

Chapter 1

Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: An Introduction



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In the last several years, I have come to believe firmly that phenomenology provides an important intellectual means for healing the rifts between art and science, seeing and understanding, knowledge and action, and design and building. As an environment-behavior researcher working with architects and landscape architects, I have sought to communicate with scholars and designers who use a phenomenological perspective, either explicitly or implicitly, and to synthesize their work in review articles and edited collections.¹ *Dwelling, Seeing and Designing* is one step toward this aim and in many ways can be seen as a companion to *Dwelling, Place, and Environment*, an earlier volume of phenomenological essays that I edited with philosopher Robert Mugerauer (Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985).

The greatest contrast between these two books is that this new collection represents fewer disciplines and gives more attention to environmental design and the built environment. Of the thirteen contributors, seven are environmental designers—four architects, two landscape architects and one planner; and six are in the sciences and humanities—three geographers, two philosophers, and one ecologist. In requesting essays, I suggested in my letter of invitation that contributors might focus on such themes as environmental awareness, environmental aesthetics, architectural experience, architectural meaning, and environmental design as place making. I was particularly interested in design and scholarly work that illustrates the reciprocal relationship between human livability and the built environment. I hoped for real-world examples of environmental design nurtured by phenomenological and related understandings.

Eventually, I received the thirteen articles presented here, which I have arranged around three major themes: First, modernity and the built environment; second, architectural and landscape meaning; and, third, relationships among living, understanding and designing. This introduction overviews these three themes and considers underlying commonalities. My hope is that the essays of this collection illustrate how phenomenological and similar qualitative approaches can lead to environmental understanding and design more in tune with our experiences and lives as human beings in the everyday world.

Part I. Modernity and the Built Environment: Problems and Possibilities

The three articles in part I of the collection are by geographer Edward Relph, philosopher Karsten Harries, and landscape architect Catherine Howett. These authors suggest that current Western environments are too often determined by economic, technological or aesthetic concerns alone and do not always relate to the full range of human experience, particularly a sense of place and dwelling. In various ways, the three authors argue that the built environment contributes to who we are as human beings and partly establishes how we see, understand and live in the world.

In "Modernity and the Reclamation of Place," Edward Relph emphasizes that a sense of place is not a romantic anachronism as some modern thinkers, particularly post-structuralists and deconstructivists, claim. Rather, places are an integral part of psychological and social well-being. Relph points out that a sense of place cannot be designed and created in all its details, since by its very nature, place is largely ineffable and indeterminate. Yet Relph suggests that an explicit understanding of place might contribute to political, economic and design decisions that would support and enhance particular places.

A key need is the involvement and commitment of people who live and work in these places, which must be made "from the inside out." In this sense, designers and policy-makers are no longer environmental manipulators but, rather, environmental midwives who provide "direction and advice based on their special skills and breadth of experience that allow them to resolve specific technical matters, overcome parochialism, and see the broad effects and im-

plications of local actions." Relph concludes that an understanding of place might help to facilitate locally committed development that is self-consciously aware of wider contextual issues and relationships.²

Karsten Harries, in his "Thoughts on a Non-Arbitrary Architecture," speaks of modern architecture in much the same way that Relph speaks of modern places: Neither buildings nor planned environments do full justice to the needs of human dwelling because they have been made arbitrarily rather than allowed to arise spontaneously out of the requirements and concerns of particular people and landscapes. Harries begins by criticizing postmodernist approaches to design, which are valuable in that they are creative and free, but troublesome in that they are eclectic and without conviction. The modern Western world is fortunate in that people are no longer constrained geographically or historically and can borrow freely from buildings and design styles of any time or place. The result too often, however, is architecture that is arbitrary in the sense that it could readily be other than what it is formally and stylistically.

Harries argues that the dilemma of arbitrariness cannot be solved by aesthetic, functional, or historical solutions because meaning cannot finally be made or invented. Instead, meaning can only be discovered through the lives and worlds that a building is meant to support and reflect. Harries suggests that the thinking of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1890–1976), especially his notion of *dwelling* (Heidegger, 1971), provides one conceptual means for considering building as it might sustain and mirror the worlds of particular persons, groups and environments. Harries is not the first scholar to suggest the value of Heidegger's philosophy to architecture (cf. Mugerauer, 1988; Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 1985). What is innovative about Harries's presentation is its call for a language of *natural symbols*—essential meanings that provide identity and orientation in human life, for example, up/down, heavy/light, inside/outside, vertical/horizontal, front/back, left/right, natural/human-made, and so forth.

A key question with which Harries concludes is how architectural elements such as column, lintel, door, and window might be understood as physical expressions of natural symbols and thereby provide one kind of tacit order to particular worlds and places (also see Harries, 1988). Several essays in part II of the collection illustrate how architectural elements like roof and porch can by their

very nature express and sustain essential qualities of human experience like insiderness, outsiderness, threshold and betweenness. In this sense, these articles provide concrete examples of what Harries identifies as the key task of environmental design: "Interpreting the world as a meaningful order in which the individual can find his or her place in the midst of nature and community."³

If architecture, from a phenomenological perspective, deals largely with buildings as they support a sense of place and dwelling, then one aim of landscape architecture is to place people in a harmonious way with the world of nature. But as Catherine Howett explains in her essay, "If the Doors of Perception Were Cleansed": Toward an Experiential Aesthetics for the Designed Landscape," landscape architecture has often ignored the full range of environmental experience by reducing the landscape to a set of views that satisfy various aesthetic and visual design criteria. Howett summarizes the intellectual history of this "scenographic" approach to landscape architecture and calls for a more comprehensive perspective that would create places where "we are invited to experience nature—and ourselves in community with nature and with each other—more profoundly, more intimately, more physically, than is possible when conventional scenographic values are enforced."

Practically, Howett suggests that a more holistic experience of nature and landscape might be helped if designers gave attention to three themes. First, she advocates an emphasis on *genius loci*, or spirit of place. She believes that a deeper understanding of a place's essential qualities would better attune the landscape architect to the ways that the natural environment contributes to a particular sense of place. Second, Howett suggests that landscape architects should continually be aware of their taken-for-granted design definitions and preferences. How, for example, does one think of "the beautiful," "the tasteful," or "the pleasing"? Through such directed attention, landscape architects might be better able to bypass unself-conscious biases and predilections and open themselves to other design possibilities. Third, Howett suggests that it might be useful to consider landscape design as a living process rather than a static product. In this way, the designer might be better able to create a more holistic environmental experience that would incorporate other senses besides sight and give people the opportunity to participate with landscapes more thoroughly, particularly in terms of bodily and emotional encounter.

As a group, the three essays of Part I suggest that current environmental design and policy are often arbitrary and incomplete.

Environmental scholars and professionals need to find ways whereby places, buildings and landscapes can say for themselves what they are rather than being constricted by a language and interpretation that is imposed from without. The three essays suggest that if academic and professional descriptions of the built environment can be more accurate and thorough, then this deepened understanding might provide the foundation for more humane and harmonious environmental design.⁴

Part II. Interpreting Architecture and Landscape

The essays of Part II illustrate ways in which deepened understanding might be had in regard to particular architectural elements, buildings and landscapes. In "The First Roof: Interpreting a Spatial Pattern," architect Murray Silverstein explores the roof in implicit phenomenological fashion. He suggests that the roof is an essential architectural element because it expresses three polarities that are an integral part of human living: inside/outside, self/world, and practical/ideal. Silverstein examines each of these polarities as they simultaneously shape and are shaped by the roof. Next, he illustrates their practical application in a house designed by Jacobson Silverstein Winslow Architects, the Berkeley architectural firm in which he is a partner.

In Karsten Harries's terms, the polarities described by Silverstein are natural symbols, and his explication of the roof demonstrates how they can be supported, mirrored and drawn together through built form. For example, the roof expresses the inside-outside polarity because it naturally divides the world into two spaces—one that contains and the other that excludes. The automatic, accompanying result is the two distinct experiences of inside-ness and outside-ness. Silverstein also explains how the roof helps to establish the two related existential polarities of self/world and practicality/idealism. *Just by being what it is*, the roof allows particular human meanings to unfold and thereby helps to define and support a human world that is one way rather than another.⁵

This tacit reciprocity between the built environment and human experience is a central phenomenological insight, and philosopher Robert Mugerauer's "Toward an Architectural Vocabulary: The Porch as a Between," draws on Martin Heidegger's interpretation of dwelling and building to clarify this reciprocity further, using Midwestern and Texan porches as an example. In agreement

with Harries and Silverstein, Mugerauer suggests that a building element such as *porch* best joins people and world when, through its very nature, it provides particular situations and meanings that are present automatically and require no direct action or attention to happen.

Mugerauer demonstrates in his essay that the porch, like the roof, naturally expresses meaning and directs experience just by being what it is, though the specific nature of these meanings and experiences is considerably different from the roofs. If the latter relates to such essential human qualities as centeredness and selfness, the former relates to *betweenness*, in the sense that the porch makes itself into a place by providing a threshold between inside and outside, people and nature, and individual and society. Mugerauer explains that there are many modes of betweenness and no doubt each is evoked by specific architectural elements such as door, window, foyer and stair. The need he says, echoing Harries, is a phenomenology of architectural elements as they support particular human experiences, situations and events.⁶

A start toward such an architectural phenomenology is suggested by architect Ronald Walkey's "A Lesson in Continuity: The Legacy of the Builders' Guild in Northern Greece," which identifies the special architectural qualities of one particular building type—the multi-story, guild-built houses of mountainous northern Greece, western Turkey, and the adjoining Balkan states. Built from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, these houses and their communities had a powerful sense of order and place. Walkey examines the building process responsible for these houses and then identifies eight architectural qualities that mark the buildings' essential character. These qualities include seasonal activities, sense of front and back, protection versus openness, ascending lightness, centeredness, and so forth.

Walkey emphasizes that these qualities do not involve imposed, arbitrary rules that the guild builders were forced to incorporate in their construction as, say, a contractor must in building suburban tract houses today. Rather, these qualities resided intuitively in the builders' imaginations and were automatically called forth when a particular dwelling was built. *Iconic house* is the term that Walkey gives to this architectural image arising naturally in the builder's imagination. A major question that Walkey's article suggests is whether such iconic images might be cultivated in a modern design context. One significant tool may be the kind of qualitative explication illustrated in Walkey's study. His work is an important com-

plement to the approaches of Harries, Silverstein, and Mugerauer because he integrates a series of relationships among various natural symbols and architectural forms and demonstrates how they come together as a whole to create a specific building type that is effective both practically and aesthetically.

In "Toward a Phenomenology of Landscape and Landscape Experience: An Example from Catalonia," geographer Joan Nogué i Font moves from the built to the natural environment. He seeks to describe the essential landscape character of *Garrotxa*, a region in Spain's Pyrenees foothills north of Barcelona. Nogué i Font's aim is a phenomenology of region, and to carry out this aim practically, he involves himself in extended discussions with two groups of people at home in the *Garrotxa* landscape—farmers and landscape painters. Nogué i Font's study is innovative methodologically because it uses the descriptions of insiders to *Garrotxa* to discover its underlying regional qualities. The study is also important conceptually because it addresses a crucial ontological question that a phenomenology of environment must sooner or later face: Can there be a phenomenology of landscape in its own right, or does there exist only a phenomenology of that landscape as particular individuals and groups experience it?

Nogué i Font answers this question by concluding that both phenomenologies exist and one does not exclude the other. In exploring the *Garrotxa* experience for the farmers and landscape painters separately, he points out that in some ways the environment has significantly different meanings for the two groups. The farmers, for example, know the landscape most thoroughly at a sensual, bodily level, since practical success provides the farmers' means of livelihood. In contrast, the painters first interpret *Garrotxa* aesthetically in terms of mass, form and color; they strive to touch the landscape intuitively and discover its underlying character and atmosphere. Yet, in spite of the differences in the way the two groups speak about *Garrotxa*, there are certain physical elements and experienced qualities that mark the uniqueness of *Garrotxa* as a "thing in itself." Perhaps most striking is the environmental characteristic marked by the meaning of *Garrotxa*—a wild, tangled landscape of gorges, precipices and forests that, because of their harshness and difficult access, inspire a sense of respect and endurance.

The last essay of Part II, ecologist Mark Riegner's "Toward a Holistic Understanding of Place: Reading Landscape Through Its Flora and Fauna," also provides an innovative way to interpret the

natural environment phenomenologically. Unlike Nogué i Font, however, who seeks to discover the landscape through people's environmental experiences, Riegner draws on a way of science developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), who believed that thoughtful, dedicated looking at a particular phenomenon would eventually lead to a vivid moment of seeing in which the phenomenon and its various aspects are understood in a deeper, more holistic way (Amrine, Zucker and Wheeler, 1987; Bortoft, 1985, 1986).

Goethe's own descriptive investigations included studies of plant form and shape—that is, plant morphology (Goethe, 1988). In turn, the zoologist Wolfgang Schad (1971) drew on Goethe's approach to plants as a way to study animal morphology descriptively. Riegner uses the work of Goethe and Schad as a base from which to read the character of landscape. He argues that there is an intimate relationship between a landscape and its living forms; thus, a deeper understanding of a landscape's plants and animals should foster a deeper understanding of the landscape, and vice versa.

Riegner first explains that there is a relationship between a plant's morphology and specific environmental qualities, such as degrees of light and moisture. Plants with leaf silhouettes more rounded, for example, generally are associated with darker and moister environments, while plants with leaf silhouettes more incised generally are associated with lighter and drier environments. Similarly an animal's form and shape says much about its environment—for example, whether it lives underground or in the water, or whether it is active by day or by night. In one sense, Riegner's work suggests that a landscape and its living forms comprise a kind of language, and that through a Goethean way of science, they can be "read" in terms of underlying patterns and interconnections. His research illustrates how landscape and its living forms are part and parcel. He suggests that creatures are *immersed* in their world and that to look carefully at one can provide insights into the other.

Of all the essays in the collection, Riegner's work is perhaps the most provocative because it describes an intimacy between living form and world that is profoundly different from conventional biological and ecological perspectives that tacitly divide environment and organisms into parts and flows of energy. In his essay, Riegner provides no detailed reading of a particular landscape or its living forms because he is marking out a research terrain—what he calls *phenomenological ecology*—that has barely been explored.

In spite of its preliminary quality, however, Riegner's work is important because it points toward certain relationships—for example, roundness/wetness/darkness/flatness versus angularity/dryness/lightness/undulation—that would seem to serve as directives for further Goethean research in regard to landscapes and their living forms. Riegner notes, for instance, that a prairie landscape expresses uniformity, both in its own appearance and through its living forms. What would a detailed exploration of prairie landscapes from this perspective lead to, and would one find parallel descriptive patterns if one conducted a complementary study of people who live on prairies, through an approach like Nogué i Font's? And what if the living forms of different prairies suggested differences as well as commonalities? Could such differences perhaps point toward other environmental qualities—geology, relative location and so forth—that define the differences among the prairies more precisely?

In addition, Riegner's approach would seem to have potential value for architectural phenomenology. For instance, do the vernacular architectures found in particular landscapes like prairies, forests or river plains reflect and highlight qualities of the landscapes themselves? Consider Walkey's guild-built houses. Does their form or organization say anything about the rugged, mountainous landscape in which they were built? And are there commonalities with other vernacular buildings in similar mountainous terrains? In short, Riegner's use of the Goethean approach suggests creative possibilities for qualitatively exploring the relationship between worlds and the things and living forms that reside in those worlds.

Considering the essays of Part II as a whole, one can say that they illustrate a crucial aspect of architectural and landscape meaning: It is not added on cognitively but arises directly through immediate unself-conscious experience of what the natural and built environments offer. For example, the meaning of the roof is first of all *existential* in the sense that it spontaneously establishes such basic experienced qualities as inside/outside, self/world and so forth, *simply by being present and being what it is* (Seamon, 1990; Thiis-Evensen, 1987). Similarly, the meanings of Walkey's guild-built houses, Nogué i Font's Garrotxa landscape, or Riegner's plants and animals in their natural environment are *always already present*. Landscapes, objects, buildings, creatures and people all have particular ways of being in their worlds. The essays of Part II

illustrate approaches whereby these ways of being-in-the-world can be studied empathetically and critically.

Part III. Living, Understanding, and Designing

The essays of Part III move away from material entities—architectural elements, buildings, and landscapes—and move toward less visible processes that exist in time as well as space—designing, learning, understanding, living, and creating community. All of the essays deal with *relationship*, whether between teaching and learning, designing and building, building and using, individual and group, or client and designer.

My essay, “Different Worlds Coming Together: A Phenomenology of Relationship as Portrayed in Doris Lessing’s *Diaries of Jane Somers*,” directly explores relationship, which I define as the coming together of two separate worlds in a widening sphere of interaction, experience and concern. I argue that all relationships involve a cyclic process that can be described by seven progressive stages that begin with dissatisfaction and search and move toward understanding and deeper involvement. I call this temporal process the “relationship cycle,” which I explicate through British-African writer Doris Lessing’s *Diaries of Jane Somers*, a novel that describes the growing friendship between two unlikely people—an indigent old woman and a stylish London editor of a fashionable women’s magazine.

By using Lessing’s novel as a descriptive base from which to extract more general characteristics of these two different worlds coming together, I argue that the development of relationship involves hazard and offers no guarantee that any growth or understanding will occur. In contrast to relationship is what I call *connection*—an arbitrary linkage between worlds that is susceptible to failure when changed or stressed in any way. I argue that social policy and environmental design often fail today because they are founded on the superficiality and forced contact of connection rather than on the depth and genuine contact of relationship. In the last part of the essay, I attempt to illustrate the generalizing value of the relationship cycle by using it to examine the student-teacher and client-architect relationships.

In “Putting Geometry in Its Place: Toward a Phenomenology of the Design Process,” architect Kimberly Dovey explores the client-architect relationship directly by drawing on the phenomenological

notion of *lived-space*—everyday environments and places as people live in and use them. He examines design translations between lived-space and *geometric space*—space as objective measurement. He points out potential disjunctions that cause confusion between architect and client and lead to a poorly conceived design that does not work well for its users.

Dovey describes the design process in terms of a “cycle of lived-space.” In this cycle, the designer, first, must understand clients’ everyday environmental needs—their lived-space, in other words; second, he or she must translate those needs into geometric expression—distances, heights, spaces, and so forth. In turn, this built environment becomes the context for human actions and, thus, another lived-space. Dovey examines two phases of the lived-space cycle—sketch planning and working drawings. He shows how in each phase there can be a failure in translation from experience and lived-space to measured expression and geometric space. Dovey ends by suggesting changes in the design process that might overcome breakdowns in the lived-space cycle. These changes include experiential simulation, a design process that involves piecemeal change, and phenomenological evaluations of environments already built.

Landscape architect Randolph T. Hester, Jr.’s “Sacred Structures and Everyday Life: A Return to Manteo, North Carolina,” echoes Dovey’s lived-space cycle in that Hester returns to evaluate a community design that he did in 1983 for the Outer Banks town of Manteo, North Carolina (Hester 1986). Hester’s aim is to overview the design process that led to the Manteo plan and determine its various successes and failures in the five years since it was implemented.

Hester’s work is important because it is an effort to develop community planning that arises from the everyday lives and needs of the insiders of place—one of Edward Relph’s key emphases in his opening essay. Hester discovers that the elements of place important for Manteo residents were often difficult to identify and to articulate because these elements were seemingly mundane and not striking visually or aesthetically. Through the use of behavior mapping, surveys, and interviews, Hester and his team eventually identified Manteo’s “Sacred Structure”—a set of settings, situations, and events that marked the heart of Manteo as a place for its residents. This Sacred Structure was then used as the basis for Manteo’s community design.

In returning to Manteo, Hester informally evaluates how successful the Sacred Structure design has been in maintaining

Manteo's traditional sense of place while at the same time helping to stimulate the town's economy. Overall, he finds that the master design has helped strengthen Manteo's small-town quality, though some new commercial development is overscaled and, therefore, out of place. He also traces the politics of the town design and finds that some residents' opposition to the design has slowed and changed its development. He concludes that, as a design tool, the Sacred Structure provides one way to reduce differences between insiders and outsiders. In Relph's terms, Hester illustrates one way in which the environmental designer can become a midwife who helps insiders articulate local needs and then translates those needs into design incorporating wider contextual concerns—in the case of Manteo, a secure economic base.

The relationship between community and design is also a central theme in Clare Cooper Marcus's "Designing for a Commitment to Place: Lessons from the Alternative Community *Findhorn*." Cooper Marcus, a community planner, examines how the physical environment has contributed to a sense of community at Findhorn, a small alternative community founded in 1962 on the coast of northeastern Scotland. Like nineteenth century utopian experiments such as Oneida, Harmony, and Shaker settlements, Findhorn is important because it is an intentional effort to establish a sense of group and community. In a modern era when designers, planners and policy-makers seek to create a sense of place self-consciously, Cooper Marcus believes that Findhorn might offer some useful design and policy lessons.

To organize her study conceptually, Cooper Marcus draws on Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *Commitment and Community* (Kanter, 1973), a sociological study of nineteenth century utopian communities. In this work, Kanter identified six "commitment mechanisms"—sacrifice, investment, renunciation, communion, mortification and transcendence—that fostered community loyalty and strength. Drawing on descriptive accounts, surveys, and her own experience of living at Findhorn for a year and visiting several times since, Cooper Marcus uses Kanter's six commitment mechanisms as an organizational framework to examine qualitatively the social patterns and structures that have led to a sense of togetherness at Findhorn. Next, Cooper Marcus considers the contribution that the physical environment makes to Findhorn's sense of community and, last, points to lessons for the design and policy of more typical residential settings.

Cooper Marcus's conclusions are important because, like Hester's, they indicate that the creation of community and place takes time and involves a developmental process that is grounded in commitment. One crucial point she makes is that a community involves some degree of shared human values which, if not present in a planned residential setting, may immediately mean failure. In the case of Hester's Manteo, shared values grow historically out of many people living in the same place for generations; at Findhorn, those values arise from a shared world view and way of living. One question with which Cooper Marcus concludes is whether a sense of community can be guided and designed to happen self-consciously, particularly the promotion of shared values. She highlights such potential design and policy tools as residents' having a stake in community management and maintenance; pedestrian-scaled environments that facilitate informal social interaction; and beautiful settings, which are more likely to foster residents' affection and pride. She concludes that physical design alone cannot create a sense of community, but it can make important contributions.

The last article in Part III, architect Gary Coates and my "Promoting a Foundational Ecology Practically Through Christopher Alexander's Pattern Language: The Example of Meadowcreek," focuses on the relationship between understanding and designing in upper-level architectural design studios. We speak of design education that fosters what philosopher Joseph Grange (1977) calls a *foundational ecology*—that is, a respect for natural environments and places that arises out of care and concern. We argue that architect Christopher Alexander's "Pattern Language"—an effort to identify design qualities that support and evoke a sense of place—is one way in which design students might gain a practical sense of foundational ecology (Alexander et al., 1977, Alexander, 1979; Coates, Siepl and Seamon, 1987).

The design focus in our article is *Meadowcreek*, a center for environmental education in the Ozark mountains of Arkansas. Meadowcreek aims to provide an educational program that emphasizes an intellectual understanding of ecology and the environment as well as practical skills like forestry, farming and land conservation. Coates and I examine the efforts of a studio of upper-level architectural students to understand the environmental needs of Meadowcreek and to translate those needs into a master design. Our major learning and design tool in the studio is Pattern Language,

and the essay summarizes the studio's results in terms of the master design itself as well as students' evaluation of the studio process and their resulting understandings.

Dichotomies, Healing and a Phenomenological Ecology

There are many commonalities that link the thirteen essays of this collection: An interest in accurate seeing and thoughtful description, a concern for creative design that evokes a sense of place, and a focus on experiential patterns and processes that mark the foundation of our lives as human beings immersed in a natural and built world. Beneath these interrelated topics, however, might there be some deeper theme that marks the center of a vortex flowing outward toward these other issues?

As I have worked with this collection for over three years, one theme that continually returns to mind is *dichotomies, healing and a phenomenological ecology*. Our world is injured in many ways, the essays seem to say. How can scholarship soothe the wounds of the world and speak to a sense of use, wholeness and harmony? How can design, planning, and policy be a midwife to the world and nurture buildings, places, and communities that are livable and life-enhancing?

A major wound that the thirteen essays seek to heal is the modern Western tendency to divide and isolate, both intellectually and practically. Conventional Western philosophy assumes a division between person and world, between body and mind, between feeling and knowing, between subject and object, between theory and practice, between nature and culture. These Cartesian-Kantian dichotomies emphasize isolation over togetherness, specialization over generalization, things over processes, matter over spirit, and secondhand cerebral knowledge over firsthand lived-experience. The wholeness of the world and human experience is fractured. At the same time, this ethos of separation affects practical life, thus the design professions debate such divisions as beauty versus practicality, form versus function, art versus life, designing versus building, and understanding versus designing.

But what if these divisions are not the most accurate way of marking out our situation as human beings? This, I believe, is the central question suggested by the essays of this collection. If we split the world into a series of parts that may not really be in touch with what the world is, how can any real understanding or change happen, either intellectually or practically? Might one be able to by-

pass these taken-for-granted dichotomies and to find new ways to differentiate the parts without isolating them or converting them into things they may not be?

In various ways, the following essays take on this task to return to human experience afresh and to look at the world anew. A first way the essays attempt this aim is through *method*: there is an effort to approach the subject kindly and thoughtfully so that it can say who and what it is. For example, Silverstein and Mugerauer seek to elucidate the essential nature of roof and porch, while Hester and Cooper Marcus look for central qualities of community and sense of place. Yet again, Nogué i Font and Riegner hope to get landscapes to speak for themselves, and Dovey and I strive to highlight general patterns of human relationships. It is true, of course, that each author's specific research method varies, thus Nogué i Font, Hester, and Cooper Marcus make varying use of interviews, while Relph, Walkey, and Riegner rely on careful observation and interpretation. In spite of procedural differences, however, the shared aim is a practical method that minimizes the distance between student and subject studied so that the student has the freedom to see, and the subject has the freedom to speak. The aim is "an imaginative sympathy [that is] receptive without ceasing to be critical" (Harvey, 1958, p. x).

A second way that the essays work for openness and fairness is *epistemologically*. How, in other words, can we as human beings come to know the world? How can the human and environmental disciplines come to know the world? Conventional scientific research generally relies on empirical information that can be identified and correlated mathematically. A thing does not exist if it cannot be measured. Knowledge becomes factual and material. In contrast, ways of knowing represented by the essays in this collection are wider-ranging and incorporate qualitative description, intuitive insight, and thoughtful interpretation. The suggestion is that human beings, including scholars, "know" in many different ways—intellectually, emotionally, intuitively, viscerally, bodily, and so forth. A full understanding of any phenomenon requires that all these modes of knowing belong and have a place.

Perhaps the most striking example of a multi-dimensional knowing is Riegner's Goethean approach to landscape and living forms. Goethe's way of knowledge is grounded in sincere interest, heartfelt dedication and growing sensitivity. The student's knowledge of the phenomenon changes and deepens as he or she becomes more intimate with it. In a similar way, Harries argues that a study

of natural symbols requires openness and patience. He says that any language of natural symbols must first be understood emotionally rather than intellectually: "If we can speak of a language at all, this is a language addressed, first, to sense and imagination. Before attempts are made to articulate it in words, it needs to be felt." The possibility of such a language is illustrated by Silverstein, Mugerauer and Walkey, who make use of careful looking, thoughtful seeing, and inspired interpretation in their perceptive explications of architectural elements and buildings.

Overall, the essays in this collection, as well as those in the earlier *Dwelling, Place, and Environment*, point toward a new discipline and profession whose substantive focus is *environment and place*, whose methodological thrust is *openness and fairness*, and whose ontological vision is *togetherness, belonging and wholeness*. There are several labels that might describe this discipline—for example, "phenomenology of place," "architectural phenomenology," or "phenomenological geography." Perhaps the designation that Riegner coins in his essay—*phenomenological ecology*—provides the best description. Phenomenological ecology is an interdisciplinary field that explores and describes the ways that things, living forms, people, events, situations and worlds come together environmentally. A key focus is how all these entities *belong* together in place, why they might not belong, and how they might better belong through more sensitive understanding, design and policy-making.

Phenomenological ecology supposes that beneath the seeming disorder and chaos of our world and daily life are a series of underlying patterns, structures, relationships and processes that can be described qualitatively through heartfelt concern, sustained effort, and moments of inspired seeing and interpretation. Phenomenological ecology, therefore, not only widens and deepens our knowledge of the world *outside* ourselves but also facilitates our *own* growth as individuals whose abilities to see and understand can become keener and more refined. We become more awake to the world, and see things in a more perceptive, multi-dimensional way.

More than likely, the world cannot be healed only by technological solutions provided by a materialist science. Nor is the hope only in political and cultural changes that restructure the world economically and socially. We must also change ourselves as individual persons—the ways we understand, feel, decide and act. Especially, we must discover ways to be less self-centered and to put other human beings, living forms and things *first* before our own selves. On one hand, we must find ways to celebrate difference, complexity, unique-

ness, freedom, disorder, chaos, and flux.⁷ On the other hand, we must believe that—beneath this diversity, entropy, and continuous change—there may lie an existential order and commonality that help to reconfigure and to transform such traditional divisions as theory/practice, unity/plurality, stability/mobility, nature/culture, animals/people, Western/non-Western, black/white, male/female, straight/gay, and so forth.

In seeking this intellectual and applied transfiguration, a phenomenological ecology is central because it seeks to allow the person, group, place or thing to speak in an appropriate language, yet also realizes that this speaking may hold points of commonality with the languages of other people, groups, places, and things. Phenomenological ecology works to foster a sympathetic and systematic contact between student and thing studied, between particular real-world instance and wider conceptual pattern, and between specific individuals and the larger natural and human worlds of which those individuals are a part. In this sense, phenomenological ecology opens our feelings outward and evokes a sense of positive obligation toward nature, toward our own immediate worlds, and toward worlds that, at least on the surface, are greatly different from our own. Where there was an *either/or*, a phenomenological ecology nourishes a *both/and*.

Notes

1. See Seamon, 1982, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990. At the start, the reader should realize that there is not one phenomenology but many (Spiegelberg 1982). The phenomenological approach represented by the essays in this volume, either explicitly or indirectly, relates to the tradition of *existential phenomenology*, fathered by philosophers Martin Heidegger (1962) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) and transcribed into use for the human sciences, especially, by the Duquesne School of Phenomenological Psychology (Giorgi, Barton, and Maes, 1983). A central aim of existential phenomenology is a generalized description and understanding of human experience, behavior, meaning and awareness *as they are lived by real people in real times and places*. The reality of these concrete experiences and situations are not an end in themselves, however, but a field of descriptive evidence out of which can be drawn underlying patterns and structures that mark the essential core of humanness.

Though many authors in the present volume would not call themselves phenomenologists or their work phenomenological, I feel their studies are significant phenomenologically because there is a search for general

experiential patterns that arise from real-world situations and circumstances. Just as quantitative, aggregate studies have the larger conceptual framework of "positivist science" around which to organize their evidence and claims, so qualitative descriptive research also requires such an overarching conceptual structure, which I believe is best provided by existential phenomenology, or *phenomenology*, as I call it for convenience here. For one discussion that opposes this interpretation, particularly as it has been used in the environmental disciplines, see Pickles, 1985. For a rebuttal, see Seamon, 1987. Also see Cloke, Philo, and Sadler, 1991, chap. 3.

2. Much of Relph's other writings work to explore in depth the broad themes of this article. See, for example, Relph, 1976, 1981, 1987, 1989, 1991.

3. Other works by Harries that explore these issues in various ways include: Harries, 1978, 1982, 1984a, 1984b, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1988a, 1988b. On the relationship of natural symbols to architecture, see Thiis-Evensen, 1987.

4. For another thoughtful philosophical discussion of these issues, see Corner, 1990.

5. For further discussion of the way that experienced polarities can be used in the design process, see Jacobson, Silverstein, and Winslow, 1990; Thiis-Evensen, 1987.

6. For a discussion of what this phenomenological argument means for deconstructionist architecture, see Mugerauer, 1988.

7. On the contrasts between phenomenological and post-structural-deconstructionist approaches to diversity and difference, see Cheney, 1989, 1990; Cloke, Philo and Sadler, 1991; Mugerauer, 1988; Relph, 1991; Seamon, 1990; Stefanovic, 1991; and Zimmerman, 1990.

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