Phenomenology

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Phenomenology is one of the most influential philosophical traditions of the twentieth century and has significantly shaped contemporary anthropological and social theory. This entry shows the various ways in which phenomenology has contributed to contemporary anthropology. In so doing, it also shows that a better understanding of the phenomenological tradition and what it offers social and historical analysis could further contribute to the development of anthropology as a discipline increasingly concerned with the relational interconnection between humans, nonhumans, and the worlds they variously share. This is done by focusing on phenomenology’s emphasis on ‘conditions of experience’, and how such conditions shape what and how it is to be human in any situated context. In particular, the entry emphasises the conditions of being-in-the-world, embodiment, and radical otherness, and shows how each of these have been utilised by phenomenological anthropologists in their analyses of socio-cultural life. Furthermore, the entry stresses that phenomenology has always been a critical endeavour. Historically, this was so in terms of the rethinking of some of the most fundamental concepts of the so-called 'Western tradition'. More recently, this critical aspect has focused on the ways in which such conditions of experience as race, class, and gender, among others, significantly shape the range of possibilities for any experience whatsoever.

Introduction

Phenomenology is one of the most influential philosophical traditions of the twentieth century. Founded at the turn of the century by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology developed over the course of the century in ways that both adhered to and diverted significantly from this foundation. Perhaps most significantly, phenomenology has critically engaged the radical distinction between human subjects and nonhuman objects, which used to constitute a dominant mode of thinking within the so-called Western tradition. In doing so, phenomenology set the stage for rethinking the very foundation of human existence as one that is above all relational, temporal, embodied, and situated. That much of this is now taken for granted within anthropology and social theory shows just how influential the phenomenological tradition has been in this critical endeavour.

Indeed, phenomenology’s impact on contemporary anthropology has been substantial. Several theoretical approaches that have shaped contemporary anthropology have been built on—sometimes critically but always productively—many of the central philosophical and conceptual foundations of phenomenology. From post-structuralism (and most especially the work of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze) to practice theory, critical feminism to queer theory, from affect to actor-network theory: each of these are indebted to the work of classical phenomenology. Anthropological theory, in other words, would likely not exist as it

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does today without the foundational influence of phenomenology (see Desjarlais & Throop 2011; Zigon 2018).

Phenomenology has contributed to anthropological theory by providing anthropologists with conceptual resources to think and write about the ways in which humans are always relationally intertwined—with one another, with various entities that make up their worlds, and with their worlds as such. A shorthand for phenomenology's focus or study and for this range of conceptual resources is 'experience'. Phenomenology offers multiple generative resources for analysing and coming to understand the complexity of human and, some would argue, even non-human experience. Thereby, phenomenology complements other theoretical and methodological approaches within sociocultural anthropology.

Some anthropologists, have been critical of phenomenology for having, so they argue, a singular focus on individuals capable of narrating their experience, and for having little concern for how such social facts as culture or power shape experience (e.g, Holbraad; Pedersen 2017; cf. Pedersen 2020). Others argue that experience inherently exceeds such a narrow conceptual framing and that it does in fact account for culture or power (see Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003; Willen & Seeman 2012; Zigon 2011). For example, the phenomenological anthropologist Robert Desjarlais has been critical of social scientists naively using experience in a common sense and ordinary manner to indicate something like the coherent and narrativised flow of one's life trajectory. To better articulate the lives of homeless persons in Boston, he has instead offered the culturally and historically specific concept he calls 'struggling along'. For the residents of a Boston homeless shelter with whom Desjarlais spent time during the 1990s, 'struggling along' implied daily strenuous efforts against an often-hostile world, with little opportunity for inward reflection or for planning the future (Desjarlais 1997). Similarly, the study of moral experience, i.e. experience qualified, delimited, demarcated, and organised in moral terms, shows that such experience only emerges at the situated and relational intertwining of persons and their worlds, which necessarily entails that such experiences are always saturated with socio-historic meaning and differentiation (Zigon & Throop 2014). For example, Cheryl Mattingly has written extensively of the moral experience of African-American mothers caring for their children at the relational intertwining of race, class, and the American healthcare system (e.g., Mattingly 2014).

What, then, do phenomenologists mean by experience, and how has it been taken up by phenomenological anthropologists? When phenomenologists and phenomenological anthropologists write about experience, they are primarily concerned with describing the essential *conditions of experience*. Therefore, rather than simply providing a description of a series of events and activities that accumulate over time and shape a person's life, phenomenologists investigate and describe the potentialities and relationships that make experience possible in the first place. Rather than merely describing that a homeless person in Boston may be 'struggling along', phenomenological anthropologists will also investigate which conditions led to this predicament in the first place and offer a way for understanding how these conditions shape lives. As this

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entry hopes to show, these conditions of experience constitute what it is to be human in all of its vast socio-historic diversity. In other words, in contrast to a notion of human nature that might emphasise, for example, that humans are rational animals or animals with language, phenomenologists write about conditions of experience that above all indicate that humans are essentially *relational beings* that become who they are because of the relations with which they are always intertwined (Zigon 2014).

Experience

There is no doubt many reasons why it is that phenomenological anthropology has come to be so closely connected to the personal, subjective, and individual. As noted above, one of the most notable culprits is arguably the prevalent reliance upon the concept of experience (see Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003; Willen & Seeman 2012; Zigon 2009). What has been stressed by several anthropologists, however, is that while experience in a radically expanded rendering is central to all forms of phenomenological philosophy, a narrower view of experience as an exclusively personalised, isolated, and individuated phenomena is *not*. Still, this narrower view of experience should not be dismissed. For by focusing upon experience's dynamic and varying aspectual, partial, perspectival, situated, affective, and embodied modes, anthropologists gain much understanding of what it is like to live any particular kind of human life (Crapanzano 2004). Experience understood in this narrower way marks our singular, irreplaceable, and unique vantage point onto our worlds. It highlights our fragility, precarity, vulnerability, and finitude. It delimits regions of possibility and constraint, of acting and suffering, that coalesce, transform, and dissipate in the shifting moments that are undergone in the arc of any given particular life. One classic example of this approach to phenomenological anthropology is the work of Michael Jackson (e.g., 1977; 1982), whose work with Kuranko communities in Sierra Leone shows the singular power of phenomenology for articulating the complex dynamics—the limits and possibilities—of living any particular life. Following phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jackson aimed to join the study of lived experience and that of objective analysis by presenting an anthropological account that starts with Kuranko conceptions of the world and relates those to the rules and activities of their society. Similarly, Cheryl Mattingly's ethnographies of African-American families' struggles with the American healthcare system (2010; 2014) and Paul Stoller's career-long engagement with Sonhay communities in West Africa and the broader diaspora (2008) are exceptional examples of phenomenological anthropology's focus on experience in this narrower understanding.

In phenomenology, much like in William James' (1996 [1912]) radical empirical philosophy, however, experience is taken in a much more expansive way than simply lived or subjective. Experience is, in this view, much closer to what James termed a 'bare relation of withness'. Experience from a phenomenological stance is thus neither exclusively of the self nor of the world, of subject nor object. As we will clarify below, this is the great contribution of Martin Heidegger's notion of 'being-in-the-world', and particularly what he

called *Mitsein*, or 'being-with'. By this, Heidegger simply meant that to be human is always and without exception to be with others (human and non-human alike), such that the very idea of an individuated human being is impossible. Experience may then include the existential 'betweenness' that arises between subjects, and between those subjects, their worlds, and the various non-human entities that populate these worlds (see also Nancy 2000; Zigon 2021).

To this extent, Edmund Husserl's famous call to return 'back to the things themselves!' (*zurück zu den Sachen selbst!*) was a commitment to examine any and all phenomena as they show themselves. Indeed, what so many of his contemporaries found so powerful about Husserl's call was its rejection of the subjectivism of the neo-Kantian philosophy that was dominant at the time—a philosophy, it should be mentioned, that was central to the founding of the discipline of anthropology and remains so still today. Neo-Kantians such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and Wilhelm Von Humboldt sought to rethink Kant's *a priori* categories of understanding as constituted by a given community's localised linguistic and cultural forms—a line of thinking that anthropologists Franz Boas and Emile Durkheim, as well as their many students, took as a taken-for-granted starting point for their analysis of social and cultural realities. With fundamental categories of thought (causation, time, space, identity, number, etc.) constituted by linguistic structures and cultural assumptions, worldly events and happenings were reduced to culturally mediated forms of subjective experience. Husserl's phenomenology, in contrast, offered a philosophical method for considering worldly phenomena from the way that such phenomena disclose themselves through intentionality. Intentionality, as an orientation toward object(s) and world, thus radically opened and destabilised a self-sufficing view of subjectivity. Accordingly, Husserl viewed phenomenology as a worldly philosophy that could inform ethically grounded forms of social critique and renewal (Gubser 2014).

Phenomenology is thus, Husserl maintained, not a philosophy of individual subjectivity but an *eidetic philosophy*, a philosophy that reveals *essential structures of experience* in its myriad forms, fluctuations, and dynamics. Importantly, these essential structures of experience are revealed through the close analysis of the relation between—or the withness of—particular humans and other existents of the world, human and nonhuman alike. That our embodied mode of being reveals both a physical and existentially lived body, that there is a background horizon encircling whatever may be foregrounded in experience, that a thing gives itself in an indeterminate fashion only ever revealing itself partially through time in varying sides, profiles, and aspects and 'never giving itself absolutely' (Husserl 1931: 138), are all *essential* aspects of experience in Husserl's analysis.

In perhaps the foundational text of classic phenomenology, *Logical investigations* (1970), Husserl wrote that phenomenology 'has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analyzable in their pure essential generality, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts' (249). By this Husserl meant that phenomenology's concern is with the essences of experience, and not this or that particular and empirically describable experience (see Moran 2000: 108). At first pass this may seem

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anathema to anthropology. But some anthropologists contend that the description of such essences are precisely what anthropology has always been interested in exploring (e.g. Csordas 1994). From culture to kinship to ritual, from political economy to biopower to affect, all of these concepts can be considered shorthands for positing the essential conditions for any particular experience. Therefore, when phenomenologists write of, for example, intersubjectivity or being-in-the-world, they can be understood as using these concepts in a manner resonate with the ways in which anthropologist have always utilised those listed above. A critical difference, however, lies in phenomenology's foundational stress on potentiality, possibility, and indeterminacy as necessary aspects of essences of experience. The work of Jarrett Zigon, for example, has emphasised how phenomenological analysis stresses potentiality and possibility; from showing how ethical life is a matter of situated and responsive interpretation that gives way to new ways of living a life, to his analysis of drug user political activism as an example of how marginalised persons can offer potential new ways of organising social life in a more caring and inclusive manner (Zigon 2007; 2018; 2019). What phenomenology offers is thus a way to conceptualise a non-essentialised essence; an essence that is dynamically generative of possibility and not ossified into an unchanging stabilised form. That is, essence understood phenomenologically describes the essential conditions of possibilities for any experience whatsoever.

Conditions of experience

Human existence is, as Hannah Arendt famously argued, 'conditioned existence' (1958: 9). Human beings are beings whose mode of existence is necessarily tethered to our worldliness. In having and being open to a world—responsive and susceptible to it—our mode of human being is one that is also conditioned by exposure to those various others who inhabit the same world. We derive our language, interpersonal skills, notions of morality, clothing, and food from others, for example. Indeed, as worldly beings, we find ourselves always-already living with, among, and alongside a plurality of others; others who preceded us, are our contemporaries and consociates, and are, as successors, still yet to be (see Schutz 1967). And yet to say, as Arendt does, that the modes of being that characterise human existence are conditioned by finitude, plurality, and worldliness is not to say that we are simply defined by such conditions without remainder. Arendt observes:

> the conditions of human existence—life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality, and the earth—can never 'explain' what we are or answer the question of who we are for the simple reason that they never condition us absolutely (1958: 11).

To suggest that the 'conditions of human existence. . . never condition absolutely' is, thus, to recognise the always incomplete, excessive, and uneven ways that we are attuned to each other and the worlds we inhabit with one another. For this reason, such conditions not only 'enable or hinder or provide limits for possible ways of being, becoming, acting, doing, thinking, saying, and so on', but also always entail

potentialities to become transfigured and made otherwise (Zigon 2018: 8). In the next few subsections, this entry will consider three conditions of experience, which were originally described by phenomenologists, and have been central to the development of phenomenological anthropology.

Being-in-the-world

One of the most influential ways this phenomenological concern with the conditions of experience has been taken up in phenomenological anthropology is through Martin Heidegger's notion of 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1996). As part of his rethinking of basic philosophical concepts, Heidegger rarely used the word 'human' but instead used the word '*Dasein*', which is the German word for 'existence' but is literally translated as 'there-being' (*Da-sein*), or perhaps better as 'being-there'. He did this in order to differentiate his view of the human—as *Dasein*—as an always-situated and relational being from the then-dominant approach in philosophy that considered the human as a being that is fundamentally separated from any specific context and, as such, defined *a priori* by such things as rationality or will.

In contrast, Heidegger conceived the human as fundamentally constituted by its there-ness: as always already relationally situated in a context—or what he called a world—in a mode of being-with. To exist as a human—to be *Dasein*—is always to be in relation with others (both human and non-human). To many anthropologists today, this sounds extremely familiar. But when Heidegger first developed and wrote about being-in-the-world, being-with, and *Dasein* in the 1920s, this was a conception of the human that was still unique. Indeed, few other intellectuals beyond phenomenology, including those in anthropology who still considered the human as a neo-Kantian subject, were thinking and writing about people in such a way.

The way in which Heidegger was particularly distinctive—and different from his anthropological contemporaries—is in his articulation of *Dasein* as an essentially relational being. The hyphenation of being-in-the-world is significant, for it indicates the relational inseparability of *Dasein* and world. The world is *not* a container that holds different content, one of which is the being we call human. Rather, the 'in' of being-in-the-world indicates an essential relational intertwining, a being-with, such that humans as a form of existence—*Dasein*—cannot be without the world, just as the world cannot exist without *Dasein*. Importantly, a world is also constituted by any number of other beings, such as non-human animals, tools, other humans, trees, buildings, spirits, gods, and so forth, and, therefore, is always unfolding in a process of the arising and receding of the presence and absence of these diverse beings as they relationally intertwine with one another.

Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world has been central to the development of phenomenological anthropology. From Jackson's earliest texts on existential anthropology (1977, 1982, 1983) to James Weiner's Heideggerian intervention in Melanesian anthropology (1992, 1993, 2003) to Tim Ingold's work on perception, dwelling, and enskilment (1993a, 1993b), straight through to almost all contemporary works, phenomenological anthropology simply would not be what it is today without having taken up and

developed the concept of being-in-the-world (Desjarlais & Throop 2011).

Arguably one of the better-known examples of this would be the work of Jarrett Zigon in the anthropology of ethics (e.g. 2007, 2014, 2018, 2021). Through an engagement with his fieldwork in Russia, the United States, and elsewhere, and most particularly in considering moments of what he calls moral breakdown, betweenness, dwelling, and attunement, Zigon has attempted to rethink the very idea of ethics in terms of relationality and situatedness, as opposed to dominant moral theories that begin with individual humans endowed with some *a priori* capacities such as the moral law or will. For example, in his work on drug addiction and the 'War on Drugs', Zigon has shown how the ethical concept of 'attunement', or the situational response to the unique and singular person here now, better describes the kind of care offered by drug user activists than does a notion of responsibility or humanitarian care that is already defined prior to any particular situation (Zigon 2019).

Similarly, being-in-the-world in one way or another has been central to various other phenomenological anthropological approaches to the anthropology of ethics, for example, those of Jackson (1982, 1998, 2013) and Mattingly (2014, 2017, 2019), as well as Jason Throop (2009, 2017, 2018), and Sarah Willen (2014, 2019). In each case, what is stressed in these works are the excessive ways in which lives are intertwined with others, events, objects, and worlds such that it is never simply an individual's experience simplistically rendered as a series of events that is examined, but the various modes of betweenness, relationality, and connection that are.

Embodiment

Building directly upon Edmund Husserl's pioneering work on intersubjectivity and embodiment, the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty developed further the relationality of being-in-the-world with his emphasis on the body. In one of his clearest articulations of the relational body as the essential condition of being-in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty wrote:

> Insofar as I have "sense organs," a "body," and "psychical functions" comparable to those of others, each moment of my experience ceases to be an integrated or rigorously unique totality . . . and I become the place where a multitude of "causalities" intertwine. Insofar as I inhabit a "physical world," where consistent "stimuli" and typical situations are discovered . . . my life is made up of rhythms that do not have their *reason* in what I have chosen to be, but rather have their *condition* in the banal milieu that surrounds me (2014: 86, italics in original).

Because, for Merleau-Ponty, the very condition of experience is the intertwining of our relational body with our world, experience is, therefore, essentially embodied and habituated.

The influence of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body throughout anthropology is likely most

prevalent through the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu and his notion of habitus (1977; Throop & Murphy 2002). Situating social theory in the concrete day-to-day embodied practices of individuals and communities, Bourdieu's social theory understood social life as generatively arising from sedimented habitual dispositions to perceive, appreciate, judge, will, feel, and desire in particular ways—what he termed 'habitus'. A close comparative reading, along with an understanding of mid-twentieth century French intellectual history, strongly indicates that practice theory, and particularly the notion of habitus, is a sociological rendering of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

Thomas Csordas has explicitly taken up Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and developed a notion of embodiment that has been widely influential within anthropology at large. Importantly, he argued that the body should not be first and foremost an *object* to be studied in relation to culture, but that it is the existential ground, or *subject* for culture (Csordas 1990, see also 1994a, 1994b, 2002). This notion of embodiment has, to a great extent, come to be one of the foundational concepts for understanding experience among anthropologists engaged with phenomenological work. This can be seen in anthropological explorations of a wide range of human experiences, from religious practices (e.g., Corwin 2012; Csordas 1994b, 2008; Desjarlais 2003, 2016; Stephan 2015; Stoller 1994, 1997; Throop 2015) to the experience of pain, suffering, illness, and disability (e.g., Aciksoz 2019; Engelke 2013; Flaherty; Throop 2018a; McCoy 2018; Scheper-Hughes 1993; Seale-Feldman 2019; Throop 2010), from morality and ethics (e.g., Mattingly 2014; Throop 2010, 2014; Willen 2019; Zigon 2007, 2010, 2019) to socialisation, play, skillful coping, and perception (e.g., Desjarlais 2011; Duranti 2009, 2010; Humphrey 2016; Ingold 2000). What phenomenological anthropologists have tended to foreground in their writings are the ways that bodily experiences are differentially responsive to the experiences of other embodied beings and the worlds that they mutually inhabit.

As a case in point, Csordas has developed the analytic of 'somatic mode of attention' as a means to underscore the multiple 'culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others' (1993: 138). In the context of his early work with Charismatic Christians, particular sensations of weakness, dizziness, or pain are taken up as embodied evidence of a spirit's presence. Such somatic modes of attention arise spontaneously from previous culturally and personally sedimented attunements to, with, and through the body to a world in which spirits and humans have complex and varied modes of relationality. In such a view, the body is not a fleshy container within which experience is held but instead is always already in a world, ecstatically pitched toward and entangled in events, situations, objects, and others (including spirits). It is, in other words, the dynamics of *intercorporeality* and seldom simply individuated (and isolated) forms of corporeality that defines this body of work.

Radical Otherness

Anthropology has always been interested in radical otherness; so too has phenomenology. But unlike anthropologists, who travel far and wide to discover such otherness as a collective otherness most commonly articulated as another culture, many phenomenologists posit that each human is radically singular in their being. For Husserl, this is manifest in his view that the other is always inaccessible to us, and yet directly disclosed to us as forever excessively beyond our grasp (see Throop & Zahavi 2020). The other is 'Other', as Emmanuel Levinas (1969) puts it (the inaccessible excessiveness of the Other is indicated here with the capitalisation). You are radically other to me, as I am to you. This is a commonly argued 'principle' of phenomenology articulated by any number of phenomenologists as a way to understand the condition of our experiences. Hannah Arendt (1958), for example, described this in terms of the uniqueness of each of us, the consequence of natality; and Bernhard Waldenfels (2011) has described this condition of experience in terms of how alien we are to one another, as well as to ourselves. Radical otherness being one of the conditions of human experience, an important question asked by many phenomenological anthropologists has been: how is it that sociality is possible?

In his phenomenological explorations of ethics, Zigon has, for example, explored what he calls 'situations' as the conditions that create the possibilities for sharedness and similarity among otherwise singular beings (Zigon 2015, 2018, 2019), and has articulated the concept of attunement to describe how it is that these singular beings adjust their relationality to that which is radically other (Zigon 2014, 2019, 2021). Furthermore, Zigon (2018) has also shown how this concept of attunement is useful for understanding how, for example, political activists design and rebuild a neighborhood to respond to the singularly unique concern of drug addiction that situationally characterises it. Similarly, Jason Throop has written extensively on existential asymmetries in the dynamics of empathic attunement (Throop 2010a, 2010b, 2017, forthcoming; see also Hollan & Throop 2008; Throop &Zahavi 2020; Mack & Throop forthcoming). Building off of Husserl and Edith Stein's work on empathy as the essential relationality between humans (Husserl 1989; Stein 1989), Throop has explored the dynamics of empathic attunement in terms of pain, ethics, and climate change. For example, Throop has examined how local manipulative medical and bonesetting practices on Yap, an island in the Federated States of Micronesia, practices which are founded upon tactile modes of empathic access to a sufferer's experience of pain, also always pathically discloses the asymmetrical excessiveness of the patient's pain to the healer (Throop 2017). The concept of pathic 'responsivity' first developed by Bernhard Waldenfels, furthermore, has recently become central to the work of several anthropologists who are interested in the relationality of difference in the context of, for example, ethics, care, and historical consciousness (Dyring 2018; Grøn 2017; Leistle 2015, 2016; Mattingly 2018; Stewart 2012; Wentzer 2018). A central concern in much of this work is to challenge simplistic views of empathy as a form of shared experience or mutual understanding. Instead, what is foregrounded are the myriad ways in which on-going asymmetrical intersubjective experiences can occur. Focusing upon the phenomenon of 'contagion' in the context of what has been termed the 'obesity epidemic', Lone Grøn (2017) has, for instance, shown how what on the surface may appear to be shared intergenerational

experiences of obesity, weight gain, and weight loss in Danish families also disclose significant moments of alienness and difference that are never simply reducible to mutually shared experiences in even the most intimate forms of kinship connection.

The conditions of experience that we have focused upon here—being-in-the-world, embodiment, and radical otherness—do not exhaust the ways in which phenomenological anthropology has contributed to the understanding of such conditions. Thus, for example, phenomenological anthropologists have also done important studies on emotion, affect, and mood (e.g., Desjarlais 1992; Dyring 2015; Ram 2015; Throop 2012, 2014, 2017, 2018b; Zigon 2013) temporality, and most particularly, anticipation, hope, and memory (e.g., Hage 2009; Lucht 2011; Mattingly 2012; Tidey 2019; Vigh 2009; Zigon 2009c), intentionality, gesture, language, and narrative (e.g., Duranti 2009, 2010; Goodwin 2017; Mattingly & Garro 2000; Ochs 2012; Throop 2010; Zigon 2012), and more recently, climate change (e.g., Dyring 2020; Throop 2020, Zigon 2018). Accordingly, phenomenological anthropologists have set out to examine the worldly conditions that shape, limit, and open the dynamics of lived experience because of the very fact that we are always being-in-the-world, inextricably intertwined with these conditions.

Critical phenomenology

As we have seen thus far, phenomenology from its very beginning has always been critical, in the sense of reconceiving the foundational concepts of the Western philosophical tradition for thinking human existence. Recently, however, contemporary phenomenology has taken an even more critical turn. Thus, critical phenomenologists have come to recognise that human experience is not only conditioned by those conditions of experience shared by all humans across time and space (e.g., being-in-the-world, relationality, wordliness, responsivity, embodiment, etc), but also by contingent historical and social structures, many of which are quite familiar to anthropologists. For example, Guenther (2014) has explored the ways in which solitary confinement – structured by a history of incarceration that is both classed and racialised – unhinges subjectivity. Prisoners kept in solitary confinement do not just suffer from boredom and isolation, but they also lose the capacity to make sense of the world and of their body, they become incapable of following a train of thought and lose the ability to distinguish between reality and illusion. Similarly, Gayle Salomon (2010) has explored transgender violence, Alia Al-Saji (2014) has considered the affects and effects of racialised perception, and Jill Stauffer (2015) has taken up the very possibility of whether or not victims of violence can be heard by others. This work and others would resonate with the sensibilities of many anthropological readers who seek a critical engagement with the inequalities and violence of our contemporary worlds (e.g., Martinez 2000; Ortega 2016).

To the best of our knowledge, however, it was anthropologists who first articulated the necessity of, and then actually did, a critical phenomenology. Byron Good, for one, first began developing an anthropologically-based critical phenomenology in the late-1980s and early 1990s in his critical studies of

biomedicine (Good 1994), in which he deconstructs the universal pretensions of biomedical knowledge and shows that the latter is primarily grounded in the lifeworlds of practioners. Furthermore, Robert Desjarlais argued that 'we need a critical phenomenology that can help us not only to describe what people feel, think, or experience but also to grasp how the *processes* of feeling or experiencing come about through multiple, interlocking interactions' (Desjarlais 1997: 25, emphasis in original). He goes on to argue that this critical phenomenology will allow us 'to inquire, for instance, into what we mean by feeling, how it comes about, what it implies, and what broader cultural and political forces are involved' (Desjarlais 1997: 25). Critical phenomenology, in other words, allows us to account for the link—or the intertwining—between the cultural, social, and political, on the one hand, and the embodied, unequal, and sometimes violent and unjust experience of living in worlds partially conditioned by these.

For example, Sarah Willen (2007; 2019) has been engaged in a long-term critical phenomenological project on violence and undocumented workers in Israel. Cheryl Mattingly (2014; 2019) has written on the moral experiments of African-American women in response to the racialised conditions of their children's health and suffering. And the work of Jarrett Zigon has been focused on the intertwining of ethics and politics with experiences of addiction and the violence of the war on drugs (2010; 2018; 2019). Each of these works has sought to show the ways in which power, and economic, gendered, and racialised inequality not only condition experience, but shape and limit the very possibilities for being human.

Conclusion

Phenomenology and phenomenological anthropology offer a conceptual apparatus and analytic approach that can critically address a number of central concerns of social scientists today. Phenomenology goes beyond empirically describing narrativised subjectivity. Instead, it has been grounded in an analysis of the conditions that make experience itself possible; that is: the essential modes of being that constitute the ways in which we and the world variously attune and gather.

Furthermore, both anthropology and phenomenology share an essential methodological strategy—the holding in abeyance of the researcher's own situated knowledge, beliefs, norms, and expectations when describing the lives of others. In anthropology this is what we might simply call 'ethnographic analysis'; in phenomenology this is called 'bracketing' or 'utilizing the *epoché*' (Throop 2010, 2012, 2018). Our hope is that a recognition and acknowledgment of the expanse of phenomenological concern will encourage social scientists at large to rethink the significance of phenomenology for their work. They might benefit greatly from it.

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