

About the things themselves

***Newsletter of the Society of
Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture
Volume III.1, Summer 2005***

About the things themselves

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Contents:

1. **Editor's comments**
2. **Call for Papers, EPTC 2006**
3. **Conference Reports from EPTC/TCEP 2005.**
 - a) **The Media and the Other: Report by Megan Penney.**
 - b) **Claude Lefort and the Nature of the Political: Report by Brian Singer.**
 - c) **Mourning Derrida: Report by John Caruana.**
4. **Call for papers: Janus Head: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Continental Philosophy, Literature, Phenomenological Psychology and the Arts**
5. **Call for Papers: The Society for Phenomenology and Media.**
6. **Call for papers: *Horizons Philosophiques***
7. **Notable Books in Phenomenology: Organization of Phenomenological Organizations**
8. **Comment on a new soon to be well-worn story: Gregory Cameron**

1. Editor's comments

Gregory Cameron

Hi Folks, I am back here in the driver's seat of the EPTC newsletter. I want to thank Christine Daigle for having done an excellent job as editor in my absence. Not only has Christine been a wonderful editor, she has also been an integral part of the process of generating the on-line newsletter and opening the door to many other possibilities, including an on-line journal. Christine will still be managing the website and editing the French language section of the letter, but I am again the chief editor so any information, submissions, questions or complaints should now be addressed to me. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Christinia Landry for her work as assistant editor.

Not having been at the conference last summer and not editing the newsletter made me feel pretty out of touch with things going on at EPTC, so it was very good to see everyone again in London. It was also great to see a large number of new faces. Those of you who were there will know that EPTC has grown significantly. Not only were there three very full days of papers (from 8:30 til almost 7:00), but there were also, for the first time, concurrent sessions. Thankfully, this increase in presenters has not changed the format of the sessions. Each paper received a full hour for presentation, response, questions and comments. The drawback of course is that with simultaneous sessions it is impossible to be present at all the papers one wants to hear. Nonetheless, the papers I did hear were excellent, and, coupled with the conversations that emerged, continuously brought the discussion back to the heart of the phenomenological project. The conversations I heard in the corridors after the sessions suggest that the entire meeting was a great success.

It was, again, excellent to hear the enormous variety of topics and approaches that go under the general heading of phenomenology and existentialism. Not only were there papers on the usual suspects – Husserl, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Beauvoir, Bakhtine, Camus, Beckett, Derrida, Agamben; I even heard Foucault mentioned once – but we had whole sessions devoted to the media, to Claude Lefort and to Jacques Derrida. Every paper I heard was not only concerned with exegetical issues, but also with meditations on the most important issues of the day. Papers continuously returned to such issues as politics, the media, the war in Iraq, the social, the body, ethics, and each of these approached, not simply so as to reiterate a thinker's position, but so as to generate new avenues into the thinking of our world. It was a very impressive meeting.

I would also like to thank John Duncan for having again made possible an excellent conference.

Gregory Cameron
Chief Editor EPTC

2. Call For Papers – EPTC/TCEP 2006.

2006 Congress

Early Call for Papers

The society for the study of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture (EPTC) invites papers and panel proposals discussing any aspects of existential or phenomenological theory or culture. For example, papers or panel proposals dealing with theoretical or cultural issues in relation to authors such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Beckett, Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Levinas, Malraux, Marcel, Buber, Frankl, Sartre, Camus, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir, Irigaray, or Laing are all welcome. Submissions from all disciplines are welcome.

EPTC will meet at York University in Toronto, in conjunction with the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities of Canada during the last few days of May 2006. Every year the Congress brings together some 100 learned associations and more than 5,000 scholars from Canada and the international community for approximately 10 days of interdisciplinary symposia, cultural events, and public discussions. For more information see: <http://www.fedcan.ca/>.

I. Interested authors should submit the following in **both** electronic and paper formats: 1. A copy of your paper, not more than 4,500 words, and prepared for anonymous review (identifiable by paper title only). 2. A separate abstract, not more than 100 words, also listing the paper's title, author's name, complete mailing address, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address.

II. If you are interested in either presenting a commentary (of not more than 1,000 words) on a paper, or chairing a session, please submit a brief email note indicating as much, including your name, complete mailing address, institutional affiliation, e-mail address, and relevant areas of interest.

III. If you are interested in organizing a panel, please submit the following in **both** electronic and paper formats: 1. A brief description of the proposed panel by Friday January 6, 2006. Then, by Friday February 3 please submit: 2. a copy of each participant's paper, not more than 4,500 words, and prepared for anonymous review (identifiable by paper title only); and 3. a separate abstract, not more than 100 words, also listing the paper's title, author's name, complete mailing address, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address (for each participant). Each panel organizer is encouraged to ensure both that the papers for his or her proposed panel meet the general standards of academic conferences, and that the panel as a whole is suitable for EPTC; EPTC reserves the right to reject individual papers or panels.

Except for item III.1., the submission deadline for the above materials is Friday February 3, 2006. Submissions should be sent to:

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3. Conference Reports from EPTC/TCEP 2005.

a) The Media and the Other

Megan Penney

When I had originally proposed this panel topic to EPTC, I was not sure if anyone would be interested in exploring the media through a phenomenological and existential perspective. However, the overwhelming response that I received quickly put those fears to rest. This panel was originally conceived of as a traditional panel with no more than three papers. Yet because of the response I received, and the excellent quality of the papers I had to choose from, John Duncan and I decided to turn it into an extended panel in which each paper and commentary was given an hour.

The panel was extremely interesting and generated a great response from those in attendance. The papers covered a variety of topics concerning the media. To start off the panel was Richard Nielsen's Kierkegaardian perspective on the modern media. This paper examined how Kierkegaard anticipated the ramifications of the media's creation of a 'public' and 'public opinion'. Along with Kierkegaard's analysis of the media, was the writer's own extensive experience in the Canadian media which enriched the understanding of our current media situation.

Following the first paper was my own Beauvoirian examination of the media which was concerned with the effect that the media had on the feminine Other. Using Beauvoir's notion of the feminine Other from *The Second Sex*, this paper argued that because of the mass media inundation, the situation of woman as the Other has become worse.

The third paper, by Albert Spalding, concentrated on internet pornography and the disappearance of Sartre's 'Onlooker'. This paper examined the idea of shame as related to the anonymous and private distribution of pornography over the internet. It posed the following interesting question: can shame still be present without the 'Onlooker' which was previously associated with the acquisition of pornography?

The fourth paper, by Dave Koukal, examined the Abu Ghraib prison photos. This paper analyzed the ontological impact that these photos are having in our media centred world. This paper considered how these images have impacted those involved in the photos including: the prisoners who were being tortured, the military police who both took the pictures and were in them, the Bush administration, and the American mass media and its audience.

In the fifth paper, Ian Angus took a unique approach in that he explored eight interesting and interrelated theses. These eight theses examined a wealth of topics. Some of the areas examined were: the phenomenological philosophy of the media as the universalization of the problem of expression, rhetoric and its distinction from philosophy, the lack of the relation to truth in rhetoric, and democracy and new democratic politics.

The final paper of the panel was Randal Marlin's response to the panel as a whole. This response included remarks and questions for the presenters. This was an excellent way to finish off the panel as it revisited key topics explored and gave an overall coherence to the panel.

Since each paper covered such a variety of topics, many aspects of the media were examined. The commentators were invaluable to the panel as they all provided excellent and in depth insights into each of the papers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank EPTC, the presenters, commentators, and chairs of the "Media and the Other" panel for all of their hard work and dedication to making this panel a great success.

**b) Claude Lefort and the Political
Brian Singer**

The annual EPTC conference this year included a day and a half of papers on the French political philosopher Claude Lefort. The session was organized by Mark Blackell, Matthew Trachman and Brian Singer. Our work had all, at one time or another, been inspired by Claude Lefort. We noted that he seemed barely visible in the English speaking world, but the wager was that we were not alone. We did not simply wish to "introduce" Claude Lefort; after all, at least three of his books have been available in English for some time. Thus we were less interested in strictly exegetical papers than in papers that explored the implications and, even better, the possible lines of interrogation that his thought suggested. The response to the call for papers was quite gratifying. On Sunday afternoon there were three papers in French; and on Monday eight in English, all with commentaries. Participants came not just from English and French speaking Canada, but also the United States and Belgium. And interest extended beyond those giving papers. A wide range of topics relevant to Claude Lefort's thought was covered. There were papers on his relation to Leo Strauss, Jean-Paul Sartre and Edmund Husserl; papers on the implications of his thought for ethics and radical politics, and for theorizing leadership, tragedy and the social. Everyone agreed that the quality of the papers was quite high. The commentaries and accompanying discussion were equally high, even as they added occasional elements of drama. The conference also provided some opportunity for socializing amongst the participants. The expectation is that revised versions of most of the papers presented, as well as a number of papers by others who could not make it to London, will be published as either a special issue of a journal or as a book.

**c) Mourning Derrida
John Caruana**

In the final stages of his career, Jacques Derrida composed a number of thoughtful eulogies for thinkers whom he admired, or to whom he was indebted, like Sarah Kofman, Gilles Deleuze, Emmanuel Levinas, and

Jean-Francois Lyotard. Derrida, like no other philosopher before or since, taught us about the complexities of mourning and remembering: guilt and debt, the 'impossibility' of death, the 'gift of death,' and the ethics of friendship. Now that Derrida is no longer with us, how do we remember him? What do we make of the numerous obituaries that 'remembered' Derrida through ridicule and sarcasm? Can we understand these uncharitable responses using Derrida's own thinking? These were just some of the questions that our panel explored. The first presenter, Bruce Barber of the NSCAD University, framed the first part of his discussion around a 'Dogbert' cartoon (itself a spoof of Dilbert) that spoofed postmodernism — an image that in many ways captured the distrustful spirit that surrounded Derrida's difficult work. In response to the dismissive attitude towards Derrida that prevailed during his lifetime and continues unabated subsequent to his death, Barber paid homage to Derrida by discussing the latter's lasting influence in his own field — fine arts. The second paper, delivered by Russel Killbourn of the University of Wilfred Laurier, attempted to bring Derrida together with one of the great literary figures of the last quarter century, W. G. Sebald. Killbourn brought to the fore a number of Derrida's and Sebald's shared concerns with memory and mourning. In particular, Killbourn defended the view that Sebald and Derrida regard the "question of mourning as the ground for subjectivity." David Clark of McMaster University presented a Derridean inspired reading of Schelling's late work. Clark's reading — like the other panelists — had much to say about what it means to remember the dead and the problem of thinking mortality in the midst of life. More provocatively, Clark set out to destabilize the familiar distinction between 'living' and the 'non-living' in the wake of Schelling and Derrida. Finally, Sandra Pinardi who teaches philosophy at the University of Simón Bolívar gave a paper that examined the intersection of mourning and hospitality, a theme that preoccupied Derrida at the end of his life. Pinardi's paper focused on one of Derrida's rarely commented texts, *Memoirs of the Blind*.

4. Call for Papers

Janus Head. A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Continental Philosophy, Literature, Phenomenological Psychology and the Arts

www.janushead.org

CALL FOR PAPERS: JANUS HEAD 9.2 (Winter 2006/2007) - Special Issue TOPIC: The situated body. Deadline for submissions: March 1, 2006.

Guest Editor: **Shaun Gallagher** (University of Central Florida)

In recent phenomenological and analytic philosophy, as well as in the cognitive sciences, emphasis has been given to embodiment. Concepts of embodied, enactive, and situated cognition have been developed. This special

issue of *Janus Head* would like to explore questions about how the body is situated in both physical and social environments. What various ways can we characterize a situated body, and how does situatedness affect (or effect) perception, feeling, and cognition more generally? We especially encourage interdisciplinary approaches to these questions, including perspectives informed by phenomenology, philosophy of mind, neuroscience, Gibsonian and developmental psychologies, and discussions of self, the experience of others, narrative, metaphor, architecture, etc.

We are also soliciting poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and visual art that, in some way or other, address the topic of “the situated body.” For more information please consult our website or contact jhinfo@janushead.org.

Costica Bradatan
Senior Editor, Janus Head

5. Call for papers: The Society for Phenomenology and Media

The Society for Phenomenology and Media invites submissions for a special issue of *Glimpse: Media Phenomena* devoted to the theme of sound. *Glimpse: Media Phenomena* is a peer-reviewed, print journal that addresses ‘mediation’ as a political and philosophical problem of relations and connections. We invite submissions that examine the way that sound structures the environment and transforms sense. Topics include, but are not restricted to, the phenomenology of sound perception; the history of audio technology; sound and spiritual revelation; sonocytology and the sound of life; the relation between the auditory and other senses; acoustic ecology; the politics of noise and silence; sound poetry; sound in cinema; natural and artificial sound; and fidelity in audile reproduction. We invite papers of 5000-7000 words, and shorter notes and comments of between 500 and 2000 words. Deadline: September 1st, 2005.

Initial queries: Stephen Crocker, Editor, *Glimpse: Media Phenomena*, Department of Sociology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada, A1C 5S7, Fax: (709) 737-2075, bcrocker@mun.ca

6. Call for papers: *Horizons Philosophiques*

Horizons Philosophiques, a French journal, is looking for French submissions for a special thematic issue to be published in the Spring of 2006. The theme is “Reception and Legacy of Existentialist Thought”. To consult the full text of the call for papers, please consult item #6 of the French newsletter, *Dehors dans le monde...*, NL 3.1. (<http://www.BrockU.CA/eptc-tcep/fr/newsletter.html>). Deadline for submission of papers is January 15, 2006.

7. Notable Books In Phenomenology: Organization of Phenomenological Organizations.

Last year the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations developed a list of notable books in Phenomenology (see <http://www.o-p-o.net/> and click the title on the left). The list at present contains over 330 titles in phenomenology. The organization is presently seeking more titles with an explicitly phenomenological approach from any discipline and especially from the cultural sciences. Please send information, including author, full title, city of publication, publishing house and year of publication to phenobiblio@yahoo.com. Information should be submitted before the end of August 2005.

8. Comment Gregory Cameron

New research conducted by Dr Leonard Sax, the director of the Montgomery Centre for Research in Child Development in Maryland, suggests that one of our most cherished philosophical biographemes may well be the result of a conspiracy to undermine the good name of Friedrich Nietzsche. According to Dr. Sax in an article published in *The Journal of Medical Biography* (February, 2003, 11: 47-54.), Nietzsche's mental collapse was not a result of complications arising from syphilis which he allegedly contracted from his visits with prostitutes. Rather, Sax's study of the medical records suggests that Nietzsche died of brain cancer.

It appears that the story about Nietzsche and syphilis was concocted after WWII by Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum in order to undermine Nietzsche's reputation as a consequence of his having been adopted by the Nazi ideologues. According to Sax's research, there is no corroborating evidence for Lange-Eichbaum's claim that Nietzsche contracted syphilis while visiting a brothel during his student days in Leipzig. With his collapse in 1889, Nietzsche was initially diagnosed as being in the advanced stages of syphilis. However, his doctors were later uncertain about whether or not this was a correct diagnosis. Sax's study of the records suggests that there is little or no evidence for symptoms of syphilis in Nietzsche's condition.

As a story that we have been telling for the last sixty years, it is certainly interesting to have this revision, but what I find most interesting is that we now have a new story to tell, a new story to suggest new ways of reading, a new way to thread the biographeme through the work of the philosopher. An indication perhaps of the power of Lange-Eichbaum's smear campaign?

Gregory Cameron