

Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology*

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Abstract

This review explores the most significant dimensions and findings of phenomenological approaches in anthropology. We spell out the motives and implications inherent in such approaches, chronicle their historical dimensions and precursors, and address the ways in which they have contributed to analytic perspectives employed in anthropology. This article canvasses phenomenologically oriented research in anthropology on a number of topics, including political relations and violence; language and discourse; neurophenomenology; emotion; embodiment and bodiliness; illness and healing; pain and suffering; aging, dying, and death; sensory perception and experience; subjectivity; intersubjectivity and sociality; empathy; morality; religious experience; art, aesthetics, and creativity; narrative and storytelling; time and temporality; and senses of place. We examine, and propose salient responses to, the main critiques of phenomenological approaches in anthropology, and we also take note of some of the most pressing and generative avenues of research and thought in phenomenologically oriented anthropology.

Phenomenology: the study of phenomena as they appear to the consciousnesses of an individual or a group of people; the study of things as they appear in our lived experiences

Intersubjectivity: the existential organization, recognition, and constitution of relations between subjects

Phenomenological modification: acts by which social actors take on differing attitudes, and more or less reflective or engaged stances, when relating to objects of experience or life more generally

Bracketing (phenomenological epoché): the act of suspending judgment about the natural world that precedes phenomenological analysis

Natural attitude: that attitude in which we assume there to be a world that exists independently of our experience of it

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenological approaches have become increasingly important in anthropology throughout the past 25 years. They have contributed greatly to how anthropologists think of lived experience, illness and healing, suffering, violence, morality, bodiliness, sensory perception, communicative practices, mind and consciousness, creativity and aesthetic efforts, and subjectivity and intersubjectivity, among other themes and topics. More generally, they have helped anthropologists to reconfigure what it means to be human, to have a body, to suffer and to heal, and to live among others.

ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES AND HISTORICAL PRECURSORS

The field of phenomenological anthropology has a number of diverse influences that run from American pragmatism and the writings of William James and John Dewey to the phenomenological and existentialist approaches of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Alfred Schutz, Hannah Arendt, Edith Stein, and Emmanuel Levinas to the hermeneutic phenomenology of Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur to the ethnomethodological perspectives of Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks to the deconstructivist phenomenology of Jacques Derrida. Although each of these perspectives can be understood as involving distinct applications of phenomenology, they all share a number of thematic and methodological orientations that are variously taken up in the work of contemporary anthropologists.

How does consciousness proceed for human beings? How do social relations, modes of perception, or life more generally take form in people's lives? To examine experience from a phenomenological perspective is to recognize the necessary emplacement of modalities of human existence within ever-shifting horizons of temporality. Our existence as humans is temporally structured in such a way that our past experience is always retained in a present moment that is feeding forward to anticipate future horizons of experience. This includes the dynamic ways

that individual actors shift between differing attitudes in the context of their engagements with their social and physical worlds. According to Husserl, it is by means of acts of phenomenological modification (Duranti 2009, 2010, 2011; Throop 2009b, 2010b,c) that social actors come to take on differing attitudes that evidence more or less reflective or engaged stances when relating to objects of experience, be those objects deemed to be of the mind or of the world. Particularly significant here are phenomenological insights into a distinction between modes of existence predicated on our immediate prereflexive (what Schutz termed "prephenomenal" and Merleau-Ponty termed "preobjective") experience and more reflective modes of existence that arise when we take up theoretical attitudes toward our own and others' actions (Csordas 1994b, Duranti 2010, Jackson 1996, Throop 2003).

Indeed, a central goal of phenomenological description is to destabilize those unexamined assumptions that organize our prepre-reflective engagements with reality. "Bracketing" is Husserl's term for the act by which such a shift in our orientation to the taken-for-granted occurs. Husserl (1962) termed the method by which an individual is able to distance or disconnect him- or herself from such assumptions the "phenomenological epoché" (pp. 91–100). According to Husserl, the first methodological postulate of phenomenology entails our efforts at bracketing the "natural attitude": that attitude in which we assume there to be a world that exists independently of our experience of it. Although originally discussed primarily in reference to the attitude of so-called natural scientists, as Duranti (2010) notes, Husserl's rendering of the natural attitude closely resonates with what anthropologists understand to be the cultural configuration of reality. To this extent, as Duranti (2010) suggests, the "natural attitude" might just as well be termed the "cultural attitude" (p. 18).

Accordingly, one of the main aims of anthropologists drawing from phenomenological methods has been to bracket the assumptions that come from their own cultural and

theoretical heritages in trying to understand more accurately and more fully a diverse number of cultural and experiential phenomena, be they questions of illness and madness (Good 1994, Jenkins & Barrett 2004); medical knowledge and healing (Csordas 1994b, Desjarlais 2003); pain and suffering (Das 2007, DeVecchio Good et al. 1994, Hollan & Wellenkamp 1994, Jackson 1998, Kleinman 2006, Throop 2010c); addiction (Garcia 2010, Schull 2005); play (Desjarlais 2011, Jackson 2005); death and dying (Desjarlais 2003, Mimica 1996); space and place (Feld & Basso 1996); home and displacement (Desjarlais 1997, Jackson 1995); social exclusion (Willen 2007a,b); morality (Kleinman 1999, 2006; Throop 2009b, 2010c; Zigon 2007, 2008, 2010a,b); sociality (Helliwell 1996, Kapferer 1997); liminality (Jackson 2009a, Stoller 2008); sensory perception (Csordas 1994b, Geurts 2002, Howes 2003); or experience itself (Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003, 2010c). These efforts have led to more fine-tuned depictions of the modalities of engagement, consciousness, and sensory perception in particular arrangements known to people. As Throop has argued, however, bracketing in the context of the anthropological encounter is most often a thoroughly intersubjective affair, with the misunderstandings that arise from such encounters at times evoking generative forms of self-estrangement in which ethnographers confront otherwise unrecognized aspects of their own assumptive worlds (Throop 2010c). For this reason, Throop (2010c) has suggested, following Bidney (1973), that we term this form of bracketing an ethnographic (rather than strictly phenomenological) epoché.

From a phenomenological perspective, then, distinctions between subjective and objective aspects of reality, between what is of the mind and of the world, are shaped by the attitude that a social actor takes up toward the world, as well as by the historical and cultural conditions that inform the values, assumptions, ideals, and norms embedded within it. There is no strict line demarcating the subjective and objective because both are necessarily

articulated by attitudes toward experience that may render certain aspects of experience as thoughts, images, feelings, sentiments, moods, sensations, perceptions, judgments, and forms of appreciation, on the one hand, and properties of physical objects, bodies, persons, animals, celestial phenomena, spirits, natural occurrences, etc., on the other (Throop 2009b). Much work in phenomenology in the twentieth century had been geared toward rectifying this conception, with anthropologists contributing important perspectives and findings. One of the first thinkers to apply such phenomenological insights anthropologically was Clifford Geertz (1973), who used a Schutz-inspired discussion of various culturally constituted perspectives to distinguish among commonsensical, scientific, aesthetic, and religious orientations to reality. More recently, Jackson (1998, 2005, 2009a) has taken this work further in exploring the ways in which a number of intersubjective engagements, from play and fetishes to violence and religiosity, involve complex imbrications of subject and object, self and other.

Perhaps one of the most influential contributions of phenomenology to contemporary phenomenological anthropology is evident in the tradition's focus on embodiment. The body is not only an object that is available for scrutiny. It is also a locus from which our experience of the world is arrayed. The body is not only a corpse- or text-like entity that can be examined, measured, inspected, interpreted, and evaluated in moral, epistemological, or aesthetic terms (*Körper*); it is a living entity by which, and through which, we actively experience the world (*Leib*) (Csordas 1990, 1994a,b; Desjarlais 1992, 1997; Good 1994; Ingold 2000; Jackson 1983; Stoller 1995, 1997). From a phenomenological perspective, the living body is considered the existential null point from which our various engagements with the world—whether social, eventful, or physical—are transacted. The literature on the body and embodiment in anthropology is vast, with scholars subscribing to various theoretical and ethnographic approaches (Csordas 1999b, Sharp 2000, Taylor 2005).

Embodiment: the bodily aspects of human beings and subjectivity

Phenomenological anthropologists have contributed most significantly to anthropological interest in the body, however, by grounding their theorizing, description, and analysis in close examinations of concrete bodily experiences, forms of knowledge, and practice. More broadly, anthropologists and other scholars have drawn on phenomenological perspectives to consider the ways in which political, social, economic, and discursive formations intersect with the operations and felt immediacies of bodies in a number of sociocultural settings (Cohen 1998; Csordas 1994a, 1999a,b; Desjarlais 2003; French 1994; Lock 1993; Pinto 2008; Scheper-Hughes 1993; Throop 2010c).

Central to the temporal and embodied structure of human experience is the existential fact that we are emplaced in a world that always outstrips the expanse of our being. As beings, we are always oriented or positioned toward aspects of an ever-broader potential world of experience. It is not possible for us to experience the world in its entirety. We must always focus on particular aspects of it. Our consciousness, phenomenologists argue, is always directed or oriented toward particular objects of experience. Following Franz Brentano, Husserl termed the “toward-which” orientation of our being “intentionality” (compare Duranti 1993, 2011). It is precisely because of our necessarily situated emplacement in the world that the world is given to us as an indeterminate phenomenon (Csordas 1994b). This does not mean that the world is structureless or a mere incoherent flux of sensations, movements, and qualities. It means instead that we are never able to exhaust our experience of the world in which we are emplaced because there is always something more yet to come, a side yet to see, an aspect, quality, action, or interaction yet to experience. An ever-shifting horizon to our experience suggests a beyond from which we have come and a toward to which we could be headed. A more-than is always woven into the fabric of existence that constantly shifts as we attend to particular aspects of reality, while ignoring others. Uncertainty, ambiguity, and indeterminacy are the norm here.

As we focus closely on one aspect of reality, other potentially experiential aspects of reality are relegated to the fringe of our awareness as a now yet still potential horizon of future experience. Whether we are simply moving through the space of a house (Bourdieu 1977, Helliwell 1996), listening to a conversation (Duranti 2009, Goodwin 1994, Throop 2010b), enjoying a piece of music (Berger 1999, Duranti 2009), or playing a game of chess (Desjarlais 2011, Mattingly 1998), we are continually shifting the focus of our attention among particular objects, phrases, instruments, or activities. For instance, as we foreground the sound of a bass in a jazz quartet, the sounds produced by the pianist, drummer, and sax player fade imperceptibly into the background horizon of our experience of the music. If we then shift to listen to the chord progressions played by the pianist, however, then the sound of the bass guitar shifts from foreground to background, all the while remaining potentially available for once again returning to the focus of our attention (Berger 1999, 2009; Duranti 2009).

Our modes of engaging with reality are further defined not only by the dynamic flux of our embodied attention from one aspect to another, from one perspective to another, from one activity to another, and from one moment to the next. They are further patterned both by ongoing engagements with others, in complex and ever-shifting negotiations of attention, and by particular existential modalities that range from imagination to memory to dreams to perception to various other sensory registers (e.g., tactility, kinesthesia, smell, audition, and taste). As Husserl taught, there are always distinctive intentional act-phases (*noesis*) mediating particular intentional objects (*noema*), that each afford some distinctive possibilities for experience, while foreclosing others. For instance, to wakefully imagine a chair is phenomenologically distinct from dreaming of a chair. And the acts of either imaging or dreaming of a chair are each distinct from the acts of perceiving it, touching it, or sitting on it. The emerging field of sensorial anthropology (Classen 1993, 2005; Desjarlais 2003; Geurts 2002; Howes

1991, 2003; Ingold 2000; Porcello et al. 2010; Stoller 1997; Synnott 1993; Throop 2010c) is a generative site in which the cultural and historical patterning of these various modalities of experience is currently being explored.

To focus on sensorial aspects of experience from a phenomenological perspective is not to focus myopically on subjective experience, however. Phenomenologists argue that even our most basic experiences of physical objects both evidence and entail a foundational intersubjectivity. The facts that the world before us is held to be the same sharable world that we mutually inhabit, that others are recognized as experiencing beings who orient to and abide by the same sharable world as we do, that the bodies of others, which are objects and subjects for us, are often the zero point of their experiential fields and vice versa, are all deemed by phenomenologists to be necessary intersubjective building blocks to the very possibility and constitution of social life (Csordas 2008, Duranti 2010, Jackson 1998).

With that said, phenomenologists recognize that intersubjectively constituted possibilities for orienting to a sharable world are not ever based simply on isomorphic interpersonal experiences. For instance, in one sense, this concept is reflected in the fact that our lifeworld or *Lebenswelt* (see below) is variously populated by other experiencing beings with whom we coexist in differing and shifting degrees of temporal and spatial intimacy [what Schutz (1967) distinguished by means of his distinctions between predecessors, contemporaries, consociates, and successors; compare Geertz (1973)]. In yet another sense, phenomenologists hold that there is always an irreducible asymmetry and instability of perspectives and experiences assumed in even the most mutually attuned, empathic, and intimate of intersubjective encounters (Desjarlais 2011; Heidegger 1996; Husserl 1962, 1970; Jackson 1998; Throop 2010b).

In anthropology, these insights have often informed critical reflections on the nature of subjectivity, self-experience, and personhood in an attempt to demonstrate the limits of purely subjectivist approaches in the social sciences

(Jackson 1998, Kleinman 1999). They have also inspired a growing number of thinkers to argue for the merits of approaching intersubjectivity as a core foundational theoretical construct for anthropology and the human sciences more broadly defined (Csordas 1990, 1994a, 2008; Duranti 2009, 2010; Jackson 1996, 1998). Phenomenologically influenced orientations to intersubjectivity have also been generatively employed in the context of recent ethnographic studies of violence, pain, and suffering (Desjarlais 1992, 1997; Jackson 1998, 2002; Kleinman 2006; Throop 2010c); morality and ethics (Garcia 2010; Geurts 2002; Kleinman 1999, 2006; Throop 2010c; Zigon 2007, 2010a,b); religious experience (Csordas 1994b, Jackson 2009a, Seeman 2009, Stoller 2008); empathy (Briggs 2008, Desjarlais 1992, Frank 2000, Gieser 2008, Hollan 2008, Hollan & Throop 2008, Kirmayer 2008, Throop 2010b); and the ethnographic encounter itself (Benson & O'Neill 2007, Frykman & Gilje 2003, Throop 2010b,c). Along similar lines, in anthropological studies of subjectivity, the best work has detailed the ways in which subjectivity itself is deeply intersubjective in nature (Biehl et al. 2007; DelVecchio Good et al. 2008; Desjarlais 2003; Hollan 2001; Kleinman 2006; Lurhmann 2004, 2006; Throop 2010c). Given this finding, some phenomenological anthropologists have given priority to the concept of intersubjectivity over that of subjectivity in trying to make sense of the lives and concerns of people (Desjarlais 2003, 2011; Jackson 1998; Throop 2010b,c).

In the context of his later writings, Husserl (1970) "radicalized" his earlier analysis of intersubjectivity in his articulation of the notion of *Lebenswelt* or "lifeworld." Closely associated with the natural attitude, Husserl defined the lifeworld as the unquestioned, practical, historically conditioned, pretheoretical, and familiar world of our everyday lives. Although the lifeworld is always necessarily structured in particular ways, phenomenologists argue that it is not to be mistaken for a static, objective entity. It is instead a dynamic, shifting, and intersubjectively constituted existential reality

Lifeworld:

the unquestioned, practical, historically conditioned, pretheoretical, and familiar world of people's everyday lives

that results from the ways that we are geared into the world by means of our particular situatedness as existential, practical, and historical beings. Accordingly, while necessarily serving as both the basis for, and the object of, scientific scrutiny, the lifeworld is never reducible simply to theoretical efforts at fixation and typification. Over the past few decades, the concept of the lifeworld has become a largely taken-for-granted construct in social theory. In phenomenological anthropology, however, a number of thinkers have sought to employ the term in a more explicitly phenomenological and rigorous way (Bidney 1973). This literature includes Good's (1994) studies of the lifeworlds of chronic pain sufferers, medical students, and physicians, Desjarlais's (2011) portrait of the lifeworlds of chess players, and Duranti's (2009) work on issues of aesthetics and improvisation in the context of language socialization and the performance of jazz music.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS AND ARTICULATIONS

Many anthropologists have found great utility in phenomenological methods in anthropological inquiry. The focus on "life as lived" and human consciousness in all of its lived realities; a mistrust of overly theoretical thought and "ideological trappings" (Jackson 1996, p. 2); the call for a "radical empiricism" (James 1996, Jackson 1996, p. 1) and the bracketing of cultural and natural attitudes; an attention to the indeterminate and ambiguous character of everyday life; and a priority given to embodied, intersubjective, temporally informed engagements in the world: These and other orientations have offered fruitful avenues of thought and analysis. These perspectives have enabled anthropologists to step beyond, on the one hand, anthropological considerations of cultural discourses, social relations, and political economy alone and, on the other, psychological considerations of selfhood, psychodynamics, and subjectivity (Abu-Lughod 1991, Biehl et al. 2007, Jackson 1998). At the

same time, anthropologists have tended to shy away from the more general, categorical, culture-free pronouncements often sounded by phenomenological philosophers, preferring instead to couch their findings within specific cultural and historical settings (Jackson 1998, 2009b). Anthropologists have also rooted much of their research less in philosophical reasoning than in ethnographic research and so in effect have undertaken "fieldwork in philosophy" (Bourdieu 1990) to get at more precise, empirically grounded understandings of human existence in its many formations. In effect, in attending to William James's (1996) call for a "radical empiricism," anthropologists have worked to introduce more fully the historical, the cultural, the variable, and the relative into phenomenology. They have also given priority, at times, to people's own formulations of the world and their place within it as they have sought to detail the contours of "local phenomenologies" (Halliburton 2002). Several distinct orientations to phenomenological thought and inquiry have emerged out of these considerations.

In a prescient passage Geertz (1973) prefaced his famous application of Schutzian social phenomenology to Balinese lifeworlds with a call for anthropologists to develop a "scientific phenomenology of culture" (p. 364). Despite Geertz's occasional (and often ambivalent) forays into phenomenology, he was not the only, or even the first, anthropologist to attempt to apply phenomenology to ethnographic concerns. Indeed, in pioneering writings of Hallowell (1955), Bidney (1973), Bourdieu (1977), Watson (1976), and Turner (1982, 1986) we find attempts to critically import insights from phenomenology into anthropology.

Starting in the mid-1980s, several anthropologists inspired by such work 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 1992; Jackson 2005; Kleinman 1995, 1999; Seeman 2009; Stoller 1997; Turner & Bruner 1986; Wikan 1990). Subsequent inquiries along these lines have offered reflections on the cultural, genealogical, ontological, and epistemological dimensions of the concept of “experience” itself, leading to the somewhat paradoxical understanding that the category of experience is, at once, highly needed in anthropological thought and deeply charged, overdetermined, and culturally constituted (Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003, 2010c). Indeed, on the one hand, phenomenological anthropologists have often explicitly relied on the concept of experience as a way to orient their research generatively to the complexly temporal, at times ambiguous, and deeply ambivalent realities of human existence. On the other hand, when used in an unreflexive way, the category itself at times presumes and promotes unexamined cultural assumptions concerning articulations of self, subjectivity, and social action that may blind us to other possible forms of life and ways of being.

Much of this ambiguity relates to the difficulties and challenges posed by the language we use and on which we have come to rely. It is important to avoid creating or reaffirming any false dichotomies or problematically conventional ways of categorizing the world. Using terms that invoke clear and rigid differences between, for instance, subjective and objective, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, experience and political economy, interiority and exteriority, culture and experience, the particular and the general, or the phenomenal and the psychological runs the risk of suggesting that these elements are quite distinct in life, when in fact they are words we use to categorize situations that are terrifically complicated, fluid, and manifold in their features. When it comes to ideas of an anthropology of experience, for instance, or a theory of subjectivity, the danger is that any work along these lines may cleave out, conceptually as well as ethnographically, a particular domain, known as “experience” or “subjectivity,” that in its presumed features more fully reflects those doing the cleaving

than it is in any real way in the world itself. There is a need for a more apersonal, discordant phenomenology, one that steers clear of, and moves us beyond, conventional notions of consciousness, selfhood, embodiment, subjectivity, and experience.

Along with efforts toward an anthropology of experience, a number of orientations have emerged out of interest to map out how phenomenal processes take form in particular cultural and historical settings. At times inspired by, and yet often critical of, Geertz’s (1973) pioneering writings, “hermeneutic phenomenological approaches” in anthropology have sought to unpack the dynamic and complex practical, historical, and cultural forces influencing the interpretative efforts and intersubjective engagements of anthropologists and the people they work with and learn from in the field (Crapanzano 1992; Desjarlais 2003; Good 1994; Mattingly 1998, 2010b). In undertaking inquiries along the lines of a “cultural phenomenology,” anthropologists have examined how questions of selfhood, sociality, temporality, agency, pain, and morality, among others, tie into social and cultural formations in specific sociocultural settings and lifeworlds (Csordas 1990, 1994a,b; Geurts 2002; Pinto 2008; Throop 2009b, 2010a–c). Advocates of a critical phenomenology, in turn, have stressed the need to attend to the many, and often highly charged, political, social, and discursive forces that contribute to life in particular settings (Biehl et al. 2007, Good 1994, Desjarlais 1997, Scheper-Hughes 1993, Willen 2007b). Other anthropologists have worked toward an “existential anthropology” (Jackson 2005), in which ethnographic and phenomenological methods attuned toward a radical empiricism have offered compelling insights into the existential demands, constraints, dilemmas, potentialities, uncertainties, and the “struggle for being” (Jackson 2005, p. x) that figure into what it means to be human (Dalsgaard 2004; Desjarlais 2011; Jackson 2005, 2009a; Kapferer 1997; Kleinman 2006; Lucht 2008; Weiner 1992, 1993, 2001; Zigon 2007, 2010b). In general, this work, while attending to particular

situations faced by people in specific sociopolitical settings, often inquires into ostensibly universal dimensions of human experience.

The more general orientations noted above have weaved their way into a number of conceptual and topical inquiries in anthropology. Anthropologists and other scholars in the human sciences have drawn on phenomenological modes of analysis in person- and subject-centered approaches (Briggs 1998; Frank 2000; Desjarlais 2003; Hollan & Wellenkamp 1994; Wikan 1990, 2008; Zigon 2010a,b), in practice-oriented approaches (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 2000; Throop & Murphy 2002; Wacquant 2003), in discourse-centered approaches (Desjarlais 2003; Hanks 1990, 1995), and in ethnographic and interpretive approaches (Benson & O'Neill 2007, Katz & Csordas 2003). Neurophenomenology, an approach that seeks to productively combine phenomenological and ethnographic insights into the human condition with neuroscientific investigations into the workings of the brain, has also emerged as a growing field of inquiry (Downey 2010, Laughlin et al. 1992, Laughlin & McManus 1995, Laughlin & Throop 2009, McNeal 1999, Reyna 2002, Winkelmann 2000).

Anthropologists and other scholars have also drawn on phenomenological methods in attending to a diverse range of topics of perennial and recent interest to anthropologists, including studies of social life, relations, and intersubjectivity (Benson & O'Neill 2007; Duranti 1993, 2010; Garcia 2010; Helliwell 1996; Jackson 1998; Weiner 1992, 1993); agency, volition, and will (Duranti 2011, Mattingly 2010a, Murphy & Throop 2010b, Throop 2010a); language, semiotics, gesture, and discourse (Duranti 2009, 2010; Goodwin 1994; Hanks 1990, 1995); political relations and violence (French 1994, Jackson 2002); psychopathology (Jenkins & Barrett 2004, Saris 1995); memory (Csordas 1996, Desjarlais 2003); morality (Kleinman 1999, 2006; Parish 1994; Throop 2010c; Zigon 2008, 2010a,b); illness and healing (Desjarlais 1992, 1997; Garcia 2010; Good 1994; Kapferer 1997; Stoller 2008); pain and suffering (DeLVecchio

Good et al. 1994, Hollan & Wellenkamp 1994, Jackson 1999, Throop 2010c); aging, death, and dying (Cohen 1998, Desjarlais 2003, Mimica 1996); embodiment and bodiliness (Csordas 1990, 1994a; Desjarlais 1992, 1997, 2003; Halliburton 2002); emotion (Desjarlais 1992, Geurts 2002, Throop 2010b,c); imagination (Crapanzano 2004; Csordas 1994b, 1996; Lurhmann 2004; Mittermaier 2010; Murphy 2004, 2005); dreams (Groark 2010, Hollan 2009, Mittermaier 2010); religious experience (Crapanzano 2004; Csordas 1994b; Jackson 2009a; Lurhmann 2004, 2006; Lester 2005; Mittermaier 2010; Seeman 2009; Stoller 2008); art, aesthetics, and creativity (Desjarlais 2011, Feld 1990, Gell 1998); music (Berger 1999, 2009; Duranti 2009; Feld 1996); dance (Downey 2005, Throop 2009a); technology (Ingold 2001); digital gambling (Schull 2005) and virtual reality (Csordas 2000); scientific practices and explorations (Fischer 2003, Helmreich 2009); narrative and storytelling (Garro & Mattingly 2000; Jackson 2002; Mattingly 1998, 2010b); time and temporality (Bourdieu 1977, 2000; Hage 2003; Gell 1992; Lindquist 2000; Munn 1990); senses of place (Casey 2009, Feld & Basso 1996, Munn 1990, Persson 2007, Weiner 2001); and globalization, migration, and illegality (Jackson 2008, Lucht 2008, Willen 2007a,b). At times, anthropologists draw explicitly from phenomenological concepts and methods. At other times, the analyses are implicitly phenomenological and are often conjoined with other forms of anthropological inquiry. At still other times, they are like Barthes's (1981) "borrowing" of "phenomenology's project and something of its language" in *Camera Lucida*, resulting in "a vague, casual, even cynical phenomenology, so readily did it agree to distort or to evade its principles according to the whims of my analysis" (p. 20).

CRITIQUES, RESPONSES, AND FUTURE HORIZONS

Several important critiques have been raised against phenomenological approaches in anthropology. Each of these critiques highlights

important potential shortcomings of phenomenology, while proffering potentially new avenues for theorizing, research, and engagement in phenomenological anthropology. Many critiques, however, mischaracterize the scope, focus, and intent of phenomenological approaches in the discipline, while often further failing to recognize the generative ways that phenomenology has contributed to the development of anthropological theorizing and practice. All too often, critiques of phenomenology assume a far too simplistic and homogenizing view of the tradition. Given that Husserl viewed phenomenology as a philosophy of continual beginnings, it is quite possible to argue, however, that there are as many phenomenologies as there are phenomenologists. Equally troubling in this regard is the fact that many anthropological critiques of subjectivism in phenomenology fail to acknowledge the direct influence that phenomenological approaches have had on the development of a range of so-called poststructuralist perspectives in philosophy and social theory. These include perspectives that range from Derrida's deconstructionism to Foucault's genealogical historicism to Bourdieu's practice theory. Such critiques also often fail to recognize the impact that phenomenology has had on the reflexive turn in anthropology that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.

One of the most pressing critiques, however, holds that phenomenology as a whole, and phenomenological approaches in anthropology, ignores the political and socioeconomic determinants of life and people's living conditions—that, as “the apotheosis of bourgeois individualism” (Moran 2000, p. 21), as Marxist thinkers have cast it, phenomenology attends merely to the qualia of the subjective and the experiential and, as it were, the epiphenomenal. Phenomenology focuses on the realm of mere appearance and sensation without serious consideration of the broader political, structural, and social forces really at work in people's lives. Phenomenology, one critique ventures, gives undue and naïve priority to considerations of consciousness and subjectivity.

These statements are, in themselves, misguided ways of thinking about it. Phenomenological approaches include within their orbit a number of empirical considerations, from the political to the psychological. They attend to the intricate, palpable force of the political, the cultural, the discursive, and the psychological in people's lives. In fact, many phenomenological approaches work in tandem with other approaches, such as cultural analyses; semiotic and linguistic perspectives; psychological, neuroscientific, and psychodynamic theories; or considerations of political economy. And they do so in trying to account for the complicated constructions and processes of consciousness and subjectivity in careful, informed ways. In fact, these efforts highlight the fact that analytic approaches that do not consider the place of the subjective or intersubjective, or of experience or consciousness, in cultural or political realities are missing out on something.

Another critique claims that phenomenology offers a limited methodology: It is good only for understanding people's subjective experiences of life at a surface level. Also, in its very design, it is a method of describing, not one of explaining or analyzing. A phenomenological approach risks missing the big picture when it comes to anthropological insights, or so the thinking goes. This mindset may come about because the descriptive mandate of phenomenology may seem, for some, to be too detailed, dynamic, and complex to allow adequate access to so-called broader historical, social, economic, and political processes. And yet it is precisely just such attention to descriptive and analytic detail that makes phenomenology such a powerful approach that may be generatively extended to other methods, modes of analysis, and theoretical perspectives in the social sciences, including discourse analysis, political economic analysis, and considerations of psychophysiology, for example.

Epistemological concerns have also often been raised by thinkers critical of the phenomenological tradition. Can we ever really know what another person is thinking or feeling, especially when that person lives in

a cultural reality distinct from one's own? Anthropologists have often responded to this key epistemological question by skirting considerations of personal experience altogether. Rather than engage with the difficulties of reconciling their theoretical assumptions with the complexities and vicissitudes of experience, they have found it better, and safer, to focus on aspects of social life—political systems, kinship structures, cultural histories, symbolic meanings—that have the air of being capable of being known in clearer, more overt, and more secure ways (Geertz 1973; compare Wikan 1990). This strategy often has the effect of neglecting important aspects of people's lives. As a result, the most compelling cares and concerns of individuals, families, and communities are often passed over or at times missed altogether. Although investigating the existential richness of people's lives is a delicate and forever challenging endeavor, this should not stop anthropologists from trying to do so.

Yet another line of argument is that notions of subjective experience are themselves the product of a distinct genealogy of thought in the modern West, making any anthropological method that attends to such experience problematic at the least. Yet it is clear that many non-Western cultural heritages include, within their horizons of thought, ideas of phenomenological inquiry and awareness. The religious and philosophical thoughts associated with Buddhism and Hinduism are two such examples (Halliburton 2002). Moreover, no matter how historically or culturally determined the concept of subjective experience might be, any simple rejection of subjective experience as a relevant site of inquiry for anthropology also entails with it a deeply troubling inattention to individuals' lives as lived. In such cases, what ends up getting overlooked, or in some more radical cases even outright denied, are individuals' existential possibilities for taking up complexly textured, variegated, and, at times, conflicted and deeply ambivalent orientations to their worlds of experience. Somewhat ironically, the denial of such existential possibilities for others, while claiming them for "ourselves,"

no matter how theoretically nuanced and historically contextualized the argument may be, runs dangerously close to forms of Othering that anthropologists have been combating for decades as ethically, epistemologically, and ontologically problematic.

What is at stake for phenomenologically inclined anthropologists are precisely the limits of approaches that seek to disarticulate unrecognized historical, political, economic, and cultural influences from the concrete engagements, concerns, and experiences of particular social actors acting in particular places and spaces in particular times. It is not unrecognized biases that phenomenological anthropologists are critical of, however. It is, rather, tendencies toward abstraction, ossification, and totalization that are held to be problematic, unless, of course, such processes are examined in concrete moments of interaction and engagement. As Good (1994) contends, one of the main questions facing the development of phenomenological approaches in anthropology (in this case, he is particularly interested in critical phenomenology) concerns how one can "recognize the presence of the social and historical within human consciousness, recognize forms of self-deception and distortion, without devaluing local claims to knowledge?" (p. 42). Such concerns evidence some of the main points of tension between phenomenological and sociopolitical approaches (and also discursive/semiotic/linguistic and psychodynamic approaches) in anthropology. Whether such tensions reveal unbridgeable epistemological aporias or whether there are still possibilities for integrating phenomenology with what are otherwise considered to be competing and antithetical approaches will continue to be centrally problematic in the development of anthropological theorizing and practice in the years to come. We hope that phenomenological anthropologists will continue to engage such tensions seriously and productively contribute to these debates and conversations.

Many critiques of phenomenological anthropology fail to recognize the ways in which

anthropologists inspired by phenomenology have themselves set out to reflect critically on the limits and shortcomings of the phenomenological tradition, while still working to extend its scope and applicability. Phenomenology as a tradition is seldom, if ever, unproblematically incorporated into anthropological research, theorizing, and analysis. Key contributors to such critical reflections include Crapanzano's (2004) efforts to highlight the linguistic and cultural biases evident in phenomenological writings; Csordas' (1990; 1994a,b) use of Bourdieu (1977) and Hallowell (1955) to extend Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology of perception and embodiment; Good's efforts at advancing a critical phenomenology and his recent turn to psychodynamic and political perspectives (Delvecchio Good et al. 2008); and Jackson's (2009b) ethnographically grounded critique of phenomenology and philosophy. And with the ongoing development of cultural phenomenology, critical phenomenology, and existential anthropology, as well as critical reflections on the concept of experience (Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 1998; Throop 2003, 2010c), still further refinements, critiques, and extensions await us.

Finally, a number of scholars have critically charged that phenomenological approaches in anthropology do not adequately address linguistic, discursive, or semiotic forces. Significantly, however, phenomenological approaches to language have been taken up productively by linguistic anthropologists (Duranti 1993, 2009, 2010; Goodwin 1994; Hanks 1990, 1995). Within phenomenological anthropology, there have also been a number of attempts to take discourse, narrative practice, and semiotics seriously (Crapanzano 2004, Csordas 1994b, Desjarlais 2003, Good 1994, Mattingly 1998, Throop 2010c). Although

each of these approaches is distinct, each views life as inescapably intertwined with discursive forms, while attending to the potential asymmetries between those forms and nondiscursive ways of being.

CONCLUSION

Phenomenologically inclined inquiries in anthropology have offered a wealth of informed and compelling accounts of particular lived realities. Combined, they add significantly to our understanding of what constitutes the human. Phenomenological approaches, broadly conceived, can get at the richness of people's lives, concerns, and engagements in direct and incisive terms. John Dewey (1958) once proposed that "a first-rate test" of the value of any philosophy is, "[d]oes it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?" (p. 7). Phenomenologically inclined efforts in anthropology have clearly passed this test.

What is most called for are careful, sophisticated phenomenological approaches in anthropology, realized through ethnographic field research methods, that attend at once to the tangible realities of people's lives and to the often interrelated social, biological, corporeal, sensorial, discursive, cultural, political, economic, psychological, and environmental dimensions of those realities. This phenomenology would rebut conventional ideas of self, society, consciousness, memory, and the human more generally. This anthropology would be attuned to both particular situations and the common threads of existence that weave through all our lives.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. What is the relation between the phenomenal and the discursive—between, that is, experience, being, and sensate perception, on the one hand, and language, aesthetic and rhetorical forms, and communicative practices more generally on the other hand?

2. How should anthropologists and other social scientists attend to the relation between the particulars of individual lives and settings and more general observations of strands of existence that weave through all people's lives?
3. How do we draw on phenomenological methods and analysis to go beyond conventional, and often overly generalized, understandings of experience, perception, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, language, and life itself?

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