architecture" conference held at Mississippi State University's School of Architecture in September. As Trigg's comments indicate, many of the papers probed architectural and environmental implications of Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the lived body and environmental intercorporeality.

Next, architect **Alvin Holm** asks how we might engage more fully with the places in which we find ourselves, and educator **John Cameron**, in the fourth letter from his rural home on Tasmania's Bruny Island, describes the difficulties and satisfactions of practicing a *lived* environmental sustainability. Cameron's essay is accompanied by four woodcuts of Bruny Island birds by his life partner, artist **Vicki King** (see image, right).

Next, philosopher **Bruce Janz** examines the concept of landscape, which he considers in terms of provenance and subjectivity. He provides six questions that he hopes might bridge the division between phenomenological and historical/cultural understandings of the landscape concept. Last, we reprint a section from anthropologist **Phil Stafford's** recent *Elderburbia: Aging with a Sense of Place in America* (Praeger Press/ABC-Clio, 2009).

EAP Preserved Digitally

Thanks to the generous assistance of Kansas State University Libraries and Research Exchange Coordinator **Marty Courtois**, all issues of *EAP* are permanently archived digitally. Called **K-Rex**, this archive is "open access" and freely available on the web. Each issue of *EAP* has a unique and permanent URL that should survive technological, institutional,

and staffing shifts. K-Rex's collection of *EAP* issues is available at: www.krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/1522.

Place & Placelessness Reprinted

First published in 1976 and still widely referenced, geographer **Edward Relph's** groundbreaking *Place and Placelessness* has become a classic of the phenomenological approach to the study of place and has influenced at least three generations of scholars. For this reprint by Pion Press (the original London publisher), Relph has written a new introduction placing the book in contemporary context. www.envplan.com/relph.pdf.

Below: Artist Vicki King's woodcut of a Tasmanian masked owl; see her images accompanying John Cameron's "Fourth Letter from Far South"— p. 14.



Items of Interest

The 2010 symposium of the **Forum for Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality (ACS)** will take place June 17-19 at the Abbey at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. Go to: <http://faculty.arch.utah.edu/acs/symposium2010/index.htm>.

Spacings of Technologies is the theme of the sixth annual conference of the **International Association for the Study of Environment, Space, and Place, (IASESP)** to be held April 30-May 2, 2010, at the Burkshire Center at Towson University in Towson, Maryland. www.towson.edu/iasesp

Bodily Phenomenology is a conference to be held May 19-21, 2010, at the Centre for Studies in Practical Knowledge at Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden. A major focus is to encourage "connections between philosophical and empirical traditions" in regard to phenomenological research on the lived body: "How can we do a phenomenology that is not only a phenomenology of the body... but is a phenomenology bodily informed?" Contact: martin.gunnarson@sh.se.

Home Cultures is an interdisciplinary journal published three times a year since 1994. It is dedicated to "the critical understanding of the domestic sphere across time frames and cultures." The editors invite submissions from design practice, design history, architecture, anthropology, sociology, archaeology, urban planning, contemporary art, geography, psychology, folklore, cultural studies, literary studies and art history. www.bergpublishers.com/BergJournals/.

The new academic journal, **Interiors: Design, Architecture, Culture**, begins publication in 2010 and welcomes contributions that consider the spaces and places within built structures. The aim is to "bring together the best critical work on the analysis of all types of spaces. Whether homes, offices, shopping malls, schools, hospitals, churches and restaurants, interiors are all embedded with meaning, both consciously and subconsciously, and evince particular multi-sensory and psychological responses." Go to: www.bergjournals.com/interiors.

Largely through the efforts of philosopher Lester Embree, the **Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists** was recently organized as a means to support multi-disciplinary work in phenomenology. The group's first conference was held last May, at Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey. The editorial committee for that conference represented Architecture, Communicology, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Geography, and Women's Studies. Committee members included: Robert Bernasconi, Scott Churchill, Christine Daigle, Lester Embree, Hwa Yol Jung, Richard Lanigan, Frank Macke, Daniel Marcelle, James Mensch, George Psathas, Mary Rogers, David Seamon, Dennis Skocz, and Fred Wertz. Contact: embree@fau.edu.

The workshop, **Phenomenology and the Vulnerable Body: the Experience of Illness**, will be held May 6-7, 2010, at the University of Hull, UK. An interdisciplinary panel of speakers considers the experience of bodily vulnerability and implications for the understanding of embodiment and selfhood. "The resources of phenomenology will be put into conversation with accounts of the lived experiences of those living with illness, pain or other kinds of bodily vulnerability." For more information, go to: www2.hull.ac.uk/FASS/humanities/philosophy/research/centre_for_research_into_embod/workshops_and_conferences/phenomenology_of_illness_februa.aspx.

The **7th International Conference on Design & Emotion** will be held October 4-7, 2010, at the Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago. Held every other year, the conference involves practitioners, researchers, and industry leaders who meet and exchange knowledge and insights concerning the cross-disciplinary field of design and emotion. "Since this conference was first established in 1999, what many predicted then came to be. Technologies are now able to achieve emotional qualities and design examples using these technologies abound. While we have made significant progress in research and practice relevant to emotional factors in design, many fundamental questions remain unanswered and new issues have been raised as we experience major changes in technological,

social, cultural, and economic environments. We are at the stage for another leap forward in the development of new understanding and vision of emotional factors in design through our critical reflection, innovative exploration and collaborative endeavor.” www.id.iit.edu/de2010/

The annual meeting of **Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture (EPTC)** will be held May 31-June 3, 2010, at Montreal’s Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, in conjunction with the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities of Canada. Contact: eptc2010@gmail.com.

A conference on **Scale**, sponsored by the **Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA)**—see *EAP*, winter 2009), will be held November 19-20, 2010, at the University of Kent, Canterbury, UK. Questions to be considered include: “In a post-humanist age, do we associate good scale relationships with particular places and times in history? Do body metaphors still have resonance? Should humans be the ultimate scaling device governing the design of artifacts from chairs, to interiors, buildings, towns, and landscapes? How do urban grids and networks affect scale? What is the politics of scale?” Contact: scale@kent.ac.uk.

Alexander wins Scully Award

The 11th annual Vincent Scully Prize was awarded to architect Christopher Alexander at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., November 5, 2009. The prize recognizes “exemplary practice, scholarship, or criticism.” The NBM’s announcement reads as follows:

For nearly 40 years, Christopher Alexander has challenged the architectural establishment, sometimes uncomfortably, to pay more attention to the human beings at the center of design. To do so he has combined top-flight scientific training, award-winning architectural research, patient observation and testing throughout his building projects, and a radical but profoundly influential set of ideas that have extended far beyond the realm of architecture. Indeed, at times it seems architects may be the last to understand and to apply the benefits of his challenging work.

In the process Alexander has authored a series of groundbreaking works, including *A Pattern Language* and *The Timeless Way of Building*. His most recent publication, the four-volume *The Nature of Order* incorporates more than thirty years of research, study, teaching and building.

Alexander became Professor of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley in 1963 and taught there continuously for 38 years, becoming Professor Emeritus in 2001. He also founded the Center for Environmental Structure, published hundreds of papers and several dozen books, and built more than 300 buildings around the world. In 2002 he moved back to England, where he now lives and works. Alexander is widely recognized as the father of the pattern language movement in computer science, which has led to important innovations such as Wiki, and new kinds of object-oriented programming. He is the recipient of the first medal for research given by the American Institute of Architects, and has been honored repeatedly for his buildings in many parts of the world.

Alexander remains a practicing professional architect and a licensed contractor in the state of California. He and his colleagues maintain professional offices in Berkeley, which provide city planning services as well as the design and construction of buildings. Alexander is also a prolific author and artist. His unique combination of professional, scientific, and hands-on disciplines have been the basis for his evolving understanding of a new scientific and empirical basis for judging, building, and modifying the quality of the environment.

News from Readers

For his advocacy of Classicism in design, Philadelphia architect **Alvin Holm** has been given the 1st Clem Labine Award, which honors “a consistent body of work that fosters humane values in the built environment.” Holm received the award at the annual Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference, held in Baltimore, October 21-24. We thank Holm for contributing an essay to this issue of *EAP*—see p. 13. He also sent the following email in regard to the spring 2009 issue.

I have always enjoyed receiving *EAP*, although I should confess I am often mystified and then sometimes discouraged by the turgid wordiness of the typical essay. I chalk this up to my own shortcomings and my own unfamiliarity with the lingo of phenomenology. Somehow, however, my faith in your work persists, along with a sense of the importance of EDRA, etc. But I do not speak the language (yet), and that in itself may be seen as a critique. Forgive my audacity but isn’t there a way these notions can be expressed in less abstruse terminology?

Today, however, as I was reading the spring issue, all kinds of lights went on and bells rang again and again. First it was Shirazi’s excellent evaluation of Pallasmaa’s ideas that I read quite happily, agreeing enthusiastically with all his points. To dissect the architectural experience into so many separate aspects is to risk missing their complex interdependence and the whole. Getting the pieces back together again may become a major chore, if indeed it is possible at all. And even if reassembled, will the organism live? Shirazi’s percep-

tive comments made a whole lot of sense to me.

Chamberlin's essay on Heidegger was similarly engrossing. After my initial struggles with ideas like "unlearning" and words like "originary," I slipped into synchrony on the second page at "To Think and Think Again." A little later he writes of Heidegger's discussion of the roots of both words as deriving from the Old English *thanc*, a fascinating etymology in itself.

To that I would like to add some thoughts from the medieval mystic Julian of Norwich that I encountered many, many years ago in another context altogether. Julian wrote an essay on "Thanking," wherein she describes the reciprocity of words in several languages for both *giving* and *thanking*. For example, we ask for *mercy* and when it is granted we say "merci" (if we are French). We pray for *grace*, and when we receive it we say "*gracias*" (if we are Spanish). We receive goodwill (or *thanc* in Old English, or *tong* the Indo-European root), and we say (if we are gracious ourselves) "thanks."

And on it goes, perhaps in other languages as well, giving and receiving have been named the same. For me this is an exciting revelation of immemorial ideas of transaction, self and other, human and divine, earth and heaven. Which way does the current flow in a lightning strike? It goes from sky to earth as it appears, but also it flows from earth to sky. In DNA's double helix, the directions are both ways as well, and Hermes goes from Gods to human beings and back again.

How this all speaks to architecture I am not sure. Of Heidegger's four fundamentals—earth, heaven, mortals, and gods—the possibilities speak volumes. From my own deeply traditional point of view, all modernist thought has gone astray in architectural theory, if not in art, commerce, and medicine as well. I contend that we think too much in ways no other eras did. We sought to rethink several thousand years of Western culture. Instead of learning from the past, we have over-intellectualized and killed the thing we took apart to study.

Look around at what we've wrought and weep. Other cultures have made shifts from time to time in some organic way, based firmly on whatever came before—until today. As in the production of synthetics, we have grown quite clever in the isolation of ingredients. But how well do they nourish us?

Citations Received

Christopher Alexander, 2008. Nature Unfolding [interview]. *Tricycle*, vol. 17, no. 3 (spring).

Katy Butler, the editor of *Tricycle*, queries Alexander in regard to the spiritual impulse that informs his work. In responding to her question, "What does it mean to you to make an arch that is pleasing to God?" [in reference to the dining-room archways in his West Dean visitor center in England], Alexander replies: "Of course, I do not mean to say that God is something like an old man with a white beard. It is something deep in the universe, the principles that governs all things. To do anything right, you need to be in touch with that 'something'. To help focus one's attention on this something, it is necessary to find, in your mind, a blankness or emptiness and let the solution arise from that emptiness. So, looking at the

arches, I ask myself, 'Which of these is closest to my own soul? Which is the most fitting gift to God? Which of them could best make a person whole?' The questions clean out my mind, get rid of the rubbish, extraneous concepts... and my own ego—and so allow me the freedom to pay attention to the thing itself."

Joseph Cambrey, 2009. *Synchronicity: Nature and Psyche in an Interconnected Universe*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M Press.

This Jungian psychologist examines how psychologist C. G. Jung's concept of synchronicity and acausal connectedness has "influenced the current field of complexity theory, which works with a paradox similar to Jung's synchronicity: the importance of symmetry as well as the need to break that symmetry for 'emergence' to occur." Cambrey develops what he calls "cultural synchronicities"—a "reconsideration of historical events in terms of their synchronistic aspects."

Farzane Haghghi, 2008. In Search of the Meaning of Home through a Phenomenological Study of the City of Kerman. PhD dissertation, School of Architecture, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.

This dissertation draws on concepts from Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Architecture: Presence, Language, and Place* (2000) to examine being-in-the city through a comparison and contrast of the old and new urban districts of Kerman, a city in southern Iran. Key urban elements considered are the *baazar* (market), *meridian* (square), *hesar* (walls), and *darvaze* (gate).

Ned Kaufman, 2009. *Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation* NY: Routledge.

This book examines "how central themes in the American experience shape the preservation of heritage—themes of race and diversity, progress and tradition, love of place and lust for property. Ranging from the 18th-century roots of preservation practice to the dilemmas facing New York City today, these essays... outline a re-energized, progressive preservation practice for the 21st century."

Jeanne Halgren Kilde, 2008. *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*. NY: Oxford Univ. Press.

A survey of church architecture focusing on "the dynamic character of Christianity and how church buildings shape and influence religion." Kilde identifies three kinds of power: (1) divine power, attributed to God; (2) social power, relating to social, particularly clerical hierarchies; and (3) personal power—"the various feelings of spiritual empowerment individuals derived from an experience of the divine."

From *Heidegger and Homecoming*

Even before he published anything significant, Heidegger became famous because he powerfully addressed how we might live meaningfully in the face of the massive destruction and death wrought by technological warfare, how we might act authentically when the power of the subject is either exaggerated into the cult of egoism or annihilated before impersonal systems of power...., and how we might hope appropriately in the time of nihilism that rises as traditional beliefs, norms, and customs fail. Here too his philosophical work joins or is followed by worldwide contemporary attempts to work through the loss and recovery of home.

Specifically...., Heidegger either directly addresses or clearly implies how we can approach at least the following four major problems facing us today:

- The existential problems of each individual person—how to live, how to face life’s challenges of meaningfulness in our cynical postmodern era.
- Massive forced emigration-immigration and refugee displacement around the world, for example, as witnessed in the literature and film of exile and diaspora and in the work of international relief organizations.
- Technologies consuming and controlling life itself: genetically engineering crops, patenting the agricultural patrimony of marginalized peoples, developing an international economy marketing organs and transplants.
- Ecological disasters on a global scale: the destruction of the Earth, the oceans, and the atmosphere—*our home of homes*.

[Some] forms of homelessness appear in our separation from the natural world. Biotechnologies move beyond sharing the world to make it more productive or suited to our desires, to the point where they are already consuming and controlling life itself. Many hold that, even with reservations about some dimensions of past technologies...., we are moving into newly dangerous hubris and alienation from the natural biological process of which we are a part....

In addition, environmentally, we are unquestionably destroying our home of homes—the Earth itself—as we contribute to climate change on a global scale. We are burning fossil fuels in our factories, power plants, homes, and cars, releasing so much CO₂, that we have changed the atmosphere and the oceans....

Though resolving or even mitigating these problems will obviously not follow directly from what Heidegger says, his complex and profound insights into homelessness and the barriers to the possibility of homecoming... can help us to learn to think and act appropriately. In the end, he does articulate a substantial understanding of how we might come into our own. This could occur, however, only as we actually participate in a specific historical gathering-together of humans, Earth, and the sacred, if there is such—an event in which the other dimensions would simultaneously come to their own.

The first task on the way toward such a homecoming is to become open to what gives itself, and for that we need to learn to better think and speak about our current homelessness, a task for which Heidegger will prove to be a consummate guide (pp. xiv-xvii).

Braham Boyce Ketcham, 2009. The Alexandrian Planning Process: An Alternative to Traditional Zoning and Smart Growth. *The Urban Lawyer*, vol. 41, no. 2 (spring), pp. 339-57.

This planner proposes “an alternative to traditional American zoning practices” based on the work of architect Christopher Alexander, who attempts a generative planning process favoring small, incremental improvements. Discusses “the practicalities and obstacles involved in implementing Alexander’s planning process in a real-world setting.”

Lance Klein, 2009. A Phenomenological Interpretation of Biomimicry and its Potential Value for Sustainable Design, master’s thesis, Department of Architecture, Kansas State University.

“Building upon the claim made by biomimicry scientists that a full emulation of nature engages *form, ecosystem, and process*, this thesis uses a phenomenological approach to interpret human and environmental wholeness. Phenomenology broadens biomimicry’s scientific and technical focus on nature and considers how wholeness can be found among form, ecosystem, and process; and between people and environment. The thesis argues that, without a deeper, more responsive connectedness among people, nature, and built environment, any proposal for sustainable design will ultimately be incomplete and thus unsuccessful.”

Sharon Kleinman, 2008. *Displacing Place: Mobile Communication in the 21st Century*. NY: Peter Lang.

“Mobile information and communications technologies (ICTs) are enabling people to participate in new ways and in additional contexts in a broad range of activities.... ‘[H]ere’ and ‘there’ can be virtually anywhere, and, moreover, both can be moving. Key features of mobile ICTs are their portability and their capacity for enabling people to communicate, seek and share information, and be entertained in ways that transcend spatial and temporal constraints.”

Robert Mugerauer, 2008. *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

“Martin Heidegger devoted himself to challenging previously held ontological notions of what constitutes ‘being’, and much of his work focused on how beings interact within particular spatial locations. Heidegger frequently used the motifs of homelessness and homecoming to express such spatial interactions, but despite early and continued recognition of the importance of homelessness and homecoming, this is the first sustained study of these motifs in his later works.” Mugerauer’s book is of major significance for the

topics covered by *EAP*, and we hope to review the book in an upcoming issue. A section from the book's introduction is reproduced in the sidebar, preceding page.

David E. Nye, 2009. *When the Lights Went Out: A History of Blackouts in America*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

This historian considers US power outages from 1935 to the present “not simply as technical failures but variously as military tactic, social disruption, crisis in the networked city, outcome of political and economic decisions, sudden encounter with sublimity, and memories enshrined in photographs. Our electrically lit-up life is so natural to us that when the lights go off, the darkness seems abnormal.”

Anthony M. Orum & Zachary P. Neal, 2010. *Common Ground? Readings and Reflections on Public Space*. NY: Routledge.

A useful collection of extracts from significant discussions of urban open space organized around the three themes of “public space as public order,” “public space as power and resistance,” and “public space as art, theatre, and performance.” Included are writings by Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, Ray Oldenburg, Mike Davis, Sharon Zukin, and Don Mitchell.

Joseph Parry, ed., 2010. *Art and Phenomenology*. NY: Routledge.

The chapters of this book “explore visual art as a mode of experiencing the world itself, showing how in the words of Merleau-Ponty ‘Painting does not imitate the world, but is a world of its own’.” Topics include: Paul Klee and the body in art; color and background in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of art; self-consciousness and seventeenth-century painting; Vermeer and Heidegger; embodiment in Renaissance art; and sculpture, dance and phenomenology.

Christopher Payne, 2009. *Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

This architect and photographer spent six years documenting the decay of 70 state mental institutions in 30 states: “Through his lens, we see splendid, palatial exteriors (some designed by such prominent architects as H. H. Richardson and Samuel Sloan) and crumbling interiors—chairs stacked against walls with peeling paint in a grand hallway; brightly colored toothbrushes still hanging on a rack; stacks of suitcases, never packed for the trip home.”

Andrew M. Shanken, 2009. *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

This architectural historian examines “the visionary designs of American architecture during World War II” and argues that this wartime era was “a crucible for the intermingling of modernist architecture and consumer culture.”

Sherry Turkle, 2009. *Simulation and Its Discontents*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

“Immersed in simulation, we are vulnerable. There are losses as well as gains.... There is an anxiety that something is slipping away.” Examines simulation over the last 20 years and then provides four in-depth investigations of contemporary simulation culture: space exploration, oceanography, biology, and architecture.

Mary N. Woods, 2009. *Beyond the Architect's Eye: Photographs and the American Built Environment*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.

This architectural historian argues that “photography has mediated the built environment since the earliest years of the medium. A photograph was and sometimes still is our first and only experience of a building and its surroundings. The eye behind the camera becomes ours, gazing on places and structures.”

Michael E. Zimmerman, 2009. “Globalization, Multiculturalism, and Architectural Ethics,” in *Architecture, Ethics and Globalization*, Graham Owen, ed. London: Routledge.

This philosopher discusses ethical implications of postmodernist theory. Zimmerman’s real-world example is the dilemma for a Western architect “who attempts to adhere to a postmodern multicultural moral framework, while being responsible for designing and helping to oversee construction of a major commercial complex in a southeast Asian city.” Her clients do not share the Western architect’s concerns “about multiple perspectives and marginalized others.”

Zimmerman writes: “Postmodern theory criticizes Western ethnocentrism, metaphysical foundationalism, centered subjectivity, and the idea of progress, on the one hand, and celebrates others who have allegedly been dominated and/or excluded by the practices and attitudes of Eurocentrism.... Unfortunately, such anti-hierarchalism deprives postmodern multiculturalists of criteria needed to evaluate critically cultural norms and practices that give every evidence of being domineering, repressive, and exclusionary.

“On the other hand, anti-hierarchalism may provide certain architects with the justification they need to design for anyone [e.g., oppressive political regimes].... A serious clash of cultures can occur when a postmodern multiculturalist attempts to deal with businesspeople in a society whose commitment to modernity is largely limited to globalization defined as planetary economic expansion and integration.”

IAEP/EAP Paper Session

At the annual meeting of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy (IAEP) in Arlington, Virginia, November 1-2, 2009, *EAP* sponsored a special session on “Phenomenological Reconsiderations of Conventional Environmental and Ecological Conceptions and Problems,” organized by *EAP* editor David Seamon and philosopher Ingrid Stefanovic. Papers were as follows.

The Saving Power of Fear: Rethinking Grizzly Bear Conservation

Leon Chartrand, Visiting Professor, Ethics Theology Department, Xavier Univ., Cincinnati; Executive Director, Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation.

Grizzly bears fascinate us, and it is this fascination that has garnered broad support for their recovery in Yellowstone National Park. It is also well known, however, that grizzlies incite fear. I argue in this presentation that it is the current human desire to repress and conquer fear that may eventually realize the grizzly bear’s demise, even as the animal has recently been removed from the U.S. endangered species list.

This possibility has become evident with the dramatic rise of conflicts between people and bears in Yellowstone. No longer are bears somewhere out *there*, foraging in a remote corner of the park on some slope far too hostile for human settlement. They are instead right *here*, roaming in backyards, spotted from bedroom windows, and foraging in the undergrowth of our minds.

This situation has raised enough concerns such that biologists have enacted a management program to address the growing number of human-bear conflicts. Upon closer scrutiny, however, one realizes that this program is apt to do more to bring about the bear’s end than to maintain its recovery status because current management programs interpret the grizzly as a threat. Fear is understood as negative, and indifferent tranquility is perceived as the positive end. This presentation argues for a reconsideration of fear, interpreting it as a mode of preserving and, hence, as a primordial element for living viably and for being mindful of our place in nature.

“Social Marketing” and Environmental Change: Phenomenological Reflections

Ingrid L. Stefanovic, Director & Professor, Centre for Environment, Univ. of Toronto; paper presented by Univ. of Toronto doctoral student Luke Gelinas.

There is growing recognition that values drive environmental decision making and that there is a need to better understand

how to modify attitudes to encourage more sustainable behavior patterns. “Community-based social marketing” is increasingly recognized as a legitimate approach to providing pragmatic tools that encourage behavior change.

This presentation provides a brief overview of the context and methodologies utilized in such social-marketing techniques. It then moves to analyze these approaches critically, looking to phenomenology for more thoughtful directions to better understand and shape values and world views.

Pragmatic Phenomenology & Climate Change

Edward Relph, Professor and Chair, Department of Social Sciences, Univ. of Toronto, Scarborough.

A strength of phenomenology is its ability to elucidate the richness of individual environmental experiences. Climate change is probably the greatest environmental challenge of the present century but is occurring relatively slowly and at a global scale. Where is individual experience in this? Can phenomenology elucidate anything about climate change?

I suggest one can only understand climate change through a phenomenological act of imagination that grasps experiences of specific weather, such as hurricanes and droughts, as opening out into an interrelated unity called climate; in other words, to grasp a particular weather event as an aspect of being. Actions are needed to mitigate the impacts of climate changes on economies and on the lives of individuals.

One of the weaknesses of phenomenology is that it translates poorly into practical actions. To remedy this weakness, I propose a “pragmatic phenomenology,” linking what is grasped through experiences of local weather with a sense of the boundless unity of climate. I argue that such a pragmatic phenomenology may need to be the foundation of any politics that promotes the sense of shared responsibility necessary to cope with the uncertain effects of climate changes.

Visualizing Scenarios: Theory and Practice for Ecological Design

Robert Mugerauer, Professor, & Dean Emeritus, College of the Built Environment, Univ. of Washington, Seattle

This presentation argues that dealing with environmental problems is especially difficult because: (a) the phenomena occur as highly contextual, far-from-equilibrium, open natural systems best described by complexity theory rather than context-free, stable, closed dimensions treated by traditional linear science. Congruently, (b) management policies and practices need to be based on complexity theory and not dominant positive science, since the latter cannot deal with the often surpris-

ing ecosystem responses to perturbations, including well-meant human “correctives”—a requirement made even more complex by the fact that diverse constituencies disagree on the values, goals, and means appropriate to the task.

Because current approaches to natural resources simulate the future based on modeling of and extrapolation from past events, data that emphasize average conditions and incremental growth provide an inadequate, even misleading, basis for planning, design, and action. Hence there is a need for new modes of research and practice, which would integrate qualitative and quantitative dimensions if they are to enable us to understand environmental phenomena and experience and to develop strategies for successful ecological design.

Evidence is presented that a promising contribution to what is needed is found in the shift to the use of “scenarios,” which can be distinguished from the traditional scientific claims to forecasting: “Scenarios are not predictions of what will happen. They are an exploration of what *might* happen. They are structural narratives about the possible future paths of a social-ecological system” (Peterson et al. 2003b).

The People-Environment Relationship Reinterpreted as Triad through Philosopher J. G. Bennett’s Systematics of Three-ness

David Seamon, Professor, Department of Architecture, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan, Kansas

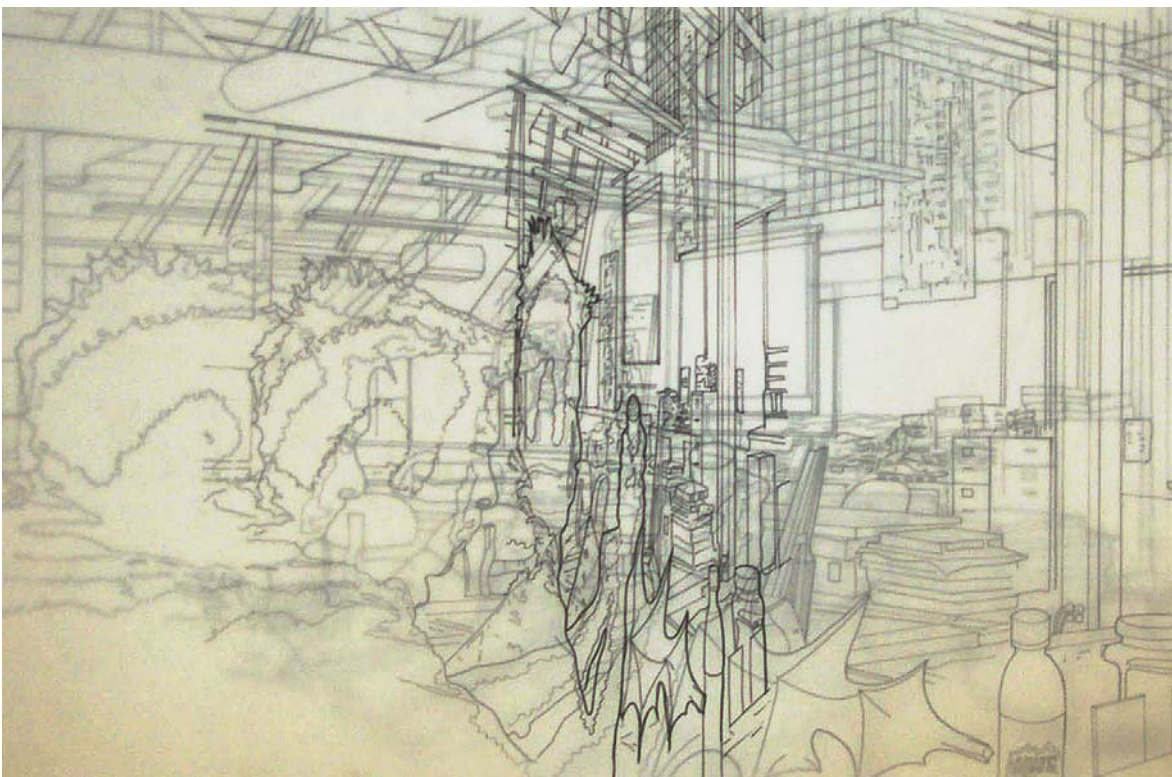
Traditionally in the environmental disciplines, the people-environment relationship has been interpreted in terms of some dyadic formulation—e.g., environment shaping people (environmental determinism); people shaping environment (possibilism); or the two in some sort of mutual interaction (as in an ecological conception). In this presentation, I argue that the people-environment relationship might also be understood through the threefold structure of *geographical ensemble*, *people-in-place*, and *genius loci* (“spirit of place”).

To flesh out this threefold structure, I draw on British philosopher J. G. Bennett’s theory of “systematics,” an approach using the qualitative significance of number to explore phenomena. Specifically, I focus on Bennett’s interpretation of three-ness and what he called the *triad* to explicate what he identified as six “universal processes”—identity, interaction, expansion,

concentration, order, and freedom. I argue that each of these six processes offers a useful vantage point for reinterpreting various aspects of the people-environment relationship, or *people-environment triad*, as I identify it here. I describe six processes:

1. place interaction;
2. place identity;
3. place creation;
4. place intensification;
5. place actualization;
6. place release.

This drawing by University of Kansas architecture student Devin Norton was one of several images in



Montana State Assistant Professor of Architecture Zuzanna Karczewska’s paper, “Re-presenting the Space for the Body,” presented at the “Flesh and Space” conference held at Mississippi State University—see report, next page. In the drawing, Norton portrays graphically the lived links of his body-in-action as he works in his design studio. His focus is the shifting dynamic between the spaces of body and studio. This dynamic is marked by different modes and intensities of engagement between Norton’s “lived body” and the “lived space” in which he works. We thank Norton and Karczewska for allowing us to reprint his drawing. © 2010 D. Norton.

Flesh and Space: Intertwining Merleau-Ponty and Architecture

Annual Meeting, Merleau-Ponty Circle

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, September 2009

Dylan Trigg

Trigg is a philosopher interested in the relationship between place, memory, and embodiment from a phenomenological perspective. One of his specific concerns is how liminal and ambiguous places can contribute to the formation of identity, both personal and collective. He is author of The Aesthetics of Decay (NY: Peter Lang, 2006) The paper Trigg presented at the conference was entitled, "The Architecture of Eroticism: Place and the Memory of (Hyper)Flesh." www.dylantrigg.com. dylantrigg@hotmail.com. © 2010 Dylan Trigg.

The relationship between phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and architecture is striking in its plenitude. With the exception of Martin Heidegger and Gaston Bachelard, no other phenomenologist has contributed as much to understanding how the natural and built environment affects our being-in-the-world. With his concepts of the embodied subject, flesh, chiasm, wild being, and the intertwining of the visible and invisible, Merleau-Ponty furnishes philosophers and architects with a rich and challenging set of ideas unparalleled in their depth.

That the 34th Merleau-Ponty Circle Conference should be devoted to themes of spatiality and flesh is thus fitting and timely. Efficiently organized by architect Rachel McCann and philosopher Patricia Locke, the event was spread over three days, with a co-conference devoted to Merleau-Ponty and architecture held a day earlier. Focusing on themes such as movement, memory, materiality, metaphysics, and "matrixial flesh," the scope of papers was broad in range, varied in quality, but united in theme.

The conference's first paper, presented by EAP's own David Seamon, concerned the interface between space syntax and what Seamon termed "place ballet." Divided into three parts, Seamon's paper began with a concise overview of Bill Hillier's notion of space syntax with a focus on how

habitual routines in place alter and transform our experience of an environment. Following this, Seamon's paper sought to bring space syntax into the scope of "place ballet," demonstrating how each idea enrich and informs the other. This idea was further fleshed out in the final part of the paper, in which the author situated place ballet and space syntax in a phenomenological context, identifying its grounding in Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger.

Singling out the idea of an "environmental flesh," Seamon ended by positing the primacy of an ethical focus in the experience and design of the built environment, in the process giving form to the intercorporeal structure common to both phenomenology and space syntax. In many ways, this idea goes against the assumption that space syntax is overly concerned with an abstracted concept of the built environment. By emphasizing the potential alliance between phenomenology and space syntax—even against Hillier's own doubts—Seamon's contribution is vital and refreshing.

The subsequent panel focused on memory and meaning with papers by architect Guillermo Garma Montiel and cultural geographer Karen Wilson Baptist. Both papers hinted at the complexities involved in linking practice with theory, a tension that ran throughout the conference. Baptist's paper in particular, titled simply "Diaspora," offered a rich analysis of the intersection between death, memory,

and place. Considering how roadside memorials afford a place to grieve, her paper touched on the relation between spontaneous mourning and spectral engagement, arguing that “the landscape inadvertently *gathers* the talismanic remnants of the dead, allowing the bereaved to eventually abandon the roadside memorial and to relinquish their dead to the landscape.”

As rich as these themes are, Baptist’s paper was oddly lacking in a rigorous analysis of how these places are experienced. One can discern a tension between the landscape as a site of human remembrance and the landscape as an anonymous space indifferent to human desire. What takes place such that the landscape is elevated to the significance of being a memorial? Where does the memory dwell—in the landscape or the human body, or in both? If both, then how is this communion between corporeality and place possible? None of these questions, though implicit, were approached, perhaps partly because of the paper’s somewhat loose relationship to Merleau-Ponty, when in fact his account of time, space, and phenomena (e.g., the phantom limb) affords a deep understanding of the spectral dimension of lived space.

Given over to the theme of “Ontology of Lived Space,” the final panel of the day included two papers by architects Jassen Callender and David Koukal. Callender’s paper, “Among Time’s Images: An Onto-Phenomenological Search for Extraordinary Experience,” provided a theoretically complex yet intriguing account of the “excess” in being, detailing the interaction between thinkers as diverse as Bataille and Whitehead. Callender concluded that “An extraordinary experience is an experience of the excess of being which privileges the accumulation of knowing over the iterative quality of truth.” A complex claim which perhaps merited more clarification than time allotted.

In contrast to the tendency to take Merleau-Ponty as an exemplar of the body-as-unified, David Koukal gave a novel and cogent paper on a topic typically overlooked in phenomenology: torture. Yet far from contradicting Merleau-Ponty, Koukal’s well argued analysis of the spatiality and corporeality of torture, exemplified the scope of phenomenology (and Merleau-Ponty in particular) for deal-

ing with a topic often neglected. At stake in Koukal’s paper was the claim that spatiality is so central to our being that once damaged by the incursion of torture, that unity is lost forever. With this negative formulation, the contingency of our embodied space is no longer taken-for-granted but thematized in its vulnerability.

After a successful first day focusing on flesh, Architecture, and Merleau-Ponty, the next three days—Thursday through Saturday—were devoted to the annual meeting of the Merleau-Ponty Circle; in diverse ways, presentations expanded on the issue of spatiality. Philosopher William Hamrick began on Thursday morning with a fine paper entitled “Topoanalysis,” a term taken from Bachelard and referring to the systematic analysis of intimate places in our lives. Hamrick linked this concept with Merleau-Ponty’s account of topological space.

Hamrick set about rediscovering the meaning of an “original place in the world” through a careful analysis of his hometown, Ligonier, Pennsylvania. What followed was an evocative account of small-town America examined through the prism of topoanalysis. Despite this—or perhaps *because*—one wonders if this lineage of thought inherited from Bachelard risks an insular account of home, dwelling, and place. After all, the emphasis on origins as a source of orientation need not entail unity.

One could argue that the “place-alienation” Hamrick largely ignored plays a far greater role in our experience of dwelling and remembering than his paper acknowledges. This is an especially prevalent issue when Hamrick spoke of no longer having access to the interior of his great-grandparent’s home. The disjunction established between inside and out sets in place a formidable set of contrasts, of which Hamrick’s paper, despite its overall virtues, tended to overlook.

Thursday’s afternoon events began with a panel discussing philosopher Lawrence Hass’s recently published *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, which, if nothing else, served as excellent marketing tool for his work. Shortly after, English professor Nancy Barta Smith gave a provocative talk that applied her situation as an identical twin to a more

generalized account of intercorporeal being. Despite claiming “not to speak for all twins,” her paper had the unusual outcome of positing a “collective sense of we-centric experience,” even suggesting that, “we all share the imitative potentials of a conjoined equilibrium.”

While this claim was surrounded in some confusion, it has the unfortunate sense of containing a homogenized account of human experience in which the idea of the autonomous individual is supposedly demythologized through the development of empathy. While it is true that Merleau-Ponty speaks of things in the world as being made of the same “stuff”—namely, flesh—what this does not mean is that the flesh has any particular relation to kinship, harmony, or disharmony.

Rather, the flesh is that which underscores and is prior to the split between subject and object, binding all things through being constitutive of the same “element.” In this sense, there is no tacit ethics to be mined in Merleau-Ponty’s flesh; as Toadvine (2009, p. 134) explains, “That we are folds of the world’s flesh, therefore, points to no particular ethical consequences, environmental or otherwise.” Barta Smith’s claim that “flesh prolongs our embodied being and makes twins of us all” is not only erroneous as a philosophical claim but also potentially naïve as an ethical and political statement.

A highlight of Friday’s presentations was philosophy doctoral student Bryan Norwood’s challenging paper, which was the recipient of the M.C. Dillon Award. Central to Norwood’s project is the task of assessing why phenomenologically orientated architects are preoccupied with perceptual experience. Norwood’s paper thus took a polemical stance toward phenomenology, which, while not seeking to neglect the importance of perceptual experience, nonetheless sought to rethink phenomenology in thought and practice.

Norwood’s approach was to introduce Deleuze’s thought into Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the flesh. At the heart of this method is the question of human centrality. As Norwood, pointed out, “very rarely will a phenomenological architect or critic talk about the perception between two architectural objects.” Implicit in this assumption is the

idea that human life transcends the places he or she experiences, thus denoting architecture as an illustration of phenomenological ideas. The point is notable, as it questions the relation between architects and their employment of theory. Norwood’s contribution was to posit the idea of “reversible architecture.” By this term, he refers to the possibility of a “pre-human architecture” that calls upon Merleau-Ponty’s enigmatic idea of “wild being.”

The advantage of such a project is that it puts forward an architecture that precludes a transcendental subject, given that the notion of “wild being” refers to being that precedes the split between subject and object. As such, the previous model of phenomenology as person-centered is now extended (but not displaced) to include “a person, a friend, a large building, a door, walls, words about architecture, things around the architecture, and dirt on the architecture.”

This move of allowing objects to speak to one another establishes an entirely new area of research, so far largely untapped in Merleau-Ponty’s incipient notion of “wild being.” Norwood’s paper is thus inventive and striking, and unlike the majority of papers approaching phenomenology from a broadly poststructuralist perspective, his dialogue between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze was not only constructive but judicious, too.

Friday’s keynote paper was given by philosopher Galen Johnson, whose talk was based on his forthcoming book on beauty and Merleau-Ponty, *The Retrieval of the Beautiful*. If the talk is an indication of the contents of the book more broadly, then the reader can expect an extraordinary, nuanced, and impassioned examination of Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetics as a whole.

Saturday, the final day of the conference, included papers by philosopher David Morris and architectural theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez. Morris’s paper dealt with the relationship between architecture and memory through Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of temporality, habit, passivity, and space. Following an account of the phenomenology of remembering, Morris moved on to argue that “temporality and spatiality are two aspects of our experience of ourselves as passive or to being’s exceeding us.”

Applying this claim to the experience of place, Morris gave an incisive though equally dense analysis of how “architecture articulates an ‘I can’ outside our bodies.” Morris concluded his argument with the concept of what he called *keep-places*, which emphasize the movement of memory in and through place rather than its static retrieval.

Implicit in this concept is an ethics of architecture that singles out certain places that encourage the learning and re-learning of a “singular past,” rather than breeding an interchangeable experience: “It is the house, city, or place well lived in that is the preserve of memory—not airport hotels that approach interchangeability.”

This is a complex claim; suffice it to say that precluding one place because of supposed “interchangeability” risks a premature assessment of the environment at odds with phenomenology’s commitment to an unprejudiced experience of things. This criticism aside, Morris’s paper was tightly argued and insightful. Despite lacking an affective account of how memory and place touch our sense of self, Morris’s argument provided ample inspiration for further thought.

Alberto Pérez-Gómez’s paper provided an extremely rich defence of a phenomenological approach to architecture, which surveyed a broad spectrum of themes and ideas, while simultaneously focusing on the depth of visual perception. For Pérez-Gómez, “Depth is the dimension of perceptual cohesion and reversibility that allows for things to appear as mutually dependent through their autonomy and, reciprocally, to manifest their ‘objectivity’ through mutual concealment.”

Returning to the broad theme of the conference, Pérez-Gómez suggested that it is flesh that allows this reversible depth to emerge and envelop things in its elemental hold. Pérez-Gómez explored these ideas with reference to Le Corbusier, giving attention to the architect’s relationship to temporality, as it relates to music and space more generally: “Depth is here re-invested with a mysterious quality analogous in vision to the interiority communicated by speech, poetry, and musical harmony.”

Overall, then, the conference was a success. Alongside several excellent theoretical exami-

nations of Merleau-Ponty, many of the papers benefited from a direct application of the philosophy in question, with Koukal’s paper particularly exemplary in this respect.

If there is an overarching criticism to be voiced, two points might be raised. First, given the complexity of Merleau-Ponty’s account of the embodied subject, the conference’s chief focus on the “personal body” in distinction to the “prepersonal body” testifies to the need for further work in this aspect of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. Why is this distinction important? Because it addresses the depth of the human body as having different “layers,” involving for Merleau-Ponty “another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am,” which is the “anonymous” body (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 296). The absence of the anonymous body in Merleau-Ponty presents a shortfall in his view of lived experience.

Second, the result of this absence of anonymity is that a delimited account of Merleau-Ponty is presented—namely, one that privileges felicitous instances of embodiment. After all, what the prepersonal body brings to light in Merleau-Ponty is that ethical judgments are of a different order to the ontology of the body itself. As such, by focusing on an “unethical architecture” (as philosopher Dorothea Olkowski put it in her paper) as primary, one runs the risk of losing sight of the fact that embodiment is fundamentally ambiguous, not only structurally, but existentially too. As Merleau-Ponty writes, “my life slips away from me on all sides and is circumscribed by impersonal zones” (ibid., p. 386).

The anonymity of space and embodiment means that we forever yield the possibility of being lost in space. Yet being lost is not necessarily a condition to be “redeemed” through “ethical” architecture, but an experience to be understood as constitutive of the very experience of architecture.

References

- Merleau-Ponty, M., 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith. London: Humanities Press.
- Toadvine, T., 2009. *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature*, Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press.

An Inspiration on Walnut Street

Alvin Holm

Holm is a Philadelphia architect whose firm, Alvin Holm AIA Architects, emphasizes traditionalist design. Note his commentary in “news from readers” on pp. 3-4 of this issue. info@alvinholm.com. © 2010 Alvin Holm.

Returning from a late lunch and walking up Walnut Street to my office a block away, I was enchanted by a little girl, maybe four years old, walking and stopping, then skipping and running, then stopping again to look at the ground where some tiny glitter arrested her eye. Her mother was ten feet ahead, immersed in a cell-phone conversation. The little girl was literally bouncing off walls as she passed along the embellished facades.

Architecturally, this Philadelphia block is a rich composite of environmental design, incorporating the elegant Rittenhouse Plaza on one corner and the 20th-Street Chatham apartments on the other. Over the years, I’ve noticed that few people actually see what they are walking beside, so engrossed are they with thoughts, cell phones, or iPods. I have participated in neighborhood tours with residents who have never noticed the amazing ornament enriching the buildings—for example, the startling images of cherub faces peering out from moldings, surrounding doors, and following passers-by with their eyes. There are all manner of creatures stationed along the walls, windows, and roof cornices. At the corner of 20th Street, one looks up to see the marvelous great griffins and gargoyles projecting from gothic pinnacles of the Chatham apartments’ roofline.

I see these environmental elements because I am an architect “of the traditional persuasion”—in other words, educated as a modernist but eventually converted to Classicism, a 2500-year tradition in Western culture. As I write this claim, I am aware of how odd or arrogant or backward it might sound. But when I saw the little girl last week, experiencing the street as adults these days seldom do, I felt a confirmation that she (and I) hold sight of something important that many others have lost.

In the 1960s, we heard the declaration, “Be here now!” which, from this architect’s point of view,

means “Be where you are” rather than somewhere else—for example, talking on the cell phone. When guests on Public Radio say, “Glad to be here,” I cringe because I know those guests are not in Philadelphia (where the host is situated) but in Chicago, Los Angeles, or even farther afield. What has modern life, modernist architecture, and cyberspace done to our sense of place, of home, of our spatial relationships to the geographical worlds in which we actually find ourselves?

Too often today, we live in a virtual world of radical disjunction and jarring irrelevances to the point that we often don’t know where we are in the moment—physically, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. But that little girl I saw on Walnut Street was entirely engaged in where we all ought to be. She was tuned into the street and to the city and ultimately to the wholeness of it all. Today, our environment in all respects—our urban fabric, television, internet, entertainment, the visual world in every way—is woefully disconnected. We no longer perceive wholeness, though at some visceral level we still admire it and know it should be present.

The influential 19th-century educator Friedrich Froebel wrote that “Every Child brings with him into the world the natural disposition to see correctly what is before him, or, in other words, the truth. If things are shown to him in their connections, his soul perceives them thus as a conception. But if, as often happens, things are brought before his mind singly, or piecemeal and in fragments [as they are today], then the natural disposition to see correctly is perverted to the opposite, and the healthy mind is perplexed.”

One needs only to reflect upon a typical day to see how thoroughly fragmented our lives have become. We know we need to be whole. Let that child lead us. Let us all learn to see in the way she saw that enchanted afternoon on Walnut Street.

Fourth Letter from Far South: Reducing Our Ecological Footprint

John Cameron

This essay is one of a series of “occasional letters” that retired environmental educator John Cameron will be writing from his home on Bruny Island, just off the southeastern coast of Tasmania, the island state to the south of mainland Australia. For earlier letters, see EAP, winter & fall 2008 & spring 2009. The bird woodcuts are by Vicki King, Cameron’s life partner; portrayed are a pied oystercatcher, scarlet robin, yellow-tailed black cockatoo, and masked owl. Jcameronvking@optusnet.com.au. © 2010 John Cameron. Images © 2010 Vicki King.

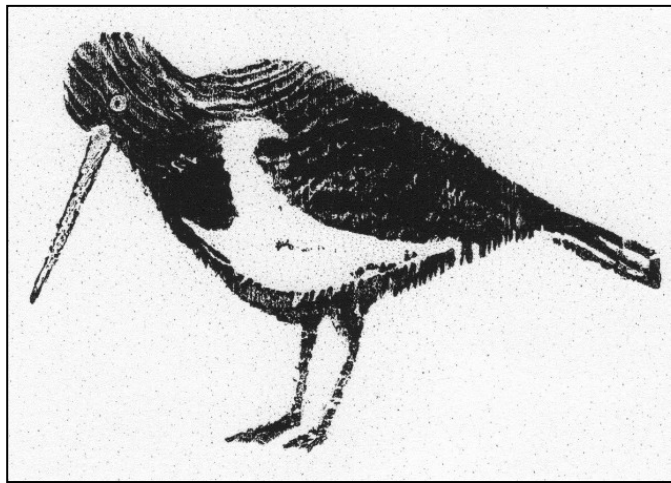
Although the nearest human neighbors on Bruny Island are a kilometer away, wallabies, echidnas, and dozens of bird species come right up to our house. Living in such a situation, Vicki and I often think about “treading more lightly on the Earth,” both as a personal question and as a broader social issue.

As two recent radio talks illustrate, current debate on the politics and psychology of sustainability is polarized. Discussing her recent *Getting a Grip*, Frances Moore Lappe, involved with global food and ecological questions since the publication of her best-selling *Diet for a Small Planet* in 1971, argued that current forms of representative democracy rob people of a sense of contributing to the common good and lead to a depleted sense of self [1]. The consumer society, she claimed, is based on a “mentality of lack,” in which one can never have enough, whereas in reality people in Western countries already have all they need and more. Participating in a living democracy would enable people to live richer and more fulfilling lives while contributing to a more just and sustainable world.

In sharp contrast, Austin Williams, a London-based architect and author of *Enemies of Progress: Dangers of Sustainability*, provoked controversy when he presented a vigorous challenge to “sustain-

ability orthodoxy” on radio a few days later [2]. He described most environmental advocates as risk-averse, moralistic, parochial, obsessed with a philosophy of limitation, living in a state of dread, lacking creativity and aspiration, and having no sense of exhilaration in life. He championed the invigorating, innovative spirit of the modern city that could deal with any of the real challenges of human development. He urged listeners to aspire to a life without limitation and reject the false choice between quality of life and quantity of consumption.

Beyond my general interest in these conflicting viewpoints, I was fascinated by the stark differences over the relationship between sustainable living and psychological well-being [3]. Is the “mentality of lack” embedded in the consumer society or in the minds of sustainability advocates? Is sustainability a matter of choice or necessity, and does it compromise or contribute to a sense of richness and abundance? How do these matters play out in daily life?



I’ve been considering such questions in relation to our experience when we moved into our modest house by the edge of Blackstone Bay three years ago. The only power source installed by the previous owner was a car battery connected to two small solar panels, which generated just enough electricity

for two low-energy light bulbs for an hour in the evening. Clearly, we needed more to live here full time. Faced with the choice between having power lines strung over our land and paying electricity bills for the rest of our lives, or generating our own electricity through a larger solar-energy system, we opted for the latter.

In retrospect, we were two naïve enthusiasts who took on a more sustainable lifestyle in a remote setting without connections to power, water, or sewage. We were ill-prepared for the complexities that ensued. It seems timely to explore our experiences when the need to reduce our collective carbon footprint because of global warming becomes pressing for everyone. There are many moral exhortations in the media to “do the right thing for the environment,” but phenomenological analyses of what it is really like to undertake a more lower-impact way of living are less common.

For a year after we bought our place on Bruny, we were still living in a suburban house in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. In preparation for our move, we contacted a Tasmanian solar energy company I will call “Simply Solar.” To calculate how many solar panels we would need, we first had to prepare our household “power profile,” an effort that was immediately eye-opening and humbling. We looked at the small metal plates underneath every appliance we thought we might want in our new home to find how many watts they consumed. I had no idea that there was such a difference in wattage between a blender and an electric toaster, for example, or between a tape deck and a stereo receiver. With each item, we asked ourselves the question: Do we *really* need this? Right away, many appliances, such as toasters and electric heaters, ruled themselves out as too energy-profligate.

Our next challenge was to estimate the number of hours per week we would use each appliance. How many hours would we have the computer on? How many electric lights would we use and for how long? To even begin to make these estimates, we had to pay much closer attention to how we lived.

We kept a diary of our daily energy use, which was uncomfortably revealing in terms of how many electrical appliances two relatively “green-minded” people were actually using. Then we had to project how much our lifestyle and electricity consumption would change in our new, “simple” life.

Much more aware of our own use of electricity, we now noticed how many appliances friends and neighbors used. There are none so zealous as the newly converted, and we tried to keep our comments to ourselves as we saw houses lit up like fairy castles, televisions blaring with no one watching, leaf blowers being used rather than rakes. We were astounded at how much energy consumption was advertised as being a wonderful thing: “Super powerful, super suction” 3000-watt vacuum cleaners, massive 2500-watt hairdryers that “dry your hair even faster,” and power tools of every description.

As the next step in the process, Simply Solar installed solar panels, inverter, regulator, and a massive bank of batteries to meet our projected needs [4]. Since the total cost was only slightly more than electric power poles stretched across our

paddocks, we were very happy with the arrangement. We would be generating all our energy needs from the sun, with low maintenance, and no more electricity bills. When a man from the electric power company arrived a few months later to read our meter, we delightedly and rather smugly told him there wasn’t one. Unfortunately, matters did not remain so simple.

There was indeed little maintenance to be done. Twice a year at each equinox, the inclination of the panels needed adjusting and the specific gravities of the batteries needed regular checking. But there was a new language to learn. The digital read-out on

the solar energy regulator was in amp hours per day (AH). Although I could measure the AH coming into the system, I couldn’t calculate how many AH we were consuming. Autumn progressed, and the battery specific gravities started to decline, indicating that the system was no longer fully charged. I became worried. Even the last-resort use of a back-



up, petrol-driven generator didn't seem to arrest the decline as the grey days of winter settled in.

As I was struggling with a new language, I was also wrestling with inner demons. Behind my wry self-description of being "technically challenged" lay a psychologically slippery slope. I quickly had to overcome my fear of approaching any unfamiliar machine without an expert by my side, since all the "experts" were in Hobart and reluctant to make the ferry journey to Bruny. Technical instructions by phone in regard to our declining batteries often left me puzzled and, at worst, in confused desperation.

I re-experienced boyhood anxieties about my lack of practical aptitude and common sense. Rather than patiently explain how to construct or repair things, my father tended to tell me gruffly to "use my head" and to "grow up." Caught in these childhood echoes, I was slow to realize that our solar-energy problem was not my technical incompetence so much as Simply Solar's gross over-estimation of how much power, in the long Tasmanian winter, our panels would generate. When a different technical team finally paid us a visit, they recommended we install a wind generator and replace the seriously underpowered back-up generator and charger left us by the previous owners. Meanwhile, to let our batteries recover, we shut off our low-energy refrigerator and prevailed upon neighbors to store food in their freezer.

We found the idea of installing a wind generator appealing. Wind is a strong part of our life on Bruny, with frequent sea breezes, hearty winds, and occasional gales from the Southern Ocean. Using another natural element to generate power without significant environmental impact was fine, as long as it wasn't noisy and didn't harm the birds. A visit to a wind turbine in operation on the mainland satisfied us on both counts, and we placed our order.

By the time these additions to our alternative energy system were installed, our original budget for alternative energy had almost doubled. Still, it was striking to see how our attitude to windy days shifted. Vicki had previously found strong winds unpleasant but, now that we knew the wind was charging our batteries, it wasn't so bothersome. It became an informative part of daily life—a quick

glance at the generator blades told me the direction and strength of the wind. One spring afternoon I was striding down toward the house with a bracing Channel wind blowing straight in my face and the sun glinting off the water into my eyes. I exulted in the strength of the elements and lengthened my stride. "It's a high-energy day today," I declared to Vicki, and we enjoyed the new layer of meaning that term now had for us.

The next winter, we found that Simply Solar's predictions that "we should be okay now" weren't entirely correct. The battery charge still declined, though more slowly. For three months, we had to use our back-up generator more often than expected. Our wind generator is rated at about the same one-kilowatt capacity as our combined solar panels, but that rating is at an average wind speed of 30 miles per hour.

Even a breezy place like ours, however, doesn't have such constant, high winds. Visitors frequently marvel at our whirling wind generator, apparently generating great quantities of electricity. In reality, to generate large amounts of power, the blades must rotate faster than the eye can see. In fact, the solar panels sitting unobtrusively on the roof do most of the work.

Over the past year, we have only produced twelve percent of our power from wind, though it does have the additional benefit of acting as a "trickle charger"—in other words, replacing small amounts of battery power overnight. In short, it is wise to stand outside and measure average wind speed throughout the year before deciding whether to buy a wind generator, but this is one of the many things that alternative power companies don't always tell potential customers.

Appearance and reality also diverge when it comes to storage batteries. When Simply Solar brought in twelve huge batteries, each nearly three feet tall, I was impressed. Only after our first disastrous winter was I able to persuade a technician to explain the situation:

"Think of it this way: Those batteries fully charged hold about 1000 AH. What's your average daily usage?"

"Oh, between 50 and 60 AH, depending."

“Okay. Now, you want to keep them at least eighty-percent charged for long-term battery health, so that gives you about 200 AH leeway.”

“But that’s only a four-day supply!”

“Yep,” he smiled. “People think there’s months of storage in these batteries because they’re so big. Of course, there’s always some little bit coming in even on a calm cloudy day, but you get the point. You’d need a large room full of batteries to keep the average house going through winter down here.”

I blanched when I thought of the extra cost. Suddenly, it all seemed so much more precarious—a safe-energy storage capacity measured in days rather than months. A year later, though, we have relaxed now that we know more about how the system works. We haven’t bought a roomful of batteries but, rather, have learned what we can and cannot do. While large-scale utility power appears to be more reliable, it now looks equally precarious in a different way, since most of Australia’s electricity is generated by coal and contributes to destabilizing the Earth’s climate.



Working within the amount of power and water we can generate and collect now feels less like a restriction and more like an opportunity. Coupled with living on an island where there is no store and having a fixed income now that I have “retired,” this discipline of “making do” is steadily permeating all aspects of our lives—what we use, what we wear, what we grow and eat, what we re-use and recycle.

Vicki has been more steadfast than I have. One morning she noticed some discarded chicken wire by the side of a local road. “Oh, that’ll be good for fencing our veggie bed, let’s pick it up.”

I looked doubtfully at the tangle in the grass. “What, that?” I asked. “It’s a mess and full of weeds. If we’re going to do something, let’s do it right and get some new wire from the hardware store. We’re not that poor.”

“That’s not the point. This wire’s here, it’s littering the side of the road and we can use it.”

“Oh, OK.” Still grumbling, I straightened out the jumble of mesh, pulled the weeds out, rolled it up and put it in the back of the station wagon. Over lunch, I pursued the topic, saying that I didn’t want to get into a poverty mentality, constantly restricting ourselves unnecessarily so that our lives shrank. I wanted an abundance mentality and a rich life together. Vicki argued for the value and pleasures of frugality, saying she wasn’t talking about self-denial and doing without what we really needed.

I scavenged some old metal posts from a fallen fence on our land and attached the chicken wire. We’d heard that floppy overhanging wire on the top of a fence discourages hungry, climbing possums, so I used some discarded, thicker fencing wire to construct an outward curve. Given my childhood experiences, I had no confidence in my ability to improvise, tinker, and construct things, yet that was precisely what I was being called upon to do because of our isolated situation and low-tech approach. Our “possum-proof” fence worked and Vicki has been lavish in her praise, which has helped reduce my habitual feelings of incompetence. My mantra has become “this is another learning experience.”

One of the things we are learning is to recognize and rely upon each other’s strengths. Vicki is quicker on the uptake, more intuitive, and more far-sighted, whereas I am more deliberate, perseverant, and thorough.

The vegetable garden has been one of our greatest sources of joy. Although Vicki had created a magnificent flower garden in England, neither of us had grown vegetables before. Vicki researched and designed the garden from scratch, making raised beds from driftwood we filled with seaweed, and hay and horse manure from our neighbors. Within months this base was breaking down into a rich soil and we were harvesting our own food. I get inordinate pleasure from collecting the salad greens and herbs before lunch. I have the abundance I wanted, too. There are bushel baskets full of our tomatoes and apples. As I write, our neighbor’s pears and quinces line our kitchen walls. We are

eating more seasonal produce, accepting what is given in each season's bounty, and having less of what is not locally provided.

We are enjoying doing everything we can to recycle and reduce our carbon footprint. Nearly all our clothes come from second-hand stores. Vicki is delighted when she finds something useful from the "fifty-cent rack." Not only are these perfectly good clothes a tiny fraction of the cost of new apparel, but they don't consume resources to produce or do they clog up landfills in the way they would if they had been discarded. Our only water supply is the rainwater we collect in tanks from our roof, and we have learned to restrict our usage in dry times and still have enough to water the many young native trees we have planted. We have a composting toilet that uses no water.

Our move to a more sustainable life has clearly involved a substitution of physical labor for fossil-fuel energy. I mash garbanzo beans by hand rather than put them into a blender to make hummus. I cart hay, manure, and seaweed rather than apply commercial fertilizer to the garden. I feel more vitality and well-being than ever before, but it has had consequences for my 57-year-old body. If I go to the paddocks (a subject for a future letter), I put on my "velcro armor" of back brace, elbow strap, and knee braces. I've had to pay more attention to my own physical sustainability and, as with our energy situation, it requires much more awareness and self-knowledge. After we both suffered injuries, we had to learn from a physiotherapist how to lift and move things properly. She described the progression from a state of unconscious incompetence (being unaware of lifting badly) to conscious competence (only lifting well when we remember to pay attention) to unconscious competence (the body's lifting correctly of its own accord). Since my preferred learning style is not "learning by doing," I have yet to experience the third stage.

What can be said of our journey into sustainability from a phenomenological point of view? The first observation is that for most people in the Western world, electricity has become part of the lifeworld, the taken-for-granted quality of everyday life that is of central interest to phenomenolo-

gists. Flick the switch and the light comes on. It's automatic. Now that we generate our own power on site, however, consuming and producing electricity has become a subject of regular conversation and awareness. I hadn't expected that the light would be shone, on one hand, on my own attitudes and fears of technical inadequacy; and, on the other hand, on the psychology of learning. No longer taking electricity for granted has involved coming face-to-face with some demons I thought had been subdued—feelings of helplessness, isolation and incompetence, and my desires for comfort and security.

The experience of reducing our ecological footprint has brought home to me the inseparability of person and world that Heidegger called *Dasein*, or being-in-the-world. There are many aspects of this process of connecting what had previously seemed to be separate. For example, when we lived in the Blue Mountains, there was no relationship between local weather conditions and the amount of power available to our household. Now, my body responds to the vigorous embrace of gusting winds and blazing sun at the same time our solar panels and wind turbine are charging the batteries for the house. Turning on the tap now connects us to our seasonal rainfall, and we can no longer blithely assume that there will be water available whenever we want it. The soundscape of our world has changed, the house reverberates to the strong rush of the wind and the particularity of bird calls, not the noise of television beamed in from afar. We have made more connection with our physicality as human animals—the way we move in physical work, the food we grow and eat, our waste. As we experience our own material and mental fragility more acutely, we see the vulnerability of our land to local threats of drought, erosion, invasive species, and the global threat of climate change.

The barriers to sustainability for us have been as much psychological as technological. The idealism and enthusiasm with which we set out was accompanied by a sense of self-righteousness, despite our best efforts to pretend otherwise. This has given way to a more sober assessment of our limitations in the face of far greater physical and psychological challenges than we had anticipated. While I

experience great pleasure and joy from our life here, I still go through periods of resistance to the discipline of living within our ecological means, followed by acceptance, even pleasure, in “making do.” I’m coming to appreciate that what we are given by this place each day and what we have now is *enough*.

I admit that on occasion I have been the sort of self-righteous and fearful environmental advocate that Austin Williams decries. My worry about our developing a “poverty mentality” is reminiscent of his critique, but though he calls for a life without limitation, I’ve come to see his viewpoint as more limited than Frances Moore Lappe’s. Despite succumbing at times to the “mentality of lack,” I’ve learned much about genuine abundance through reducing our ecological footprint. Deeper connectivity with our immediate world as a lived experience, not just as an attractive concept, has brought a greater vitality and sense of “well-being-in-the-world.”

As regards choice and necessity, it is possible that this generation could choose to ignore the challenge that climate change presents and thereby condemn more species to extinction and deprive future generations of the choices that we take for granted. The alternative is to make a choice at a deeper level and embrace at least the moral necessity of what must be done. This raises a new set of questions about how the task can be undertaken with the innovative, invigorating spirit that Williams champions, particularly in the cities where most people live. Surely it isn’t necessary to move to a remote location to learn the hard lessons that we have: Ecological limits aren’t the enemy of creativity and well-being but can be their source.

Acceptance of what is given and the limitations that come with it can bring a deep, almost paradoxical, gratitude. In *The Snow Leopard*, Peter Matthiessen encounters a crippled lama in remote Nepal:



I wonder how he feels about his isolation in the silences of Tsakang, which he has not left in eight years now and, because of his legs, may never leave again... Indicating his twisted legs without a trace of self-pity or bitterness, as if they belonged to all of us, he casts his arms wide to the sky and the snow mountains, the high sun and the dancing sheep, and cries “Of course I am happy here! It’s wonderful! *Especially* when I have no choice!” [5]

Making do with less *is* more, for us at least. More enriching, more fulfilling, more enlivening. Opportunities abound for us to live even more resourcefully and resiliently with what we are given. I was looking for abundance in the wrong place when I argued with Vicki about the chicken wire. It’s not about the things we can afford, much less our material consumption. Rather, it’s about opening my eyes and heart to the richness of what I am given each day in this place co-inhabited by such remarkable beings as herons and sea eagles.

The real poverty is to see myself surrounded by internal limitations and external restrictions rather than by fresh opportunities to learn and to flourish.

Collectively, we must learn to live within our ecological means. We have enough. Isn’t that wonderful? *Especially* when we have no meaningful choice!

Notes

1. F. Moore Lappe, *Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity and Courage in a World Gone Mad* (Cambridge, MA: Small Planet Media, 2008).
2. A. Williams, *The Enemies of Progress: Dangers of Sustainability* (London: Imprint Books, 2008).
3. The difference can perhaps partially be attributed to the context within which the two speakers work. Frances Moore Lappe, Director of the Small Planet Institute, has primarily been working in Third World countries on food and development issues, while Austin Williams works principally in the City of London as the Director of the Future Cities Project.
4. To be specific, we have six 160-watt solar panels and twelve deep-cycle storage batteries.
5. P. Matthiessen, 1978. *The Snow Leopard* (London: Penguin), p. 246.

Landscape, Language, and Experience: Some Claims and Questions

Bruce Janz

*Janz is Associate Professor of the Humanities in the Philosophy Department at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. His research interests include African philosophy, the philosophy of mysticism, and interdisciplinary approaches to place. He recently published *Philosophy in an African Place* (Lexington Books, 2009). He has created the website, “**Research on Place and Space**,” which overviews the wide range of academic and professional research on place; see the sidebar on p. 23. janzb@mail.ucf.edu © 2010 Bruce Janz.*

Philosophy’s proper object is the creation, propagation, contextualization, analysis, and understanding of the concept. For example, what is the relationship between words and the ideas they represent? How can a set of concepts work as a kind of “meaning ecology” to provide specific cultural or disciplinary needs? Where do new concepts come from, and how can we be deliberate about their creation? How might we extend concepts to a new sphere or along a new trajectory? How might we use concepts appropriately yet creatively?

Landscape is an intriguing concept to think of in these terms. It often stands for a host of other place and environmental words. I once asked a professor who taught landscape architecture what she told her students about what landscape was. Her answer was that she didn’t tell them anything. Rather she asked them what they thought it was. Students gave answers that ranged from place to home to terrain to a host of other things. She was fine with that.

In fact, landscape is not all these things. It is not the same as place, land, home, or terrain. Its provenance is different, and its current uses cannot be interchanged with other place-related terms. In short, we must be clear on the concept we use.

This need for clarity also makes a difference because different concepts arise from different disciplinary methods and questions. We may use the same word across those disciplines or even within the same discipline, but in fact the concepts are not the same because they usually do different work.

Disciplines have resources for systematically asking questions and answering them. Both questions and answers are necessary, but it is questions that are said to be on the way to something more substantial. I would like to *question our questions*—to see where our concepts come from and what work they do.

In this essay, I consider two ways by which philosophers might interrogate the concept of landscape: first, the history and adaptation of concepts; second, phenomenology. Both approaches have implications for the relationship between language and landscape. Superficially, the first may seem an “external” way of understanding a concept through its “provenance,” while the second may seem “internal” in the sense that phenomenology takes up questions of subjectivity.

I argue these two approaches need each other—that each opens to the other. More precisely, I attempt to demonstrate that the concept of landscape is a useful context for thinking about how meaning is shaped culturally and how speaking and referring are not just afterthoughts of an already constructed subjectivity but are constitutive of it. In other words, our sense of landscape, like our sense of place, is fundamental to who we are. It is not just an idea deployed to serve a descriptive, analytic, or theoretical purpose.

Traveling across Disciplines

The concept of landscape has traveled across disciplinary boundaries. Its provenance passes through art, but from there we find it used metaphorically in

many other ways. There are moonscapes, seascapes, cityscapes, and so forth. Roberto Matta and other surrealists painted “inscapes”—the “scape” of the interior world. People speak of a political or religious landscape.

What these various uses share in common is engagement with the land, either by traveling through or living with it. These uses of landscape involve a recognition of contours and a sense that the land makes a whole rather than a piecemeal composite of discrete parts. These uses suggest land as narrative, whether placed on the land in the process of naming and representing it or implicit in a natural or human engagement with the land. There is an element of temporality in these uses of narrative, illustrated most literally in the history of landscape painting, which often included ruins or some indication of the interaction of the human past with the quotidian present.

Arguably, the advent of geographic-positioning systems (GPS) signals the end of landscape, since, through use of this technology, there is no longer the necessity of direct engagement with the land. With GPS, we do not need to read the land, either literally or through textual proxies such as maps. We follow instructions, based on geographical information readable primarily through a device, which fixes position not by any aspect of lived human meaning but through overlapping signals that triangulate positions on an abstract grid.

With GPS, our environmental embodiment does not need to unfold as we move through the land. Rather, we are self-contained and apart from the land, through which we still move but from one digital marker to the next. Our engagement with the land becomes *instrumental* in that a digital indicator or mechanical voice provides directions and is not concerned with what lies in between. Places are first of all coordinate points rather than geographical intensifications. Nothing is any longer related to history or myth. Removed from narrative and shifted to technology, navigation is taken out of language.

Rather than claiming that GPS marks the death of landscape, it might be better to say that this technology points toward a new means of engaging the landscape. At the beginning of the modern era, our orienteering moved from reading “texts” more di-

rectly inscribed in the land or written about the land to deciphering schematic representations of the land expressed in latitude and longitude. At the same time, landscape painting brought the human back into the world by pictorially representing people as engaged in that land. What we lost in the map, we recovered in the picture.

Similarly, with the rise of the GPS, we engage the landscape in a different way. GPS takes the burden of a particular kind of way finding out of narrative, which is thus freed to do other things with landscape. In this sense, cultural engagement is particularly important, partly because we are in need of new ways of understanding what it means to live in and with the land—not just on it.

On one hand, we could interpret landscape as a system of signs arising from a particular culture and history. On the other hand, we could interpret landscape as an “ecology” of concepts shared among disciplines but changing according to disciplinary demands. I use the term “disciplinary” here broadly, to indicate any making of knowledge with an object, method, and history. This difference can be phrased in terms of “synchronic” and “diachronic”—in other words, understanding how concepts are used informally at a particular moment in time vs. understanding how concepts become formalized, disciplinary property.

Why is this difference important? Because landscape is not synonymous with land, territory, region, or even place. In the history of Western art, for example, landscape eventually took on a character of its own. We can trace this shift through the paintings of Claude Lorraine through the Dutch masters to the American Hudson River School and, later, the Canadian Group of Seven.

Today, the sense of landscape often moves away from a literal connection with land to more abstract expressions—we speak, for example, of a “landscape of corporate culture” or “the web as a landscape through which we navigate.” If we are cognitive scientists, we might highlight the “landscape of the brain.”

In this sense, to speak of landscape is to speak of spatial movement, whether literal or figurative, remembered or anticipated, solitary or collective. In one significant sense, the space is created by the

movement and does not pre-exist our engagement with it. We see the land *as* something. In ecological psychologist James Gibson's words, it "affords" something for us, just as a chair "affords" sitting.

Phenomenology of Landscape

When we think about phenomenology and place, we need to distinguish between different styles and approaches. In founding phenomenology, Edmund Husserl sought to find the universal in experience by bracketing off metaphysics, including ideas such as "objectivity" and "subjectivity."

In contrast, Martin Heidegger was much more interested in interpreting human experience, including the nature of human inhabitation, dwelling, and place making. For Heidegger, we are always caught up with that which we know. "Dwelling-in" describes that engagement. What we build frames the world in ontological ways—for example, in ways that either reveal our humanness more fully or cover it over and reduce us and our world to instrumental things. Yet again, we can speak of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which builds on the lived body as the first site of experience—an approach that might be called "embodied phenomenology."

Edward Casey is one philosopher currently thinking about landscape. His *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (2002) sketches out the provenance of the term and examines what it means to represent landscape. Casey begins with the Heideggerian claim that we dwell in the land and thus turn it into landscape as we inscribe ourselves on it. Further, landscape becomes the site in which our subjectivity emerges and is made manifest. Casey then explores the idea that the landscape concept has a history, which accrues a set of meanings by the path that it has taken through various forms of knowledge construction in history.

But we can also find phenomenological accounts of landscape outside philosophy. Take, for instance, anthropologist Tim Ingold's *Lines* (2007), which considers the relationship between movement and inscription. Moving through and representing the land, whether verbally or graphically, involve proceeding along lines. Superficially, a meditation on lines may seem not about landscape. Ingold's

interest, however, is all sorts of movement across surfaces—something we find in both landscape and writing. What is significant in Ingold's work is his ability to move across cultural boundaries to identify the ways in which narrative becomes inscribed on the land and the land becomes understandable as elements of narrative in a host of different ways.

It is important to note that the move from descriptive to hermeneutic phenomenology is in part the move from the search for the universal in experience to the recognition that all experience comes mediated through interpretive mechanisms—in other words through the particular personal and cultural situations of individual and group. Husserl could write the *Cartesian Meditations* as a primer on phenomenology because he was following Descartes' lead of attempting to find a universally reliable method for knowledge. Heidegger, on the other hand, is resolutely anti-Cartesian. If we are to look for philosophical method that will not only allow us to analyze place but also be sensitive to the implications that place might have on the emergence and development of knowledge, we will find the Husserlian vs. Heideggerian explications dramatically different in emphases and conclusions.

Whatever its particular sense, there is a conviction in all phenomenological efforts that philosophy must be about experience, though what it means to access that experience may vary with phenomenologist. In addition, what we do with experience once we describe or interpret it may also differ, though we are definitely not engaged in thinking about metaphysical abstractions, whether in regard to the land or to the self. Landscape is not land but *experience of the land*. A theoretical approach that appreciates that distinction is crucial.

Language & Landscape: Questions

We have, in short, two methodological poles and shades of difference between them that help one to understand the relationship between landscape and language. On one hand, we can trace the concept of landscape across disciplinary and cultural changes; with enough care we can tease out distinctions between landscape as a concept and other related concepts like land, terrain, or place. On the other hand, we can ask about how we as human beings engage

the land to produce landscape—that is, how we experience the land.

These contrasting approaches to landscape turn on how we treat subjectivity. Both approaches give us significant direction as to how we, on one hand, might understand landscape within our own specific lived situation; and how, on the other hand, we might understand landscape across various disciplinary and cultural boundaries. To conclude, I present a set of six questions that might be helpful in thinking about what it means to move across these boundaries.

1 What is the purpose of asking about landscape? Are we asking about naming? About place? Are we getting some insight into a culture? Are we sharpening our geographical knowledge? Are we finding ways of interpreting across boundaries?

The question of purpose moves us beyond the idea that we are working with bare concepts that have no relation to social, political, religious, or disciplinary perspectives. For example, maps of Africa were far more “filled in” in the interior of the continent before the 19th century than they were during the 19th century. Africa was not always the “dark continent” but became that label as particular kinds of questions about Africa became prevalent.

In this case, geography contributed to the colonial enterprise by confirming the prejudice that Africa was an empty continent with no history and, therefore, ready for the taking. The African landscape became a way to avoid thinking about the people who lived there.

For example, one can still find settlers in Kenya from before independence who, regarding the “real” Kenya as the place of birds and animals, speak of native Africans as a corrupting influence. Landscape becomes the rural idyll, not only confirming a Rousseauian view of nature but a Hegelian view that Africans are by nature uncivilized.

If landscape is viewing land *as* something, that “as” need not be benign or positive. In this sense, asking why one inquires about landscape is a way to identify narrative implications.

2 What does it mean to understand the other spatially and platially? Does one understand the other *through* or *with* place? Or does one understand place by understanding the other? Do I infer something about the other by understanding their uses, namings, and practices of place, or do I gain insight on place by understanding those who inhabit it?

Heidegger is useful here. He would ask us to see dwelling as a fundamental mode of being and to see building as making possible dwelling. In other words, we are never dealing with the purely natural because we always build, even if that building amounts to words about natural space designed to render it less foreign.

One example is the idea of wilderness, a concept used quite differently in different places, in part because of different relationships with the natural other. Naming and defining that natural other is always entwined with the human other and, thus, “wilderness” is something quite different in Europe than it is in the United States. In Europe, the meaning arises from “wildness,” or the place where the wild person lives. In the United States, wilderness is the pristine—what is untouched by human hand.

In short, if one is speak of dwelling, one must speak of it differently in different places. This is not geographical determinism, but the recognition that our places have a provenance—they are imagined using the understandings we have available. This perspective allows one to think about landscape across cultural boundaries.

3 In what languages does landscape speak? Landscape itself is a language that always embodies a set of conventional signifiers. For example, Claude Lorrain’s paintings established a particular vocabulary of the land with terms like “picturesque” to refer to particular landforms. Travelers on the Grand Tour carried a Claude glass (or “black mirror”) by which they could transform any landform they encountered into a version of a Claude painting, complete with frame and muted tinting.

In short, landscape is always already language, though this in itself doesn’t tell us much. To what language does landscape refer? Or rather, what lan-

guages might it be? Does landscape speak in dialects or entirely different languages? In other words, is there enough commonality in the conventional systems of understanding the land so that we can speak of a common meaning core, or does landscape function like languages, sufficiently different so that we are working with incommensurable meanings?

The appropriation of landscape in the sciences tends to turn it into a meta-term, applicable beyond the level of locally significant signifiers. We might recognize, therefore, that what counts as landscape in the United States might be vastly different in a Chinese context. On the other hand, we might also realize that there are sufficiently similar ways of making the land comprehensible so that we can speak at this meta-level in a meaningful way.

4 How is landscape as a concept being used? Focusing on use often allows us to tease out the different provenances within the ecology of similar concepts and assists in clarifying those concepts. On one hand, landscape may be used as the *mirror of the processes of consciousness*. In other words, landscape can inscribe differing forms of consciousness, and if we can locate differences among those inscriptions, we can learn about how consciousness operates and acts. In this mode of interpretation, we treat landscape as a text, perhaps more specifically as *parole*—the coherent utterances that bear meaning and are the immediately experienced elements of meaning.

On the other hand, we might understand landscape in terms of *langue*—the *invariant structure that underlies the possibility of practice*. Here, we can speak of a language of landscape that is richer or poorer. For example, we could imagine an extremely rudimentary language—a kind of proto-language—that describes experience in broad categories that do not distinguish between kinds of related experiences. We could, in a contrasting way, imagine a language that has elaborate means for distinguishing related but different experiences. Human-made landscapes, in particular, can be seen as affording rich or poor grammar: Consider the contrast between strip mall and traditional marketplace. The former affords a limited vocabulary in that the

proper form of engagement is primarily commercial, while the latter is more rich in expression, since we can imagine other modes of engagement that include sociability, diversity, and serendipity.

5 How does landscape encode time? In her *On Landscape*, Susan Herrington (2009) explains that landscape exists along the axis of time, particularly in terms of memory, imagination, and anticipation. What kinds of memory does landscape encode? Does it preserve memory or repress it? Is there something like *anamnesis* possible with landscape—in other words, the “unforgetting” in which we can re-member and re-construct a coherent past out of the traces that have been left in the land?

Visually, there are many banal, and even bad, landscapes circulating in the popular media. We could mention the art historian’s favorite target, Thomas Kinkade, and his hyper-real, hyper-romanticized landscapes that have proved so popular with many Americans. Kinkade was by no means the first—Constable’s pastoral scenes were practically wallpaper in nineteenth-century England, a touchstone for the urban, industrialized Briton to recover the “meaning” of British life.

What would banal landscapes look like in other cultures? Could we recognize them? We can sometimes see such banality in tourist art (Africa is full of images of the “Big Five” as if the savannah and the veldt were reducible to them).

It is important to demystify the concept of landscape in other cultures so that it does not just stand in for older ideas about the exotic. If it is fundamental to any particular site of knowledge production that place and, particularly, landscape be engaged, then we must also allow that this engagement could be done superficially or stereotypically. Recognizing this allows one to consider what an adequate concept of landscape might be in some particular context.

And what kind of anticipation might be available in the idea of landscape, both in our own discipline and culture and in those of others? Does the landscape narrative rely on a progressive-regressive view of time and history? Or does that narrative necessitate a cyclical view of time with the future

more or less like the past? Or is there yet some other narrative of past and future as encoded in that landscape?

6 What is an aesthetics of landscape? The debt that landscape has to art means that disciplinary uses of the landscape concept have often borne echoes of its roots in aesthetics. The questions one asks about landscape are often about beauty or (given the distinctions among the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque) about a particular kind of order. More often this order is not the stasis of form or proportion but the dynamism of motion, since one typically moves through or to landscapes. In other words, one typically *participates in* the aesthetic value of landscape.

This direct involvement means that description of landscape elements alone does not fully capture the aesthetic provenance. How does one encompass the sense of participatory movement intimated by the concept of landscape when labeling and naming seems to calcify a dynamic understanding? One solution is poetry, which can push language beyond its inherent tendency to freeze things with descriptions. Might poetry be a central means for evoking a particular concept of landscape?

Doing Philosophy across Borders

As I suggested at the start of this essay, one task of philosophy is to analyze concepts and to question the purpose and relevance of concepts for particular tasks. Arguably, philosophy's major contribution to intellectual endeavor is the analysis of concepts and the creation of concepts when needed. Philosophers have typically worked at this contribution by starting from an abstract position, draining out all particularity and emphasizing essential characteristics.

In the case of landscape, this approach is inadequate. Abstracting from the lived sources of landscape concepts expunge their significance. The result is sterile and uninformative. Much of the time, philosophers have not been particularly good with particularity. Throughout Western history, philosophical approaches have avoided particularity. For example Aristotle's *topos* did not require attention to any particular place and did not differentiate

between places. Neither did Locke's examination of place. For our purposes here, both efforts fall short.

If we are to be true to philosophy *and* true to landscape, we must recognize that we can never stop with categorizing or classifying. For philosophy to operate adequately at the edges of cultures and disciplines, it must find ways to do more than just translate. Cultures are never static. Landscape, like language, is lost and renewed, appropriated in controversial and trivial ways.

The six questions I raise here offer instances of the methods I sketched at the start of this essay. There I raised both issues of provenance and phenomenology. These questions indicate the kinds of concerns with which one must deal in any attempt to use landscape as a viable concept. I have argued that the concept of landscape is actually multiple concepts, rooted in different cultural and disciplinary spaces. As we move across those boundaries, we risk misunderstanding but also encounter a creative opening that is only available as we question the questions that produce the concepts we use.

References

- Casey, E., 2002. *Representing Place*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Casey, E., 2005. *Earth-mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Herrington, S., 2009. *On Landscapes*. NY: Routledge.
- Ingold, T., 2007. *Lines: A Brief History*. NY: Routledge.
- Mitchell, W. J. T., ed., 2002. *Landscape and Power*, 2nd Ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Place & Space Website

For both beginning and experienced researchers, Janz's website, "**Research on Place & Space**," is an exceptional resource for exploring topics covered in *EAP*. His aim is "to incorporate as many traditions and perspectives as possible" and "to cross-pollinate the notion of place across disciplines." Website headings include:

- What should I read first?
- General websites;
- Resources on place.

To view the site, go to:

<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/place/>

Memory: Body: Place

Philip B. Stafford

Phil Stafford is the Director of the Center on Aging and Community at the Indiana Institute on Disability, and Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. He is editor of Gray Areas: Ethnographic Encounters with Nursing Home Culture (SAR Press, 2003). The following essay is drawn from his newest book, Elderburbia: Aging with a Sense of Place in America (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Press/ABC-Clio, 2009) and is reprinted here with permission of the publisher. © 2009 Praeger Press/ABC-Clio.

I suspect that if I asked you to imagine the home you occupied at age ten you would sit back, close your eyes, and traverse that space in your mind's eye. So it is when I ask elderly residents of a local convalescent center to revisit, in their mind's eye, the homes of their youth and early adulthood.

Opha Miller, 100 years old, closes her eyes and describes the pasture seen from her back window as if it still exists. She sits on the porch and looks out across the road at the Wisnand girls. She recalls her husband, a good carpenter, building that porch, and revisits the bedroom in which she gave birth to a daughter.

Moving further back through time, 93 years, she describes how, at age seven, she lived with her family in Texas and helped fill bags with cotton and dump them into a canvas covered wagon. She is crossing a little bridge and hears a train whistle right up close. "I jumped off that bridge and the passenger train nearly hit me!" She never told her folks about that since she knew that would mean trouble. Through the irony of dementia she confesses once again, three minutes later, and reiterates the story just as before.

Another resident nicknamed Hack shows me the photograph of his former home on the wall of his room at the center. The photo is one of those bird's-eye pictures taken by itinerant pilots who would then hawk the images to the appropriate household. The structure is a small bungalow highlighted in front by a stone arch at the start of a sidewalk leading to the house. The arch has no adjoining fence and so does not keep things out but welcomes them in.

Hack mentions how his son used to mow the grass across the road at Opha Miller's house (yes, the very same Opha now living in the next room!). Hack, speaking of his son while pointing to the arch in the picture, says:

Hack: "He sees now what old Dad did. I did that."

Phil: "You did?"

Hack: "A windstorm blew it down... My son said [to the insurance man], 'There's nobody gonna fix that unless they put it back exactly like Dad had it!' This guy looked at it and said, 'I'll put it back exactly like that'... and he did."

Pointing to the stone work, Hack says:

Hack: "I cut every one of them with a pitchin' tool."

Phil: "You cut it with pitching tools... You mean you dug them out of the ground?"

Hack: "You face it."

Phil: "You call that 'pitching it'?"

Hack: "Yeah, 'pitching it' is making rock face out of it... and squarin' it up—it's a breakin' tool [*shows me the movement of the tool in a chopping motion with his hands*]... something like a big wide chisel, but it's cut on just like that—you get that just right and it'll break the rock. But you line it with a square, and then cut it. Put your rock face on it."

As he talks about his life, I stand in awe, reminded of how I love the work that brings me here to listen. When Hack talks about doing some "water witchin'" as a kid and not finding a forked peach branch, he lets me know with his hands how he improvised with a "coke bottle and a number nine wire." When he tells about the man from Texas who came up to drill wells, it seems important to remark that he used a number five casing, "not a number six like they use around here." And when Hack drew his water from a rock spring out at his Greene County home, it was cold: "It was at least 51 degrees, and that water in the wintertime would feel good on your hands."

As he talks, his body enters into the conversation. The objects we use to construct our conversation, the pictures on the wall, help cement the relationship between us and place us in the imaginary landscape we are noting together.

A conventional, semiotic understanding of the objects in Hack's room might suggest that the stone arch represents Hack's friendliness and hospitable nature. It might suggest that the arch represents Hack's valued past, which it does. The stone arch is significant. It does have symbolic import—as a symbol of his artisanship and a vehicle for a son's pride of father.

But the arch is more than that. It's a presence in and of itself. As Hack stands there and "faces" those rocks with his hands, that arch is rebuilt, recreated anew, re-experienced not as symbol but as home itself. As Hack's body enters into this process of memory, the effect is transformational, in Barbara Myerhoff's sense, in that the past enters into the present and transforms the institutional *space* of his room into the *place* of his experience [1].

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, describes this memory of the body:

...the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we would recapture the reflexes of the "first stairway," we would not stumble on that rather high step. The house's entire being would open up, faithful to our own being. We would push that door that creaks with the same gesture, we would find our way in the dark to the distant attic. The feel of the tiniest latch has remained in our hands [2].

Wendell Berry, Kentucky farmer, poet, and essayist describes this bodily attachment to place in his short novel, *The Memory of Old Jack*, in which elderly Kentucky farmer Jack Beechum no longer farms his old place. Though he lives in the boarding house in town, he dwells in the memories of place:

[But] the present is small and the future perhaps still smaller. And what his mind is apt to do is leap out of that confinement, like an old dog, still strong, that has been penned up and then let loose in the one countryside that it knows and that it knew for a long time. But it is like an old dog possessed by an old man's intelligent

ghost that remembers all it has seen and done and all the places it has known, and that goes back to haunt and lurk in those places. Some days he can keep it very well in hand, just wandering and rummaging around in what he remembers. He is amazed at what he comes upon that he thought he had forgot... Sometimes he can recover a whole day, with the work he did in it, and the places, and the animals and the people and even the words that belong to it [3].

So memory of home is not merely symbolic and representational but draws upon one's whole being as it is recollected. The proper study of it is not semiotic but phenomenological. As the original experience involves the whole body, is it any wonder that its memory should do the same?

In ways that are compelling to me because they resonate with my experience of place, Bachelard, Berry, Hack, and Opha point to the role that memory plays in converting empty space into place. Important objects are not mere souvenirs (though the root meaning of the word suggests a bodily "coming back again"). They take on meaning as they evoke narrative and recreate bodily experiences.

Memory, it seems, is the hallmark of a good place. We might say that a good place remembers itself to us. More properly, we might say that a good place has a kind of mirror quality because it helps us to remember ourselves to ourselves. Kathleen Woodward cites a passage from *The Stone Angel*, by Margaret Laurence, in which 90-year-old Hagar Shipley finds himself in his objects:

My shreds and remnants of years are scattered through it [the house] visibly in lamps and vases...If I am not somehow contained in them and in this house, something of all change caught and fixed here, eternal enough for my purposes, then I do not know where I am to be found at all [4].

A good place is a "keeping place." It holds people together through their common participation in its qualities. As Wendell Berry put it in another essay, "a human community, then, if it is to last, must exert a kind of centripetal force, holding local soil and local memory in place" [5].

Notes

1. B. Myerhoff, 1978. *Number our Days* (NY: Simon & Schuster), p. 225.
2. G. Bachelard, 1994. *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press), p.15.
3. W. Berry, 1974. *The Memory of Old Jack* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace), p. 31-32.
4. K. Woodward, 1991. *Aging and its Discontents* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press), p.146.
5. W. Berry, 1990. *What are People For?* (San Francisco: North Point Press), p. 155.