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Editorial: Natura Vocare - *Lived Experience and the Ecological Ethic*

Dear phenomenologist Reader,

I would like to introduce the current special issue "Natura Vocare" *which in seven scholarly papers addresses ethical ecological concerns that are very important for our time. A warm thank-you to the two guest editors, Dr. Patrick Howard and Dr. Stephen Smith! Thank you also to the peer reviewers of this special issue, the proof reader, Chelsea Howard, and not least to the authors of the articles presented here. And to readers: you can look forward to an exciting read!*

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This special issue of *Phenomenology & Practice* explores how the human sciences speak to our embodied connectedness to the world. The assembled papers invoke and so provoke understandings of those ties, relations and relatings that undergird notions of sustainability, environmental stewardship and ecological sensitivity. Nature exists not simply in the things, creatures and forms of a world set apart from human knowledge production, as if already formed and thus subject to human intervention, manipulation and exploitation, but as signage pointing to the places of restorative human interest. *Natura Vocare* is, furthermore, a call to nature, heeding a cry from nature, while speaking of our relations with the more-than-human world.

The articles in this special issue inquire into how phenomenology brings us to a new awareness of our embeddedness in a network of relations and interactions through which our lives continually unfold. The contributors respond to the question, 'What can phenomenology, with its emphasis on the experiential, the relational and the corporeal, add to ecological discourse?' These writers also consider how we are to understand the more-than-human world as comprised of living others imbued with intentionality, or what the Greeks called *physis* as that which unfolds and emerges of and from itself, while continually returning back unto itself. We attune phenomenologically, and thus more knowledgeably, to those beings and becomings that disclose themselves from out of their otherwise concealed abundance. Worldly things have their own inwardness and the very condition for their appearing meaningful is related to having their own complexities, mysteries and intentions that invite us into some kind of knowing relation.

As this issue illustrates, phenomenology opens up an interdisciplinary dialogue in the examination of our relationship with the larger living world. We most often turn to science to provide answers as to how we can extract ourselves from the dire problems brought on by our unsustainable human practices and by their devastating effects on the natural systems. But phenomenology has a central role to play in describing our most essential relationships with the natural world on which we depend for our survival. Patrick Howard addresses climate change

within the lived geography of Eastern Canada and in terms of those place animations that are of vital, material significance in our day-to-day lives. Jess Buckley considers practices of sustainable living in light of an urgent and essential restoration of earthly animated life. Laura Piersol and Sean Blenkinsop take these animations to warrant close listening and a participant attentiveness to the murmurings and honkings that reverberate within the metaphors of communication with nature. Bronwyn Preece proposes a practice of exploratory improvisation as that which affords a deep, reciprocated relationship with the earth, the elements, and to all living beings. Ilan Safit sounds a cautionary note in drawing attention not just to the responsibility of humanity for its survival and the continued existence of other animate beings, but also to the task of rethinking the very conditions of humanity by which we find ourselves in such a predicament. How may we, as suggested by Martin Heidegger, come to *dwell* poetically and ethically to truly in-habit places with respect and restraint? How can we learn to care for such places, conserving and preserving them, and empathizing, sympathizing and showing compassion for those who dwell there? And how might such place consciousness extend to wilderness, and the no longer limitless expanses of earth, ocean and sky, all of which are now more than ever influenced by human dwelling? The need of an eco-phenomenology is indicated in the articles comprising this issue, which is a phenomenology that does not simply return to the things themselves but to things in their places of being and becoming, so that we might better ascertain their integrity and flourishing.

David Abram is not alone in asking if the relatively new ecological ethos of embeddedness in the more-than-human world can help us forge practices that truly care for this world. We seek "conviviality between our animal body and the animate earth" (Abram, 2010, p. 64), opening our senses to the sensibilities of the animate world. The more-than-human world then sounds and smells and tastes and feels in ways that give substance to a phenomenological intentionality and to those practices of living to which phenomenology applies itself. Living with deep place consciousness, living sustainably, living with listening attentiveness, living improvisationally, in times of inescapable environmental crisis – these are the imperatives of an ecological ethic that extends into the reaches of daily lived experience and that the phenomenological analyses collated in this issue brings into consideration.

Jacques Derrida poses a significant epistemological, phenomenological, if not practical challenge to *Natura Vocare*. Derrida drew upon the work of Jacques Lacan to suggest that "man is an animal but a speaking one, and he is less a beast of prey than a beast that is prey to language" (Derrida, 2008, pp. 120, 121). So, it seems we should ask, even while addressing questions of animality, predation and the rapacious use of the earth's resources, what it means to be "prey to language" that distances us from the nominative natural world and how we might otherwise be? By what nouns and verbs are we held captive to language? And what terminology, what metaphors, what tropes, what conjunctions will allow us to see and feel and taste and smell the pulsing, vibrant, colorful yet endangered world in which we live? The articles comprising this issue of *Phenomenology & Practice* suggest not simply an expanded vocabulary of environmental sensitivity but also a phenomenologically-expansive, textually-attuned vocation of environmentalism.

References

Abram, D. (2010). *Becoming animal: An earthly cosmology*. New York; Pantheon Books.

Derrida, J. (2008). *The animal that therefore I am* (edited by M-L. Mallet and translated by D. Wills). New York: Fordham University Press.