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

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

Notes

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

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

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

Seamon is the Editor of Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology.

The State of Architectural Phenomenology

Benoît Jacquet

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Architect-Scholars”

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

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

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

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

Interdisciplinarity

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

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

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

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

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

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

Back to Experiencing Things

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

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

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

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

Intellectual History’s Past & Future

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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