

About the things themselves

Newsletter of the Society of

Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture

Volume V.1, Summer 2007

About the things themselves

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1. Editor's Comments

Gregory Cameron

Back from Saskatoon and time to start thinking about next years Congress. It was great to see everyone in Saskatoon. As usual the papers I heard were excellent, as were the conversations, and it was great to see so many people taking advantage of Saskatoon's hospitality, and the rather strained taxi service.

Glancing back over the conference schedule, I am yet again impressed by the range of themes considered under the basic heading of phenomenology and existentialism. Looking back over the past few years, I am also extremely impressed by how many different themes have been addressed. There have been panels and individual papers on an enormous number of topics, thinkers, films, writers and artists. This year too we saw the first "back to the things themselves" with a panel and workshop on the theme of the in-between, a basic concept in phenomenology. Newcomers to the society, or those merely interested in what has been going on in EPTC over the past few years, should check out previous years conference schedules. There's a great deal to learn merely by reading the titles of the various papers.

While in Saskatoon, I had ample opportunity to discuss the newsletter and its possible futures. Besides providing members with news and information about EPTC, the main goal of the newsletter is to provide information about members and friends of EPTC. You will notice that in each of the newsletters there have been calls for papers, book announcements, journal announcements and conference announcements. The reason for collecting this information is to give members an opportunity to keep in touch by letting us know what it is that you or your organizations are up to. We are also very interested in short reviews of conferences, books, films, whatever you think might be of interest to the membership. So send us your info, your comments, your thoughts – we would be very happy to hear from you.

Gregory Cameron: Chief Editor
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2. Call for Papers: EPTC Vancouver 2008

Early Call for Papers EPTC/TCEP 2008

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 the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia, in conjunction with the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities of Canada during 3-5 June 2008. The Congress will bring together some 100 learned associations and more than 9,000 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 electronically in Rich Text Format: 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 electronically in Rich Text Format: 1. a brief Panel Call for Papers by Wednesday August 1, 2007. Then, by Friday January 11, 2008 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 and panels.

Except for item III.1., the submission deadline for the above materials is Friday January 11, 2008.

EPTC is able to waive Congress fees for a few delegates each year. Such awards will be made according to criteria of financial need and quality of paper at the discretion of the conference programme coordinator. Non tenure-stream delegates interested in this award should append a note indicating as much to their submission materials.

Submissions should be sent to: Professor David Tabachnick,
davidt@nipissingu.ca, EPTC/TCEP 2008 Program Coordinator.

3. Call for Papers: Panels: EPTC Vancouver 2008.

A) Back to the Things Themselves! 2008

Doing Phenomenology: “The In-Between/Edges”

This panel of collaborative phenomenological description will take place as a workshop during the Society for the Study of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture’s (EPTC) annual meeting at the Congress of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vancouver, British Columbia in the first days of June 2008. For more information, see the EPTC general Call for Papers for Congress 2008 in this newsletter.

Back to the Things Themselves! is an attempt to temporarily liberate ourselves from textual exegesis, and return to the lived world to divine the essential structures of experience through rigorous phenomenological description. Husserl’s call to return *zu der Sachen selbst* has only been intermittently heeded by subsequent generations of phenomenologists, the majority of which have generally focused on contributing to and elaborating on the enormous critical apparatus issuing from the founding texts of the movement. What *Back to the Things Themselves!* proposes is to build on the important contributions of such scholarship by using them to guide our reflections on phenomena in the lifeworld.

The Theme of Next Year’s Panel: “The In-Between/Edges”

EPTC’s inaugural *Back to the Things Themselves!* panel in 2007 began to explore the phenomenon of the in-between. Based on suggestions from last year’s participants, next year we will invite further exploration of “the in-between” in order to deepen and expand our initial conversation. Yet we will also take this conversation in a new direction: “edges.” We invite the submission of descriptions of both or either of these phenomena to *Back to the Things Themselves! 2008*.

What is neither here nor there, now nor then? What resides or occurs in the in-between, and what is its meaning or purpose? And what is the meaning or purpose of the edges that mark the liminality of both this in-between, and the phenomena on either side of it? What are the rhythms, speeds, contours or densities of the in-between? What affects, sensations or movements do edges evoke? Can the in-between be known, can we dwell there - or do we only ever traverse this phenomenon, pass through or pass over? Do edges draw a clear line in the proverbial sand, or do they rather shift like the waves of sands across a desert? “The in-between” and “edges” are clearly related phenomena, in that they both

raise questions about the limits of binary systems of classification and the identity of things as discrete and separate entities. But what is the nature of this relation? How do the phenomena of the in-between and edges support one another, challenge one another, or even form the condition of possibility for one another?

For this workshop we are inviting participants to explore the phenomena of the in-between and edges in relation to one another, or as phenomena in their own right. As examples of doing phenomenology, these explorations will go to the things themselves, as they are experienced in the lifeworld. While the following suggestions are by no means exhaustive or prescriptive, participants might consider grounding their descriptions in the following phenomena:

- in-betweens of identity (transsexuality, hybridity, diaspora, middle-age, tween-hood) and/or the edges that demarcate difference
- architectural in-betweens (bridges, passages, tunnels) and/or architectural edges (walls and fences, city limits, urban/suburban/ex-urban transitions)
- musical in-betweens (*intermezzo*, the caesura, musical bridges) and/or aesthetic edges (the frame of the work of art, the foreground/background divide, the edges of a certain genre)
- linguistic and grammatical in-betweens (patois, the stammer, the comma, the conjunction, the copula, ellipsis) and/or edges of language (slang, gibberish, the boundary dividing animal communication and human language)
- cultural and political in-betweens (the “shoulder” season, commuting, “between jobs,” half-way houses) and/or cultural and political edges (fringe groups and movements, marginality, the poverty line)
- other territories of transformation and experiences of liminality

Submission Guidelines and Format of *Back to the Things Themselves! 2008*

Back to the Things Themselves! is explicitly interested in the application of phenomenology’s insights, and in textual exegesis only to the extent that it serves to clarify a point of method or a feature of a given description. Papers should therefore focus squarely on the announced themes of the panel, and arise from phenomenological reflection broadly construed, be it a product of Husserlian or post-Husserlian phenomenology, or any of the more contemporary variants. The panel endeavors to collaboratively generate detailed, extended descriptions of the lived world, which can be expressed in terms of essences or manifold matrices of meaning. The aim is to stay close to the phenomenon itself in order to be faithful to it and describe it vividly to others; the conceptual

tools employed to this end are of only secondary interest. Therefore, conceptual explications of method, while in some cases helpful and illuminating, should be brief and limited, and not interrupt the “flow” of a description. Similarly, reference to other theoretical explications of the stated phenomena may serve to contextualize the description that the paper offers, but the explication of such theories should remain peripheral to the description itself.

In the spirit of collaborative phenomenology, paper commentators for *Back to the Things Themselves!* will view textual interpretations in light of how these interpretations inform a given description. In other words, commentators in this panel will act less as critics of scholarly exegesis and more as collaborators helping to extend, refine and deepen a paper’s description. Criticisms of textual interpretation are welcome so long as they further the aim of collaborative inquiry into the phenomena.

The panel will consist of four to six papers, followed by a 2-3 hour moderated workshop and discussion on the phenomena under analysis, as well as the practice of phenomenological description. The work of the panel will culminate in this concluding workshop, which will take place the day after the final EPTC sessions.

Papers on the “the in-between” and/or “edges” should be submitted to David Koukal by RTF or Word email attachment at koukaldr@udmercy.edu by January 7. Papers should take no longer than 30 minutes to read (generally less than 4000 words), should be prepared for anonymous review (identifiable by paper title only), and include a separate abstract not exceeding 100 words. The cover sheet should also list the paper's title, the author's name, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address. Please note that papers will be initially reviewed by the panel organizers, and suitable papers will be forwarded to EPTC for anonymous review.

The organizers will invite authors of papers from both *Back to the Things Themselves!* 2007 and 2008 to submit revised papers to be considered for publication in a Special Topics issue of *PhaenEx: Journal of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture*, to be published in Fall/Winter 2008. For further information, please see www.phaenex.uwindsor.ca “Call for Papers.”

Please address any questions to: David Koukal (koukaldr@udmercy.edu) or Astrida Neimanis (astrida@sympatico.ca).

B) On Time: Perspectives on Temporality and Urgency

Organized by Gregory Cameron and Kir Kuiken for EPTC.

The problem of time, its nature and constitution, has been a major feature of phenomenological, and post- phenomenological, research over the past century. The temporality of existence and experience has demanded

extensive meditations on the nature and role of time in human life and community. In the past, however, these meditations have tended to focus on the universal structures of time consciousness, on the temporality of dasein or of human being-in-the-world, . As a result, the historicity of temporal existence has taken something of a backseat. Meanwhile, in cultural theory, an increasing amount of work has been devoted to the transformation of temporal existence brought about, it is claimed, by capitalism and the mass media. Relations between past, present and future are being irrevocably transformed; we are living in a state of amnesia, a progressively decreasing temporal horizon, a tendency towards the immediacy of the experiential present. At the same time, however, the very same mass media is today bombarding us with visions of a future, whether immanent or indeterminate, in which the very possibility of human life is threatened. Global warming, various possible pandemics, the drying up of the oil fields, rogue states and nuclear threat, not to mention various natural disasters, all constitute a continuous threat to our sense of security and the immediacy of the moment. There is, it appears, a turn in attention, from the past to the future, from a past that held the key to the meaning of our existence to a future that constitutes a threat to the very possibility of human life. The question of temporality has therefore met with an increasing urgency, as though we were soon to reach a limit after which it would be impossible to turn back. This seminar will at once respond to and question this urgency.

The goal of the EPTC panel "On Time" is to approach the question of temporality today from as many different perspectives as possible. These can include theoretical considerations of the nature of time in social and cultural theory; representations of temporality in cultural production; explorations of transformations in the lived experience of historicity; critical meditations on the role of representations of the past, present or future; the ideology of temporal representations; temporality and technology; the cultural specificity of the experience of temporality; and more general papers on time and urgency and the anxiety that accompanies this urgency.

Papers from all academic backgrounds are encouraged. Preference will not be given to papers from phenomenological or existentialist backgrounds, but some theoretical consideration of the issues involved in thinking temporality is a necessity.

Papers of no more than 4000 words, in French or English, are to be submitted in full by January 5th 2008. Papers should be prepared for blind review, with a cover sheet including paper title, author's name, a 150 word abstract, affiliation and contact information. A decision concerning your paper will be made before February 15th, 2008. Papers should be submitted by e-mail attachment in rich text format to grcameron@wlu.ca.

See above general call for papers in this newsletter for further information on the 2008 Congress.

C) Rethinking 1968

The events of 1968 shook the world. On the 40th anniversary of the protests in France, Germany and the United States, we are organizing a panel to reflect on the importance of these student actions and whether they can serve as a basis for critiquing our current political climate. We want to ask if the philosophical underpinnings of these revolutionary acts have continued relevance today.

In France, the French phenomenologist and existentialist, turned Marxist, Jean-Paul Sartre was held up as one of the intellectuals who could provide an intellectual basis for the revolution. Alongside structuralists like Althusser, Sartre was viewed as an intellectual god-father of the movement, not only because of his writings critical of capitalism and the bourgeois system, be they his early writings on existentialism, or his later reformulation of Marxism in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, nor because he linked left-wing activism in the first world with support for the oppressed elsewhere, but because he was willing to lend his name and support to the Maoists against the Gaullist government.

In Germany, two philosophers, the phenomenologically-inspired and Marxist Herbert Marcuse and the neo-Marxist and member of the Frankfurt School Jürgen Habermas were central figures for the student revolutionaries. As a member of the Frankfurt School's second generation, Habermas was viewed by the students as safely removed from the alleged post-World War II conservatism of Adorno and Horkheimer. For the first several years following its publication, Habermas's habilitation thesis, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, was text central to the student struggle in Germany. Similarly, Marcuse's texts, *Reason and Revolution*, *Eros and Civilization*, and *One-Dimensional Man*, as well as his occasional writings, were used as rallying cries by the left both in Europe and in the United States.

The question we propose for this panel is, what relevance do these philosophers's works have today, in light of the continued stability and even expansion of the capitalist system, and the fact that student leaders like Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Bernard Kouchner, and Joschka Fischer have renounced extra-political activities and joined the political mainstream. We are interested in papers that explore the relevance of the philosophical critiques that inspired the movements of 1968 for present day radical politics, including papers that use the philosophical inspirations behind 1968:

- (1) To critique global capitalism while providing a positive way forward,
- (2) To examine American hegemony,
- (3) To examine possibilities for overturning existing political structures in either the developed or developing world,
- (4) To examine issues surrounding the environment or environmental justice,
- (5) Or any other topic, provided that the paper deals extensively with the philosophical ideas of 1968 and their relevance for today's changed political landscape.

Interested authors should submit the following electronically in RTF or WORD formats:

1. A copy of your paper, not more than about 3,500 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.

If you are interested in presenting a commentary (of not more than 1,000 words) on a paper, please submit a brief email note of interest, including your name, complete mailing address, institutional affiliation, e-mail address, and relevant areas of interest. Submissions and queries should be sent to: Kevin W. Gray at kevin-william.gray.1@ulaval.ca. The submission deadline is January 1, 2008.

The panel will be part of the annual meeting for the Society for Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture (EPTC/TCEP) — <http://www.brocku.ca/eptc-tcep/> — at UBC in Vancouver, Canada, June 3-5, 2008, held in conjunction with the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities of Canada (3-5 June 2008). 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/>.

Papers from this session will be considered for publication in a special volume of the journal *PhaenEx*, to be published the end of 2009.

D) Frantz Fanon's Phenomenology of Oppression

Frantz Fanon has had a significant influence on postcolonial studies and on concrete struggles against colonial oppression, and yet he is often overlooked in phenomenological and existentialist circles, or else his philosophy is seen as merely applying Hegelian and Sartrean themes. The papers in this panel will seek to correct this oversight by uncovering

the distinctively philosophical contributions that Fanon's works have made to decolonization struggles, both in national liberation movements and in previously exclusionary sites of power such as academia and clinical psychiatry. We would like to call for papers on all aspects of Frantz Fanon's phenomenological analyses of power and oppression, as well as papers exploring Fanon's influence on different types of anti-colonial struggle.

Please send paper submissions to Tracey Nicholls - tracey.j.nicholls@gmail.com - and Chloë Taylor - chloe.taylor@utoronto.ca - by January 7. Papers should take no longer than 30 minutes to read (generally less than 4000 words), should be prepared for anonymous review (identifiable by paper title only), and include a separate abstract not exceeding 100 words. The cover sheet should also list the paper's title, the author's name, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address. Please note that papers will be initially reviewed by the panel organizers, and suitable papers will be forwarded to EPTC for anonymous review.

4. Panel Reviews: EPTC/TCEP Saskatoon, 2007.

A) "Recent Continental Perspectives on Animals"

The idea for a panel (and journal issue) on Recent Continental Perspectives on Animals was hatched between Lisa Guenther and myself in a conversation at the McGill library early last summer, and was pursued over breakfast and many cups of tea at Dusty's diner on Parc Avenue, during Lisa's sabbatical in Montreal, where we drafted our call for papers. While philosophers sometimes worry about the practical relevance of their work, the example of Peter Singer's writings on animal liberation is frequently cited as a case of a philosopher whose work has convinced thousands of individuals to become vegetarian and to abolish other practices of cruelty to animals, and thus of philosophy being a highly effective means of achieving practical political and ethical goals. While the subject of animal rights and animal liberation has thrived in analytic philosophy for several decades following Singer's first work on the topic, only recently has the question of non-human animals come to generate a comparable amount of interest among continental philosophers. It was this recent flurry of interest in non-human animals in continental philosophy which Lisa and I hoped to see examined and pursued in the EPTC panel on "other animals." The papers we received and which were ultimately accepted met and surpassed our hopes, and Lisa and I were entirely pleased with the outcome of the panel.

The morning session began with two papers exploring Deleuze's and

Guattari's notion of "becoming animal." Astrida Neimanis presented "Becoming Grizzly: Timothy Treadwell meets Deleuze and Guattari," a stimulating discussion of "becoming animal" in terms of Werner Herzog's 2005 film *Grizzly Man*. Etienne Turpin's thoughtful commentary provoked a lively discussion of bees and cell phones, among other topics, and in general we saw a pattern emerge of insufficient time for the amount of discussion generated by the excellent papers and commentaries presented. Lori Brown's wonderful paper was entitled "Becoming Animal in the Flesh: the Impact of Deleuze and Guattari's Becoming-Animal on Our Ethical Engagement with Animal Others," and was followed by a lively commentary by Hasana Sharp. Next Emma Jones presented a superb paper, "In the Presence of the Living Cockroach: The Moment of Aliveness and the Gendered Body in Agamben and Lispector," which engaged with Clarice Lispector's novel *The Passion According to G. H.* Lisa Guenther, who is conveniently also working on cockroaches at the moment, was the ideal commentator for this paper, while in the discussion period Hasana Sharp once more provided a memorable intervention in her impromptu Spinozist analysis of Dick Cheney's gratuitous killings of countless pheasants.

The afternoon session began with two ethical papers, Zipporah Weisberg's "Unmasking the Animal Other in Levinas's Ethics," a careful examination of the positive potential for developing an animal ethics from Levinas's thought, which was followed by an equally careful but more pessimistic reading of Levinas's contribution to animal ethics in the commentary by Scott Marratto. Next was my own "The Precarious Lives of Animals: Butler, Coetzee, and Animal Ethics," on which Karen Houle commented. Among other illuminating points, Karen raised the provocative comparison between animal rights and abortion. Finally, with Brett Buchanan's compelling paper, "The Time of the Animal is Now (or The Time of Death)," and Alexandra Morrison's thought-provoking commentary, the panel concluded with a fascinating discussion of the topic of animals in Heidegger's philosophy.

Thanks to all the presenters, commentators, and audience members who helped to make this such an interesting and fruitful day!

B) Back to the Things Themselves! A Phenomenological Practicum on the In-Between

The 2007 Saskatoon meeting also featured EPTC's inaugural panel of Back to the Things Themselves!, an extension of the occasional attempts of various phenomenologists to actually do phenomenology. The panel's organizers hope that BTTTT! will become an annual attempt to temporarily

liberate participants from textual exegesis, and return to the lived world to collaboratively divine the structures of experience through rigorous phenomenological description. Featured papers from the first meeting included analyses of corpses, motels, commuting, and building a sauna as phenomena manifesting different aspects of "the in-between," the panel's first theme. The panel culminated in a workshop facilitated by Glen Mazis of Penn State - Harrisburg. Mazis was a participant in the Back to the Things meetings (sometimes called "the Carbondale Conference") a group with similar goals that met for a period during the late 1990s. Response to the first BTTTT! was very positive; based on suggestions from participants, the organizers will invite further analyses of "the in-between" next year in Vancouver, and extend this initial exploration to a related phenomena: "edges." BTTTT! 2008: The In-between/Edges promises an expanded workshop and a more refined format designed to elicit more collaboration from its participants. [Check out our Call for Papers in this newsletter.]

C) Nietzsche on Revenge, Pre-Platonic Philosophy, and Strauss.

The 2007 EPTC Nietzsche panel consisted of three papers, two in English, one in French. Javier Ibanez Noe's paper explored revenge in Nietzsche, and especially its relation to time. John Duncan looked at Anaximander as the leading figure, and as a Schopenhauerian figure, in Nietzsche's early manuscript on the Pre-Platonics. Martine Beland dealt with Nietzsche's Untimely Meditation on David Strauss in its historical context. The papers, commentaries, and discussion all amounted to a pleasant and thought provoking morning of Nietzsche in Saskatoon.

5. Call for Papers: PhaenEx: Open Issue.

PhaenEx 3, no. 1 (spring/summer 2008): Open Issue. Papers dealing with any topic relevant to the goals of PhaenEx are invited for publication review for the Open Issue to be published by early summer 2008. Submissions are to be made on line, are due October 1, 2007, and will be subject to peer review. Lead Editor: Martine Beland (martine.beland@videotron.ca).

6. Book Announcement.

Barry Blesser, former Professor at MIT, would like to draw your attention to his new book, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*, which has recently been published by MIT Press.

Creating the aural experience of space is central to all sounds because they and the listener always exist in a space. *Spaces Speak* establishes the language of aural architecture and applies the principles to examples from many cultures and centuries. Aural architecture influences the social, artistic, behavioral, and cultural experiences of the inhabitants of a space. Aural architecture parallels the more conventional visual view of space and the built environment.

More information is available at the author's website: www.SpacesSpeak.com.