

# Introduction

## *Phenomenology's Methodological Invitation*

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WHAT IS PHENOMENOLOGY? And why should anthropologists, as well as students of history, psychology, education, or political economy be interested in it? Within philosophy, phenomenology is as diverse as its practitioners. Indeed, Moran (2000: 3) in an introduction to philosophical traditions of phenomenology finds it important to warn readers not to overstate the degree to which phenomenology “coheres into an agreed method, or accepts one theoretical outlook, or one set of philosophical theses about consciousness, knowledge, and the world.” Some of this diversity continues to be a feature of anthropological uses of phenomenology, as we show here. Yet we also argue for a heuristic narrowing of the range of its meanings. We do so in order to widen its potential applicability, making it more instructive to anthropology as well as to aligned disciplines. What might appear to be a paradox—restricting meaning in order to expand its use—is in fact in keeping with phenomenology’s own teachings, and we argue for this in some detail in this introduction. For preliminary purposes, we offer a serviceable definition of phenomenology: phenomenology is an investigation of how humans perceive, experience, and comprehend the sociable, materially assembled world that they inherit at infancy and in which they dwell.

Framed in this way, phenomenology in anthropology is a theory of perception and experience that pertains to every man, woman, and child in every society. As such, it is relevant not just to locals in the fieldwork sites that anthropologists step into and out of, but also to anthropologists and philosophers in their own regional lives, surrounded like everyone everywhere by significant others, human and non-human. Phenomenology therefore has a decidedly universalistic dimension. But it is also determinedly particularistic. The phenomenology we privilege sets out to show how experience and perception are constituted through social and practical engagements. There is a temporal, cumulative dimension to phenomenological descriptions of people’s activities and concerns, which comes through most profoundly in phenomenology’s subtle vocabulary of the orientations that inhabit our bodies and guide people’s actions and perspectives.

Such a developmental account is necessarily also particular to both time and place. In this combination of the universal and the particular, phenomenology

contains elements of anthropology's original charter that sought to maintain a sense of human generalities while pursuing empirical investigation of the particular and the concrete. We suggest that phenomenology can renew this older project, infusing it with freshness, while avoiding many of the pitfalls that have been located in overlapping and diverse critiques of universalism as a cloak for particular and powerful subject positions—European, imperialist, masculinist, white, and so on—there being no necessary limit to such forms of positionality. Instead, the universalism of phenomenology seeks to locate itself at ever more basic levels, actively aiming to expose and shed presuppositions. Its method is in fact predicated on this quest to reveal and discard whatever is revealed to be an unwarranted presupposition smuggled into one's work.

The account we provide in this introduction tries to elucidate and clarify a version of phenomenology that makes it important not simply to contemporary anthropology with its breadth of concerns, but to other disciplines as well. Many definitions of phenomenology locate its focus at the level of individual experience. But perception and experience contains many dimensions—sensorial, corporeal, cultivated, interactional, distributed, collective, political, ethical, and individual. Such dimensions immediately invoke processes of education, socialization, and political power. As people's situations, concerns, or orientations alter, often materialized in a transformation in embodied experience or in educated capacities, so are their perceptions modified. The phenomenology we seek to foreground invites considerations of politics and political economy, macro- as well as micro-processes. In the many corners of the world now where war, compulsory migration, or violence have wrought perceptual and experiential modifications upon people, phenomenological anthropology will be necessarily involved in describing the passive apprehension of that which is involuntary or even unspeakable, even as it discerns and describes the active absorption of traumatic experience amidst the suffering.

### **Narrowing the Range of Meanings and Expanding the Range of Applicability**

Our volume vindicates and extends the sense of burgeoning interest in phenomenology among anthropologists, attested to in several wide-ranging overviews—most recently by Desjarlais and Throop (2011) in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, and earlier, by Michael Jackson in his extensive introduction to *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology* (1996). We build on the clarity of these excellent essays, which describe the ways in which phenomenology and anthropology have already intersected over a period of time. In this longer history of exchange and critique a number of recurrent themes have already emerged. Reviewers have noted a clustering of phenomenological anthropology in certain areas such as sensory perception, illness and healing, bodily-ness, inter-

subjectivity and sociality, and senses of place (Desjarlais and Throop 2011), with a particularly heavy concentration in the areas of medical anthropology and the anthropology of religion (Knibbe and Versteeg 2008). Katz and Csordas (2003) found a typicality of approach as well, with a prominent stream of work seeking to illuminate “native groundings” for subjects’ experiences, “enhancing respect for local cultures by uncovering reasons that outsiders had not appreciated” (2003: 275). Such interpretations may also show a preference for an ethnographic accounting of “alien cultural life-world[s]” (Mimica 2010: 204), and in particular of non-urban societies. Sometimes these societies have also been presented as essentially stateless (despite their partial incorporation within new nation-states), or at least as relatively self-instituting in relation to the projects of nation states and the global capitalist economy.

This volume makes a more radical claim for phenomenology in anthropology. It seeks to show that any anthropologist who engages with the method in a sustained manner over time will find it illuminates aspects of their own work. The essays demonstrate our claim empirically, showcasing the sheer breadth and variety of social activities and events whose study is enhanced by phenomenology. While some of the characteristic areas of concentration certainly recur in this volume as well, the contributions extend much further, ranging from martial arts, sports, dance, and music to political discourses and history. A sustained closing segment of the volume explores how phenomenology might both contribute to and benefit from long-standing anthropological debates and practical attempts to reshape the poetics of ethnography, and thus to forge more adequate means of representation in bringing unfamiliar and marginalized modes of perception into language, image, and sound.

Yet—perhaps paradoxically—this expansion of subject matter, potentially one that promises to address the entire breadth of concerns of contemporary anthropology, has been won in this volume by what we have already described as narrowing down the range of meanings attached to the term phenomenology. It is characteristic in introductions to indicate and implicitly to embrace the sheer variety and range of philosophical versions that fall under the label of phenomenology. The gesture may seem ecumenical, but it presupposes an abstract, detached view toward phenomenology itself. A lesson we may well apply here, taken from phenomenologists such as Heidegger, is that such a detached perspective is not necessarily the most useful one, because it is also not the most characteristic attitude taken in human endeavors. The detachment that is upheld as a goal and starting point by dominant scholarly traditions is, he suggests, a distortion of our far more ordinary purposive attitudes to the world in which we are oriented by the tasks and projects we seek to accomplish. In that more characteristic mode, he argues, we typically select and favor certain aspects of the world around us over others (Heidegger 1962).

In the case at hand, our purposive orientations are given by the tasks of anthropology. We use these to foreground specific features of phenomenology, which means selecting certain interpretations of phenomenology at the expense of others. These different interpretations sometimes occur even in the same text, making for a marked instability of meanings that cluster around a term central to phenomenology and many would argue to anthropology itself: experience. We use this introduction to argue that the most useful version of phenomenology for anthropologists is one that recognizes the limits to a knowing consciousness. Experience is not simply what is illuminated by the light of the mind or by cognitive attention. It includes also the indistinctness at the edge of audibility, the shadows that subtend that which appears in the clarity of attentive focus.

The subtitle of this volume—*A Sense of Perspective*—refers to this mixture of vision and opacity, of audition and indistinction as both ever-present within human experience and systematically interrelated in forming our sense of perspective. Our perspective encompasses all the senses as they inform one another, even as they remain distinct modalities of perception. But it is equally important to emphasize that the version of phenomenological anthropology we elucidate here does not see opacity and indistinctness only as limitations. They also create a field of perception and the possibility of sensing and comprehending the world, not as a chaotic jumble or as the uniformly arrayed objective universe of scientific imagination, but as something that can be understood through our human endeavors and purposes.

We hope to show that this more stringently defined version of experience we have picked out from among many unstable and inherently contradictory interpretations accrues a further advantage. It allows us to address one central concern that anthropologists express when asked to consider utilizing phenomenology: how does concentrating on experience allow us to account for the many forms of mediation of experience and perception itself? This too is part of the meaning we hope to signal with our subtitle. Such mediations, many of which play a salient role in the anthropological analyses collected in this volume, encompass long histories of power relations that connect as well as divide people. Mediations thus include traditions of representation; old and new discursive formations that shape and reshape what we take to be experience; rules, regulations, and practices of state institutions and corporate entities; class, gender, and property regimes; dominant ideologies; language; assemblages of the built environment; and new technologies. Just as significantly, mediation includes that dimension of social variability that has been central to the anthropological endeavor, namely the diversity of cultures—between but also, crucially, within social formations.

Yet the capacity to visualize an enlarged perspective must always bring in its train—for phenomenology—a certain new version of selectivity. We hope to show that this more stringently defined version of experience we have picked out from

among many unstable and inherently contradictory interpretations accrues advantages. We begin therefore by clarifying the definition of experience that is implied in our preferred version of phenomenology, before moving on to show how this can help us readdress the question of mediation.

## Phenomenological Redefinitions of “Experience”: Marking the Limits of Consciousness

A number of the selections we wish to make converge on the crucial term “experience” as well as the term “consciousness,” both of which are regularly invoked in definitions of phenomenology.

Consider the following quotations:

*Phenomenology is “an investigation into the structures of experience which precede connected expression in language.”* (Ricoeur, cited in Jackson 1996: 2)

*Phenomenology is the scientific study of experience. It is an attempt to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy, before it is subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual systematisation.* (Jackson 1996: 2)

*Phenomenology is an analytical approach, more a method of inquiry, really, than a theory, that works to understand and describe in words phenomena as they appear to the consciousness of certain people.* (Desjarlais 1996: 13)

*Phenomenology is the description of “the experiences of the conscious self . . . in particular fields of experience.”* (Macquarie 1988: 211)

The term “experience” enjoys an old and obdurate history in the traditions of Western philosophy, cohering specifically around the conscious thoughts, intentions, desires, projects, and plans of the human individual. Its dominance may be gauged by the extent to which such terms occur to many of us as the most spontaneous interpretation that suggests itself when the term is mentioned. Unless explicitly reframed (and the redefinition kept alive by application to fresh contexts as they arise), statements that proclaim the immediacy of lived experience as their methodological measure automatically suggest to readers a subject whose experience is transparent to consciousness. Such a reading of phenomenology has been further encouraged by the circulation of influential critiques such as that of Bourdieu’s, which describes the phenomenological description of experience as one that simply “excludes the question of the conditions of its own possibility” (1977: 3). Bourdieu persistently reads phenomenology as a species of “subjectivism,” that is to say, as an epistemology that begins with the individual human subject as methodological starting point. Sartre figures in his account of phenomenology, but not his contemporary Merleau-Ponty, who dedicated his phenomenology to creating a break with “subjectivism” as well as with what Bourdieu describes as “objectivism.” It is also this version of phenomenology that is implicit in the widespread

apprehension within anthropology, captured in Desjarlais and Throop's overview, that "phenomenological approaches in anthropology ignore the political and socioeconomic determinants of life and people's living conditions" (2011: 95).

Such a reading and its ensuing apprehensions have been further encouraged by the specific conjunctural circumstances in which many anthropologists turned to phenomenology: "Starting in the mid-1980s, several anthropologists . . . began to advocate for 'an anthropology of experience,' finding that anthropology had come to focus unduly on questions of meaning, discourse, structural relations, and political economy, to the neglect of the everyday experiences, contingencies, and dilemmas that weigh so heavily on people's lives" (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 92–93).

We take here Jackson's rich introduction to *Things as They Are* as an exemplary manifestation and crystallization of this conjuncture: a turn to phenomenology, as recommended by those "alarmed at the alienating power of their professional discourse" (Jackson 1996: 8). Later in this volume Houston explores the wider dimensions of the crisis as well as Jackson's creative responses to it, as they take shape in the diverse corpus of his work. Here we will concentrate instead on just one aspect of that introduction: namely, an ambiguity in the conceptualization of "experience." Some of this indecisiveness stems from Jackson's alarm not only at classical anthropology's abstractions, but at key conceptual tenets of post-structuralism: Bourdieu's "habitus" and Foucault's discursive formations and practices, both of which give primacy to what he describes as "impersonal forces of history, language and upbringing" (1996: 22). Against this onslaught, he defends the place of "the subject" as the central site where "life is lived, meanings are made, will is exercised, reflection takes place, consciousness finds expression, determinations take effect, and habits are formed or broken" (1996: 22).

We agree that many a practitioner of Foucault and Derrida has reduced experience to little more than an essentializing centerpiece of Western metaphysics. A fundamental incoherence results if such positions are consistently taken as theoretical orthodoxy by the social sciences and humanities. This is especially the case for anthropology, given its own continued methodological orientation toward long-term involvement with the lives of people as the way to understand wider social forces. However, in posing the matter as a choice between post-structuralist theorists and experience, the argument suggests we have to choose between a phenomenology of experience and accounts of power and other forms of determination. Such a choice is rendered unnecessary if we recognize, instead, the ways in which phenomenology contains within itself many of the "decentering" moves we associate with post-structuralism, but without giving up on "experience." Indeed, it is this very quality that is particularly attractive about phenomenology, not only for illuminating various theoretical conundrums, but for a more satisfactory analysis of power and politics as well (see Ram 2013).

Such advantages may not be equally true of all phenomenology, which is why in the main contributors to this volume concentrate on particular phenomenologists. While Sartre and Charles Peirce are important phenomenological points of reference for two contributors in particular (Van Heekeren and Bedford, respectively), Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty are central to the volume. It is no coincidence that these philosophers also form an integral part of the genealogy of theoretical developments that have included Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, and post-structuralism. Together they aimed to deconstruct and decenter the figure of the subject inherited from a tradition they came to retrospectively characterize as so many “philosophies of consciousness.” One of our opening papers in this volume, by Csordas, explores the work of Foucault, Bourdieu, and Merleau-Ponty in terms of permutations that occur in the relations between three key terms—body, world, and subjectivity. Bourdieu may well have been discomfited by being thus brought into such an intimate relationship with a phenomenologist, particularly Heidegger, whose politics were anathema to him (see Bourdieu 1991). But our point here is a Bourdieuan one. Without a common and shared theoretical “habitus”—successively established by Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty—one that had already simultaneously redefined and brought all three key terms into an integral relationship, it would not be possible for Csordas to express the work of Foucault and Bourdieu as variations or modulations of the same shared set of terms. Nor would he be able to successfully compare them as complementary methodologies.

A definitive break with earlier traditions is already firmly outlined in the opening of Heidegger’s opus *Being and Time* (1962), which begins with a sustained challenge to all epistemological traditions that rely on starting with a subject who is defined primarily in terms of an isolated consciousness. He points out the irony that defines this history: despite the seeming certainty of such a self-evident version of experience, this is a tradition racked with doubt as to the foundations of knowledge. If all that one has sure access to is one’s own thoughts, perceptions, and consciousness, then what measure remains for assessing their truth and veracity? What necessary correspondence is there between one’s consciousness and the world outside it? And how can this experiencing subject have access to the experiences of others? Heidegger does not seek to answer these questions within the received epistemological framework. Nor does he seek to provide a better account of empathy, traditionally privileged in anthropological accounts of how we come to know worlds other than our own. Instead, he sets out to show that the very premises of such epistemic questions are based on a faulty ontology of the human subject and proceeds to no less a task than providing a fresh one. The volume’s first two chapters (by Ram and Csordas) set out some of the basic features of the reframed ontology of human existence as it emerges from the reworking provided by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Taking the concept of intentionality

from Husserl, who uses it to indicate a fundamentally outward-directed orientation of human existence, Heidegger gives it an active practice-based as well as existential set of orientations. In Merleau-Ponty, this active orientation of human existence is further made flesh, finding its basis in the sentient motility of the human body.

We are not suggesting that many of these key concepts with which these particular philosophers redefine the classical “subject” of philosophy—subjectivity as intersubjectivity, embodiment, sociality—have not been well represented in the literature on phenomenological anthropology. Jackson’s introduction to *Things as They Are*, which we are examining for its exposition on “experience,” is eloquent on each one of these themes. But what remains unclarified in the overall schema of his introduction, as in many other presentations, is the implication of these phenomenological concepts for the “subject” who exercises will, reflects, makes meanings, and expresses consciousness. Jackson’s defense of this subject renews the instabilities of meaning surrounding what we mean by “experience.”

What we are suggesting, then, is that certain defining features of this “subject” do have to be given up in order to take in the full import of phenomenology. They need not be absolute choices. We can retain—as we obviously must—the exercise of choice, will, reflection, and conscious expression as attributes of subjectivity. But we need to give up the primacy afforded to these domains in the definition of experience. Concepts such as intersubjectivity and embodiment are not simply extensions or enrichments of older understandings of experience. They also, in very important senses, mark the limits of consciousness itself.

Marking these limits also brings with it certain theoretical gains. We can return afresh to the question of mediation and determination. For as long as we are asked to concentrate on experience, and experience continues to be the domain of conscious understanding, will, choice, and reflection, then anthropologists will necessarily continue to be perplexed as to how to “bring into the account,” as if from some foreign land, crucial considerations such as “the political and socioeconomic determinants of life and people’s living conditions.” By contrast, the version of “experience” that emerges from these philosophers already contains within it the framework needed for an integrated understanding of all these elements.

One of the sources for ready misunderstanding stems from the drama of the opposition between abstract intellectualizing schema and experience, a drama staged by phenomenology itself. The spectacular nature of this opposition easily captures the attention of observers, and obscures the quieter but equally significant drama that is unfolding in the phenomenological redefinition of experience itself. The account that emerges from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty is one in which pre-intellectualized experience is itself subject to a wide range of influ-



ences, determinations, and mediations. What is often described as “immediate” experience in fact turns out to be a mediated one, with a secure place carved out precisely for the impersonal elements that are integral to the personal. The total field of what constitutes experience is thus made wider than before. But that field no longer coincides with what is conscious.

We offer as a concrete example the model of perception developed by Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (POP). In fact, perception is not simply an example of experience for Merleau-Ponty but the very site in which the concreteness of experience takes place. Perception is to be described, as we have noted, as it occurs, before it is “thematized,” subjected to intellectual systematization (POP 1986: xiv.). We are not asked to discard analytic accounts as if they had no place in our universe, but we are asked to cease assigning them primacy over ordinary perception. In an example that is easily grasped, Merleau-Ponty points out that having reflective knowledge does not prevent us from seeing the sun as “rising” and “setting.” But the account he gives of “unthematized” perception is not the same as what we consciously perceive or experience. Instead, what emerges is a complex set of relationships, which is what makes it a field of perception. These are relationships between what is “foregrounded” by our conscious attention and what remains in the background. Placing the sensing, perceiving, and moving body at the center of his account, Merleau-Ponty gives us a dynamic sense of the way in which purposive attention foregrounds certain aspects of the world and simultaneously moves others into the shadows to form a “fuzzy” background. In other parts of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, this background is also described as made up of the “horizons” of perception (1986: 67).

In an argument that has particular implications for the use of photography in ethnography (see Desjarlais’s reflections in this volume), Merleau-Ponty contrasts the camera’s close-up with that of ordinary vision. In the close-up of an object shown by a camera we have to recall what the object is, but we are unable to actually identify it because the “screen has no horizons” (1986: 68). By contrast, ordinary vision does not lose perception or memory of what it saw previously when it switches attention to a new object. It is this relational field which facilitates our distinguishing one object from another, allowing the perceptual field to present itself as an actual, concrete (as opposed to a theoretical) synthesis of the world around us. This concrete synthesis also sustains a different interpretation of subjectivity, one that has a real palpable grasp of the world.

There is still more to the methodological shift proposed. For the entire text in *Phenomenology of Perception* is less concerned with describing what is already at the center of the subject’s attention—the usual framework for “experience”—than with bringing into description the shadowy background that provides the crucial supports for what we consciously perceive. In this central concept of the fuzzy,

shadowy background, we have the fissure, the opening, through which pours the entire range of what we should acknowledge—and welcome—into our account precisely as “impersonal” determinants. The same sentence in which Merleau-Ponty questions the primacy of systematized theory is completed by an invocation of the supportive background that pours into the conscious moment of attentive perception: “Reflection can never make me stop seeing the sun two hundred yards away on a misty day, or seeing it ‘rise’ and ‘set,’ or thinking with the cultural apparatus which my education, my previous efforts, my personal history, have provided me with” (1986: 61).

Casey echoes one important element in this complex statement when he uses a striking phrase to describe the way in which social institutions and cultural practices permeate our sensing bodies: they “become infusions into the infrastructure of perception itself” (1996: 19). Such “impersonal” determinants are, in fact, constitutive elements of “personal” experience, but as background, forming the horizons of ordinary perception that are not part of the conscious domain. Thus the crucial conceptual role played by “horizons” or “background” must be properly integrated into our account of experience. For with it comes the entry of other places and times, invisible and in the past, into experience, bringing a quality of porosity to the concept. Not only does the present open up to the past, but the method is opened up to differences in individuals’ and groups’ visions, auditions, tastes, and olfaction, each under the influence of place, perspective, position, interests, movement, and educated embodied competencies in acting and perceiving. Nor does every element of our background make its entry as a totality or as some inert force bearing down on us. We call up, like a conjurer, those elements that might support us in our projects. But only some elements of these impersonal determinants may be supportive—others, if inappropriate, will be non-supportive, and fall into disuse or simply hold back either the individual or collective agency of an entire social group. We can therefore speak not only of the particularity of experiences, and their diverse social constitution, but of less supportive horizons, backgrounds, or environments that retard individual’s or classes’ efficacy in accomplishing tasks or projects. Some backgrounds equip subjects to enjoy far greater agency, authority, and power in the world. In other words, we have here the ingredients for discussing power in the very constitution of experience without having to take abstract theoretical schema as our starting point.

To be of real methodological use to anthropologists, however, it is not enough to simply indicate the existence of such dense but shadowy backgrounds. There must be some way of bringing them to light. And indeed, phenomenology does not propose to leave the fuzzy background of supportive mediations where they are. It does suggest methods for bringing them into the foreground of attention,

even though they are not immediately available to conscious experience. But let us make a caveat here, before we explore these methods in the next section as applied and utilized by our contributors.

The recognition of the limits to a knowing consciousness—which marks phenomenology as the precursor of the “decentered” subject of later initiatives—is extended by phenomenology to its own desire to bring that which is shadowy into light. If there are limits to reflection, as Merleau-Ponty argues, he extends this same consideration rigorously to his own reflections. Impersonal determinations enter into the phenomenologist’s ability to reflect, enabling some aspects and limiting others: “Reflection never holds, arrayed and objectified before its gaze, the whole world. . . . Its view is never other than partial and of limited power. . . . I never actually collect together, or call up simultaneously, all the primary thoughts which contribute to my perception or to my present conviction” (Merleau-Ponty 1987: 61).

Bourdieu’s charge that phenomenology excludes thought about the conditions of its own production reminds us (as it is meant to) of the standards set by Marx’s sophisticated precedent. One recalls Marx’s account of the material and economic prerequisites for the emergence of an abstract notion of the “human individual,” celebrated in liberalism as the carrier of inalienable rights, but embedded in the unprecedented capacity of the market to buy and sell human labor itself as a commodity. The quotation we have just had from Merleau-Ponty also makes room, within the complex field of perceptual experience itself, for the entry of material determinants of reflection. Unlike Marxism, however, the method relinquishes the grand ambition of producing a total account of all the determinants that produce perceptions, ideas, and theories. At this point, phenomenology also prefigures many later postmodern arguments that invoke the “partial” nature of knowledge and eschew a “totalizing” account of the world. We cannot hope, argues Merleau-Ponty, to produce an account that makes all the determinants of consciousness entirely available at any one given time. Indeed, he does not rule out the humbling possibility that there are dimensions of mediation that may never be available to reflection. We are left with a fundamental indeterminacy in our conscious relation to the very forces that may directly determine our existence.

## Overview of the Volume

### *Part 1: The Body as Constitutive “Horizon” of Experience*

The first six chapters (by Ram, Csordas, Throop, Dalidowicz, Downey, and Bedford) elaborate and demonstrate the utility of one of phenomenology’s key contributions: to bring into systematic awareness the centrality of the body in con-

stituting experience. The body is Merleau-Ponty's prime example of a "horizon" or "background": a necessary support of all that we perceive and experience. As the three opening chapters make clear, the concept of "intentionality"—the sense in which we are more "outside ourselves" in the world than locked away in our consciousness—is grounded in bodily capacities, motility, and perception. But for that very reason, the body is also typically taken for granted and is therefore invisible as a determinant of our existence. It certainly remains absent from much academic theorizing about matters such as politics, economics, and the environment. As horizon the body does not form part of our conscious experience. It is a central element in the "margin of almost *impersonal* existence which can be practically taken for granted, and which I rely on to keep me alive" (Merleau-Ponty 1987: 84, my emphasis). When things continue in an ordinary fashion, our body's contribution to our everyday coping with life may be likened to an indistinct murmur, a steady rhythm, a "medium" of existence in the sense of a conduit through which existence flows.

But the body is also a prime instance of how that which exists largely as background support can also become an explicit object of attention and concern for us. For any crisis in the body, small or large, makes it surge into awareness, its usual role as support all too painfully made evident in our sudden or slow impairment, our deteriorating ability to comport ourselves in our usual way. In illness, in disability, in the awareness of death, in pain, we find that "bodily events become the events of the day" (Merleau-Ponty 1986: 85). But as Csordas's exploration of illness in this volume shows, even in our new state of preoccupation with our own illness or the illness of a loved one we are closely intertwined with, it is never simply "the body" that is altered in its relation to our existence. For illness, and even each specific form taken by illness, brings with it an altered existential way of experiencing being in the world. Examining three distinct kinds of illness—the "phantom limb," chronic fatigue, and "environmental illness" or "multiple-chemical sensitivity"—Csordas traces in each case a different location of impairment in what he describes as "the structures of agency": the relationship between body, bodily schema, world and social practice.

For Throop, these impairments can also be the source of transcendence in ordinary bodily illness and suffering. These conditions may not meet the usual requirements of "the sacred" outlined by Durkheim, something set apart from the quotidian and the profane, or based on a conviction in "unseen realities." Yet illness and suffering can, without ceasing to be part of the everyday, "suggest palpable possibilities of an elsewhere breaking through its pale" (Throop, in this volume). This transcendence need not be confined to the suffering individual. In Micronesia, for the Yap communities, it allows a mobilization of care, concern by others—the solicitude and involvement described by Heidegger as *Sorge* (see also Ram and Desjarlais, in this volume).

Several contributors (Ram, Van Heekeren, and Wynn) take from phenomenology a reinforcement of their quest to give renewed significance to the pervasive presence of emotions in social life, and to find a parallel significance for them in social theory and ethnography. Ram takes from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty a method that can help extend our awareness of emotions by attending to their unobtrusive and background mode of presence even when we are not necessarily conscious of them. Using Heidegger's concept of mood and his account of anxiety, Ram argues for the emotions as fundamental to our capacity to have access to the world, and to interpret it even at a pre-reflective level. Such access is clearly very different from a retrospective intellectual deciphering. She describes the anxiety of the anthropologist in situations of acute displacement, as well as the anxiety of the women she writes about, who are experiencing such a rapid rate of change that they are unable to experience maternity without an accompanying "mood" of anxiety. But where Heidegger uses his account to disclose the individual's capacity to take existential responsibility for their own life, Ram takes it in a more anthropological direction, as revelatory of something about the shifts in the social nature of the world we live in. What is revealed, she argues, might be described as the human limits of coping with too radical and too total a rate of change.

For Van Heekeren, sorcery among the Vula of southeast Papua New Guinea is present as a pervasive mood of fear best described as part of the perceptual "field" itself. Harking back to the earlier work of Stoller (1989), she is able to show how something as universal and fundamental as breathing is also simultaneously culturally saturated: "The smell of wood smoke is part of the non-reflective experience of breathing for people" (Van Heekeren, in this volume). But with the smoke is also inhaled the smell of coconut husks burning, and with the smell of coconut husk and oil being burned is kept alive a subliminal awareness of the presence of volatile spirits in need of propitiation.

We breathe, like we dream, unconsciously, unnoticed. And as we breathe, we imbibe particular worlds and all they contain, without full cognizance of what we take in. The crisis that jolts our attention could be physiological—shortness of breath, relentless asthmatic wheezing and coughing—but it could equally be a crisis assailing us from the very environment we breathe in, manifesting itself as a full blown sorcery attack.

Wynn addresses the tendency of social theory to treat certain emotions—love in particular—as unimportant or embarrassing. How would it alter social theorizing about "kinship," she asks, if we were to integrate it with recognition of love, in all its complex admixture of fears, jealousies, and sexual desire? What would happen to structural accounts of gender and the "exchange" of women if such powerful emotions were no longer treated as epiphenomena? We may be able to tentatively broach the emotional difficulties of anthropologists, including their

anxieties, but what about their experiences of love? Wynn's treatment of the questions she poses are addressed, not at the level of theory but at the level of writing ethnography, and will be further introduced in that context.

Accounts of breakdown are not to be confused with what is typical of human existence. In fact, such breakdown stands out only against the background of a more characteristic synthesis and resynthesis that is ongoing in the way human beings perceive experience and thus understand worlds in which they dwell. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger both develop intermediary concepts that convey such synthesizing capacities: Merleau-Ponty in his concept of bodily schema that mediates between physiology, existence, and world; Heidegger in his notion of "dwelling" as a way of being in place. Such "dwelling" brings with it a world that is, in important senses, pre-given—pre-synthesized for us by sustained interaction between previous generations and the environments they have lived in and partially shaped. The concept of "place" itself, as the phenomenologist Casey has eloquently elaborated (1996, 1997), is another such intermediary or mediatory concept, being neither the objective space of geometry, nor an attribute of pure consciousness, but rather the result of an ongoing synthesis across generations and across life cycles. Places habituate our bodies as much as we inhabit them. All of these features of human existence involve constant interaction and relationships with others—with people, animals, and things. "Every living being," says Ingold, "is a particular nexus of growth and development within a field of relations" (2011: 314).

But where such synthesis is smoothly functioning, it is difficult to achieve a suspension of our taken-for-granted perspective, described by Husserl as our "natural attitude." Husserl's solution, to consciously "bracket" such an attitude and practice the phenomenological *epoché*, is referenced by several contributors (see Throop, Fisher, Desjarlais, and Houston in this volume). There are other precedents for such a method. Houston explores the possibilities set by poetic techniques of cultivating awareness. Exploring the work of the poet Wallace Stevens, Houston finds there a means for utilizing the active poetic imagination as a technique for noticing the very act of noticing: "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," as one of his well-known poems is titled. In a similar vein, Desjarlais describes photographs as a mode for cultivating ethnographic modes of attention.

But the obduracy of the natural attitude means that more drastic methods of disruption are required to supplement such conscious techniques. The anthropological method traditionally favored, where the discipline subjects the investigator herself to forms of displacement that may be more or less radical, is given fresh reinforcement by such considerations. Heidegger's examples of methodological "limit situations" typically involve a collapse of some aspect of familiar environments. This occurs when our environment withdraws its capacity to offer itself as "equipment," as useable, apparently anticipating our likely range of purposes, pre-fitted to our bodily capacities (which in turn have been fashioned by interaction

with that environment), and therefore experienced as “ready-to-hand.” The carpenter’s tool kit is Heidegger’s favored example of such equipping. But in breakdowns large and small, things that we expect to find in place are no longer available or ready for use. The environment no longer, to use the phrase provided by Gibson (1979) and embraced by many of our contributors, provides “affordances” for our practical endeavors. Such fractures crack open the social fabric for potential reflexivity for individuals, social groups, and for the social analyst seeking to explore the impersonal determinations of power, politics, and inequality in the environment. Bourdieu’s “habitus,” often regarded as a mechanically available form of “affordance,” is in fact often investigated by him in Heideggerian modes of breakdown or misfit. In explorations of class and in his long term association with Sayad’s path-breaking work on Algerian migration to France (Sayad 2004), Bourdieu follows phenomenological precedence by privileging situations when social background no longer equips the individual or even entire social groups with requisite capacities.

In anthropology we not only study social environments where there are forms of breakdown; we combine it with our method that positively encourages large or small levels of breakdown in the relationship between the anthropologist and her taken-for-granted environment. While Ram alerts us to the mood of anxiety such breakdown may trigger—with its associated strengths as well as dangers for the anthropologist—Dalidowicz’s paper richly demonstrates some of the positive gains from such a method. Here the strain in the body of habit is brought about by subjecting herself, along with others who live in North America, to the demands of mastering a dance that originates in a complex wider habitus among the elites of pre-colonial India. Evolved over time, the habitus was able to synthesize elements of both Hindu and Islamic codes of gendered comportment and emotional expressivity, exploring them in a rich aesthetics of love and emotions situated at the borderland of the human and the divine. For the guru, situated in North America, and therefore for his students, this background to the dance becomes an explicit object of concern as dancers gain mastery over the physical kinesthetic aspects of the dance, but not the emotional and gendered dispositions that give it significance, at least for Indian audiences. A habitus that was taken for granted by the teacher with his students in India now comes to the foreground, and with it the anthropologist gains a point of entry into considering the broader forces that constitute competencies in what appears to outsiders simply as a “dance” form. Equally, it is the fact that the anthropologist subjects herself to these demands along with those around her that allows entry into a form of knowledge that eminently resists reduction to intellectual knowledge.

We have here the perfect illustration of that which is simultaneously graspable only by the “body” but not by a body in isolation—it can only be learned by the body in an ongoing relationship with the right kind of environment, and that

environment cannot be provided by an isolated guru, however charismatic he may be. This is in many ways a study in the limits of anthropological and pedagogical translation. It also alerts us to the necessary limits of ethnography as an open-ended “inter-subjective” exchange between anthropologist and respondents in the field. Our respondents are no more constituted entirely in the exchange with us as anthropologists than we are, and therefore those exchanges are only partially revealing. At the same time it affirms the value of widening what we mean by learning in the field, by diversifying our fieldwork modes of engagement, and making ethnographic intersubjectivity as much a matter of bodily engagement in daily practices (an attempt to cultivate a new, necessarily imperfect, “body of habit”) as of other more specialized methods.

But if Dalidowicz draws our attention to the ultimate limits of consciously attempted resocialization through undertaking specialized forms of bodily retraining, the following chapter by Downey draws attention to the surprising degree of plasticity shown by the one element of the body we usually take to be a pre-determined given, namely biology. Merleau-Ponty himself gave due importance to biology in the continual resynthesis being performed in various modalities of bodily activity, using case studies of individuals who had suffered damage to the brain to highlight this role. But he nevertheless took biology to be a determinant, not as something that was, in turn, determined. Downey takes up Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on motility as primary to our understanding of the world—but instead of using impaired bodily functioning as a limit situation, he examines the cultivation of “hyper-capacity” in athletes who set themselves rigorous and prolonged specialized training in martial arts and other sports. He shows that the resynthesis that takes place increases a sense of personal agency—particularly striking in accounts by women, who find in training the wherewithal to overcome some of the restrictive aspects of ordinary everyday forms of gender socialization of the body. His reference here is Iris Marion Young’s classic piece “Throwing Like a Girl” (1990) in which she makes powerful use of phenomenological insights for feminist purposes.

But Downey’s account of the resynthesizing process does not simply single out the relationship between bodily remodeling and cultural remodeling. He wishes to emphasize the accompanying shifts that must occur in the “organic body,” in the anatomy itself. Methodologically, this allows us to give far greater attention to biology as anthropologists, and more generally for all those wishing to emphasize experience. Yet what we have here is yet another dimension of experience that is not coterminous with consciousness. The modifications that occur at the level of the muscle, skeleton, and neurological levels of the athlete are part of the resynthesis that constitutes their ongoing experience of greater (or lesser) levels of agency. These may well be experienced consciously as bodily agency, but this can occur, indeed, typically will occur, without the athlete being aware of ongoing



modifications in the brain or skeletal systems. Yet such modifications can be and need to be made part of the conscious methodological awareness both of anthropologists and phenomenologists.

Bedford's paper on music takes us deeper into appreciating the refinements that phenomenology can bring to bear on anthropological method, particularly in its core project of inquiring into the malleability of human perception and the ensuing task of translation. He reflexively utilizes his early experiences of defamiliarization as a Western anthropologist in the radically new soundscape of Pakistan, hearing Qu'ranic cantillation on the public address systems, to open a rich and sustained exploration of what constitutes music. He singles out two aspects that stood out as initially unfamiliar and a provocation to reflection: the "unmeasured" quality of the cantillation or absence of a regular pulse or rhythm, and the existence of silences, which in Western music discourse have been reduced to the function of measure, "conceived as rests, and counted with the beats in the bar" (Bedford, in this volume). In a wide ranging exploration that takes in several music genres of both South and West Asia, Bedford uses the phenomenology of Peirce to pose a series of questions that bring together phenomenology and anthropology: How is music perceived? What makes it music? How is time perceived both in and out of music? How does sound create shape and spatiality? While the anthropologist is attuned to the deep play of culture, phenomenology takes us even deeper, thanks to its attention to the elements that make up a background. Thus "silence" becomes the unobtrusive element that Bedford focuses on in order to ask how we come to recognize something as "music." Such a framework also allows him to extend his discussion into illuminating the proximity between music and aspects of language. What now comes to the fore is precisely those aspects of language itself which usually escape what is included in discussions of "meaning": the sensory aspects of rhyme, alliteration, and—silences. Yet all of these, as well as posture and gesture, are essential to an occasion when "something is spoken, and spoken well, with an ear to how it is spoken."

### *Part 2: History and Temporality*

The chapters by Fisher and Timmer crystallize and extend some crucial issues for anthropology that flow from our account thus far, focusing our attention on temporal shifts that are conventionally thematized within the disciplinary framework of "history." In the wake of postcolonial critiques of Orientalism in Western academic disciplines, the notion of the "ethnographic present" has been a marked category, emblematic of a wider predilection for representing non-Western societies as if they stood outside time itself. In a formative contribution, Fabian (1983) described this as a denial of the "coeval" and shared temporality between the anthropologist and the people they come to write about. One response to this particular charge, in which the contribution of phenomenological anthropologists

has been notable, is to restore the sense in which fieldwork knowledge is not a relationship between anthropologist as subject and the rest as object, but an “intersubjectively” generated knowledge (see Desjarlais and Throop 2011 for an overview).

But phenomenology also suggests richer possibilities in relation to this ongoing debate. Heidegger argued in *Being and Time* (1962) that “temporality” was a broader and more fundamental dimension of human existence, of which “history” is only one very specific cultural manifestation, just as “biology” is only one very specific way of regarding and exploring our bodily physiognomy. Such a distinction offers fresh ways of contributing to the debate over the place of history in anthropological knowledge. For even if we were to concede that fieldwork does not generally entail taking the past as a theoretical object of systematic regard, as in the attitude one has to take up in history, it is nevertheless the case that fieldwork is constituted by much more than the conscious version of the present. If experience of all kinds has a temporal as well as a spatial horizon, then the “ethnographic present” is necessarily more porous than it appears. What flows into the intersubjective exchanges between anthropologist and others in the “field” is much more than can be consciously co-constructed or reflectively reconstructed by either side. There are impersonal recurrent patterns of typicality that enable as well as constrain the present. In this sense, the impersonality and typicality that clings to the concept of “habitus” is not a defect. The habitus is not simply a synchronic concept but fundamentally temporal in its orientation since such typicalities only evolve over time. What remains the case, however, is that unlike historiography, both ethnography and phenomenology emphasize the way the past is taken up and lived in the present, in response to fresh contexts. Accordingly, the habitus is not a self-sufficient concept for either phenomenologist or for anthropologist—it must, as in Bourdieu, always be related to “the current situation” (see Ram 2013: 180ff.).

For Fisher (in this volume), an ethnography of the situation of young Aboriginal people who are trainees in a community radio station in Australia must attempt to describe not only their conscious experience and ambitions—of sound, of working in radio programming, of music, of projecting Aboriginal identity—but also capture a range of impersonal mediations that shape their situation. Fisher gives the impersonality of mediation a deeper meaning in the case of Aboriginal people. They have been addressed as “abstract Aboriginal subjects” not only by “governmental interpellation and colonial history,” but also more agentially, through their engagement with “forms of media [and] activism” (Fisher, in this volume). Trying to fill the shoes of such an abstract identity has meant eliding individual differences as well as the sheer heterogeneity of Aboriginal Australian pasts and presents. Such tensions reach into their experience of working at the studio itself. Young trainees who wish to project presence and intimacy in a “live” show find themselves dealing with digital preprogramming, as well as the

requirement that they themselves adopt the public-health voice of the state and various government departments that sponsor the show.

The chapter by Timmer foregrounds another set of questions about “history.” Potentially, these questions extend to all the systematized disciplines that phenomenology described as “abstract intellectualisms.” But they work as much more than just so many forms of theoretical abstraction. Here Foucault’s contribution to the debate becomes fundamental. His characteristic preoccupation with power was able to direct our attention to the way in which academic disciplines and other seemingly abstract theoretical discourses were also alive and proliferating in various disciplinary projects of modern institutions. Such considerations have in turn enabled two decades of postcolonial scholarship to explore the ways in which disciplines such as history and economics, as well as numerous forms of data collection and mapping (including anthropological and ethnological enterprises), have played a key role in equipping colonial states and missions with their sense of destiny and rational superiority. Similarly, linear narratives of developmental temporality continue to assign unequal cultural capital to discourses emanating from different parts of the world. In all of this, those subject to such new forms of power and knowledge necessarily have had to take up and renegotiate their identities, putting them to new uses, and selectively reinterpreting the dominant discourses.

Of necessity, then, disciplines such as history have to be considered part of the “ethnographic present” of the situations we seek to describe. Timmer describes the efforts of people in the Solomon Islands, not so much to rewrite for themselves a new place in “history” but “rather to limit the scope of orthodox ‘historical science’ (colonial contact, development and civilization processes) by bringing the Christian scripture to life by putting it in relation to present existence and its problems” (Timmer, in this volume). What results is a radically altered appropriation of the Bible. It is altered in content and narrative, with a turn to the prophetic texts of the Old Testament. More fundamentally, what changes is that it becomes an existentially heightened project. Bambach’s analysis of Heidegger’s own turn to Lutheran Christianity, a departure from his earlier training as a Catholic theologian (Bambach 1995), provides Timmer with a model for such a reappropriation of religion. What makes it even closer as a parallel is the wider context of an entire people being assigned an invidious identity by the narratives of historicism. Here Timmer draws a broad parallel between what development and earlier colonial processes have implied for the people of the Solomon Islands, and the crisis of identity in a Germany defeated in the First World War.

### *Part 3: The Poetics and Politics of Phenomenological Ethnography*

The final four essays of the volume continue to focus on phenomenology’s key terms of experience and perception, but shift the emphasis to explore how an-

thropologists can and do represent them in writing or image. The authors' concern is phenomenological anthropology not as epistemological method or critique but as style, understood by contributors as akin to (and sometimes as even better composed in) fiction, art, photography, and poetry. The issue concerns both the genre(s) and politics of phenomenological anthropology.

Questions of representation have been an ever-present and, for some, an almost distracting aspect of anthropological debates over the last three decades. Said's condemnation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, literature, and political science for the construction of its own object of study—the inferiorized Orient—helped make anthropologists, especially those working in the Middle East, wary writers. Closer to the bone, and as already mentioned, Fabian's (1983) critical diagnosis of primitivism in the discipline meant that for anthropologists working in postcolonial contexts, links between knowledge and power became habitual concerns.

In his grappling with both the poetics and nature of anthropological knowledge, Jackson's decades-long oeuvre (in ethnography, fiction, and poetry) can be seen as an exemplary response to these and similar critiques. Houston's essay explores Jackson's turn to phenomenology in the 1980s, connecting it to his emerging disillusionment with theoretical models of kinship, social structure, or magic devised by intellectuals to explain the social worlds of people. Paradoxically, for a discipline that values the knowledge gained from personal relations with others, an enduring intellectual temptation for anthropologists is to write as if theoretical schemata constitute the generative principles of social action. For Jackson, abstract models displace social relationships more than they emplace them. By contrast, a better anthropology involves apprehending others' existential concerns and ordinary/extraordinary experiences through fieldwork and shared practical activity, evoking in writing what one has learned. This is no modest task. Even while our faltering descriptions of violence, illness, ecstasy, subordination, suffering, and other existential events do not correspond with our own and others' embodied experiences, in rendering emotions and perception sensible our accounts also give them shape, form, and meaning, at least for readers.

Referencing William Carlos Williams's poem "The Red Wheelbarrow," Jackson argues that anthropology inspired by phenomenology should generate "styles of writing which resist the idea that knowledge may be won by a progressive interrogation of the object" (1996: 42–43). In the process, other questions and possibilities emerge concerning how phenomenological anthropology might translate as ethnographic production. Should its bias toward experience privilege writing in the first person (I-writing), or the insertion of the director or filmmaker into the film's frames? Does it demand from the part of the anthropologist an imaginative imitation or ventriloquism of the tone, talk, and bearing of others, of what they "*can't hep but notice*"? (Stewart 1996: 150). As artistic and reflexive enterprise, must it involve repeating people's accounts in their own words? How do anthro-

pologists write or film intersubjectivity, including their own experiences of interaction, cross-social encounter, and self-transformation in fieldwork? What types of genre experiments or styles best facilitate the recounting of truths mutually arrived at, evolving relationships, and shared memories and activities? How are “detailed descriptions of lived reality” (Jackson 1996: 2) selected, textually or visually organized, and composed so as to serve the intentions of the ethnographer? And which lived realities should we choose, or not choose, to describe, and why?

Wynn’s paper tackles a number of these questions, asking first why it is that in anthropology sexual love and desire have been so little written about, and noting secondly that when it is, many accounts are “experience-distant,” as if ethnographers were ashamed of their own sexual being. She concludes that the combined force of disciplinary and cultural taboos makes public discussion of the experience of intimate bodily love appear vulgar and polluting. In response, Wynn engages in a kind of literary and phenomenological experiment, first retelling an evening of flirtatious talk between friends about relationships between men and women from her fieldwork in Cairo, then presenting in quick order excerpts about sex from Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception*), Malinowski (*The Sexual Life of Savages*), and a popular romance novel (*Devil in Winter*). Judging the romance fiction to be doing “far more than either Merleau-Ponty or Malinowski to convey the embodied sensations of arousal and desire,” she argues that borrowing from the techniques of fiction writers would help phenomenological anthropologists better represent the embodied, passionate dimensions of love and desire. Interestingly, if Wynn commends fiction to anthropology, Houston, Desjarlais, and Van Heekeren show how poetry, photography, and creative language, respectively, enable anthropologists to more fully attend to the multiple appearances, generative fashioning, and constant minor changes of ours and others’ lived existence, in the process helping the anthropologist to “bracket” the “natural attitude.”

Desjarlais’s beautifully written essay on his own photography among Tibetans in Nepal reflects on this “bracketing,” exploring the mutuality and disjuncture between different times of knowing/perceiving, and different modes of representation. He describes how his recent photographs of people and things help him heed aspects of Yolmo sociality that sharpened up or even ran counter to his earlier memories and forms of understanding. In studying the photographs, Desjarlais senses how half-forgotten horizons gained by fieldwork in Nepal a decade and a half ago reappear to consciousness, only to be altered and revised by new perceptions. “I notice the ripped clothes, the poverty,” he says. At the same time, Desjarlais confronts the problem that viewers of the images who are unfamiliar with Nepal are unable to draw on the backgrounds that for him make them so rich and suggestive. Seeking to disarm viewers’ perception of the photos in terms of more readily available representational regimes such as tourism and aestheticizing exoticism, Desjarlais is led to argue for the important role played by descriptive language, narration, and commentary in relation to the images.

Yet despite—almost to spite—this narrative exegesis, for Desjarlais the images still seem “seared with reality.” Looking at them he feels confronted by the “sheer existence” of things, by “rank growth” in the corner of a photograph, by a realness that, citing the writer Maurice Blanchot, he calls “existence without being” and that we may equally well describe as senseless presence. This is presence—light, sound, matter, living beings—at the fringes of consciousness, insignificant until sensed.

In her discussion of senses of magic in southeastern Papua New Guinea, Van Heekeren begins with Husserl’s notion of the lifeworld, conceived in phenomenological anthropology as an original way of being in the world of a group of people. She demonstrates how describing a radically different lifeworld, including Vula’a people’s sometimes fearful living in the presence of “those things (phenomena) that we call ‘magic,’ ‘Christianity,’ and ‘sorcery,’” requires a new or different type of language. Her description is simultaneously both art and translation, the creative and affective uncovering of “experience remote from our own into such terms of our consciousness as may best enable the nature of that which is so translated to appear for what it is in itself” (Merret, in Macquarie 1988: 212). Citing Heidegger, Van Heekeren shows how the artistic act of translation involves her in a twofold process of “coming to awareness.” First, a new perception of another’s reality dawns through her being moved by what she calls the intensified moods and emotional states of the Vula’a lifeworld. Second, in her efforts at creatively representing that reality in ethnographic writing, in crafting it in terms comprehensible and immediate to others, there is “an uncovering of what-*is*.” In describing this creative art as a return to Husserl’s early goal of doing “better science,” van Heekeren echoes Ram’s call to reclaim the commitment to greater objectivity in phenomenology’s charter.

Each task effects a neutralization of the anthropologist’s natural attitude, or what Husserl calls a phenomenological reduction. Indeed, all four papers in this section demonstrate how fiction, art, photography, and poetry enable this reduction. In doing so they also reveal the intimate relationship between perception, power/knowledge, and poetics. Although couched in much less politicized language, phenomenology’s investigation of experience and reality prefigures many of the issues canvassed in both postcolonial theory and in books such as *Writing Culture* (1986), without their narrower focus on representations of the “ethnographic other.” Phenomenology began with the discovery and critique of the “natural attitude.” More specifically, for Casey the natural attitude involves “what is taken for granted in a culture that has been influenced by modern science” (1996: 13). Husserl’s critique of early twentieth-century science involved an exposé of its naivete in assuming that the natural or everyday world existed independently of the subject’s—in the former case the scientist’s—apprehension of it.<sup>1</sup> We have here, as suggested earlier in the introduction, an influential precursor for epistemological positions later advocated and politicized by post-structuralist social theory.

Nevertheless, in thinking through the complex relations between the sheer existence of things and our experience of them, Throop's, Desjarlais's, and Houston's essays each show how anthropologists do not have to make a choice between "pre-given objects of experience" and "processes of subjective and intersubjective constitution that underlie them" (Throop, in this volume). On the contrary, phenomenology's "politicization" of perception problematizes the autonomy of each, of the work of consciousness in constituting the everyday world, and of the world itself in existing independently from us. Being in the natural attitude—our accepting of objects and of our everyday life as given, in our straightforward dealing with them—can be seen as co-determined by what Castoriadis (1997a) calls social imaginary significations: forms, ideas, and images through which any particular society institutes itself. (Van Heekeren, following others phenomenologists, terms this the "cosmo-ontological" background.) The language here provides us with another vocabulary to get at the "cultural-political" dimensions of what we have identified as the shadowy background or impersonal horizons informing experience and perception, as well as at certain of their "conditions of possibility" (Bourdieu 1977). Perceiving and experiencing, then, is as much fabricated by society through socialization and pedagogy (including training regimes aimed at physiology-modification) as it is a product of people's engagements in their everyday worlds or their idiosyncratic creation.

In other words, neither the natural environment nor practical social worlds simply exist, neutrally arrayed for consciousness's contemplation nor awaiting human expropriation. The very affordances of the environment offered to our bodies and projects already have embedded in them the subjective and political intentions of others, engineered (*techne*) in interior design, architecture, and urban planning, artefacts, tools, machines, and in the city itself. As Bachelard remarks, "The house that we were born into is an inhabited house" (1994: 14). Phenomenological investigation reveals how imagining the physical world as "mute and blank space" (Casey 1996: 15) is already the perspective of someone dwelling in the natural attitude, an attitude patterned not only by science but for those of us inhabiting this globalized modern world by a core instituting signification of capitalism as well, "unlimited expansion of 'rational mastery'" over both social life and nature (Castoriadis 1997b: 37). Far from revealing an original detachment from the environment, this perception depends upon the fact that we are already in it, being there (Casey 1996).

In sum, the essays in this volume show that phenomenology conducts an exploration of a certain elementary stance through which we live our lives, involving literally the moving grounds of our changing bodies in perceiving, experiencing, and acting in the world; the centrality of intentionality or purposeful interest in our focus and consciousness; the primacy of the practical dimensions of our social activities (captured in the trope of the "lifeworld"); and the significance of the vast sedimentation of socialized knowledge and skills that undergirds and fa-

cilitates our switching between modes of attentiveness (and attention) to different meaningful objects or things in the places we live. This elementary stance is shown in the essays to be co-constituted or mediated by the imaginary significations, cultural practices, social institutions, and fields of power of different societies.

Yet phenomenology offers anthropologists more than this. In identifying the natural attitude, phenomenology inaugurates the possibility of a new reflexivity toward it, a methodology for gaining a sense of perspective on our perceptions. This new “stance” toward our elementary orientations produces a difference in our modes of sensing, feeling, knowing, and acting in the world. This would be the case with any methodology that takes ordinary perception itself as the object of systematic attention—as is the case, for example, with techniques of meditation. Equally importantly, certain sources of reflexivity can also occur “naturally” to everyone while living in the natural attitude, through everyday processes. In this volume, such processes of everyday living are highlighted, showing how they can create the dawn of a new perspective. They include reflections occasioned by a lack of “fit” between experience and the dominant discourses of history, bodily enskillment, suffering, illness, migration, art, and social activism. Yet we have insisted that phenomenology also takes us a step further than these ordinary avenues of reflexivity. The core elements of the natural attitude—embodiment, consciousness, intentionality, practicality, intersubjectivity—are all necessarily related to the political-economic or social structures that accompany them, acting to retard some forms of organization and to energize others. These, too, form part of the proper ground of phenomenological investigation.

## Notes

1. For example, a mining geologist may appreciate a rock for its mineral and chemical composition, its permeability or porosity, and for the size of its particles. By contrast, Myers (1991) tells us that for many Pintupi in central Australia, a rock may be experienced through its connection to Dreaming events, one small feature in a region of known and sacred places. These imaginative and learned perceptions govern actors’ ways of dealing with rocks. Nothing, of course, stops an Aboriginal geologist from shifting between such perspectives.

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