Phenomenology and Its Worlds

Villanova University | March 27-28, 2020

The 25th Annual Philosophy Conference at Villanova University, Sponsored by the Philosophy Graduate Student Union

Featuring Keynote Addresses by Alia Al-Saji (McGill University) and Megan Craig (Stony Brook University)

Phenomenology takes “the world” as one of its central themes. It is variously conceived as the intersubjective horizon of all experience, as the environment which surrounds and envelopes consciousness, and as the flesh into which bodies are interwoven. Yet, these conceptions are consistently interrogated by authors who call attention to how the world is materially constituted. They show that the world is inhabited differently – or is sometimes uninhabitable – by certain bodies, in certain places, and certain times. Sara Ahmed, for example, poses the world as a question of orientation: how do we find our way in a world that acquires new shapes depending on which way we turn? Different orientations of embodied consciousness give rise to different and materially specific expressions of world. As a result, phenomenology today cannot avoid interpreting worlds as plural and conceptually dynamic.

Contemporary phenomenological engagements illuminate previously unthought (or unspoken) horizons of experience. Critical phenomenologies affirm the material situation of consciousness and show that worlds are subject to structural conditions of legibility and erasure. Frantz Fanon’s description of blackness as a zone of non-being emerges from the violent friction of an anti-black world that threatens to negate his humanity. Such descriptions sharpen our sensitivity to harms produced by structural forces and motivate strategies of resistance. Applied phenomenologies hold the potential for practical intervention in various disciplines such as art, psychiatry, education, and environmental science. Merleau-Ponty’s theory of embodied perception has been taken up in the fields of neuropsychology, autism studies, and disability studies as a means for giving expression to modes of embodiment unfamiliar to “normal” descriptions of consciousness. Whether considered as a tool for critique or interdisciplinary collaboration, phenomenology turns our attention to the multiplicity of worlds that we inhabit.

We invite submissions broadly related to the theme of this conference or one of the following questions:

- Is world best understood as singular or plural?
- What are phenomenological tools and strategies for structural transformation?
- How is phenomenology related to materialism?
- What is critical phenomenology?
- How does phenomenology contribute to other disciplines? (e.g. theology, decolonial theory, disability studies, and the sciences)

We will be accepting abstracts/summaries up to 800 words, full papers up to 3000 words, and panel proposals for review. Presentations should not exceed 20 mins. For panel proposals, please submit an abstract for the whole panel along with separate abstracts for each of the papers. We also invite submissions of artwork and performance pieces. Please submit a description of the artwork/performance and how it contributes to the conference theme.

Deadline for Submissions: January 4th, 2020 at 11:59 PM EST