

Editorial: Experiences of the Outdoors

Andrew Foran, St. Francis Xavier University, Canada

Email: aforan@stfx.ca

The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice. The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms.
(Arendt, 1958, p. 20)

A counter narrative that humans should reclaim a connection to the outdoors has made its way into daily media streams of contemporary society. One can find these outside messages connected to human health, learning for children, meditation for mental health, and adventures exploring a more natural world captured moments by Instagram or Twitter. The accumulation of these connected, but ranging messages is that the outdoors is very much a universal in our human experience. However, modernity, it seems, has allowed us to separate the human from the concrete of being in natural outside spaces. This *Special Issue* of *Phenomenology & Practice* attends to the everyday, pre-reflective experiences being in the outdoors—a return to the world, away from human design in a very concrete sense. The collection of articles for this *Special Issue* explores the multiple aspects and variations of the everyday experience outdoors. The authors explore and interpret the experiences of the outdoors for not only those who spend time or work in the outdoors, but also for those who may wish to explore the inherent tensions between the human-built environment and the natural world

In this *Special Issue*, we feature lived experiences of the *outside* that reveal, reconnect, reclaim, and restore what it means to be a human being *out there*. How is the outside experienced by those whose lives are predominantly rooted *indoors* or *outdoors*? Does there exist a taken-for-granted, beyond the doors of our inner worlds? Is the outside world so far removed from our everydayness that outside has become foreign, forgotten, dismissed, and perhaps forbidden? Arendt (1978) reminds us “human beings are born into the world” (p. 174) and from the moment of our birth, we make great efforts to shape our experiences. Increasingly, this shaping occurs indoors. The outdoors, out-of-doors, the outside for many in modern, urbanized society has become removed from our everyday lives. Out-there is something seen through a doorway, window, or virtual screen. Outside becomes something many of us merely pass through or we visit temporarily, which leaves us to ask, how do we understand ourselves in relation to the

outside? This question opens a phenomenological space to inquire into the experience of the outside, the out-of-doors.

These articles collectively respond to the natural draw, a hold that the outside still seems to have on our humanness. Psychologists, educators, environmentalists, therapists, social workers, and many health practitioners are among the growing number of proponents currently advocating for an increased connection with the outside, or more natural world. The accumulation of these connected, but divergent messages is that outdoors is very much a universal in our human experience. However, late modernity, in most instances, contributes to the compartmentalization of the human and a denial of connections of *being* in the natural outside spaces of the world.

Society is full of distractions—the noise of living, the flashing of screens, the vibrations of incoming messages marking our social connectivity. A taken-for-granted-ness has settled into our way of being when the outdoors is weighed against the magnetic draw of technological advancements. Yet amidst the cacophony of the digital environment we have built, many will claim there is a pull, a call, to the outside—to a more natural world. For some, there is a dominance that the outside seems to have over our consciousness. Many of us—adults or children—need the outdoors to make sense of our lives; this is the introspection through counterpoint. This understanding presents itself in simple life moments often regarded as fond childhood recollections—from the formative experiences and times when being outside was a common occurrence. When the outside world is re-experienced for some, what it means to be truly human is (re)-awakened. There is a re-connection to nature as a possible reminder or stirring of who we are in this world. How is the vastness of outside spaces, the (un)boundedness, experienced when *being outside*?

Our perception of the outdoors in juxtaposition to the human, built environment of the indoor world, influences our daily interactions. Langeveld (1983a, 1983b) shares a phenomenological insight that interprets place as the distinction between an inner and outer world where these worlds may melt into one. In this issue, Melton explores *Pre-Service Teachers in the Outdoors* through wonder. Melton shows the openness that comes when one dwells within the present moment, allowing questions to arise, and using wonder as a tool to question typical-teaching approaches. The exploration of time spent in the outdoors, as a common way to engage wonder, reveals the subtleties in the ways adults experience their surroundings compared to children. Foran, Throop-Robinson, and Redmond's work, *Attunement as a Pedagogical Starting Point* also show how the outdoors is central place for a teacher's practice. This article reveals the value of reflection and relationality as these authors connect the prominence that attunement has in pedagogical practice. They explore how *being-in-time* with children can show the importance of dwelling alongside students and letting them be seen. Howard's article, *Language-ing the Earth*, presents the human relationship with the larger living landscape that is grounded in experiential renewal. Central to Howard's discussion is to understand the natural world. Hermeneutic text offers important reflections on the human mediation of the meaning of the more-than-human-world and assists in understanding the implications of our encounters with the world. Morse and Blenkinsop's *Lived Experience on the Franklin River* shows that being outdoors can provide experiential possibilities not readily available indoors. These authors draw on phenomenological research undertaken with participants on 10-day outdoor Franklin River journeys in Tasmania, Australia, to

illustrate such possibilities. Redmond, in another part of the world, explores *Experiential Intensity of Exploring Place Abandoned*. Redmond's work presents modern-day encounters with an abandoned community in remote Newfoundland and reveals insight into the loss of place and home as educators explored the remnants of an abandoned community. In *Painting Deep Time*, Behrisch shares the practice of oil painting landforms, rocks and sea water in Jervis Inlet, British Columbia and a rich dialogue with land's resistant alterity. Behrisch positions a close attuning to landforms, blurring the focus at regular intervals while practicing oil painting of landforms, offering a lived experience of *phusis* of land and the practice of painting.

Howard also shares phenomenological insights in the review of *Hermeneutics in an Age of Alternative Facts, Fake News, and Climate Change Denial*. Howard's overview is timely, and on point, in this time of climate upheaval, coupled with a global pandemic that has revealed to many the importance the Earth, and the many outdoor spaces, or special places, has in our everyday lives. Howard's review reminds us of Derrida's (2002) claim that individuals can discover inner self by going outside; then going inward by reflection to understand the body experience. The juxtaposition of inside and outside illuminates the other. One needs the other to exist (Derrida, 2002, pp. 10–12).

Stepping outside for the individual may be more than the physical act of stepping out into the world. Heidegger's (1982) *Dasein* is a human projection of "understanding belonging to existence" (p. 278). What, then, is the lived experience for the person who steps outside the boundaries of their predominately indoor world? What is the experience of an outside world that is strange, foreign, and other? Human control over space has allowed for the emergence of micro-worlds disparate from the space of the natural world. These micro-worlds of indoors or virtual spaces further removes us from the natural outdoor spaces of the world. Do tensions between the inside–outside exist because of our prolonged absences—our living largely indoors for extended periods of time? Does this contribute to a forgetting how to just be outside? And what is experienced by those who find themselves at home and feel more human in the comforts of natural spaces?

Many of us seek direct contact with the world, removing the layers of every-day life in search of something more primal. And our hope is that as you read these articles (for many, indoors), you too will be reminded of the taken-for-granted of the outdoors and will be prompted to pause and dwell in a special outside place.

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