
Editorial Introduction: The Inaugural Open Issue

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I am pleased to present to you the inaugural open issue of *PhaenEx*, the e-journal affiliated with the Canadian based international society for *Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture / Théorie et culture existentialistes et phénoménologiques* (EPTC/TCEP). *PhaenEx* provides an interdisciplinary forum for original research in theory or culture from existential or phenomenological perspectives, broadly construed. We publish two issues a year: a Spring/Summer open issue (the first number in a volume) and a Fall/Winter special topics issue (the second number in a volume). A link to current calls for papers is available on our homepage. The Editorial Executive welcomes submissions for peer-review from all authors in our field. Authors are to submit essays electronically through the Online Journal Software. Registration is free as are the contents to readers. Our hope is that all visitors to the website will register, especially if interested in joining our peer-review board. Interested parties should provide relevant details during registration, including: highest degree earned, place of employment, and scholarly interests. Information submitted is kept strictly private. The Editorial Executive also seeks photos and/or art works for each issue's cover page. Please send electronic submissions for consideration to the current Chair of the Editorial Executive. Finally, as a new journal, we are always in search of ways to update the functionality of our website. If you have any suggestions or comments, send them along to the Chair. Thank you.

The Content: Possible Encounters

Traditionally, the editor of an issue such as this would devote the introduction to an overview of the articles. Overviews are superfluous in my case since the authors have provided their own abstracts, all of which are found on the table of contents page. What I provide instead are brief, suggestive points of contact between pairs of essays, hopefully encouraging the reader to see unity in an otherwise open issue.

The most obvious pair is Benedict O'Donohoe and Richard Matthews, both of whom focus on the writings of Camus. O'Donohoe remains intratextual, taking on arguably the most famous character in existential literature: Meursault. Traditionally cast as a hero, O'Donohoe's careful examination of violence in *The Stranger* makes us wonder how this assessment ever got off the ground.

By contrast, Matthews casts Camus in a positive light by defending his ethics against the lofty claims of Heidegger. Concerned that Heidegger's critique of the "everydayness" of ethics leaves the actual suffering of the oppressed outside the scope of genuine thinking, Matthews establishes the coherence and superiority of Camus' sense of historical limits as the ethical path between absolutist and relativist positions.

My question: how are we to reconcile Camus' own acceptance of Meursault as a hero with his post-war concerns about oppression and violence? Is the "hero" of *The Stranger* simply a murderer and misogynist; or, are we supposed to transcend the "everydayness" of these crimes in some philosophically relevant way? If the former, how would Matthews reply; if the latter, how would O'Donohoe? What answer could possibly adjudicate their apparent difference?

Three of our authors display the continual relevance of four anchors to the continental tradition: Spinoza, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. Bela Egyed sets the tone by offering a

thorough critique of Schopenhauer's interpretation of Spinoza's ethics. Most interesting is Egyed's ability to draw the *rationalist* Spinoza into an intimate and corrective dialogue with the *irrationalist* Schopenhauer around the topic of freedom. Not so surprising, the "sage of Amsterdam," despite (or because of?) his celebration of the rational universe, comes closest in spirit to Dalie Giroux's study of Nietzschean prudence. Spinoza dovetails nicely with Nietzsche, which is to be expected, for it is well known that, directly contrary to Schopenhauer's pessimism, Nietzsche evokes a love of fate (*amor fati*). We can reasonably wonder to what extent Nietzsche's prudential wisdom, as Giroux develops through Eros, Nature, and Will-to-Power, strikes a chord with Egyed's development of Spinoza's "affirmation" of our essentially determined nature. The not so hidden Deleuzian subtext here should be sought out by the reader.

The last pair I would like to suggest appears most unlikely: David Duquette's analysis of Hegel's *Geist* and Farhang Erfani's instructive account of utopia as supporting Levinas's ethics. At the meta-level, there may be as great a gulf between Hegel and Levinas as there is between Spinoza and Nietzsche. Certainly Levinas and Camus or Spinoza and Hegel are better pairs. Nevertheless, we find more than just a productive tension between the two when we concentrate on the trees instead of the forest. Consider Duquette's point that, for Hegel, there is a disconnect between the speculative insight into a final synthesis and the historical reality of such an event. In reality, there will always be continuous, open-ended struggle. Societal strife is insuperable; it does not come to rest. Set this strife next to Erfani's featured concern that the function of utopia is not to bring about an actual state but to critique our own state from within and we find a bridge from Hegel to Levinas.

Recall that for Hegel the "means" of *Geist* are the world historical individuals, i.e., the heroes of history. Heroes foster progress because they do not rest in idle tranquility; their

“passion” for a future good makes them outcasts from normal, calm society. Seen from a Levinasian angle, which takes the Other as prior to the Same, the power of the hero is analogous to utopia in its destabilizing force. Yet utopias are not focused on heroes; utopias give voice to the oppressed by exposing the injustices of a present society. Hegel too recognizes oppression and injustice as genuine motors of progress. He describes, even validates, the slave’s use of bloody violence to issue in a better day. Should we be persuaded by this need for bloodshed or is this an ideal for primitive times? Do we now live at a point in history where a Hegelian insight into the rational infinity of unity in difference demands a politically protected tolerance for peaceful protest? If so, then writers of utopia appear to be heroes, heeding the call of disempowered others, at the service of a positive, albeit infinite, end.

Finally, a word or two about the cover image by David Colosi. “Syntactic Object #5 (Arrow-Black)” undoubtedly has a meaning other than the one I ascribe to it. The object itself, made of painted wood and chalk (36 x 96 x 110cm), was part of a performance piece from 2007, and is now part of a private collection in Brussels. Colosi has invited me to invite you to view this and other works on his homepage: <http://www.3dlit.org>.

The arrow symbolizes the famous *intentional arrow* of Husserlian phenomenology. As depicted, Colosi’s arrow has more to do with the genetic and generative interests of Husserl than with his static portrayal of consciousness. Notice that the arrow is coming at the viewer; it does not project outward, as the subject → object model would suggest. This indicates that consciousness depends on, even begins with, an encounter with the Other’s intentional act. Notice also that the arrow’s present is aligned with its past; its head is looped around to meet its tail. How close the past is to the present. Thus, Colosi’s image is a perfect representation of the socially and historically sensitive discipline that is existential phenomenology.

Acknowledgments

A highly diverse team of executive and advisory board editors runs *PhaenEx*. My task as the Lead Editor and as the current Chair of the Editorial Executive is to orchestrate this rather large, virtual group of people. What has made my experience with *PhaenEx* so fruitful is the professionalism and expertise of everyone involved. I am truly amazed by the committed excellence to be found in not-for-profit publishing. Specifically, I would like to thank Martine Béland, Michèle Calvosa, Kevin Gray, David Koukal, and Astrida Neimanis for offering fresh eyes when I needed them most. Thanks also go to Joan Dalton and the University of Windsor for their continued support of the journal. Lastly, I thank the authors of the present issue for they have given us something genuinely good to read.