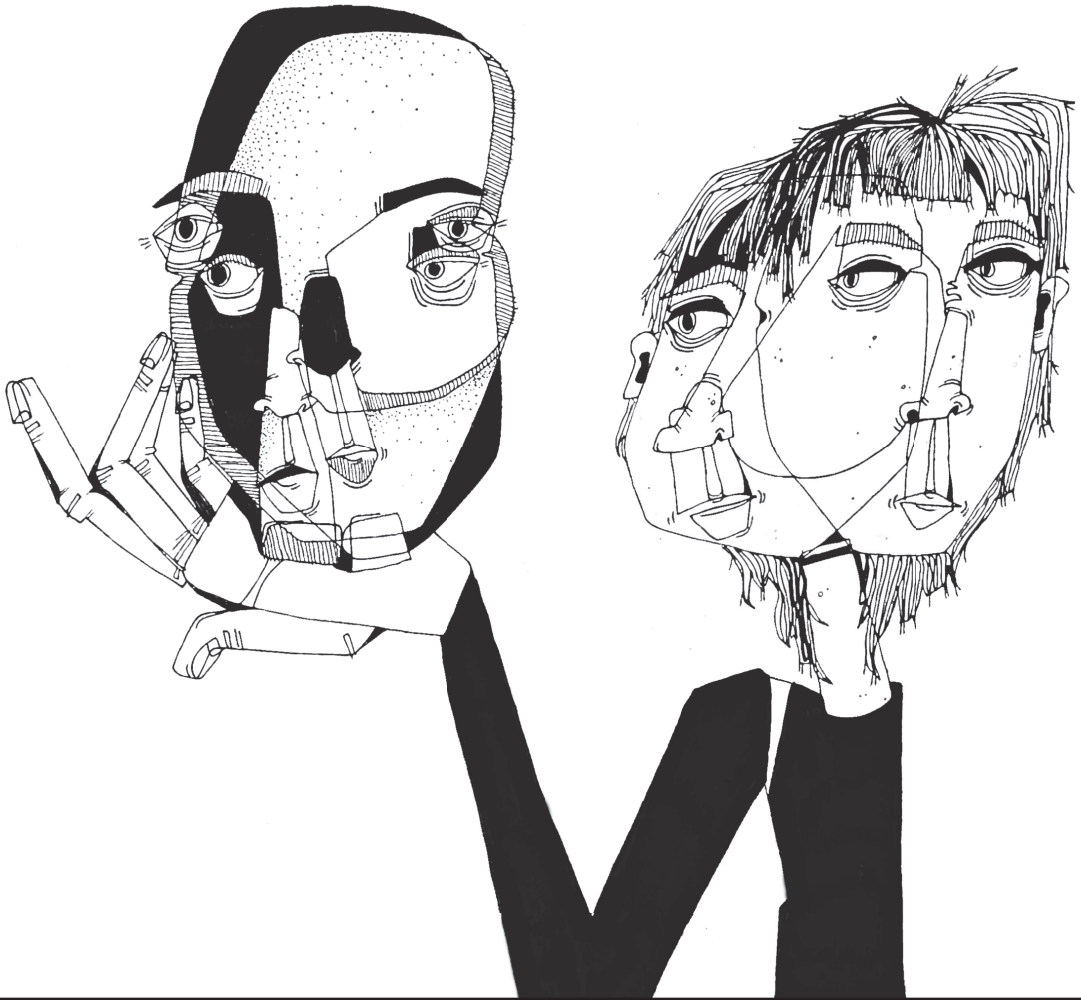


# Anamnesis

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# Contents

**6** Postmodern Lackluster:  
Technology and the Race of Imitators

---

**Courtney Timmins • Boston College**

**14** The Arrival of Ahmed: Queer Phenomenology  
and the Husserlian Tradition

---

**Amanda Pinto • Appalachian State**

**22** Half a Century with John Riker

---

**An Interview**

**34** Letter From the Editors

---

## Postmodern Lackluster: Technology and the Race of Imitators

By **Courtney Timmins**  
*Boston College*



Over time, imagination has helped increasingly blur the line between being and non-being, real and representation. Present-day philosopher Richard Kearney, currently a professor at Boston College, distinguishes three main epochs of imagination: premodern, modern, and postmodern. The premodern epoch is marked by the symbol of the mirror, representing reflection and reproduction. The modern epoch is symbolized by the lamp, representing original creation and conception. The postmodern epoch is symbolized by a labyrinth of looking glasses, representing infinite parody and simulation. The postmodern epoch of simulation has taken the premodern epoch of reflection and inverted it; postmodernism is essentially a Frankensteinian burlesque of its premodern ancestor. This essay will explore that issue by first examining Plato's early denouncement of imagination and then looking at the ideas of modern philosophers who address Plato's concerns.

Ironically, Plato uses various faculties of imagination such as allegory, simile, and fictional dialogue to condemn imagination. He criticizes the artistic imagination for being removed from reality and reason, saying that it brings conflict and disunity.<sup>1</sup> Plato condemns the imagination for leading to multiplication through representation rather than unification through reason. He argues that representation is merely a curse that opposes truth and identity because it pretends to be a *logos* (reason), but really only takes us further away from the realm of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> *Logos* is the thing that is at one with itself, so Plato wants to stop the diaspora of meaning away from the *logos*. He says that imagination caters to the lower, foolish, unstable part of the mind.<sup>3</sup> Because of the imagination we are no longer just pure thinking forms; we are caught up in a mix of images and senses which are and are not true.<sup>4</sup> Plato warns that the imagination is immoral and leads us to behave immorally—thus, he argues for censorship to protect us from this.<sup>5</sup> We know now more than ever that movies and other art depicting vulgarity and violence can lead people to imitate that bad behavior. Plato says that imagination represents illegitimacy and parasitism, even comparing the imagination to a disobedient son who threatens patriarchal law.<sup>6</sup>

In his *Republic*, Plato speaks with Glaucon about the fallacious nature of artists, deeming them to be pseudo-makers whose work is useless and non-didactic. He believes that the artist merely takes real objects of knowledge and turns them into one-dimensional illusions. Of these real objects, Plato says, "You could fabricate them quickly in many ways and most quickly, of course, if you are willing to take a mirror and carry it around everywhere; quickly you will make the sun

and the things in the heaven; quickly, the earth; and quickly, yourself and the other animals and implements and plants and everything else that was just now mentioned.”<sup>7</sup> Plato insists that the imitative and inauthentic nature of artists is dangerous because it draws people toward fictional experiences.<sup>8</sup>

French Philosopher Jacques Derrida includes an essay titled “Plato’s Pharmacy” in his 1972 book *Dissemination*. In this essay, Derrida presents a deconstructive reading of Plato’s critique of the imagination in the *Republic*, and then he compares the postmodern imagination to a distorted version of Plato’s Cave. Derrida states:

*Imagine Plato’s cave not simply overthrown by some philosophical movement but transformed in its entirety into a circumscribed area contained within another—an absolutely other-structure, an incommensurably, unpredictably more complicated machine. Imagine that mirrors would not be in the world, simply, included in the totality of all onta (things) and their images, but that things “present,” on the contrary, would be in them. Imagine that mirrors (shadows, reflections, phantasms, etc.) would no longer be comprehended within the structure of the ontology and myth of the cave—which also situates the screen and the mirror—but would rather envelop it in its entirety, producing here or there a particular, extremely determinate effect.”<sup>9</sup>*

We have learned that images no longer have a 1:1 correspondence to real things; they are caught in a circle of parody as images of images of images. Technology has radically changed since Plato first launched his critique of imagination in the *Republic*, and now, representation has become more important than reality itself. Technology has caused the imaginary to take over the real: the real has disintegrated, and images, or contrived reality, are now more real than reality itself.<sup>10</sup>

Derrida describes the postmodern imagination as “a textual labyrinth paneled with mirrors.”<sup>11</sup> He says, “the whole is organized by this relation of repetition, resemblance, doubling, duplication, this sort of specular process and play of reflections where things (onta), speech and writing come to repeat and mirror each other.”<sup>12</sup> Derrida cites Stéphane Mallarmé’s introduction of the symbol of the lustre—rather than sun or mirror, the postmodern imagination is marked by the paradigm of “a chandelier with multiple glass pendants endlessly reflecting each other.”<sup>13</sup> This is essentially infinite parody and allusion with no escape, which defines the digital phantasmagoria that we now inhabit. We each have our own

cave—in the form of smartphones, tablets, laptops—with which we produce shadows of forms and reality, and that is what we intentionally project to others. When it comes to perceiving the external world, we are all prisoners in chains restricted to watching the play of shadows. The digital age and social media have ensured that. But, we don’t mind, since we each also get to be the puppeteer and the puppet—pulling the strings while also projecting our own selves. We each mutually plead: “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!” The digital world provides the cave wall that causes us all to live as prisoners who believe secondhand knowledge because it is the majority of knowledge we are now exposed to: immediate, but vacuous. And we are losing the ability to perceive with any depth.

French philosopher Roland Barthes also takes up these themes in his 1967 work *The Death of the Author*. Barthes says the concern of Plato and Derrida is precisely the “infinitely remote imitation” that we revel in today.<sup>14</sup> Barthes discusses how the modern epoch was governed by a reign of autonomy and original authorship in which man believed that he controlled the message in an authentic way. Now, in the postmodern era, we have transitioned into “an imagination which is no more than a parody of itself.”<sup>15</sup> The imagination of the postmodern era is analogous to a postal communication system in which the author is merely a postman who carries impersonal, structural messages that he did not originate. Barthes agrees with present-day philosopher, professor, and political activist Noam Chomsky that we are governed by a “manufactured consent” in which mythologies operate behind our backs. We now have widespread access to the messages, images, and mythologies of the mass media, but a question of credulity exists because we have become submerged in a convoluted of myths that we think we can control and interpret but we really cannot. Barthes essentially declares that we live in a mass culture of the myth that is passing off its cultural construct as something natural.

These mythologies manifest themselves in mirror-play, or parodies of texts that are parodies of other texts, and we don’t know the real basis and can never get to the origin. This phenomenon is exemplified through the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The movie parodies the legend of King Arthur and his search for the Holy Grail. The film is based off of Arthurian literature, or the body of Medieval literature about Great Britain and the legendary kings and heroes associated with it. Arthurian literature is essentially written works done by people who lived at the time recounting what happened through stories. Monty



Python uses the representations of Medieval authors to make its own pastiche representation of King Arthur. The film, which originated from the literature, was then adapted by playwrights into a musical comedy called Monty Python's *Spamelot*. We begin with Medieval life in Great Britain as it actually happened, then as those living at the time perceived it, then how they chose to represent it in literature, then the literature represented by a parody film, and finally the parody film represented by a comedic musical. This is just one of an infinite number of examples, but the prevalence of this dynamic raises the question: is there any escape from the imaginary?<sup>16</sup> Barthes promotes the concept of semio-clasm, or critiquing signs and images by breaking them open in order to see what is behind them.

We prefer the cave to the outside world because we believe that what we see and create in the cave is a world more polished, more vivid, and more interesting than what is outside of it. We know that those images on the wall in the cave aren't the real things, because we manufacture them ourselves. But, we accept them as reality because we like being able to interact within the cave, avoiding confrontation with the harsh and blinding sun outside. Rather than leaving the cave to seek the truth we know to be out there, we remain in our safe caves with technology and media, avoiding any "disturbances of the eyes."<sup>17</sup> In like manner, there are twentieth century artists such as Andy Warhol whose work "negates the notion of creative subjectivity."<sup>18</sup> Warhol deliberately produced works that were nothing more than reproductions—they had no depth and no manifestation of the human imagination beyond imitation and commodification. He forces us to ask, what is the original source behind the copy? To what do these reproductions refer? He does so merely in order to highlight the possibility that there may not be anything real behind this circle of images.<sup>19</sup> By exposing the fallacy of the cave, he calls us to move past the image and see the original source behind it.

Barthes, a contemporary of Warhol's, says that there is no original source. He deconstructs the notion of an autonomous author who uses the power of man's creative imagination to express authentic ideas. There is no authenticity and there is no autonomous creativity; rather, the author is merely a product of "structural linguistics" who thinks that he can control and interpret myths, when, instead, it is he who is really the one controlled.<sup>20</sup> Barthes exalts the infinitely self-referential nature of language over the individual author's attempt to control it, and in doing so, frees us from the illusion of originality.<sup>21</sup> Like Warhol's multiple images, Barthes explains, "a text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation;

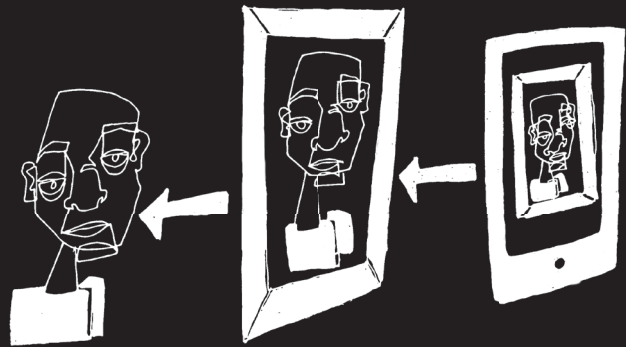
but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was, but the reader."<sup>22</sup> Hence, the superficiality of texts liberates readers to be able to "traverse" works without "penetrating" them.<sup>23</sup> Barthes claims that from the death of the writer comes the birth of the reader, for when there is no longer any fundamental meaning beneath this superficial, "playful parody," the reader is free to take from it whatever he wants.<sup>24</sup>

What is perhaps the most visual manifestation of Barthes' view can be found in *The Palace of Living Art* in California, where Warhol's notion of reproduction as art is found in exhibits which present imitations as if they were reality. The museum stands as a "multi-media artifice" that displays pieces of high art and presents them as more authentic versions of the original works.<sup>25</sup> The Palace contains replicas such as Michelangelo's *David* that purport to be better than the originals—originals which were admittedly the works of autonomously creative artists. Here, those same works are supposedly reproduced in the museum exactly as they were when the artists first created them, and before time took its toll on their original beauty. The museum displays its reproductions next to copies of the originals as they currently appear in their respective museums, so the viewer can see the difference between the worn original and its more vibrant reproduction.

Exalting the notion of autonomous creativity is not the point, however. Each display is intended to reinforce the idea that the viewer enjoys an improved experience viewing the artificial copies rather than the original art itself. Twentieth century Italian philosopher Umberto Eco explains that the thought process behind the *Palace of Living Art* is not "we give you the reproduction so you will desire the original," but rather "we give you the reproduction so that you will have no further need of the original."<sup>26</sup> Like Barthes' reader, the *Palace's* viewer is free to take from the experience whatever view, however superficial, he or she wants. The existence of the *Palace of Living Art* serves as a testimony to Plato's view of imagination—it is a reality devoid of originality, a reality where the creative process is no longer needed. However, we are not ignorant in the same sense that Plato once described; we know there is a sun and a depth to what we view and experience that goes beyond the surface we might choose to focus our attention on.

Even though we are more informed than Plato's community, we simply choose to be compliant "prisoners of man-made images."<sup>27</sup> We walk through places such as the *Palace of Living Arts* and enjoy its copies, we display the copies of art by

Warhol, and we do both while frittering away on keyboards that have encouraged dependence on virtual simulation. The creative process has been dulled by time, just like Michelangelo's David—it has been replaced by the reign of technology, and we no longer care. We now prize, even embrace, illusion. While we may have come to see thought and understanding, knowing there is a sun outside the cave, we now willingly choose to remain in the cave. Interestingly, Plato feared that indulging the imagination would lead to a life of pursuing deceptive images and senses. Now, we have become bored with real knowledge and succumbed to a base world of representation, opinion, and subjectivity where “creation” is little more than editing, distorting, and remixing. We have become the “race of imitators.”<sup>28</sup> To sum it up perfectly, we are part of a world in which “the unfathomable mysteries of Nature and God have been replaced by those of technology and mass communications.”<sup>29</sup>



### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 603a.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 598c.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 605b.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 605c.

<sup>5</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 94.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 596e.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>10</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 272.

<sup>11</sup> Derrida, *Dissemination*, 195.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>13</sup> Derrida, *Dissemination*, 288.

<sup>14</sup> Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 276.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 289-290.

<sup>17</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 518a.

<sup>18</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 254.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>22</sup> Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 277.

<sup>25</sup> Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 340.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

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## The Arrival of Ahmed: Queer Phenomenology and the Husserlian Tradition



By **Amanda Pinto**  
*Appalachian State*

S ara Ahmed presents a new take on the tradition of phenomenology, queering it to become something new. In *Queer Phenomenology*, she claims that phenomenology is her starting point but quickly admits that she loses her way from there.<sup>1</sup> For Ahmed, phenomenology is a resource for queer studies, as it emphasizes lived experience, significance of distance, intentionality of consciousness, and the role of habitual actions.<sup>2</sup> With these resources, and following Husserl's example of a table, she seems to leave the traditional phenomenology of Husserl behind. It is this question of to what degree Ahmed goes beyond phenomenology that is at the heart of this paper. Key to this will be what Ahmed calls the 'arrival' of objects, which will be elaborated upon, and the histories that have shaped their presentation to our perception.<sup>3</sup> It is this aspect of arrival that I focus on primarily. How does Ahmed arrive at *Queer Phenomenology*? To do this, I will need to see what she takes from Husserl and what she changes.

I will first outline what phenomenology is for Husserl followed by what it is for Ahmed, emphasizing her focus on orientation. She discusses four concepts in depth: objects in perception, objects that arrive, doing things, and inhabiting spaces. From here, I will discuss the Husserlian terms that she alters for her orientation, starting with the 'Phenomenological Reduction' and her critique of the 'Natural Attitude.' Then I will show how her reading of the Natural Attitude changes by keeping Husserl's distinction between 'Noesis' and 'Noema' in the concept of intentionality. Lastly, I will explain her "queer phenomenology" and what that means in relation to how she has changed Husserl's traditional concepts.

Before going into Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, I will first explain Husserl's phenomenology. For Husserl, the Phenomenological Reduction is a cognitive act of "suspending," or questioning, the reality of the Natural Attitude.<sup>4</sup> The Natural Attitude is when one accepts the world as it appears to us normally.<sup>5</sup> Through "suspending," or "bracketing," the Natural Attitude, we can get to the Phenomenological Attitude: a questioning of the world as it normally appears.<sup>6</sup> For Husserl, these reductions show us that thought can have different relationships toward objects in the world, which tells us something important about the intentions of our consciousness itself, namely, that thought always "intends" an object or works toward an object.<sup>7</sup> Hence the importance of the Phenom-



enological reduction, for Husserl, is that it allows us to potentially come to an understanding of objects as they really are (a project that Husserl identifies with the Eidetic reduction). For Ahmed, the success of this final step, the Eidetic reduction, is of less interest than what the Phenomenological reduction tells us about thought's relationship to the world, which will be the focus of her *Queer Phenomenology*.

In order to compare Ahmed to Husserl, one first has to understand how she differs from him. Ahmed's focus is on orientation in the most literal sense—spatially—which must always be kept in mind when thinking through her ideas. Orientation is defined as being within the objects around us and the spaces which we inhabit.<sup>8</sup> It involves recognizing the proximity of objects and others as well as how that orientation becomes shaped by this proximity.<sup>9</sup> Ahmed uses this concept as a way to rethink the “phenomenality of space:” how our bodies and space are interdependent.<sup>10</sup> For Ahmed, orientation is an alignment of body and space, allowing us to “find our way” by turning towards different objects. The spaces around us affect orientation, as we are shaped by the places we inhabit, but we can also shape the space itself.<sup>11</sup> However, this ability to both affect and be affected, she insists, is dependent on knowing where we are facing, on being “at home.”<sup>12</sup> One must always have an anchor point in order to be oriented or to orient. Hence, for Ahmed, orientations do not come about randomly, as there is always a “directionality” in space that guides bodies to inhabit space in certain ways, and bodies always have the power to change and develop the space they inhabit.<sup>13</sup> The social world is the product of how we inhabit space, and it develops from agreement about space.<sup>14</sup> Thus, for Ahmed, there is no “absolute space,” no space that exists independent of bodies and their relationships, as it is an invention of the arrangement of bodies and, in effect, recreates this arrangement of bodies over and over again.<sup>15</sup> It is the insight that there is no “natural” or “given” space independent of bodies that Ahmed inherits from Husserl's phenomenology, first and foremost.

I believe Ahmed keeps the Phenomenological Reduction that Husserl lays out, but alters and critiques the concept by examining objects in our perception.<sup>16</sup> As previously discussed, spaces are not coincidental for Ahmed; there is nothing “given” in the world. In fact, the Natural Attitude, for her, comes to be through this accepting of the world and space as “given.”<sup>17</sup> The ability to perceive certain objects is dependent on the orientation that we have.<sup>18</sup> This is where Husserl inserts his idea of intentionality.<sup>19</sup> Ahmed, on the other hand, believes that our direction towards an object precedes any intentionality. The concept of inten-

tionality holds a different purpose for her in *Queer Phenomenology* and will be discussed later. It should be noted, though, that within the Natural Attitude Ahmed's focus remains not on the consciousness towards the object but on the direction that gives us the ability to perceive the object at all. Importantly, this direction towards certain objects relegates other objects to the background, in which, when we have our attention and perception on certain objects, there are objects that are not in our perception.<sup>20</sup> Through this act of relegating objects to the background, we sustain a certain direction and a certain orientation of ourselves and the world.<sup>21</sup> Returning to Ahmed's concept of directionality and the lines we follow: these lines relegate certain things to the background so as to keep one's orientation on the path in front of oneself and to continue along that line. The Natural Attitude is affected by what we focus our attention on, and that attention is influenced by the orientation we take towards objects to bring them into our perception.<sup>22</sup>

Ahmed then moves into looking at the act of “suspension” or “bracketing” in Husserl. When Husserl engages in “bracketing,” he is not leaving behind the Natural Attitude, as he remains primarily reliant on objects.<sup>23</sup> When we attempt to put the object aside through suspension, we make more than just the object disappear. This is where Ahmed begins to look at the object as something that is not within itself, so it is here where the importance of the arrival of an object matters. When you suspend the reality of the object, you also end up suspending that which made the object available to you in the first place. She uses the example of Husserl's paper, in which, when he puts aside the paper, he also puts aside the labor of writing that occurs on the paper.<sup>24</sup> For Ahmed, the Phenomenological Reduction should not be a “suspension” of the Natural Attitude nor taking the object as given but should rather be an investigation into the conditions of arrival that allowed for the object to be perceived in the first place.<sup>25</sup>

Ahmed's alternative to Husserl's “suspension” involves looking at the objects that arrive. Returning to her concept of the background relegation of objects that sustains the Natural Attitude, it is the background we must turn towards to see the conditions of emergence for the Natural Attitude.<sup>26</sup> At the same time as asking for the arrival of the object, we must also question our own arrival to the object itself. For this, she borrows Husserl's term of “co-perception” to understand how the object and the subject must co-incide for the object to be perceived.<sup>27</sup> In saying that these things arrive, however, it means that objects that are near to us are not simply given. They have conditions that have been

predetermined (through the space inhabited and the lines directing) which allow for their emergence.<sup>28</sup>

This arrival of the object is historical, which she elaborates on using the Marxist critique of matter taking form.<sup>29</sup> If we think of the form of the object (table) as how it is presented to us, then we also have the matter which is what has developed the form. The matter being the work, or labor, that has shaped the table into what it is. The labor of making the table, but also the labor that is done on it, whether it is a writing table or a dining table, has determined its perception.<sup>30</sup> Thus, for Ahmed, suspending the Natural Attitude would not be looking at the object and accepting its surface but would rather be looking behind it. It would be a turn towards the background and the conditions of emergence that has brought the table forth as such, the work done on the table, and how the work allows for these conditions to disappear.<sup>31</sup>

I have demonstrated how Ahmed has altered the Phenomenological Reduction for Queer Phenomenology. Now I will examine her idea of intentionality for objects and her split of Husserl's notions of Noesis and Noema. Noesis describes the active, subjective element within the process of, for example, perceiving an object.<sup>32</sup> Noema, while necessarily still abstract for Husserl, marks the objective, non-active within the process of perception.<sup>33</sup> Noema is what calls thought, while Noesis is the action of interpreting this call. Or put more simply, for Husserl, these terms mark the difference between the perception or judgement of an object itself and the act of perceiving and judging that object.<sup>34</sup> Ahmed takes these abstractions of the Noesis and Noema and places them somewhere real and spatial.

I will start with Noesis and her alteration of the term. Objects are shaped by the work that is done on them and acquire the shape of the work that they do.<sup>35</sup> Here, Ahmed introduces the term "occupy," which denotes that our attention is focused on and taken up by an object to the extent that we may not notice other objects.<sup>36</sup> This relates back to the Natural Attitude, whereby when objects are in our perception and receive our attention, they make it so other objects are relegated to the background where they cannot be seen or attended to. The things that we do with an object or what it allows us to do is essential to the object.<sup>37</sup> It is this doing that brings the objects forth in a certain way. We can therefore intend and interact with an object because of what it allows us to do.<sup>38</sup>

Returning to the concept of matter and form of objects in their arrival, the matter (work) shapes the form of the object and allows us to interact with or do work with the object. For example, with the writing table, the table is shaped because it

enables writing to be done on it and for it to be used through this interaction of body and object. Work is Noesis for Ahmed because it is what allows for interaction with an object. This is also demonstrated when an object fails to extend our bodies through interaction.<sup>39</sup> That is, in the case of the failure of an object to do the work for which it is formed, the description of its properties will still refer to the work that could be done.<sup>40</sup> For example, when one leg of a table is broken, we complain that writing can no longer be done on it, its properties being the work it enables. The way we can perceive and interact with the object is possible due to the work that the object performs and, therefore, the Noesis is work.

Similar to Husserl's idea of the Noema, Ahmed's version is elaborative and has to do with what objects do and how spaces are inhabited by bodies and objects. Expanding upon what objects do, Ahmed continues with how work can shape the tendencies of objects themselves. The work that objects enable to be done makes them tend towards certain objects and bodies. The work that it is intended to be used for thus shapes the object.<sup>41</sup> This shaping can also mean that the object does not fit certain bodies depending on the "tendencies" of those bodies.<sup>42</sup> The concept of "tendency" is what leads me to connect this to Noema, as the tendencies of bodies being able to line up with similar objects can allow or not allow the object to be used. This use, which intends an extension of body with object, is part of what Noema means for Ahmed. However, Noema also refers to the habitation of bodies in spaces; the ability of bodies and objects to inhabit the same space and how this space allows for interaction.<sup>43</sup> Ahmed specifies that bodies are not just "in" space, but that they constitute and become that space.<sup>44</sup> The relationship between bodies and space allows for the approach and the interaction of certain objects. This is where the concept of "horizons" and "reachability" become important for Noema. Within the space that is inhabited, there are horizons which are around the body as work is being done.<sup>45</sup> The objects that are perceived are within one's horizon, and reaching for the object makes them available to be interacted with.<sup>46</sup> The direction and orientation of ourselves thus puts some objects more in reach than others, allowing them to be used for work. The Noema is the space that we inhabit due to our orientation allowing certain objects to be perceived, and then through the action of Noesis, allowing those objects to be interacted with and used.

This layout of intentionality references the "given" that Ahmed was critiquing from Husserl. From our spaces that we inhabit, certain objects are within our reach, and those which are, get work done on them. These objects also lead us

to other similar objects, allowing for an expansion of space, but also to similar conclusions.<sup>47</sup> However, through this repetition, the work that is done to repeat these actions seems to disappear. For example, think of the practice, work, and effort you have put into writing with a pencil. As a child, it was sincerely difficult, but now as adults, we have repeated this action, or work, so much that it has in fact become effortless to write with a pencil. It is this phenomenon that is important to Ahmed. Through repetition, the intentionality of objects disappears and they become “given” to us.<sup>48</sup> This repetition also shapes our bodies in certain ways to where our alignments and orientations become a result of said work that is now effortless.<sup>49</sup> Thus, these orientations become naturalized to the point where the effort and work repeated leads us to certain spaces that enable us to do certain things and relegate other types of work to the background—to the place we cannot see, as if it does not exist.<sup>50</sup>

It is in moments when bodies do not line up with the set lines or fail to extend with objects, when disorientation happens. Granted, moments of disorientation happen even when following lines; you never stay directly on the path. For Ahmed, it is these moments of disorientation that are the purpose of Queer Phenomenology. When you look at the background behind the Natural Attitude, you are turning, and that turning from your line leaves you disoriented. Bodies have the ability to extend into spaces where their shape does not fit and thus re-orient the space.<sup>51</sup> This is a possibility to reach new objects that are not usually within one’s reach and to take up spaces that are not meant to be taken up. In those moments, the lines might be altered and directions changed to create something “new.”<sup>52</sup> This arrival at something new, through disorientation, means, for Ahmed, that the conditions for arrival, the background, do not determine or ground us in one space or direction but still allow us to follow other lines.<sup>53</sup> Queer Phenomenology thus turns the tables on traditional Phenomenology by leaving behind Husserl’s reductions. While the purpose of traditional Husserlian reductions is for us to get at the world as it is, Queer Phenomenology seeks to re-orient the world to allow for the emergence of new objects.

So what kind of Husserlian does that make Sara Ahmed? A queer Husserlian. She has taken the traditional reductions of Husserl, but by demonstrating that orientation and the Natural Attitude are organized, she has, in effect, “queered” Husserl. Traditional Phenomenology looks to get at the world as it is, but Ahmed has determined that the world is an effect of bodies and space being aligned in certain ways and that to look only at the world is to ignore the

conditions that make it possible. She has queered Husserl by looking at things he could not see. The end goal of Queer Phenomenology is not even to look at the backgrounds, as her version of the Phenomenological Reduction would suggest, but rather to not let those backgrounds continue to anonymously determine the objects in perception. Her original statement was thus correct: phenomenology was Ahmed’s starting point. However, “losing her way” was never a loss at all, but was a turning to find new objects: the very goal of Queer Phenomenology.

## Endnotes

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|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <sup>1</sup> Sara Ahmed, <i>Queer Phenomenology</i> (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 21.     | <sup>9</sup> Ahmed, 3.       | <sup>25</sup> Ahmed, 34, 36. | <sup>41</sup> Ahmed, 46.    |
| <sup>2</sup> Ahmed, 2.  | <sup>10</sup> Ahmed, 6.      | <sup>26</sup> Ahmed, 38.     | <sup>42</sup> Ahmed, 51.    |
| <sup>3</sup> Ahmed, 37.   | <sup>11</sup> Ahmed, 8, 12.  | <sup>27</sup> Ahmed, 39.     | <sup>43</sup> Ahmed, 51.    |
| <sup>4</sup> Dermot, Moran, <i>Introduction to Phenomenology</i> (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 123. | <sup>12</sup> Ahmed, 7.      | <sup>28</sup> Ahmed, 39.     | <sup>44</sup> Ahmed, 53.    |
| <sup>5</sup> Moran, 107.  | <sup>13</sup> Ahmed, 12.     | <sup>29</sup> Ahmed, 42.     | <sup>45</sup> Ahmed, 55.    |
| <sup>6</sup> Moran, 109.  | <sup>14</sup> Ahmed, 13.     | <sup>30</sup> Ahmed, 49.     | <sup>46</sup> Ahmed, 55.    |
| <sup>7</sup> Moran, 118.  | <sup>15</sup> Ahmed, 13.     | <sup>31</sup> Ahmed, 44.     | <sup>47</sup> Ahmed, 56.    |
| <sup>8</sup> Ahmed, 1.  | <sup>16</sup> Ahmed, 27, 37. | <sup>32</sup> Moran, 156.    | <sup>48</sup> Ahmed, 56.    |
|   | <sup>17</sup> Ahmed, 13.     | <sup>33</sup> Moran, 159.    | <sup>49</sup> Ahmed, 57.    |
|   | <sup>18</sup> Ahmed, 27.     | <sup>34</sup> Moran, 159.    | <sup>50</sup> Ahmed, 58.    |
|   | <sup>19</sup> Ahmed, 27-28.  | <sup>35</sup> Ahmed, 44.     | <sup>51</sup> Ahmed, 61.    |
|   | <sup>20</sup> Ahmed, 29-31.  | <sup>36</sup> Ahmed, 44.     | <sup>52</sup> Ahmed, 62.    |
|   | <sup>21</sup> Ahmed, 31.     | <sup>37</sup> Ahmed, 45.     | <sup>53</sup> Ahmed, 62-63. |
|   | <sup>22</sup> Ahmed, 32.     | <sup>38</sup> Ahmed, 46.     |                             |
|   | <sup>23</sup> Ahmed, 33.     | <sup>39</sup> Ahmed, 48.     |                             |
|   | <sup>24</sup> Ahmed, 34.     | <sup>40</sup> Ahmed, 48.     |                             |

## Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology*. London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.  
 Moran, Dermot. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.





## **Half a Century with John Riker**

JOHN RIKER has been a Professor in the Philosophy Department at Colorado College since 1968, where his research centers on the intersection of psychoanalysis with ethics. He sat down with the editors one Tuesday afternoon to share insights gained from a fifty-year career in philosophy, observations about CC students in that time, and his love for both dancing and teaching, among other things.

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Tom Roberts: Since this is an undergraduate journal, we wanted to start by asking if you would share a bit about your undergraduate experience studying philosophy...which I know you have some funny stories about.

John Riker: [Chuckles] My undergraduate experience in philosophy was, well I think I had the worst department in the history of philosophy. Probably not quite the worst but it was a two-person department when I first entered and the chair of the department had had a massive stroke ten years earlier and had lost, really had lost his mind. There was nothing there. So the way he taught class was to read us the assignment, which I actually rather enjoyed, just being read to. Everyone else just kind of fell asleep. The second professor was an active, raving alcoholic, and he would come in and teach—he was a brilliant guy from Harvard, from the

analytic tradition—he would come in just red-faced, bleary, he'd go to write on the board and smash chalk against the board, he'd turn around and say "well, it wasn't important" [chuckles]. They added a third member my junior year—a German who had this heavy, heavy German accent and was simply not understandable, because he just couldn't make anything plain.

The incident I tell of a lot is that on one of these cold January days, it was way below zero in Middlebury, but the buildings were heated up to about eighty, and the sun was blazing through the big windows. So you had to wear eight sweaters to get to class, but when you got there it was just really hot. So this guy who had had the stroke started reading. And as soon as he started reading, the class was about twenty students, I would say that instantaneously half the class, their heads hit the desk and they were just asleep. This was, you know, two o'clock

in the afternoon, nap time, they were gone. By fifteen minutes after the hour everyone was asleep, but me. I was the only student who was awake. It was fun looking around, reading, listening—it was 20th century philosophy, some pretty cool stuff. But I noticed the professor slumping down in his chair, and his words were getting slower and slower. And sure enough, he fell asleep. And so, within a half an hour, everyone in the class was fast asleep except for me. At which point I put my head down on my desk and slept, too.

But I just love philosophy. One of the best things about having a bad department—two great things about having a bad department. One is that you know you love the subject matter for the subject matter, and not because you've been taken in by the charisma of a great teacher. So I knew my love of philosophy was legitimate, but I was not loving it because I loved my professors. Secondly, if I was going to learn it I had to learn it on my own. So I had to learn skills of disciplined reading and thinking in order to get the philosophy. And then learning how to go to secondary sources when I was confused. Oh, the third great thing—I had no problem deciding to go on in the field, because I thought if these guys represent what it's like to be a philosophy professor, then I can do better! I know the profession needs me. And so

I had no hesitation about going into the field. So that was my undergraduate philosophy career at Middlebury.

I wrote my undergraduate thesis on Whitehead, and I really, really got into Whitehead. And it was about 200 pages, or 175. Because I had to write out Whitehead's system, I mean no one in the department understood Whitehead and I had to write out for myself what all these actual entities, and eternal objects, and prehensions were doing and then was working through the problem of freedom and determinism in a metaphysical system. You know where Whitehead would locate freedom and how he would locate it and what it really meant. As it turned out, a past graduate of Whitehead was a guy named Donald Sherbourne who happened to be one of the great Whitehead experts in the world. He had written a couple of books on Whitehead. And he came to Middlebury in my senior year to give a talk and so we met. And really hit it off with one another. So lo and behold when I applied to graduate schools, I applied to Vanderbilt where he was teaching, and they gave me a bunch of money to go to Vanderbilt to work with Sherbourne. So, it worked out very nicely, in that way.

Tess Gruenberg: So you're going on to your fiftieth year, correct? Five zero?



JR: Yes, next year is my fiftieth year. Five-Zero, yes.

TG: That's amazing... One of the questions that I've had is: In that span of time, how have undergraduate philosophy students changed, if they have? What has been your experience, are there markers of time in that fifty years that really stick out to you—when that did change? Or has it been a consistent feeling?

JR: More consistent than inconsistent. Always, to be a philosophy major in America means you're always weird. You don't fit in. You're looking for something other than what the culture is offering. So we've always had student who have had this very strong, I wouldn't call it anti-social sense, but a willingness to be alienated and a willingness to think more deeply into human life than you usually can. That has remained constant. The late sixties, early seventies, we were much more radicalized politically. You know, this was Nixon, this was Vietnam, this was Watergate, and all that. The whole campus was. The students were much more, I would say, politically active and politically radicalized. Once the oil embargo, once the American economy started to shut down to some degree, students then got very concerned about whether there was going

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**“To be a philosophy major in America means you're always weird. You don't fit in. You're looking for something other than what the culture is offering.”**

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to be a place for them. So I would say in the eighties we had our fewest philosophy majors. Some years there were only two or three majors, and we had a very weird department at that point. It was a five-person department. One of the people who founded it was a cofounder of the comparative literature department, so he said, basically, I'm really just doing comp-lit. One was a cofounder of the environmental program and basically did all his work in environmental ethics. A third person founded feminism and women's studies on campus and she put all of her time into that. The fourth person was a cofounder of Asian studies on campus, and so put almost all of her time into that. So I was the only one left doing straight philosophy. So they were pulling students into Asian Studies and comp-lit and feminist stud-

ies, but not into philosophy. So those were lonely years. And I still had a lot of students, but they were not majors, for the most part. Then, once Jonathan [Lee] came, in the mid-90s, that's when everything changed. He was really somebody like myself who was just in love with philosophy and in love with thinking and with philosophy. And between he two of us then, there was a kind of little core or critical mass for students to start to come to. And then the woman who was doing feminist studies ran into some problems with the people who were doing feminist theory, and she came back to philosophy a bit. And the department then started to change in the late-90s and the early-2000s with the addition of Marion [Hordequin] and Alberto [Hernandez-Lemus] and Rick [Furtak]. We went through a time in which we hired a number of people and then had to fire them and that was really painful. It just didn't work out. About four people we hired with tenure track jobs that we then had to fire within three years because one thing or another went really really wrong. So that was a deeply destabilized period, all of those firings. And then these last 10 years have just been kind of wonderful, with a fabulous amount of stability in the department. So, I would say, right now, the difference is the students in the last ten years have just

been a quantum brighter. I'm just getting brighter students. I haven't seen a C-student in the longest time. 100% of the class is typically with the material and really bright, able to get it, able to read it, able to be in class. And in the 70s, there was a 20% bottom that just wasn't quite there, just really wasn't quite there. In the last five years, just a great great deal more diversity in philosophy classes. Which is nice, a lot of fun. A lot more Chinese students and American ethnic minority students. So, those are the changes.

Nathan Davis: And what about the changes for your approach to Philosophy in those fifty years? The detours, the twists and turns, who you're reading now that you weren't reading before?

JR: When I came, I was hired in the fields of American philosophy and ethics and history of philosophy and logic. So for a number of years I was the logician, I mean, I taught logic all the time. I even taught history. But when we turned to the block plan, we had to teach nine blocks a year. And we used to have to teach three courses a semester, and that's six courses. Well now I have three extra courses to teach. And so what I did with those three extra blocks, is that I would just say, “Ok, where do I want to ex-

pand my philosophical knowledge?” I would teach courses in things that I just wasn’t prepared to teach and I would just tell students, “We’re in this together!” And so that’s how I learned Wittgenstein. I had never been taught the *Philosophical Investigations* so I taught a block on Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* and just decided we’d read it all the way through and find out what was going on. It was incredibly exciting. I invented [the course] “Greek History and Philosophy” with Owen Cramer, because I didn’t know anything about anything other than Greek philosophy, I wanted to learn more about the culture. So I invented that. I taught a course on mathematics and metaphysics with a mathematician because I wanted to learn a little bit more about the mathematical underpinnings of some of our metaphysicians. I taught a course on concepts of human nature with a sociologist. So we did all sorts of weird things before we all burned out of teaching nine blocks a year, so we started to cut down a little bit on that.

The major thing that happened is that towards the end of the 1970s I had a fairly severe mental breakdown, psychological breakdown. My marriage collapsed, I collapsed, and went into a really dark depressive place which I thought I could pull myself out of because I had all this philosophical wis-

dom and I had all of this great rational capacity. And it didn’t work. No matter what I thought, what I willed, I just kept being depressed. And so I got into a psychoanalytic psychotherapy and learned more about myself personally in about three hours than I had in all my years of philosophy. Because philosophy gives you concepts for thinking about what it means to be human and who you are and how your society works and what it’s forcing upon you. But it doesn’t have tools by which you can really get into what happened to you in your personal life, what you’re harboring at substructures of your, if you will, subconscious existence. And it just opened up a whole new world to me. It was absolutely fabulous. It wasn’t like, in three hours I was cured. That took about fifteen years of fairly intense psychotherapy.

But, at that point, I got really interested in a psychoanalytic way of looking at human nature and what was going on. That’s when I started to add psychoanalysis [to my curriculum]. Not, thoroughly—I mean, what I had found before I fell apart was that I was working on problems of ethics, and I was really wanting to do a contemporary neo-Aristotelianism, in which ethics would come out of our understanding of who we are as human beings. And the 70s time were a fabulous time for developments in sociobiology

and sociology and anthropology and echogenic studies. And so I thought I would just look at all these social sciences and natural sciences and find out what was going on and see if I could pull it together for a kind of new conceptualization of human nature, to see if we could find a sort of new way of kind of grounding ethics in an Aristotelian way, in that concept of human nature. And so I started writing. I wrote a little book called *The Art of Ethical Thinking* in the seventies, it was a kind of initial, to see if I could do it, I don’t even know what I said in it [laughter] it’s so gone. I have no idea. It was just a kind of try-out book. And then I started to write this book called *Human Excellence and an Ecological Conception of the Psyche*, and I realized that the language I was trying to write in was not equal to what I wanted to say. That is to say, I wanted to, you know, if you’re trying to open up and talk about what it would be like to live with your whole psyche available to you in terms of experiencing, then you can’t have a language which is really strictly highly meant for the frontal lobes and only the frontal lobes. And so I had to just tear apart everything I knew about writing philosophy and start writing in a more conversational way, a more metaphorical way. And that change of style in writing led to a change of style in teaching. And so

my teaching language got deeper and more complex and as it did I was able to bring that oral kind of feeling back into my writing and the two really started to enhance one another.

So I think that book was published 1992, *Human Excellence and an Ecological Conception of the Psyche*. Still Jonathan Lee’s favorite of my books because it has that kind of freshness of language in it. But at that point I had now been through about ten years of psychotherapy and realized that psychoanalysis had much more depth going to it than this kind of wide, broad, bring in some sociology and anthropology and ethogenic theory, etc and try to tie it all together. It was basically a theory in which you look at all the different fields, you find out what they think the fundamental human need is, and then you kind of put it all together into a multiplicity of needs and how to respond to them, and what’s going on with them and a multiplicity of emotional states, etc. What I found, especially when I started to get much more into Kohut’s self-psychology, which I found in the eighties and really started to read—I didn’t understand it, I didn’t get it, but then the more I got it, the more I saw what was going on, the more I got excited about it, so that led to *Ethics and the Discovery of the Unconscious* in I think 1996, when I wrote that.

And at that point I really tried to connect up philosophy and psychoanalysis, and now I started to get more and more into psychoanalysis, and I went to a conference, mid-nineties, a self-psychology conference in which I said “What’s the philosophical importance of Kohut’s work for philosophy?” And I found that there was a whole set of people there that were really interested in my work, much more than philosophers were who just said “Psychoanalysis, meh, we don’t do anything with psychoanalysis.” They tended to be highly analytic and didn’t want anything to do—when it went into psychoanalysis it was pure Lacan and didn’t have any kind of, liking of where I was going with this. So I started to locate this new audience and think about them, and then in 2003 Jonathan Lear invited me to be the Kohut professor at the University of Chicago, and that was the turning point. That was the huge turning point, I mean to be a distinguished professor, even for just a year, at the University of Chicago is a really cool thing. And then to have to give a major address at the University of Chicago was a really, really important thing. And that’s when I met all of Chicago’s psychoanalysts and they really took to my work and pushed me to develop my ideas and just kept inviting me to give talks to them to hear what I was thinking and

what I was saying. So I would say from 2003 on I’ve been really focused in the philosophical implications of Kohutian self-psychology and have read much much more in psychoanalytic theory than I have—you know, I always pick up books on Nietzsche and Hegel and Kant and try to deepen my understanding of these guys, but my original thinking is within the philosophical implications of Kohutian self-psychology and psychoanalysis. And that’s resulted in these last two books, the *Why It Is Good to Be Good* and *Exploring the Life of the Soul*. So that’s more or less my history.

So yeah, what I’m teaching, where I’m thinking, I didn’t have a clue when I first came to Colorado College that there was anything in psychoanalysis. I’ve—you know you always take up things—what don’t I teach anymore that I used to teach? ...Logic. The block plan and logic don’t get along well together, it’s too dry, there’s no content to it, it’s all pure form and so it’s really, you know, it’s really hard to sustain interest in it. And so the more logical part of philosophy, the more analytic part of philosophy, which I used to do, I’ve kind of dropped out. I don’t have much interest in it anymore.

For many many years I dropped out American Philosophy and am now coming back to that and really really like—especially the philosophy of na-

ture, which is in Emerson and Thoreau, and that’s where I brought back Whitehead to do more Whitehead. So, yeah, so...I think I’ve taught about everything under the sun in these fifty years.

I actually—I was a visiting professor at Emory in the mid seventies and I taught a graduate seminar on Wittgenstein, believe it or not, and was their analytic philosopher for just two of their trimesters. Hated the place, and they hated me [laughter] and so we were both happy to part ways. I didn’t like their students, you know, they were just, that was a bad experience. I didn’t like University of Chicago

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“The philosophy classroom is one of those places where I just feel most myself and most alive and I’m not about to give it up for planting flowers and cutting grass and playing golf or anything like that.”

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go students either, they were way way too intellectual and not enough existential for me. So everything was just these head games at the University of Chicago. At Emory it was “Oh, Professor Riker, please tell us what we need to know for our exams and papers so we can get more A’s.” And it was all “We don’t want to think, we don’t want to really engage the text, we just want good grades. And so tell us what we need”—I mean, they really came out and said this. And I said, no we have to talk about—philosophy is talk, it’s discussion, it’s going through questions... and they wouldn’t talk, they wouldn’t respond to the class. I finally taught a philosophy of religion talk, my last class there, in which the fifteen weirdos on campus came to [laughter]—because everyone else knew exactly who they were, they were good Christians, etc. So the people who didn’t know who they were in terms of religion found me in that class and I found them and it was wonderful, then we were just weird together and we were just happy as larks. [laughter] So... that’s enough on that question.

Corey Baron: So with fifty years in mind, you can either look backward, but it also is sort of interesting to look forward, because, I guess, who spends fifty years in a place?—

JR: Yeah, where do we go from—

CB:—so what's next both for you personally and then also maybe where would you like to see the discipline go?

JR: For me personally, it's a good question, I mean one always has to keep, am I still alive? Am I still being an effective student? Am I losing it? Etc. You know when you hit your mid-seventies you have to always kind of be aware of things like this and hope you're not fooling yourself.

I have no plans for immediate retirement. I get a sabbatical next year, I'm going to see if I can possibly spend some time as though I were on sabbatical without having to come back to teach and preparing myself for a deeper more complex interactions in the classroom. But, right now, I would say the philosophy classroom is one of those places where I just feel most myself and most alive and I'm not about to give it up for planting flowers and cutting grass and playing golf or anything like that. So, I just feel enlivened by it personally and until—if you will, this is empirical rather than a priori. If you just make an a priori decision—I'll retire when I'm seventy-six or seventy-seven—I'm just going to wait and see how my health is and how my spirit is and hopefully will be able to anticipate in enough time to retire before I be-

come a lousy teacher.

Where I hope the profession goes is, obviously I would love it to open up to be more interdisciplinary, to look at what the other disciplines are saying about who we are as human beings. It's become a little bit stultified, certainly in its analytic side, you know it's pure conceptual side. That's why I stopped going to meetings, the papers were just too boring. They weren't getting anywhere and they were being nitpicking, really tight logical kinds of things that have forsworn—you know, philosophy always has to deal with the deepest questions of human life: who are we, what ultimately exists, how is it best to conceive of human existence? And we have to keep those fundamental questions alive rather than simply, you know, "How does the word 'good' work? "How does the word 'real' work?"; so on and so forth. I don't want to know how the word real works. It's very important—I want to know what's real. And I don't want that answered simply within "How does the word real work within a language game which we'll call 'about the real?'" Is this real coffee or not real coffee, and so on and so forth. I still love the old metaphysical questions, the old Socratic questions, and think that they need to be with us and not answered simply in a kind of neo-linguistic way.

TG: So this is less of an academic question and more of a personal one. You're a dancer, and I feel like there's a stereotype a lot of the time, with philosophy students at least, that the body is the vehicle for the head. To get the head to places. And so, maybe you could just speak a little bit about your relationship to dance and movement and how that plays in with...

JR: Yeah, absolutely. I'm going to go look at my advisee and just tell her I'll be a few minutes late...

[laughter]

TG: That you have to talk about dancing.

...

JR: So.

TG: Why do you need the body?

JR: I've got to get out of my head. I mean philosophy is such a head game. You know, conceptualizing, thinking thinking thinking all of the time, I mean it never, philosophy is just something you never stop doing. Once you get into philosophy you just think. And think and think and think. And so I just need ways to get out of my body and, so I love hiking the mountains of Colorado, etc. But when I found dancing, ballroom dancing, my body really

responds to music and just, especially music which has a wonderful beat to it. And obviously there's Marcia [Dobson, Riker's wife]. Marcia's this fabulous dancer. I didn't particularly like dancing with my first wife, she was an awful dancer, so we didn't dance very much. She was heavy, she didn't move very well, it wasn't fun. But Marcia is a beautiful dancer, and just the ecstasy of being able to glide across a ballroom with this beautiful woman in my arms and just have your body moving to waltz music, or foxtrot or tango music, or getting your hips moving in a beautiful rumba and all of that—it's just heaven itself. It's just glorious.

The only reason I might retire is to become a competitive dancer with Marcia. I can see doing that. But you take a big chance that your body is going to hold up, you know, as you get older, dancing three or four hours a day to get yourself competition ready, you might not be up to it, so, hard to say. Anyway, dancing is—the two things I absolutely adore in life are teaching a philosophy class and ballroom dancing. If I can do those two things, it doesn't matter much what else happens in life, I'm just a happy camper. Obviously playing with my dogs and seeing fine art and being part of cultural world—all of it is just marvelous fun. But the high points are dancing and philosophy, no doubt about it. •



# Mission Statement

*Anamnesis is the entirely student-edited philosophy journal of Colorado College, which publishes philosophical undergraduate essays from colleges and universities nationwide. Although academic journals can tend to be dry and sharply focused upon a specialized audience, we alternatively aim to present high quality philosophical writing in an aesthetically creative way in order to broaden philosophy's appeal. Students across all disciplines are thus encouraged to submit, so long as their essays grapple with philosophical issues.*

We would like to give a special thanks to The Colorado College Philosophy Department, John Riker, Rory Stadler and Karen West. The Colorado College Journal of Philosophy is funded by Cutler Publications.

# Letter From the Editors

In this second volume of *Anamnesis*, the journal continues discovering itself. Our first issue left us feeling both proud and ambitious. We had projected a strong voice; the task was to make it more articulate. In our eyes, the philosophy in this volume does just that. Following our mission statement, the work is rigorous but lively, elaborate but accessible. We present two vibrant essays from Amanda Pinto and Courtney Timmons, along with an interview with Colorado College Philosophy professor John Riker.

This volume also witnesses the departure of Bowen Malcom and Willow Mindich, two of our founding editors. The remaining two founders, Tess Gruenberg and Tom Roberts, were joined by Corey Baron and Nathan Davis. In addition to the four Editors-in-Chief, 13 students contributed to the journal by critiquing papers as part of the Editorial Review Board.

This year, we received 21 submissions from students at Amherst College, Appalachian State University, Boston College, Brandies University, Grove City College, Loyola University New Orleans, Princeton University, Rutgers University, University of Arkansas Fort Smith, University of Nebraska, University of Victoria, and University of Virginia. After three blind review cycles, the first stage of which guaranteed that every single essay was read at least twice, we ultimately decided to publish two of the 21 submissions. Thank you to all of our submitters; we look forward to seeing more of your work.





