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Cripping Spaces? On Dis/abling Phenomenology In Architecture

One of the key texts for a first-year architecture student in 1970s London was Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*. In my 40-plus years of experience as a professor of many architecture and interiors courses since then, I have seen this work continually assigned as a core reading. But my own intuitive sense of "not fitting" within this particular phenomenological discourse – even years ago as a student – was part of what led me to try to make sense of what is problematic about how architecture talks to and about itself; most particularly who and what gets erased through such discourses, how such erasures come to be both unnoticed and unconsidered, and the effects that this has had on the way that architecture is inculcated, practiced, and interrogated.

Attempting to better understand this "misfitting"[1] has led me to feminism, postcolonial and critical race studies, and disability studies. Disability studies in particular offers opportunities to explore just how certain kinds of bodies come to matter, while others become invisible or inconsequential.[2] Architectural phenomenology makes certain kinds of bodies obvious and unproblematic, emphasizing the sensuality and immediacy of experience while simultaneously assuming only "normal" (unencumbered, mobile, independent) subjects who have archetypical responses to space and objects.[3] Some disability studies scholars are engaging directly with phenomenological approaches, both as a means to critique limited framings of the body and to investigate what happens when theories and practices start from different and unique bodies rather than archetypical ones. Based on this work, I will end with some suggestions about the importance of dis/abling phenomenology, and of the possibilities generated out of *deliberately* cripping spaces (both disciplinary and actual) through this way of thinking/doing.[4]

1. See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept," *Hypatia* 26 (June 2011): 591–609.

2. See, for example, Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008) and *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Tanya Titchkosky, *The Question of Access: Disability, Space, Meaning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Margaret Price, *Mad At School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press, 2011); Jay Timothy Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Aimi Hamraie, *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Access* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2017).

3. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

4. The term *crip*, or *cripping*, is used throughout this essay as an active verb to articulate the practice of starting from disability and impairment as a positive and dynamic disruption of the "normal." This is similar to the increased use of "queering" space, rather than queer space, in queer and gender studies. Crip also reflects a political reclaiming of the historically derogatory word *cripple*, and extends it as an inclusive term across diverse groups who have historically been ignored or marginalized by mainstream society. See, for example, Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006) and Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

5. For this critique see, for example, Rob Imrie, "The Body, Disability, and Le Corbusier's Conception of the Radiant Environment," in *Mind and Body Spaces: Geographies of Illness, Impairment and Disability*, ed. Ruth Butler and Hester Parr (New York: Routledge, 1999) and Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

6. See Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments – Surrounding Objects*, 5th ed. (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006).

7. Variations of this can be found in works such as Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000); Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980); Steven Holl et al., eds., *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: William Stout, 2007) and Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (New York: Wiley, 2005).

Whose Bodies?

Architectural phenomenology's centering of embodied sensations has had considerable resonance as a critique of architectural modernism's understanding of "users."[5] But the procedures through which this deliberate shift from functional and abstracted rationality to intuitive experience is operationalized also act to essentialize specific bodies and to make others invisible. Crucially, this includes an easily unnoticed slippage *away from* the complexity, variety, and differences of inhabitants' spatial experiences and *toward* the designer's own sensitivity to, and interpretation of, those experiences. While there have been many contested understandings of phenomenology in architecture, the procedures outlined here are common enough to require critical interrogation wherever they appear in contemporary design ideas, attitudes, or processes. What, then, are the underpinning steps that connect embodied experience with material space and form? Consider the following simplification:

- All human beings have a similar interpretation of material space through our collective and unconscious psyches, developed both in childhood and through deeper, ancestral memories;
- Designers can best access this collective unconscious by reading it in the material and sensory qualities of built spaces, particularly those that make us feel like we belong there (often articulated as "a sense of place") – that is, the places that best express an essential human connection to the world;
- The architect's role is to have enhanced sensitivity to such readings of built space, and to enable the design of rich and embodied human experiences in each new situation through a deeply intuitive manipulation of materials, light, sound, atmosphere, etc.[6]

Thus, architectural phenomenology purports that the essence of human experience is projected onto, and can be intuited from, a close look at the material world and its elemental forms.[7] To do this requires inculcating a particular attitude toward the design process: what could be called a "care-full" (full of care) approach – that is, a particular concern with context, human sensory experiences, and the detailed crafting of materials and spaces. In the 1970s, this was exemplified in the work of architects such as Alvar Aalto, Hans Scharoun, Carlo Scarpa, and Herman Hertzberger.

More recently, the work and writings of Peter Zumthor, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, and Steven Holl have reinterpreted such a phenomenological approach for a contemporary generation of architecture and urban design students, educators, and practitioners. But following Sara Ahmed's example in *Queering Phenomenology*, we need to ask what is still missing: what kinds of bodies and what kinds of actions? Whose collective psyche are we actually talking about? Why are we asked to understand everyday lived social and spatial practices predominantly through the embodied experience of the material space itself – that is, through the ways *architects themselves* engage with space? Revisiting Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, it becomes clear how deeply problematic it is to rely on archetypes to define embodiment. While designing from sense experience can indeed be seductive to architects and students, it obscures other understandings of material space, most crucially as a site of complex, contested, and often inequitable everyday encounters and relationships; that is, as an uneven mediator of difference, not an expression of archetypical sameness.

For Bachelard, the collective unconscious is understood as formed through archetypical spaces like the primitive or hermit's hut, the cradle, and the maternal womb, which shape our shared memories and psyches and our positive feelings around shelter and protection. This assumed collectivity is seen as having grown out of humans' elemental connections – to warmth, shelter, and bodily movements – which form throughout childhood and through memory to become part of a shared psyche, based on the familiar and the traditional. But what about those who do not share the "originating" spaces that, for Bachelard, keep the normal unconscious "well and happily housed"? Bachelard only mentions in passing the problem of people who have what he calls an "ousted unconscious" – one that has been "roughly or insidiously dislodged," giving only flat-dwellers and war refugees as examples.[8] By blurring the potential gap between personal childhood memories and universally shared archetypes, between individual perceptions of specific spaces and a generalized notion of the shared feelings that those spaces provoke, Bachelard makes "abnormal readings" simultaneously negative – because they are stunted or depleted – and invisible, since they are assumed to be non-normal and thus irrelevant and inconsequential. For Bachelard, those misfits who have not been "happily housed" disappear from view. They – whoever "they" are – are both *there* and *not there*

8. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 10.

9. Titchkosky, *The Question of Access*.
10. Simon Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*,
3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 30.
11. Ibid., 23.
12. Ibid., 24.

simultaneously – or in Tanya Titchkosky's words, "included as excludable."[9] If I personally do not share the happy childhood memories of Bachelard's "everyone," how then do I fit within this discourse? How am I to be "housed" within the assumptions of architectural phenomenology, when my own memories of home are defined by fear and lack of safety, not comfort and protection? How am I, who has indeed been "roughly dislodged" from the shared and unproblematic certainties of a privileged "normal" subject, to respond to the arguments in Bachelard's *Poetics*?

Whose Spaces?

If the concepts of collective unconsciousness and archetypical experience appear to encompass everyone, albeit leaving some out, then what does this mean for a phenomenologically informed approach to architecture? This way of designing imagines both a detailed specificity to human experience – the feel of a door handle, the meaning of an attic – and an unproblematic psychic commonality of those experiences. Simon Unwin's *Analysing Architecture*, a popular student textbook first published in 1997, introduces a design methodology strongly influenced by architectural phenomenology, the implications of which can be interrogated.[10] For Unwin, design starts from identifying the central elements of everyday life, "places that through familiarity and use, accord with users' perceptions and expectations."[11] His examples include a Welsh farmhouse interior and a temporary beach encampment. He writes about the house, "Although nobody is shown in the drawing, every one of the places mentioned is perceived in terms of how it relates to use, occupation, meaning. One projects people, or oneself, into the room: under the blankets of the bed, cooking on the fire, chatting by the fireside. Such places are not abstractions as one finds in other arts; they are an enmeshed part of the real world. At its rudimentary level architecture deals not with abstractions but with life as it is lived, and its fundamental power is to identify place."[12] In the complex conditions of making architecture, then, students must learn how to become close-reading interpreters of the everyday. They can do this by drawing out both the specificities of the setting and the deep-seated essences that it reveals. According to Unwin, these implicit meanings will be intuitive and obvious since they are shared by designer and imagined occupants alike. What happens, though, if we interrogate what Unwin calls "primitive place types" more closely? What kinds of people and types of inhabitation are

projected onto these scenes? On both the fireside and the beach, Unwin projects a moment of conviviality, expressed through closeness to the light and heat of a fire or the sun, the comfort of an armchair, the pleasure of company. The projected inhabitants are all already "normal," included subjects who are simply being in space. They do not have different kinds of bodies, complex histories and trajectories, or different (unequal) relationships to one another or to resources. They have an unproblematic relationship to the world – everyone is assumed to be equal in their access to the comfort of the armchair or the obvious pleasures of the beach.

What is unspoken or absent here? What are other, less comfortable and comforting experiences of these scenes? What is it like for a woman doing the domestic work that enables such conviviality? What does the farmhouse scene feel like for someone whose sense of home is fraught with negative associations and emotions? How does someone who uses a wheelchair experience the beach, except as a potential hindrance to mobility? Who is being noticed, represented, and valued here? Who is observing, and what are they bringing to their observations? And – just as relevant – who does not appear, or is doing the unseen and unrepresented work that makes such a scene possible?

Whose Experience?

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed is particularly interested in who gets relegated to the background. She works through a critical reengagement with phenomenology and revisits Husserl's famous experiential analysis of his work table, showing that there are people outside of his detailed description who are made invisible by his concentration on the physical experience of the table itself, but who enable the philosopher to undertake his work – his wife and children, the cleaner, the maker of the table, etc.[13] To Ahmed, this suggests the concept of *orientations*, which "involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others. Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward."[14]

To investigate orientations – in architectural discourses and processes, in everyday social and material practices, and in actual built spaces – opens up for inquiry what is noticed and treated as valid within the discipline of architecture, as well as what is ignored or marginalized. Phenomenologically informed design tends to orient toward specific assumptions

13. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 25–63.
14. Ibid., 3.

15. See Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 1998), 29. Zumthor frequently refers to other architects whose approaches are generated out of a response to contemporary conditions. For example: "My Swiss colleagues Herzog and de Meuron say that architecture as a single whole no longer exists today. . . . [They] derive from this assumption their theory of architecture as a form of thought, an architecture which, I suppose, should reflect its cerebrally conceived wholeness in a special way." In contrast he offers himself up as an intuitive designer who strives to grow directly out of human experience, and not its representation.
16. Steve Rose, "The Perforated Palace," *The Guardian*, November 19, 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/19/germany.architecture.

about the built environment as composed of elemental forms and archetypical human responses that are projected onto and then read off those forms. Such an approach in fact orients *away* from the complex and inequitable variations of lived experience. This alternative conception of occupancy is framed not through archetypical sensations but through the relational encounters between people, spaces, and objects, whose interactions are not necessarily obvious, poetic, or shared but rather often contested and contradictory, ultimately privileging particular types of bodies and experiences over others.

I have also proposed that architectural phenomenology tends to orient toward designers themselves and their intentions. Zumthor, for example, explicitly locates himself as an intuitive designer to be set against those who "intellectualize" the process.[15] As Steve Rose writes: "His approach is characterised by patient craftsmanship, deep understanding, and ascetic rigour. His buildings usually consist of very little, done very, very well. Zumthor is no minimalist, though; not for him ephemeral fashions in form and theory. He doesn't believe in architecture as a vehicle for communicating other forms of meaning, but rather as a language unto itself. The only thing Zumthor has labelled himself as is a phenomenologist, 'concerned with the way things look, feel, touch, smell, sound.'"[16] Here, the ultimate evidence of the quality of Zumthor's work is not the actual experience of its occupation, but the architect's own integrity and sensitivity, as well as the considerable skill and sheer hard work that such a crafted approach requires.

Where then are the misfits? Dislodged through the phenomenological framing of a collective unconsciousness in architectural discourse, those who are included as excludable are again left out by a design process that starts from a belief in an unproblematic, collectively shared relationship to material space. Such an approach is then justified as both "obvious" and "true" by projecting assumed archetypical human experiences onto material space, and then privileging the designer's expertise in interpreting those experiences (without actual people's perceptions, experiences, or differences ever being engaged). Finally, the complexities and inequities of everyday encounters and relationships in material space are oriented away from the assumption that good design is primarily defined by the architect's "careful" and sensitively sensuous method. To critically intervene against these assumptions, I want to explore what happens when architects instead start from misfitting.

Starting From Misfitting and Difference

Although disability studies remains largely outside architectural education and practice, it has much to say about how starting from difference can disrupt assumptions of what is normal in theories and practices of space making. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson sees misfits as exemplifying awkwardness, instability, and contestation: "The utility of the concept of misfit is that it definitively lodges injustice and discrimination in the materiality of the world more than in social attitudes or representational practices, even while it recognizes their mutually constituting entanglement."[17] Expanding this further, Thomas Abrams's reframing of Heidegger from a disability perspective, as well as those of other scholars, offers a means to crip architecture and provide some valuable concepts for challenging the archetypical unencumbered, mobile, independent, and "deeply feeling" subject that underpins architectural phenomenology.

In *Heidegger and the Politics of Disablement*, Abrams argues that a fundamental aspect of Heidegger's work is his insistence that things are not mere objects separate from life but are integral to our meaningful dwelling as beings-in-the-world.[18] Seeing an artifact or a space as "out there" fails to understand how the material aspects of the world are bound to everyday concerns[19]: "Phenomenal space is found not in the objectively measurable distance between things but rather in terms of availability. [Things] are 'in reach,' 'at hand,' 'right here,' and so forth. . . . The times and spaces of daily life are found in anticipation, in the way we continually dwell in the 'what is to come,' not in minutes and seconds. These are what Heidegger calls the times and spaces of 'care.'"[20]

Heidegger does not interrogate bodies (or difference) but, according to Abrams, he does provide a resonant definition of – and model for framing – human existence in space. He starts from a "mode of coexistence" that "describes the materially situated, institutionally organised settings in which we body forth in the world, where human lives unfold."[21] Crucially, we do this through care – through a heedful active concern, interacting with others and with our material surroundings. While individual modes of care may vary widely, acts of caring underpin all human existence. For Abrams, reframing what is normally seen as individual rational activity as care enables both diverse disabilities and abilities to become "descriptions of collected incidents of care,"[22] rather than externalized and normalized categories. Rethinking architectural phenomenology

17. Garland-Thomson, "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept," 593.
18. Thomas Abrams, *Heidegger and the Politics of Disablement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.
19. Heidegger uses variations on the concepts of concern and care as a way of articulating an attitude to the world that is not merely cognitive, rationalist, or theoretical. By concern he means "concerning oneself with or about" something; also linked to caring – whether as "paying attention to," "worrying about," or taking "care of."
20. Abrams, 3–4.
21. Ibid., 4.
22. Ibid., 32.

from a phenomenological perspective suggests two key problems. First, projecting human experiences "out there" onto material space and objects, and then basing architecture on designers' interpretations of these projections, in fact separates experience from our everyday embodied concerns as beings-in the-world. This process acts to reduce multiple and collective "modes of coexistence" to simple, immediate, and individual bodily sensations. Second, a Heideggerian understanding of care as something that underpins all our bodying forth into the world is decisively different from the way that care is so often articulated within phenomenologically oriented architecture. Care, in the Heideggerian sense, is embedded in our everyday encounters with one another, objects, and space. Architecture could build on phenomenology to critically and creatively investigate what these cares are and how they intersect with objects and spaces. But instead, it allocates care to care-full design intentions and to caring architects.

For Abrams, engaging with disability (as well as gender and sexuality, etc.) as a mode of being – rather than as a "thing" category – also means that we have to question the kinds of bodies and modes of being that phenomenological philosophy has taken for granted as normal representations of human life. He argues that Heideggerian phenomenology is based on an underpinning argument that is often not followed through, either in originating texts or those by more recent theorists: that phenomenology explicitly accords value to all modes of personhood, whatever their variations, their multiple ways of being-in-the-world. Abrams therefore calls for a phenomenology "that sees all modalities of embodiment as derivative of our common existence, and accounts for the unequal distribution of personhood in institutionally organized and materially situated everyday life."[23] By leaving disability and ability as open relationships (that is, not already categorized and defined), we can explore how forms of human capacity are culturally organized, and how dis/ability (disability and ability as an assemblage, not distinct concepts) relations come to be made in particular ways rather than others.

Similarly, things reveal themselves as neither distinct entities nor archetypical projections, but rather as modes of relevance invested with meaning and embedded in specific situations and bodily modalities. Reflecting on these everyday encounters and practices discloses how bodily hierarchies are accepted, reproduced, and contested. Beginning with

23. Ibid., 8.

24. Ibid., 32–33.

25. Johanna Oksala, "A Phenomenology of Gender," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39, no. 3 (2006): 229–44.

26. Tanya Titchkosky and Rod Michalko, "The Body as the Problem of Individuality: A Phenomenological Disability Studies Approach," in *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions*, ed. Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes, Lennard Davis (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 127–42.

the taken-for-granted opens up the basis of our differential being-in-the-world and can give insights into how things might be done differently. As Abrams writes:

This is not just about using phenomenology to talk about disability, it is also to rethink the basis of the phenomenological enterprise itself. The point is to eliminate from the outset a priori assumptions about what human bodies must be, must do. I want a phenomenology that thinks about bodies that dwell upright and those that do not. I want a phenomenology that addresses bodies that are sighted and those that are not. I want a phenomenology that thinks about bodies that are queer, white or brown (Ahmed 2006), throw like a girl (Marion Young 1980), break down (Diedrich 2001).[24]

Although he does not deal explicitly with architectural phenomenology, Abrams clearly refuses the idea of archetypical responses or their projection out there onto particular spatial and material entities. For Abrams, the relevance of phenomenology is in its unpacking of Being, not in trying to find some essentialist Being. His reframed phenomenology enables us to conceptualize intersubjectivity and the concrete experience of others, as well as investigate how this works as an ongoing process of "normality." Following Johanna Oksala:

As an incarnate subject, I am always already situated in an intersubjective, historical nexus of sense. I am a member of a historical community, learning from others what counts as "normal" and thereby, as a communalized subject, participating in an intersubjective tradition. I also always understand the world and myself by virtue of a handed-down linguistic conventionality. . . . [This] type of intersubjectivity thus refers to the constitutive importance of the cultural sphere, or the homeworld of which the transcendental subject is a member.[25]

Her cripping of phenomenology allows for an interrogation of how bodies come to be articulated in particular ways – in theory, discourse, attitudes, and "common sense" beliefs – and how actual bodies, objects, and spaces come to be made concrete through particular practices.

In "The Body as the Problem of Individuality: A Phenomenological Disability Studies Approach," Tanya Titchkosky and Rod Michalko also see phenomenology as a means to critically interrogate how the lifeworld is framed: "Phenomenology is a way to frame disability as a scene where the meaning of the human condition of embodiment can be brought into consciousness for reflective consideration – a task we regard as essential to any political possibility of forging something new since the new is tied to rethinking our most basic ways of framing embodiment."[26]

Because the lifeworld comes to us as a given, it is precisely "this 'rule' of the taken-for-granted world that is concealed from us when we experience the world," which starting from dis/ability opens up to inspection. But, as they also note: "Herein lies an irony – disability is framed as a phenomenon located and locatable only outside of the taken-for-granted life-world as well as outside of the natural attitude. Disability is thus understood as marginal to the common-sense world and, as such, as outside of intuitively given reality. Disability is one source of what Schütz calls the 'fundamental anxiety' insofar as disability can, and often does, disrupt the taken-for-granted character of the world and our life in it."[27]

27. Ibid., 132.
28. Ibid., 128.
29. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 129.
30. Vasilis Galis, "Enacting Disability: How Can Science and Technology Studies Inform Disability Studies?" *Disability & Society* 26, no. 7 (November 2011): 825–38.

Rather than ways of thinking, doing, or designing that insidiously dislodge or orient away from misfits, the question is *how* and *why* this happens. How does dis/ability make an appearance in the world? How is it lived? For Titchkosky and Michalko, arguing both theoretically and through case examples of the exeperiences of people with disabilities in university spaces, this means unraveling how disability is made into an individual problem (perceived as being of tragic proportions) and begs an interrogation beyond disability. It reveals the normalized embodied contours of individuality itself – that is, of the very frameworks through which "the human condition [is] harnessed to the workings of a culture that seeks to service 'normal' individuals."[28]

As Ahmed writes, this is "a world that extends the form of some bodies and not others, and such bodies in turn feel at home in this world."[29] Bachelard's collective unconscious, Norberg-Schulz's genius loci, and Zumthor's atmospheres each articulate a shared belonging that assumes its own commonsense universality while simultaneously making concrete a normative order in which some bodies are present and others are absent. In the process, it attributes disability *and* ability to particular forms and not others. From a dis/abled phenomenological perspective, in contrast, architecture becomes not the development of elemental spaces and forms derived from our collective unconscious but the mapping, analyzing, and challenging of assumptions about what makes a place normal; what Vasilis Galis calls "the analysis of situations where the interactions of bodies and materiality/culture produce action or inaction, ability or disability. . . . Different bodily forms, abilities and disabilities are not independent of architecture, but are mutually constitutive such that 'produced space' also forms 'social norms.'"[30]

Cripping Space, Dis/abling Phenomenology?

In a series of texts exploring intersections between blindness, objects, spaces, and encounters with others, Michael Schillmeier investigates what happens when neither dis/abilities nor inter/dependencies are assumed as a priori effects of given realities, "rather, they appear as highly fragile mediations of heterogeneous elements that make up the times and spaces of emerging in/dependences and dis/abilities."[31] By looking at visual impairment Schillmeier shows how ordinary acts, like dealing with money and going shopping, configure the experiences of blindness and sightedness as contingent effects of "highly specific material relations that have their own rhythms and times, make up their own socially relevant spatialities, assemble affects and affectations, visualize (or alter) preferences and old habits, and so on."[32] For example, he explores the implications of the shape of money and the economic and social relations that it mediates:

Visually attuned money doesn't translate easily into "blind" money. Currencies differ in their materiality. Money mediates into different materialities (coins, paper money, plastic cards, electronic money, etc.); they also have different colors, shapes, textures, weights, thickness and sizes. To become blind money, different temporal and spatial arrangements have to be mobilized.

Blind money practices slow down and lengthen money transactions; blind people plan, select and earmark the money in use. . . . Generally speaking, it is the assemblage of human and non-human configurations enacting blind times and spaces that disrupt, question and alter the presence of visually enacted times and spaces. These configurations also mediate the intermediary "money" itself; visual money becomes blind money. Such a clash of different regimes of time and space disables when no translation, when no mediation, is possible. Through failed money transactions, blind people become disabled.[33]

In this analysis, objects and spaces are not out there as sensory representations of our deepest psyches. Rather, they (and our encounters with them and with others) contribute to enabling or disabling times and spaces through everyday conduct. Where normative social and material practices are dominated by able-bodied rules and routines, and by able-bodied theories and discourses – and where this very act of unacknowledged privlege and domination stems from an implicit and "commonsense" framing of bodies as separately abled or disabled, independent and active, or dependent and passive – then disability as a concept and disabled people as a constituency disappear. For Schillmeier, again through a Heideggerian reading:

31. Michael Schillmeier, "Time-Spaces of In/dependence and Dis/ability," *Time & Society* 17, no. 2/3 (2008): 215–31. See also Schillmeier *Rethinking Disability: Bodies, Senses, and Things* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 215.
32. Ibid., 217.
33. Ibid., 219.

Independences and abilities refer to enabling relations "without having to look" (Heidegger, 1993: 69). . . . These assemblages unfold the readiness-to-hand of things. According to Heidegger, the associations [Umgang] *with ready-to-hand relations are, metaphorically speaking, not "blind." Rather, they configure the secure and cautious pragmatics of "care"* [Umsicht] *that network heterogeneous entities into fitting ones.*

If associations are badly put together, disconnected or displaced from ready-to-hand situations, the very rhythms, the temporalities and spatialities involved, are disrupted, questioned and altered. Estranged, humans and non-humans alike become merely present at-hand.[34]

What might such a dis/abling phenomenology mean to architecture as a discourse, as a practice, and as built spaces? Unlike a conventional architectural phenomenology that closes down design through a particular set of careless (that is, unnoticed and thoughtless) procedures, the attempt here is to move toward the deliberate cripping of material space starting from, and embedded in, care and concern for the multiple ways of being human. To repeat Abrams's words, this is an architectural phenomenology "that sees all modalities of embodiment as derivative of our common existence, and accounts for the unequal distribution of personhood in institutionally organised and materially situated everyday life."[35]

Of course, this opens up many more questions than can be answered here. I have looked elsewhere at examples of alternative conceptual frameworks and artistic and/or design practices that start from a critical and creative engagement with how disadvantage, marginalization, and disablement come to be enacted in certain ways rather than others. Such approaches involve better understandings of how ordinary, everyday social and material practices operate to normalize differential experiences, the role that built space takes in these practices, and how the discourses and activities of architecture are also part of these practices. Caring, in Abrams's phenomenological use of the term, becomes a commitment to understanding and working against ordinary, unnoticed discriminatory practices, and to exploring how – given the very real constraints of contemporary architectural education, theory, and practice – these might be critically and creatively rethought and redesigned.

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34. Ibid., 227.
35. Abrams, *Heidegger and the Politics of Disablement*, 3. While this essay has focused on the uses of phenomenology in both architecture and disability studies, it should be noted that other, related modes of inquiry such as Science and Technology Studies (STS) and ethnomethodology also explore the dynamic "assemblages" and "entanglements" of everyday social, spatial, and material practices; as does post-human studies.