

gaps that we find throughout Derrida's work. Gaston asks how it is that we might mourn the one who so zealously forewarned of its dangers. Derrida is clear that we cannot avoid mourning, for it is thrust upon us, whoever we are, and yet we are told of its simultaneous impossibility.

Gaston offers readers a unique work that, while representative of a kind of mourning—a prolonged aching—offers a tribute that is careful not to "monu-memorialize" Derrida. How one should mourn is not answered by Gaston. In fact, the matter of mourning seems to get significant attention as a topic only in the last part of the book, leaving the rest of the text as an act of mourning itself. Some readers will no doubt be disappointed that many important questions are raised but receive only passing glances, e.g., the problem of history, the philosophy of literature, and so on. In such ways this book acts more like an anecdotal philosophy text, which is interesting because of its personal character more so than its depth of philosophical insight. Even so, this is a pleasure to read because of its existential honesty and its frustrating gaps.

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The Things Themselves: Phenomenology and the Return to the Everyday

H. PETER STEEVES

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006; 245 + xvii pages.

In this new volume in SUNY's Contemporary Continental Philosophy series, H. Peter Steeves aims to renew the philosophical revolution that was inaugurated by Husserl's phenomenological account of intentionality, a revolution that purports to replace the detachment that has traditionally characterized philosophy with a robust, concrete reengagement with the world capable of disclosing the structures of experience. The underlying contention is that the radical edge of this project has grown dull through idealist misinterpretation and internal theoretical disputes among later generations of phenomenologists. Thus, like many others over the years, Steeves aspires to "do" phenomenology rather than just produce textual commentary about it. As his title suggests, Steeves takes this up in terms of the dictum that ostensibly guided Husserlian phenomenology: to return "to the things themselves." By returning to "the specifics of everyday existence" (xvii), his goal is to "make one small step within [the Husserlian] tradition, hinting at a possible direction for a phenomenology that takes seriously a return to the things themselves" (xiii).

Attractive as that old slogan may be, it has never been clear exactly how it ought to be understood, and just how much stock, if any, should be put in it. But Steeves takes it up completely unproblematically. He consequently avoids dealing with a number of crucial questions that are implicitly broached by his investigations, for example, the question concerning the relationship between "world" and "things," that is, whether pursuing the latter really will bring us closer to the former. There is likewise no direct reckoning with questions concerning the meaning of "everydayness," nor with just what "structures of experience" are and how they relate to the "being of the world" (xiv).

This theoretical looseness is positively embraced by Steeves by way of locating his project as neither a work of strict phenomenological theory (too abstract) nor mere psychology (too naive), nor even somehow in between. Deliberately situating it "outside of standard academic discourse" (xvii), he presents the work as one of "applied phenomenology" and hence as a "truly philosophical and phenomenological project" (xiv).

While some such practical orientation is certainly commendable, in particular with regard to the task of renewing phenomenology, and especially (but not only) if it succeeds in gaining for phenomenology an accessibility beyond specialists, it is far from clear whether *The Things Themselves* can really advance either agenda. Steeves's claim, for example, that his approach does not sacrifice "rigor and exactitude" (xvii) is by and large untrue, and so it is hard to see how that which is rendered accessible is actually phenomenology. At any rate, the reader will be left wondering whether the populist tone is not simply an alibi for methodological laxity.

Nonetheless, the book—consisting in ten chapters spread over three sections—is an interesting and at times entertaining read. The first section, "The Animal as First Philosophy," takes up themes that are central to Steeves's work more broadly, namely, animality (see *Animal Others*, 1999) and community (see *Founding Community*, 1998). The aim here is to learn to recognize and rethink humanity within the larger framework of animality and the natural world. There are lively discussions here concerning, for example, animal language and logos, feral children and Bigfoot, as well as critical reflections on Levinas's view of animals. But as will be the case throughout the book, these discussions are liberally interlarded with anecdote and other narrative which, while often intriguing, leave the discussion short on substance.

The second section, "The Good, the True, and the Beautiful," takes up aesthetic and epistemological questions, aiming to show how such issues are mutually inseparable and thoroughly normative. Here we find an interesting critique of the quasi-pornography of ESPN exercise shows,

although like the earlier chapters this does not amount to much more than an introduction to the issues. Building off Merleau-Ponty's famous essay, Steeves then provides an analysis of Cézanne's work. This provides a refreshing dose of rigor, albeit ironically only by taking some distance from the ostensible return to the everyday. Finally, there is a discussion of feminist epistemology, in which Steeves traces out some of the important philosophical affinities between phenomenology and feminism. There are noteworthy and highly suggestive observations made in terms of scientificity and communitarianism, for example, but as before the discussion tends to be detracted from by a frustrating amount of digression.

The point of the third and final section, "Away From Home," is to question the meaning of home and travel. The first chapter looks at ethical considerations related to the possible colonization of Mars. Although a lot of flighty speculative science is dealt with here, it makes for an interesting extension of the concerns of the first section to an even larger holistic vision that goes beyond the notion of "life." The next two chapters deal with tourist experience—in Disneyland and Las Vegas—and are surely the best of the book. In David Wood's judicious phrase, they deal with the "hermeneutics of irreality." Although the discussion of various "rides" in the Disneyland chapter gets a bit tiresome, the overall analysis in terms of community is well done. Likewise, the interrogation of Las Vegas in terms of a broad notion of "risk" makes for a surprisingly salutary interpretation.

The tenth and last chapter is, as Steeves admits, something of an oddball. It is about Venezuela, where the author lived for a year as a Fulbright Fellow; in particular it concerns the rise to power of Hugo Chávez and the radical social changes involved therewith. A large chunk of the chapter is devoted to recent Venezuelan history (although a great deal more has happened there since the time the chapter was written), and the rest is a stylized, largely autobiographical account of Steeves's experience during this tumultuous period. The ostensible point is to question the nature of democracy and the ethical duties of philosophy, presumably in terms of "phenomenological communitarianism" and the idea of a practical, ethically-driven view of phenomenology. But nothing is said that addresses these themes very clearly or explicitly. Again, it all makes for a gripping read, but by the end the poetic fancifulness (possibly an attempt at "magical realism") reaches such a fever pitch that it is utterly mysterious just what is going on.

The upshot seems to be that without serious methodological reflection that enables us to go beyond the static analysis of intentional structures, the phenomenologist is left oscillating between being either a detached observer of irreality or a disoriented participant uncritically

swept up in the force of major historical events. To be sure, Steeves's book suggests a number of fruitful areas for the development of phenomenology. But as a return to the everyday the latter project will require, as it always has, no small amount of "theoretical" work, if we really want to see the revolution through.

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Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation: Out of This World

PETER HALLWARD

New York: Verso, 2006, 199 pages.

It is a rare event to encounter a book on Deleuze that does not privilege either the actual or the virtual sides of what he understands as real, but that rather attempts, despite the seeming paradoxes and contradictions of such a distinctively Deleuzian position, to develop it into a theoretically and practically consistent whole. Unfortunately, Peter Hallward's well-written and well-researched *Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* is not such an eventful book. Unlike those commentators who privilege the actual at the expense of the virtual and read Deleuze as a sort of "fleshy materialist" philosopher, Hallward opts for the opposite extreme. He maintains that "the actual ... is in reality ephemeral and illusory" and "[t]he virtual alone is real" (35), and that therefore Deleuze is more correctly read as a sort of spiritual, if not mystical, philosopher "out of this world." That Deleuzian commentators take such extreme positions might not only suggest that Deleuze failed to get his ontological message across loud and clear, but more important that they are perhaps less concerned with what Deleuze really meant and more with what they can do with him. While such practice is common, if not solicited in the context of Deleuzianism, it does become problematic when a commentator, such as Hallward, proposes a reading in order to reach the conclusion that when it comes to the world we live in, we cannot actually do that much with Deleuze. One is inclined to adopt a more traditional attitude: what *did* Deleuze really mean?

Although he deals with a variety of issues, Hallward's real concern in the book is with the relationship between actualization and counter-actualization. Hallward devotes the first two chapters to actualization, that is, the ontological movement of being from the virtual to the actual, and then spends the following four chapters developing the ways in which such movement can conceivably be reversed. From political practice to art to philosophy, counter-actualization entails progressively

Steeves is the author of eight books, including: *Founding Community: A Phenomenological-Ethical Inquiry* (Kluwer, 1998); *The Things Themselves: Phenomenology and the Return to the Everyday* (SUNY Press, 2006); *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* (SUNY Press, 1999); *Beautiful, Bright, and Blinding: Phenomenological Aesthetics and the Life of Art* (SUNY P, 2017); and the forthcoming *Being and Showtime* (Northwestern U P, 2019). He has published more than 130 book chapters and journal articles, and has presented more than 190 public and academic professional lectures. Steeves has als *The Things Themselves* book. Read reviews from worldâ€™s largest community for readers. Taking Edmund Husserl's dictum to heart yet finding in it a new dire...Â Start by marking â€œ*The Things Themselves: Phenomenology and the Return to the Everyday*â€ as *Want to Read*: *Want to Read* savingâ€| *Want to Read*. Currently Reading. Read. Other editions. Enlarge cover. Analytic versus Continental. Phenomenology: returning to the things themselves. Analytic versus Continental. Analytic versus Continental. Arguments on the Method and Value of Philosophy. Chapter. Chapter.Â It seems to be phenomenology's more grandiose methodological aspirations that analytic philosophers have been troubled by, rather than any kind of wholesale rejection of the worth of all phenomenological description (although there have been wholesale rejections too). Recommend this book. Email your librarian or administrator to recommend adding this book to your organisation's collection.