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Comments to Michael Schnegg's Article:

Response

Phenomenological Anthropology
Philosophical Concepts for Ethnographic Use

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Abstract: As a philosophical discipline, phenomenology is interested in *how* and *as what* things appear *to* a subject from the first-person perspective. Phenomenological analyses can be applied to objects, others, the self, feelings and much more. Yet, how do they appear? Within experience! While this is also accepted in anthropology, I show how we can benefit from some of the theoretical concepts that phenomenology has developed, including *intentionality*, *being-in-the-world*, *embodiment*, *empathy*, *responsivity* and *atmosphere*, to explore specific experiences more thoroughly. To demonstrate this, I introduce the foundations of these concepts: of-ness (Husserl), in-ness (Heidegger), embodied-ness (Merleau-Ponty), with-ness (Stein), responsive-ness (Waldenfels) and between-ness phenomenology (Schmitz). Then I discuss how these ideas have been mobilized in anthropology before applying them to a single ethnographic scene about the weather in Namibia. This allows a phenomenological anthropology to be developed positing that *as what* a thing appears for the subject depends on *how* it appears. This *how* encompasses transcendental structures of experience and the social contexts that shape what people live through, including the normative views they face when acting in the public sphere. By tracing entanglements between first-person perspectives and social, material and normative structures, phenomenological anthropology can make visible what otherwise remains obscured. In concluding, I carve out the unique critical potential that emerges from such an analysis and show the potential it offers for imagining a possible otherwise, two salient components of my version of a future phenomenological anthropology.

[*phenomenological anthropology, experience, mind-word relationship, critical theory*]

I. Introduction

As a philosophical discipline, phenomenology is first and foremost interested in the relationship between the subject and the world. It explores the various modes in which subjects relate to objects as well as *how* and *as what* such objects appear from a first-person perspective. In analysing these processes, phenomenology is *not* interested in the particular experiences I, Michael, have while writing this text, but in the *structures of experience* that make my writing and my experience of it possible. These structures include, among other things, that I am an *embodied* agent and can relate to the world only through my body. It furthermore includes the *atmosphere* in which I write, which shapes how I feel when writing and possibly how I proceed. But why should we, as anthropologists, become aware of this? Consider the following example.

Before writing this paragraph, I poured water over my tea leaves. While filling the kettle with tap water, I thought about the difference it would make if this was bottled water. Would it be the same to me? Then, sipping my tea, I remembered that in the Catholic Church the water was holy for the priest and frightening to the baptized child, who cried at being made to feel wet. And how, when helping my nephew with a chemistry experiment, we learned that salt dissolves in water by getting 'in between' the water molecules.

But how and in what circumstances can water become a substance to quench thirst, be holy, frighten with wetness, or be a bunch of molecules for me? Through my experiences. To describe the processes that underlie my experience, phenomenologists have developed a wealth of concepts ranging from Edmund Husserl's *intentional* perception of water to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *embodied* experience of water and to the *atmosphere* constituted in the network of relationships surrounding water of Hermann Schmitz. They shed light on specific aspects of how things appear *as something*, as water in this case. In brief, the 'as' is what phenomenology is about.

When analysing this as-structure, phenomenologists typically claim that there is no dichotomy between sensorial perception and categorical thought, but that perceptual experience itself is already cognitive (in that the knowledge we have about, say, water influences the ways we 'see' it). On the other hand, categories can be formed by abstraction from experience. For example, water is only experienced as 'holy' if one has acquired a certain knowledge about it in contexts of religious teaching and learning. The other way around, many abstract concepts can only be properly 'understood' if one has an appropriate experience of them. For example, the concept of hunger is grasped in a different – and more existential – way if one has not eaten in a while and has suffered a period of great hunger. In other words, the 'as' of experience is shaped by factors ranging from elementary bodily states to higher-order cognitive information (Gallagher and Zahavi 2021:8).

My *first aim* with this text is to introduce the *concepts* phenomenologists have developed to explore this as-structure and thus the relationship between the subject and the world. I do this to show how these concepts can become useful for anthropologists when interpreting *specific ethnographic situations*. One might now object that many of these concepts, including *epoché, Einfühlung* and *being-in-the-world,* match ideas developed or already adopted by anthropologists, such as *reflexivity, empathy* and *emplacement*. In my view, however, anthropology can still profit from engaging with the originals. This allows us to develop further a language with which to describe, theorize and compare experience. Furthermore, re-reading the originals also leads us to discover new aspects and concepts that have not been recognized in the anthropological literature. The *second aim* of this text is to address the fact that experiences leave traces in our bodies and in our consciousness. Tracing these inscriptions and making them visible become the basis for a *critical phenomenological anthropology*.

But this use of phenomenological concepts in anthropology is not a one-way street. The use of these concepts in a wide range of ethnographic situations can lead to the

kind of wondering that is an important driver of scientific debates. This is because these concepts will come back differently from their encounter with anthropology and 'the field' (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022). Through this, ethnography becomes a means to destabilize, broaden and diversify phenomenological concepts and thus to develop them further. Ideally, this collaboration could be mutually illuminating for both disciplines (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022; Mattingly 2019; Pedersen 2020; Schnegg and Breyer 2022).

Let us start with some history to get a feel for where this journey might lead.

Phenomenology Entering Anthropology

Phenomenology developed in Germany at the turn of the 20th century through the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, Max Scheler and others.[1] It emerged when, as Edmund Husserl observed, the sciences had successfully established the understanding that there was an objectified 'reality' that only they could describe adequately. In this world of science, heat, for example, was now defined as energy crossing the boundary of a thermodynamic system. Defining heat in this way, scientists disconnected the phenomenon from heat sensations and anything a subject could feel: that is, they disconnected the phenomenon from the Lebenswelt (lifeworld), as Husserl says (Fuchs 2018: xiv; Husserl 1976c). Because scientists were successful in controlling phenomena like heat in this way, they became increasingly convinced that they could describe the world objectively, while all others only had 'feelings' and 'beliefs'.

Husserl, who is credited with beginning the phenomenological train of thought, replied that a scientist, like anyone else, has a particular attitude towards a phenomenon in the moment of studying it (Husserl 1976c). In making this claim, he was not opposing science (he held a Ph.D. in mathematics) but rather arguing that it operates within the same limits that circumscribe all other knowing. According to Husserl, natural scientists, for example, assume that the world exists 'outside' and 'independently' of us, which is a common 'belief' of the modern era that is not challenged but adopted. In his view, the sciences are also biased and should acknowledge this to improve through becoming more self-reflective.

The critical and self-reflective thinking these writings stimulated entered anthropology through Franz Boas.[2] Boas was influenced by the German historic tradition and claimed that there was a stark difference between what he coined the 'cosmographer' (like himself, referencing Humboldt's idea of the 'cosmos') and 'physicists/naturalists/scientists' (Boas 1887). In his view, a 'cosmographer' is motivated by 'personal feelings'

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1 Comparable thinking also developed in American pragmatism.

2 I focus on the US-American tradition because the phenomenological anthropology I discuss largely emerged there. I am very much indebted to Byron Good for sharing his knowledge with me and for correcting some of my initial readings of this history. Developments in France, Britain and Germany were different. A more complete, albeit somewhat divergent analysis is provided by Ingold (Ingold 2000:157).

and is subjectively 'affected' by the world, wanting to discover the 'truth of every phenomenon'. This distinguishes her from the naturalists who subordinate phenomena to laws (ibid.:139). Referencing Goethe and Humboldt, in searching for 'totality in the individuality' (ibid.:140) Boas roots anthropology in the study of the particular, while deeply acknowledging the subjective relationship between the knower and the known. This thinking shaped the generations of American anthropologists that followed, including Hallowell, Sapir, Whorf, Mead and Benedict.

In the sixties, Clifford Geertz furthered this line of thinking by introducing a more explicit focus on experience (Throop 2003). Strongly opposing Lévi-Strauss' structuralism and the emerging cognitivism – the 'cerebral savage', as he tellingly called it (Geertz 1967) – Geertz was among the first to use the term 'phenomenology' when calling for a 'scientific phenomenology of culture' that allows 'describing and analysing the meaningful structure of experience (here, the experience of persons) as it is apprehended by representative members of a particular society at a particular point in time' (Geertz 1973:364).[3] This included exploring how distinct perspectives (i.e., religious, scientific, etc.) frame experience. With this, Geertz continued a salient interest of American anthropology, which was to show how language and categories shape the experiences of time, space, etc. Geertz also drew methodologically on phenomenology by analysing culture as public symbols borrowed from the hermeneutical tradition in phenomenology, especially that attributed to Ricoeur (Breyer 2013; Geertz 1974).

Next to Geertz, Victor Turner made significant use of this early continental philosophy. Although he is rarely considered a phenomenologist, his theory of experience, and especially his distinction between *Erleben* and *Erlebnis*, built on Wilhelm Dilthey (Bräunlein 2012; Turner and Bruner 1986). Whereas Geertz, in the tradition of Boasian cultural anthropology, had argued that 'perspectives' (religious, scientific, etc.) shape what we can experience, Turner turned the arrow around. In his view, the categories these perspectives entail are themselves the result of reflections (*Erlebnis*) of what we have lived through (*erlebt*) unconsciously in the first place (Schnegg 2022; Throop 2003; Turner and Bruner 1986).

The motivation for exploring subjective experiences grew with the 'crisis of representation', which further fuelled distrust in both objectivism and culture as collective representations. The study of subjective experience seemed a promising way to overcome both problems (Katz and Csordas 2003:277).

However, while studying first-person experiences is necessary for doing phenomenological anthropology, the potential of this approach goes further. Phenomenology offers a wealth of concepts that have not been fully explored. The potential for anthropology was first realized by a group of scholars at Harvard under the mentorship of

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3 Other prominent early engagements include Hallowell's work on the self. Hallowell talks about his study as a phenomenological analysis of self-awareness, albeit 'for want of a better term but without implying too many theoretical implications' (Hallowell 1955:79). Other early engagements include the works of Bidney (1973) and Kultgen (1975).

Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good and by Michael D. Jackson (then at the University of Indiana, Bloomington). The Harvard group had detailed knowledge of continental philosophy, partly through working with Geertz. Their pioneering works on illness and disease (Kleinman 1988; Kleinman and Kleinman 1991) and on medical rationality and experience (Good 1994) apply phenomenological thinking effectively to theorize the relationship between the subjective experience of being ill and the objectified description of having a disease. While these authors had been laying the foundations since the 1990s, the full potential of putting phenomenological concepts to ethnographic use is only now being realized by pioneering anthropologists like Csordas, Desjarlais, Ingold, Jackson, Mattingly, Throop and Zigon.

Many anthropologists apply phenomenological thinking to understanding how our interlocutors experience the world in which they dwell. However, with the crisis of representation, and partly even before that (as my reference to Boas and the affected 'cosmographer' indicate), it became more and more evident that there was another relationship to be explored phenomenologically (Bidney 1973).[4] This was to reflect on how we as anthropologists experience 'the field' we write about. In his seminal works, Jackson began to demonstrate how the notion of 'lived experience' can become a concept with which to theorize the relationship between how we know others and how they know themselves and us (Jackson 1989, 1996). While most of my text is explicitly about the former relationship, anthropology cannot escape the latter; phenomenology provides a framework for analysing both experiences under one umbrella. That is, we do not have to make different assumptions about how we as anthropologists and our interlocutors experience. In my view, this is a significant advantage for theorizing the relationship between both the knowers and the known.

To learn about phenomenological anthropology, several texts exist. The first and canonical overview was written by Desjarlais and Throop, who identify four phenomenological schools (Desjarlais and Throop 2011). Pedersen discusses this classification, as well as showing how the ontological turn provides an extension of it (Pedersen 2020). Leistle (2022a) places special emphasis on the philosophical foundations (Leistle 2022a). Similarly, Zigon and Throop focus on the intersection between philosophy and anthropology and the most recent developments (Zigon and Throop 2021). Finally, Hahn offers a German introduction, showing how phenomenology has become a source of innovative developments in anthropology (Hahn 2023:353). Others have reviewed specific research fields, including morality, embodiment, the self, the relationship between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and science (Brandel and Motta

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4 Heidegger made this point long ago, when he argued that it is unlikely that the 'psychological' 'sociological' or 'lay' understanding of humans that anthropologists adopt is a suitable basis for describing people outside the Western context. Applying such a Eurocentric model will not bring scientific advancement (*Fortschritt*, literally, a step forward) but rather repetition (*Wiederholung*)! Coincidentally, Heidegger's development of this argument was inspired by a discussion with Cassirer in 1923, a hundred years ago in Hamburg (Heidegger 2006:51).

2021; Cargonja 2013; Csordas 1994, 2012; Good 2012; Jackson 1996; Jackson and Piette 2015; Mattingly et al. 2018; Ram and Houston 2015).

What do I still have to add? Phenomenology is a theory of experience. To explore its use for anthropology, I introduce its concepts in more detail than existing texts. But these concepts are not sufficient for anthropology, as I will argue. *What* things appear *as* in a situation is a combination of *how* they appear and the social context. Tracing these entanglements between structures of experience (the *how* question) and the context allows us to make visible processes that would otherwise remain obscured. To demonstrate this and to develop the unique critical potential that lies therein is the main intention of this article.

II. Mind-World Relationships

I used the word 'phenomenon' several times. But how does one define a phenomenon? It helps to consider how the relationship between mind and world was construed when phenomenologists started asking these questions. René Descartes famously distinguished between the material world (*res extensa*) and the mind (*res cogitans*). In this view, which later became known as the representational model of cognition, the world exists twice: once out there in reality, and once as a representation in the mind. When we see, think, or feel something, our consciousness is triggered by our senses to retrieve a representation we have stored. Thus, what we perceive in that moment is not the world but the representation we have of it. But how does the representation get there? According to Descartes, representations are built mostly by capturing information through our senses, like pouring water into a container through a funnel (our senses).

This conceptualization of the mind–world relationship began to change with Immanuel Kant, who introduced the term 'phenomenon' (*Erscheinung*) into the debate. For Kant, the epistemological focus became the phenomenon; that is, what appears, not what is 'out there'. Things became more relational. Kant argued that phenomena are co-constituted through a combination of given *a priori* forms of perception (*Formen der Anschauungen*) of time and space, concepts (*Begriffe*) and universal categories of pure reason (*Kategorien der reinen Vernunft*) and the sensual impressions of the thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*).

Husserl picked up on this idea when he famously said that we must get *zurück zu den Sachen selbst!*, 'back to the things themselves' thereby moving from Descartes' representations, which are encapsulated in the mind, to the world! While he agreed with Kant that phenomena are shaped by both the mind and the world, he went beyond Kant in two important ways. First, he rejected the idea of a thing-in-itself and argued that even if such a 'real world' exists it does not matter as such. We should rather ask how it is accessible due to the abilities of our conscious engagement with it. For Husserl, mind and world are *relationally intertwined* in constituting what appears phenome-

nally. Consequently, Husserl described what phenomenologists study as '*Nicht Wirklichkeit, sondern erscheinende Wirklichkeit*', 'not reality, but appearing as reality' (my translation) (Husserl 1976d:100).[5] Second, Husserl developed detailed understandings of *how phenomena appear*. In so doing, he overcomes Kant's rather static categories. Pushing philosophy to explore the relationality between mind and world is the main innovation of his analysis, and the concepts I discuss below are largely a result of these kinds of analyses.

Phenomenology and Social Constructivism

Although this might sound like social constructivism, there is a significant difference. Social constructivism is a theoretical framework that suggests that individuals' understandings of the world are shaped through interactions within their social environment. It posits that knowledge is not objectively given, but constructed through experience, interpretation and agreement. Social constructivism emphasizes the role of language, culture and communication in shaping individual beliefs, values and understanding, and stresses the importance of context and perspective in creating knowledge. In a radical constructivist account, nothing at all is naturally pre-given or self-evident, but everything – including our subjective perspective of the world and our sense of self – is a product of social practices, negotiations and conventions. In brief, social constructivists emphasize the priority of language over experience. Phenomenologists, conversely, would typically claim that there is an irreducible mine-ness of experience, a first-person perspective on the world, others and ourselves, which is not precisely a construct of social practices, but feeds into them.

In a nutshell, then, the direction of the question differs: while constructivists ask how socially constructed discourses shape experience and the self, phenomenologists take the self as a starting point and want to learn how an embodied first-person perspective contributes to the shared constructions we have. But what are the basic characteristics of such experiences?

The Basic Principle of Experience

Phenomenologists make a basic distinction concerning experience. In their view, we are mostly so immersed in thinking and doing that we hardly recognize what we are up to. We just think; we just do. Husserl refers to this as pre-phenomenal (*präphänomenal* (Husserl 1966b:484). This kind of habitual thinking and doing is our usual routine, but phenomenology recognizes two ways of escaping it, which Husserl describes as an

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5 Whereas Husserl thus argued that all there is, is reality as it appears, some of his followers (i.e., Adolf Reinach, Max Scheler and Moritz Geiger) have proposed a 'realist phenomenology' that tries to get to the things in and of themselves.

active and reflective 'turning towards' (*reflektive Zuwendung*) the experience (Husserl 1966b:484).

The first way to 'turn towards' an experience is often unbidden. Sometimes we are disturbed or torn out of the groove. Imagine a glass on the edge of a table. The three-year-old sitting next to it moves her arm and, at this very moment, you experience the scene differently, almost as if it is frozen: the glass is full, it might be hot, the arm has some length and can reach some places, and so forth. These perceptions, which were in the background while we were in the groove of sitting, talking, playing at the table, are now foregrounded in a moment of rupture and worry. In this moment, we turn our consciousness to the experience itself! Reflections also arise when language comes in to categorize experiences that were previously unreflected, such as when we say, 'Watch out, the glass!' The second way to get to the *reflektive Zuwendung*, the 'turning towards,' is a phenomenological method, the *epoché,* which I discuss in the methodological section below.

With this, I define phenomena as things as they appear in experience. This experience is structured and contains an interplay between a habitual doing, coping and thinking, and those moments in which we turn our consciousness to the experience itself.

What are Phenomena in Ethnography?

Basically, anything that appears can be a phenomenon. In anthropology, topics that have been studied phenomenologically include the environment, time, illness, spirits, the body, emotions, values and much more. But what is special about the approach, and how does it differ from other ways of studying these topics?

In exploring this, let us consider the experience of time. We all know about an 'objective' time that we count in days, hours and minutes. The intervals between days, hours and minutes are the same; time moves at a given speed. By contrast, there is a subjective experience of time in which an hour can feel awfully long, for example, when waiting for a train, or very short, as when trying to finish an exam. The experience is embedded in a complex set of circumstances, including aspirations, feelings and an atmosphere that contributes to the subjective experience of time as running fast or slow.

The questions phenomenological anthropologists ask typically start with 'How does it feel to be X' where X might be 'bored', 'not at home', 'in love', 'ashamed' or 'right.' Or the questions address how material or social phenomena are experienced by asking, for example, 'How do you experience X', where X could be 'the coronavirus', 'the changing weather', 'your family life' and so forth. If a research question is compatible with these, a phenomenological approach might be a productive entry point. But how would one do this methodologically?

III. Methodological Approaches

To give an idea of how phenomenological anthropology can be done, I now briefly discuss three methodological approaches from philosophy – *epoché, free imaginative variation* and *Gelassenheit* – before showing how to access experiences others have through phenomenological interviews.

Epoché, or Suspension of Judgment

The basic idea of the *epoché* (from Greek ἐποχή, 'suspension of judgment') is that our everyday perceptions as well as scientific knowledge are laden with more or less implicit presuppositions concerning the being of everything that appears.[6] The most fundamental of these assumptions is the belief in the existence of the world outside of consciousness. But how can we actually be sure about this? How do we know that the world we perceive is not merely an illusion? For Husserl, in order to attain any certainty in these questions and to see things clearly as they appear using experiential evidence, we need to bracket (i.e., to radically question, make explicit, and eventually suspend) all of our beliefs and presuppositions, whether they stem from our own experience, from communication with others, from religion, and so forth (Husserl 1991). In a sense, it is a way of defamiliarizing the familiar.

Introducing the term 'ethnographic *epoché*', Bidney was the first to interrogate critically the assumptions we make when doing and writing ethnography (Bidney 1973:137). Starting with the work of Jackson (1989), the approach was fully developed in anthropology. Desjarlais, for example, showed how the uses of the concept of 'experience' often contain a 'fundamental' and 'romantic' understanding, and that we need to 'bracket' those understandings to see how people establish meaningful relationships to the world (Desjarlais 1994:887). As a result, he finds 'struggling along' to be a much more fitting term to describe the forms of life his fascinating ethnography reveals. Whereas these reflections are a deliberate process, as in Husserl's *epoché*, they can also occur unbidden, triggered by some other event during fieldwork, as Throop has shown using examples from Malinowski's work (Throop 2018:206).

These *epoché*s remind us to reflect on how we as anthropologists experience the world we describe in our writings. But is this what Husserl had in mind? Zahavi denies this, arguing that the *epoché* is so closely tied to his transcendental philosophy that it is hard to use in the social sciences (Zahavi 2018b, 2019). What he proposes instead, and I follow his suggestion, is to apply the knowledge the *epoché* generates about the

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6 The *epoché* draws on the Ancient Greek Sceptics and further develops Descartes' project of doubt. However, unlike Descartes, Husserl does not attempt to doubt the existence of everything and hence the world universally. Instead, he aims to doubt and neutralize the worldly assumptions on which our thinking is unconsciously based.

structure of experiences (including concepts like *embodiment*, *being-in-the-world* and *Einfühlung*) as a guide for empirical analyses.

Free Imaginative Variation

Husserl questions whether we can access the world as 'real.' But how do we then get to the things as they appear? To do so, Husserl introduces the German term *Wesen* or 'essence'. This essence might be conceptualized as the common denominator of the diverse variants of a phenomenon, as well as a variety of perspectives on that phenomenon. In his view, if we look at the phenomenon from all possible perspectives and take into account all possible appearances, some basic characteristics remain unchanged; these constitute its essence or core of identity. Free imaginative variation (*imaginative Variation*) is a way to approach such essences gradually while acknowledging that this process is never complete.

Thinking about the water from the opening page, the philosopher imagines variations of the phenomenon to find out how much she can change her perspective on it in her mind without losing the sense of 'water'. It is the search for the water-ness, or water if you will. While free imaginative variation is primarily a tool to think variations thought in the researcher's mind, it can extend to observations as well. Gallagher called this as a 'factual variation', arguing that it can overcome the philosopher's prejudices (Gallagher 2012:308). This means adding others' perspectives on what water is, if you will.

In this way, as anthropologists we want to ask what kinds of water (or love, or freedom, etc.) exist in a particular context and what its specific historically situated essence is. Acknowledging this situatedness helps avoid problematic essentializations, while recognizing that water shares some characteristics in particular contexts. Without them, it would not be water anymore. Think of how water becomes wine in some religious narratives.

Gelassenheit (Releasement), or Opening Up

While Husserl's techniques are laborious practices for getting rid of assumptions (*epoché*) and working towards the essence of things (*free imaginative variation)*, Heidegger proposes a more relaxed methodology (Wehrle 2022:87).

In his view, phenomenologists should 'open up' to allow themselves to notice the phenomenon as '*das Sich-an-ihm-selbst-zeigende, das Offenbare*', or 'that which shows itself from itself, the obvious' (Heidegger 2006:§7). Heidegger offers some related characterizations to describe this opening up, including '*Sich einlassen*' (getting involved) and '*Mitgehen*' (to go along with). With this, he proposes that phenomenologists should strive for an attunement with the world he calls *Gelassenheit* (often translated as 're-leasement') – a leap into a region of letting-be. But why do we need to open up, to let-be? His basic idea, and concern, is that in today's world the true meaning of things

is typically hidden and concealed. In his view, we need to become open to see more clearly (again).

Sometimes this requires work too, for example, tracing the etymological meaning words have, and allowing one to arrive at an understanding of what things mean or are. To get an idea of what Heidegger has in mind, think of the word 'culture'. What does it mean? What do we realize when we learn that the word comes from Latin *colere* 'tend', in the sense of 'cultivate'? Heidegger's answer can be found in the famous essay on *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* (Building, Dwelling, Thinking) (Heidegger 2000).

Fortunately, in Heidegger's view, there are other expressions in which meaning is much less concealed, artwork, including poetry, being the most important one. Here, we can see things more clearly. In anthropology, Weiner (2001) has shown convincingly how this approach can be mobilized to explore meaning among her Foi interlocutors in Papua New Guinea through rituals, poetry and skilled crafting (Weiner 2001).

Phenomenological Interviews and 'Go Alongs'

But how can we know how the world appears to others through ethnography? Anthropologists mostly rely on a specific kind of qualitative interview that puts the subjective perspective centre stage.[7] With others, I refer to such interviews as *phenomenological interviews* (Bitbol and Petitmengin 2013; Petitmengin 2006; Sholokhova et al. 2022). Other names for overlapping techniques include person-centred interviews (Levine 1982; Levy and Hollan 1998) and lived-experience descriptions (Van Manen 2016). The main characteristic of a phenomenological interview is to guide the interlocutor to recall a concrete experience with as few reflections about the experience as possible.

To imagine such an interview, it helps to picture its opposite. Asking interlocutors how Germans feel when their team lost an important soccer match would not be a phenomenological interview. This question encourages the person to give a third-person description how others (the Germans who are experiencing a defeat) feel. By contrast, a phenomenological interview on the same theme takes a number of steps to capture a person's subjective experience, that is, how it feels for her to be part of a group that felt defeat in a concrete moment. Those steps include the following:

First, encourage the interlocutor to remember a situation when she last felt or experienced this feeling by asking, for example, to remember an important match that was lost. Second, try to direct the person to live through that experience again by asking them to describe the place, the social constellation, the things that happened before, the things that triggered the experience, the situation and the atmosphere when the feeling occurred. That is, where were you when the game was played? Who was there? And so forth. And third, encourage the interlocutor to describe how it felt to be losing in this moment using as little interpretation and reflection as possible, focusing

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7 Another approach in phenomenological anthropology that I will not be able to discuss is autoethnography.

on the interlocutor's relations to the world, to the self, to others, and so forth. Finally, and optionally, one might ask the interlocutor to interpret these descriptions and experiences, for example, later, now it has become obvious that the championship is now over for one's own team.

In addition, a phenomenological interview can be informed by the knowledge phenomenology provides about the experience of a certain field, for example, time. To learn how the experience of time varies between people or situations, we can draw on Husserl's general model of temporal experience as a fading in and fading out and see how this varies if, for example, I hope that the redeeming goal will be scored in the final minutes.

In similar ways, other phenomenological concepts can inform the interview too. When I am interested in experiences where breakdowns (Heidegger's *Störungen*) are important, for example, it might be advisable to make this an explicit component of the interview by, for example, asking how it felt when one realized something oneself ('We are out!') or when someone confronted one with the evaluation ('Germany lost so badly – we thought you were good!'). In both cases, the pre-reflective feeling is thematized and becomes something we must relate to.

In addition to the phenomenological interview, an effective way on capturing information in a phenomenological, e.g., embedded way are 'go alongs'. Kusenbach introduced this approach as a way of 'walking and talking' with interlocutors through 'their' environment (e.g., their urban neighbourhood in her case) that captures knowing as it is embedded and emplaced in specific contexts. Although she does not cite Heidegger and his idea of '*Mitgehen*' (go along with; see above), there are obvious parallels. The methodological proposition for doing 'go alongs' is that knowledge comes to exist only in the context in which it is embedded, enacted and emplaced. Therefore, it can only – or most validly – be verbalized by our interlocutors and to some extent co-experienced by the researcher in that very situation (Kusenbach 2003; von Poser and Willamowski 2020).

A Note on Didactics

Having introduced these basics, I will now show how anthropology can benefit from phenomenology. To do so, I follow a three-step didactic approach. First, I introduce the philosophical concepts. Second, I show how anthropologists have applied these concepts. Third, I apply these concepts to one scene from my ethnographic fieldwork in Namibia to show how the different perspectives can contribute to theorizing ethnographic observations. Let me take you to Namibia to introduce this scene, to which I will come back again and again in the analysis.

IV. A Phenomenon: |*Nanus* (Rain) on ||*Gamo!nâb*

Following my interest in understanding how Damara pastoralists (ǂ*Nūkhoen*) get to know the environment in which they dwell, my ethnography in arid northwestern Namibia also explores the rain, the most distressing weather-related phenomenon in their world (Schnegg 2021b, a, c). During one of my stays, I was sitting with my long-term research partner and friend Charles a little way uphill, where we could see deep into the sky across the flat savannah landscape. It had been an extremely hot day, and the sea wind had been blowing since the early morning. People in the area say that this wind is female and that it seeks its male counterpart far inland, and the two winds return to the area together with the rain (Schnegg 2019). By now they were on their way, and we were enjoying a cold breeze on our sweaty skin.

As we sat there, thunder and lightning approaching on the horizon, I told Charles that our neighbours in the Rockies region would be happy since they were about to receive some rain. 'No, Michael', he replied; 'the rain is much further away'. I wondered if I would ever learn how to align the pictures of clouds in the sky with the landscape beneath. Then Charles said in Khoekhoegowab, the language spoken by most people in the area, '|*gurukupu* |*nanub* is bad' (literally translated, 'the rain which darkens the soil'). '|*Gurukupu* |*nanub* kills our animals', he added. I responded by asking how rainfall, which is essential for survival, could be bad? Charles explained that the livestock could sense the rain from far away. When rain fell at the end of a long spell of dry winter months, they would instinctively run in that direction and continue – sometimes for days on end – until they reached the damp spots, where the soil is dark and keeps the smell of the wetness. However, since the first rain did not bring an immediate change in vegetation, they would find very little grazing when they arrived at their destination. 'In the end', Charles continued, 'because they are exhausted by then, some will even die. Therefore, |*gurukupu* |*nanub* is bad'.

On another occasion, Charles and I saw clouds forming again. I remembered our previous conversation and mentioned the different context, and more specifically that this time it could not be |*gurukupu* |*nanub* because the rainy season had already started some time ago. He confirmed this and yet chose a different explanation: 'You know, Oupa Carl passed away, and they are burying him today. This is |*hôa*|*nanub*, the rain that comes after the funeral of a well-known person to wash away the footsteps of the deceased. Only then can he enter the sky peacefully'. In German I would have called both rain events *Wolkenbruch* (cloudbursts) based on their intensity, but Charles had two different names and explanations for them.

I will return to this ethnographic vignette later to explore why and how the rain appeared this way to Charles, and in ways that separated me from him (Schnegg 2021c). I will show how analysing the structure of knowing and experiencing (the *how we know* questions) through notions of *intentionality, being-in-the-world, embodiment, empathy, responsivity* and *atmospheres* provides us with effective tools for understanding *what we know* and how that differs between people and in different situations.

I have selected these scenes because similar observations inspired me to engage with phenomenology. I had observed that both scientists and Damara explain the arrival of the rains as an interplay between two winds. However, their ways of making this meaningful could hardly be more different. While the Damara refer to love and care, scientists talk about convection zones (Schnegg 2019). In search of a paradigm to theorize this, phenomenology seemed to provide the resources to explore how similar observations turn into different experiences and ultimately meaningful entities. While I first found Heidegger's notion of *being-in-the-world* particularly useful (Schnegg 2019), I soon realized that other concepts were productive for making sense of some of the related observations I made, including the way people name and categorize these rains (Schnegg 2021c), the ways the weather is changing (Schnegg 2021d, 2021a) and the social construction of the multispecies world in which all this takes place (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). Above, I cite the works in which I explored these topics because they embed the experience of something in the wider socio-political framework, including, importantly, coloniality and rural marginalization, which is more than I can offer in this text.

V. How Things Appear – Six Phenomenologies

Phenomenologists have developed a wide range of concepts, which I group into six approaches. In so doing, and by naming them, I emphasize specific aspects of their work that I find especially relevant for anthropology, knowing that their philosophies are much broader and more complex than I can touch upon (or comprehend). Husserl makes us aware that how we relate to the world affects how it appears to us. He calls this *intentionality*. I refer to his work as *of-ness* phenomenology. His student Martin Heidegger finds this notion too 'intellectualized' and argues that the connection between mind and world is established through *use* and *being-in-the-world*. I call his approach *in-ness* phenomenology. Maurice Merleau-Ponty adds that our *lived body* establishes this link, which is why I refer to his approach as *embodied-ness* phenomenology. His student Bernhard Waldenfels emphasizes that phenomena emerge in response to the demands that situations articulate. I refer to his approach as *responsive-ness* phenomenology. His contemporary Herman Schmitz proposes that all situations in which we interact are characterized by some atmosphere that affects us emotionally. Because this atmosphere develops between people, places and practices, I refer to his philosophy as *between-ness* phenomenology. Finally, Edith Stein (also Husserl's student) explains the social construction of reality through *empathy* leading to *intersubjectivity*. I refer to her work as *with-ness* phenomenology. This line up shows a development. The primary source of experience – its impetus, if you will – continuously moves towards the world on the subject – world continuum. It shifts from Husserl's consciousness via Heidegger's practices to Merleau-Ponty's body, Waldenfels demands of the alien,

Schmitz' atmospheres and Stein's intersubjectivity from the subject to the material and social world in which it acts.

As I will show, all six approaches emphasize something different when answering the question of *how things appear*. They partly overlap and partly contradict each other. I will not be able to engage with these incommensurabilities and the arguments for or against particular approaches in detail. I will, however, attempt to understand for which kinds of phenomena certain approaches can be especially suitable, given the aspects of experience they bring to the fore. In the end, it is up to the ethnographer to decide which of these concepts if any are productive for theorizing the particular experiences at stake.

Of-ness Phenomenology (Edmund Husserl)

Edmund Husserl argued that our consciousness is characterized by the essential structure of a relationality he calls *intentionality*. Perceiving does not mean retrieving a representation I have stored somewhere in the mind, as it does for Descartes, but rather it is relational. We always see *something*, remember *someone*, desire *something*, and so on. Going back to the '*Sachen selbst*' means recognizing that our consciousness relates to entities by constituting them and itself. But how? According to Husserl, there are six (or seven) different kinds of intentional structures, including perception, memory, fantasy and empathy (Zahavi 2018a). His main aim was to identify the structure of these intentionalities, and to do so, he applied the *epoché*.

The example of perception illustrates how this works and what the results are. Let us consider, with Husserl, the perception of an object like a table first. Catching sight of a table, we know what it is, even if just in its typicity (e.g., as an object to put something on to). We recognize the table as something complete, even though our perspective captures only a fraction of it at any given moment. Critically reflecting on this process of perception, Husserl concludes that there is a process guiding this, which he refers to as *Abschattung* (adumbration) (Husserl 1966a:3). What is this? Typically, most of the table – its underside, its back, its interior and its base – is hidden from our view, yet we 'intend' the table as a whole thing. From our embodied situatedness, we only ever have one *Abschattung* (adumbration), one particular side of the table, at a time. How, then, does it become a complete table in our mind? Husserl argues that we 'co-intend' (*mitmeinen*) aspects based on having seen similar objects or the same object in the past. Plus, we integrate the potential perspectives of others who could at the same moment see the table from other angles. The (partial) presence prompts us to include those other perspectives and utilize them to complete the partial sensory impression we have (Husserl 1966a). With this, Husserl shows that we *do* see or perceive that table as one complete thing on the basis of a complex synthetic process that includes *Abschattung* and *mitmeinen*.

Let us consider the experience of time as another example. A naïve conception of time is that we experience an encounter as a stringing together of many small impres-

sions. Instead, Husserl argues that it is a unity across a succession of 'nows'. Put differently, there is no gap between these 'nows' because the impressions blend together. Even in the very moment one recognizes something, one already anticipates something that might come next. Husserl calls this '*protention*.' Then, once we have experienced an object, this experience does not disappear but remains present as something that has left an impression. Husserl calls this process '*retention*'. In short, the presence is not just the single moment in which we consciously recognize something, but it co-intends perceptions of a before and an after that we link it to. This intersection constructs what we experience as 'now' as a whole (Husserl 1966b).

Whereas Husserl applied his analysis of time perception to short moments, I have extended the length of these intervals to understand how environmental concepts are created (Schnegg 2021c). In the situation I described, Charles and I watched the weather change but interpreted the scene differently. To me, it seemed a promising afternoon that would bring rain. In German, I would have called this a *Wolkenbruch* (literally, a cracking of clouds), referencing the intensity and duration of the precipitation, its physical properties. I further assumed that rain was a good thing in the arid environment, bringing wealth and life. Charles had a different way of seeing the rain – as something that could cause harm, even death. But how do these concepts come about? Charles weaves entities that happened before and that he expects to come again into the present moment. By doing so, he makes it a particular rain. For him, those entities include the past drought, the lack of rain, the anticipation that it would rain somewhere else, the expectation that the animals might run to their deaths. They are, importantly, embedded and circumscribed by larger social and political structures, including coloniality, marginalization and the aspirations for a better future. Without this context, |*gurukupu* |*nanub* would not be deadly; most likely, it would not even exist. In sum, these moments that fade in the particular experience, and that are expected to come next, constitute what this particular rain becomes. For me, as a person who does not know this but who connects something else, the rain becomes something different (Schnegg 2021c).

However, different intentionalities co-exist. The 'switching' between them, sometimes called phenomenological modification (Duranti 2009; Throop 2015), indicates how entities like the rain appear differently depending on how we relate to them, like the famous *Gestalt* figures or Escher's art that seems to 'flip' the moment we look at it differently. The physical object, the figure or the rain, remains the 'same' and yet appears differently through our way of relating to it. This is intentionality, the rationality that creates the consciousness of something. Throop's analysis of suffering on Yap mobilizes this idea to show how suffering is experienced and how pain sometimes becomes sacred and sometimes profane. With this he shows not only how intentional modifications transform pain, but also how historical and political relations produce the possibility for those modifications and how the phenomenon is created through these switches (Throop 2015:84). In a similar manner, Duranti analyses how different ways of relating to the world are taught in everyday language (Duranti 2009). Through forms of com-

munication, cultural models of sharing and morality are established, linking language, cognition and experience. This framing in early childhood establishes trajectories for modifying the world and is one reason why it is difficult to learn new models when we are older (Duranti 2009).

How do phenomena appear with Husserl? They always appear *in consciousness*. We apply a particular perspective to *see something as something*. Because the focus is on consciousness and the mind, phenomena that are to a significant degree 'seen', 'thought' or 'read' are most easily accessible through this approach, including the perception of material objects, things in the environment and partly feelings like pain, as we have seen.

In-ness Phenomenology (Martin Heidegger)

Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, is a founding philosopher of the European tradition of practice theories. His personal involvement with the National Socialist Party in Germany and his anti-Semitism made him a highly controversial figure (Trawny 2014). Critics claim that his political inclinations reveal inherent problems in his philosophy, whereas supporters argue that his political and philosophical engagements can be separated. Keeping in mind the problematic aspects of his thinking, I nevertheless wish to critically engage and develop another aspect of his work, namely our being-in-the-world.

For Heidegger, the relationship between mind and world is less about an of-something link (Husserl's intentionality) and more about an overlap. For him, Husserl was still caught within the Cartesian divides and was too 'intellectualized'. To capture the in-between more adequately, Heidegger coined the term *In-der-Welt-sein*, 'being-in-the-world'. The three hyphens are the essence of his phenomenology, indicating that subject and world are always already intertwined. Therefore, I describe his approach as *in-ness* phenomenology. But how does this *in-ness* emerge, and what are its consequences?

To theorize this, Heidegger develops the term *Dasein* (lit. 'there-being' [*Da*=there, *sein*=being]) that replaces humans as the analytic category. Heidegger's aim is to show what characterizes *Dasein*, and hence what human existence is fundamentally about (Heidegger 2006; Schwarz Wentzer 2013). If one reads Heidegger's project as a social scientist, one can understand it as an attempt to formulate a basic theory of conduct that seeks to answer how human beings are situated in the world, what moves them, and how meaningful relations with the world emerge.

To understand this, we need to consider what distinguishes us humans from other living beings. We know that we will die. As a result, we always live in the face of our own death and can also envisage what we want to accomplish before that. We imagine how we want things to be – for example, we want to be married and to have a storybook Cinderella home. Imagining our future structures today's actions and forms our relationships in the world – in this case with potential partners or with economic

activities (Bryant and Knight 2019; Schatzki 2010; Schnegg 2023a). Because we want a Cinderella home, we start looking at things differently, including our job, money and the materials we need for building. All these things become something *for* something – equipment (*Zeug*), as Heidegger says. They are good to accomplish some project and aim with.

This relationship of uses also determines what the things become. Heidegger illustrates this through his example of a hammer: how do we get to know the thing composed of wood and steel lying in front of us as a hammer? There are two ways:

The first is hammering. Accordingly, our everyday practice of using things with a specific future-oriented purpose is one way to constitute the nature of things. Through the act of hammering, we are so immersed with the thing that the Cartesian separation between the object and the subject is overcome and an I-hammer entity emerges. Without the act of hammering to put the nails into the wall, we have no hammers! Without bicycling to get from here to there, we have no bicycles! Heidegger refers to this way of being in the world as *Zuhandenheit,* an 'in-order-to', or briefly 'ready-to-hand'. This is why Heidegger has been the inspiration for practice theory.

However, there are also ways of experiencing the hammer, that are much more reflective. Heidegger calls this *Vorhandenheit* ('present-at-hand'). In these moments, we look at the hammer and recognize it through the properties it has, such as its size, colour or shape, and we co-constitute it with our minds. A common way to look at the hammer or any other entity in this reflective mode is scientific thinking. Here, we deliberately isolate entities from the daily uses they have and look at them in an objectified sense, describing what material the hammer consists of, how much it weighs, how old it is, and so forth. Besides scientific thinking, there are also other moments in which we perceive things in a detached mode. One such reflective moment occurs when we miss the nail and now look at the hammer differently: 'You damn thing!' In this moment, the hammer becomes something different, and the immersed relationship between subject and object that is established in the activity is disconnected, lost.

To theorize these switches between pre-reflective and reflective knowing, Heidegger identifies three moments, or *Störungen* (breakdowns): (1) malfunction (conspicuousness, *Unverwendbarkeit, Auffallen*) occurs when something is broken and/or does not work anymore; (2) total breakdowns (obtrusiveness, *Aufdringlichkeit, Fehlen*) happen in situations in which we urgently register the lack of something that is usually there; and (3) temporary breakdowns (obstinacy, *Aufsässigkeit)* are situations in which we miss something when we omit a habitual activity. According to Heidegger, in these moments of *Störung* we see the world more clearly because routines are broken that usually cover its authenticity (Dreyfus 1991:71; Heidegger 2006:72; Zigon 2007).

In anthropology, the idea of the breakdown was developed by Zigon (2007) in his seminal essay on 'moral breakdowns'. In his outline for an anthropology of morality, Zigon shows how morality is a constitutive part of our being-in-the-world. We are just moral. However, as Zigon also shows, moral breakdowns occur at moments when we

recognize that our way of being-moral-in-the-world no longer applies to the situation we face. Then we switch to a more reflective mode and actively rethink how to respond to the demands the situation creates (Zigon 2007, 2008, 2018). With this, Zigon significantly shaped the development of the anthropology of morality – his intervention became a breakdown for the discipline, if you will.

In addition to the anthropology of ethics, the emphasis on being-in-the-world has been mobilized very effectively in the study of the environment. In his pioneering book *The Perception of the Environment*, Tim Ingold (2000) combines a Heideggerian analysis of being-in-the-world with other philosophical concepts to come up with a genuine understanding of how people co-create knowledge and the environment through skilful practical activities. The 'dwelling perspective' he proposes has inspired an entire generation of environmental anthropologists (Anderson et al. 2017; Gieser 2008; Habeck 2006; including, Ingold and Kurttila 2000).[8]

But how does the in-ness perspective add to understanding the situation with ǁgamo!nâb? First, without the practice of pastoralism there would be no ǀgurukupu ǀnanub (the first rain I described that makes the animals run, often to their deaths). Many of the other ten rains I have described elsewhere would also not exist (Schnegg 2021a). All these rains have different uses for something within the pastoral domain: some rains kill livestock, others make the grass grow, some hurt it, and others care for insects. At the same time, this pastoral being-in-the-world takes place within historical, political and economic contexts. The rain is so salient because the colonial powers seized most of the land and relocated the Damara people to areas too small for subsistence farming. This is also why the goats run away to their deaths. Hence, without land scarcity, there would also be no ǀgurukupu ǀnanub.

Whereas the focus on being-in-the-word-as-pastoralists can explain how the rain appears to Charles, it also makes intelligible why it is something different for me, an anthropologist with a regular salary – even though I own some livestock too. Or, for the shop owner in Fransfontein who does not possess any livestock at all, or for the scientists who measures precipitation from afar by looking at the quantity and intensity with which water falls from the sky. I would even go so far as to say that these practices, these different ways of being-in-the-world, can create the rain as different ontological entities, depending on how we enact them (Schnegg 2019, 2021d). If the rain becomes something different by enacting it, it also makes sense that people have very different explanations for the lack of rain they observe with climate change. Some make CO_2 responsible, others coloniality or social decay (Schnegg 2021d, 2021a).

How, then, do things appear for Heidegger? They largely appear *through practices*; we always *use things for something*. This practical use determines what things become, what they are. Because the focus is on practices, phenomena that are to a significant

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8 Moreover, Heidegger's phenomenology has proved productive in migration studies (Lems 2016), in exploring corruption (Tidey 2022) and in many other fields (Weiner 2001).

degree 'made' through skilful activities are accessible through this approach, including things that appear in crafts, sports, physical work and other activities.

Embodied-ness Phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

Merleau-Ponty initiated a train of arguments that differentiated between what we know through the lived body (*corps propre*, sometimes also translated as feeling body) and what we know in the mind and that we can – more or less easily – articulate linguistically (Merleau-Ponty 2012:139). How does the body – or the mind – 'know'? When I raise a cup of tea to my mouth, for example, I direct my consciousness towards the cup. Merleau-Ponty says that this intentionality is not performed through my mind, as Husserl has it, but largely mediated through the acting body. My body knows the cup because I learned as a child to use cups without spilling their contents. The habitual aspect of knowing manifests itself in the body – 'it is the body that "understands" in the acquisition of habit' (Merleau-Ponty 2012:144).

Importantly, Merleau-Ponty works out how the body has a dual character. We are both *having a body* and *being a body*. That is to say that we are, for one, in the world through our bodies. This active role is what Merleau-Ponty refers to, drawing on Husserl (and Helmuth Plessner), as the *corps propre* (the lived body). Moreover, while the body is the only means of being in the world, it is also the object of my observation and that other others, for example, when I touch my arm that just lifted the cup or someone else touches me. The touched-arm is what Merleau-Ponty calls the *corps objectif* (sensed body). The *corps objectif* is the objectification of the *corps propre* through me and others.

In anthropology, Thomas Csordas must be credited for developing the embodiment paradigm. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, he argued famously that the lived body is the 'existential ground of culture and self,' and that this had not been adequately recognized in cultural theory at the time (Csordas 1990:6). Gesa Lindemann wrote that, before the body-turn, the social sciences engaged in the study of angles (Lindemann 2005:114). In this view, culture is not only manifested in symbols and representations, as Geertz, Boas and others would have it, but also in the body (Csordas 2011, 2015; Desjarlais 1992, 1997; Jackson 1983).

Many uses of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology ask how culture, biology and experiences interact. Perhaps most famously, the phenomenological feminist Iris Young (1980) investigated why girls throw differently than boys of the same age in the US. To understand this she points out that in the patriarchal and sexist US American society, the female body is not only a subject, but an object evaluated by others who are more powerful and often male (Young 1980:148). Furthermore, girls are told during socialization to 'close' their legs while they sit, not to stick out their chests, and the like. As this becomes inscribed into the body's habitus, it makes movements like throwing, in which one must expose oneself, difficult. Moreover, because their bodies are objectified under the gaze of others, girls often find themselves in a position where they ask themselves, 'How do I look throwing this ball?' This hinders a free unfolding of the body,

which does not get into the pre-reflective mode of 'just doing'. Young shows how this hinders the female body from connecting to the world in the way of 'being a body', a way Merleau-Ponty assumed was universal (Young 1980).[9]

In a related manner, Downey's ethnography of the Brazilian *capoeira*, a martial art that combines elements of dance, finds considerable differences between male and female athletes in Brazil. However, the degree of difference between them is minimal in comparison to the performance of students in the US. This points to a larger issue, namely that even the masculine, uninhibited way of being-in-the-world differs largely with training and skills acquisition, and also partly by class membership (Downey 2015:132).

How does embodied-ness add to our understanding of the ‖*gamo!nâb* situation?

The Damara people with whom I work make two winds responsible for the arrival of the rain, the female *huri‡oab* and the male *tū‡oab*. During the morning, the female *huri‡oab* seeks out the male *tū‡oab* in love and care, and people watch as the two meet in the sky east of Fransfontein, where clouds begin to form. Typically, it is very hot, and the *huri‡oab* blows strongly until early afternoon. 'Knowing the weather' includes feeling the heat and the hot air on the skin. Before it rains the wind direction changes, and it gets colder. The coldness and moisture in the air makes people anticipate the rain bodily. This became especially clear to me when I picked up an old man hitchhiking who had spent his life in the hinterlands. It was a hot summer's day and, without him noticing, I turned the air-conditioning on. At the time, there was not a single cloud in the sky and the rainy season was still ahead. Feeling the aircon, the elderly man, who had not experienced this 'wind' before, said, 'Michael, this is strange, it feels as if the rain is coming, but I cannot even see any clouds.' The body knows. And it can also be wrong.

How do things appear with Merleau-Ponty? Phenomena appear *through the body*. Therefore, any subjective position must be an embodied position, and the analysis of knowing must include this too. Phenomena that are to a significant degree 'enacted', such as illness, dance, physical work and ritual, are accessible through this embodied-ness phenomenology.

In my view, three important directions emerge from this. The first is the overall recognition that we are only in the world through the *lived body* and that we must acknowledge this embodiment if we want to understand how our interlocutors experience the world. '4E-cognition' is a recent development along this line of thinking. It acknowledges that all knowing is *embodied, embedded, enacted* and *extended* (Fuchs 2018; Gallagher and Zahavi 2021; Varela et al. 2016). Second, acknowledging the saliency of the body implies that we must take *all* sensual experiences into account, including seeing, tasting, hearing, smelling, feeling and orienting, if we want to under-

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9 Young later distanced herself from some of her earlier analyses because she felt that she had defined the female body as a liability that expresses female experience through a sense of victimization and thus becomes subject to the male norm (Young 1990:14).

stand world-making. This has been a salient claim in recent years, and Merleau-Ponty provided the theoretical foundations for it (Geurts 2002; Pink 2015; Spittler 2001; Stoller 1989). Third, the body is not only the medium through which we are in the world but also the repository where traces are stored. This happens through practices as in the case of throwing (Young) and the *capoeira* (Downey), but also through oppression and related suffering (Bourgois and Schonberg 2007; Scheper-Hughes 1992). While it is evident that knowledge is stored in the lived body, the question of 'where exactly' is much less settled. Accordingly, some researchers have proposed the term *Leibgedächtnis* ('body memory') to explore this (Breyer 2021; Fuchs 2012).

Responsive-ness Phenomenology (Bernhard Waldenfels)

In Husserl's view, perception is a process that connects consciousness with the world in an a priori correlation to *see something as something* (Husserl 1968, 1976b, 1976a). Where mind and world meet, phenomena emerge. Bernhard Waldenfels gave the world-mind relationship a different direction. The innovation of his phenomenology was to turn the arrow around. Building on *Gestalt* psychologists like Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Lewin and their notion of an *Aufforderungscharakter* (demand character) or *Gefordertheit* (requirement), which James Gibson later rendered as 'affordance', Waldenfels argued that the mind does not reach out to ask *What is this*? Rather, the phenomenon asks us *What am I*? It affects us.

The things we encounter pose demands (*Ansprüche*) on us (Waldenfels 2011:63): the laptop on which I am writing this text, the bicycle I rode to get to my office, the atmosphere in the room, my friend. When experiencing these things, something happens to us, affects us, reaches out to us, or, to say it in German, something *widerfährt* (befalls) us (Waldenfels 2011:87). But what is happening, and why? Waldenfels argues that all phenomena are to a certain degree alien (*fremd*) to us. This is the case for the computer I use, my bicycle, the atmosphere and my friend, and it includes myself too. This alienness develops a *Zugkraft* (traction) that demands an answer from us. At the same time, it withdraws itself continuously, leaving aspects *unzugänglich* (inaccessible).

In this view, meaning is an attempt to get a grip on the alien, the insecure and the chaotic that irritate us. Therefore, meaning is not primarily a process of framing, of co-constituting a phenomenon through the mind, as Husserl says. Instead, intentionality comes second. It is the response to the demands a situation makes. Or, as Waldenfels says, 'it is only in responding to what we are struck by that what strikes us emerges as such' (my translation of *Erst im Antworten auf das, wovon wir getroffen sind, tritt das, was uns trifft, als solches zutage*) (Waldenfels 2002:59).

In responding, we rely on answer registers (*Antwortregister*) that belong to some larger order. When registers fit a situation well, we respond habitually, pre-reflectively. However, in some situations this is not so easy, such as one in which we are exposed to multiple and contradicting demands. Should I finish this plate? I feel I should not, otherwise I might feel bad. My friend talks about the climate and how much she hates

throwing food away. The food can be taken home, but will it go bad? What will the waiter say if I ask for a doggie bag? Because demands are heterogeneous and contradictory, I must switch to a more reflective mode to respond to them. Reflective responses also become necessary when a demand is especially alien, and we do not have an appropriate answer at hand. One particularly useful characteristic of the responsivity approach is that it radically *decentres* the process of meaning-making. It starts with the world to which the subject must respond.

Waldenfels' phenomenology is new in anthropology. Among those who have engaged with his work, Leistle's contribution stands out. For one thing, Leistle has provided well-written introductions in which he focuses on Waldenfels' notion of alterity (Leistle 2016, 2020a, 2020b, 2022b). For another, Leistle effectively applies these conceptions to the analysis of rituals, possession and other ethnographic fields (Leistle 2014, 2017). Moreover, Grøn offers a rich ethnographic analysis of obesity in which she renders Waldenfels' notion of responsivity into a responsive self to analyse how her informant frames her body (Grøn 2017b, 2017a, 2022) and Mattingly (2018) provides a fascinating investigation of the structures of ethical experience among African American families which also builds on Waldenfels' phenomenology. Other uses of the responsive approach include the works of Hepach and Hartz (2023) Louw (2019) and Meinert and Whyte (2017), and Schwarz Wentzer (2018). How does Waldenfels' responsive-ness add to our understanding of the situation regarding the rain on ‖gamo!nâb? With Waldenfels, the focus is on how the world is alien and demands answers from us. The weather situation affects me. While we are sitting there, the clouds, the wind and the sun are alien, and we cannot understand them, as they continuously withdraw themselves. They ask, *Where are we?* and Charles and I answer in significantly different ways. Or they ask Charles, *Am I |gurukupu |nanub or any of the more than ten rains you know?* As the clouds shift their colours and shapes, they withdraw from his attempt to order them. They remain alien. *Will it even rain?* To answer these demands, we need to consider the wind. Is the west wind still fighting, not letting the east wind in? Will the two agree and bring rain? Was it hot enough during the day for the rain to come? The environment poses provocations, dangers, all of which contain some elements of alienness, and we respond.

The situation regarding ‖gamo!nâb also shows different demands articulated through the distinct entities the situation contains: the clouds, the behaviour of the animals, our intentions as pastoralists, and the condition of the pastures here and elsewhere. The meaning we give is an attempt to come to grips with the alien they contain. This principle can also help explain the differences between what Charles knows and what I know, and between different rains on different days. Linking the alien to different orders (pastoral, religious, scientific), the phenomenon emerges as something different. Taken together, then, one of the great advantages of Waldenfels' approach is that it allows us to explain how we know situationally and how this differs between different people and at different times.

To conclude, with Waldenfels and the responsive-ness phenomenology, a phenomenon appears through the response to the demands *articulated in the situations* themselves. The idea is still relatively new but provides an especially good framework for understanding experiences that are perceived as radically *fremd*, including intercultural experiences, one's own body and illnesses, religious experiences like possession and healing, and the like.

Between-ness Phenomenology (Hermann Schmitz)

Most lay and scientific perspectives view emotion as an affective framing of the world through the psyche. This reading is already inscribed in the meaning of the Latin *emovere*, combining *e-* 'out' and *movere* 'move'. As we have seen, this is also Husserl's train of thought, according to which I, the subject, perceive (or feel) the world *as something*.

Hermann Schmitz argues that it is a misconception to theorize emotion as a process in which the psyche reaches out to the world. According to him, this prejudice is 'new' and Eurocentric. It emerged in Greece around the second half of the fifth century BC, sometime between Heraclitus and Sophocles. At that time, Schmitz finds, a fatal splitting of the world (*schicksalhafte Weltspaltung*) occurred (Schmitz 2016:19). The world, which used to be one, was divided into inner and outer worlds.

In this process, emotions became part of the inner world. Only they were encapsulated in the mind, and only reason, which became salient in Western philosophy and thinking, could control them! From then on, the realm of experience was dissected by ascribing to each subject a private sphere containing their entire experience (Schmitz et al. 2011:247). Whether one fully agrees with his historical analysis or not, it is hard to deny that in the modern era emotions are predominantly viewed as something inside, in the mind (see also, Rosaldo 1983). Schmitz paves the way for theorizing emotions in a less psychologistic way and taking them out of the 'box' into which they were put, he thinks, 2,400 years ago.

To theorize emotions in the space between people, objects and practices, Schmitz uses the term *atmosphere*. According to Schmitz, any situation has an atmosphere that is created through the entities that constitute it and the ways in which we relate to them. Accordingly, he defines emotions as atmospheres that are 'poured out' in space from where they grip and retune humans through the lived body (*Leib*) (Schmitz 2016:19). The space itself is occupied through feelings and experiences, allowing the *Leib* to receive them and the mind to cognitively frame them. Because emotions (as atmospheres) are intangible and in between, he calls them *Halbdinge* (half-entities). Let me provide an example to illustrate this.

Imagine it is Monday morning and you are entering the coffee kitchen at work. You join your colleagues in their chat about things that happened over the weekend. Coffee is running slowly through the machine. The atmosphere of the coffee kitchen lingers between weekend reflections and some heaviness of the working week ahead. As you chat, your boss comes in. The talk stops. The atmosphere changes. It touches you, and

you feel uncomfortable, looking at the coffee machine, hoping that it will run through faster so that you can return to your desk without an excuse.

To theorize the shared affectivity this situation contains and its sudden shift, I propose – following Schmitz – to consider the affect as an atmosphere. This atmosphere is constituted in the network of relationships that includes people, furniture, the space of the kitchen, narrations, aims, the burdens of the working week ahead, the tiredness of a Monday morning, the smell of the coffee and much more. As you enter the situation, it touches you. As your boss enters, it changes, affecting you, soliciting your lived body (*Leib*) in such a way that you must develop an attitude towards it. One of the attractive aspects of Schmitz's conceptualization of emotions as atmosphere is that every situation has an atmosphere. But why might entering the room feel different for you and for me? According to Schmitz, past experiences and the disposition we have can explain these differences. We have, so to speak, socially learned ways of attuning to an atmosphere.

This conception of emotions as atmospheres is new to anthropology. It has mostly been used to study collective situations and their affective layer. Wellgraf (2017), for example, shows how boredom is experienced as an atmosphere in a German secondary school (*Hauptschule*) and how it is shaped by historical, material and political processes (Wellgraf 2017), while I explore rural boredom as an atmosphere of feeling blocked in post-colonial Namibia (Schnegg forthcoming b). In a related manner, Bens (2018, 2022), in his ethnography of the trial of a commander of the Lord's Resistance Army in the International Criminal Court (ICC), explores how atmosphere becomes important in courtrooms (Bens 2018, 2022). Another line of research emerges around music, aesthetics and rituals, where Eisenlohr (2018a, b) offers a fascinating analysis of *naʿt khwan* recitations as a Muslim devotional practice (Eisenlohr 2018a, 2018b), Heidemann (2021) explores the atmosphere in a South Indian temple festival, and Bille (2015, 2020) analyses the role light plays in home-making and aesthetics in Denmark. Most recently, Keil has used Schmitz's conceptual tools to study pig-dogging (a collective hunt) and its atmosphere in Australia (Keil 2021).[10]

But how does the between-ness perspective add to our understanding of the situation around the rain on ǁ*gamo!nâb*? In my reading, the feelings Charles develops – being worried, frightened, fearful – are best described as an atmosphere that affects him. This atmosphere is produced in between the nodes of a network that constitute the situation in which he finds himself. These nodes include the view of the sky that opens a window to perceiving what might happen soon; the rain that will come, with its many effects; the sky that grows dark; and the wetness of the wind, which begins

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10 While the term 'atmosphere' is comparably new in the anthropological debate, two other terms have been used to analyze similar phenomena: mood (Throop 2014) and *Stimmung* (Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi 2017). All three terms have been used in various contexts, and their meanings overlap. In addition to these uses, anthropological classics, especially Turner and Geertz, mobilize similar ideas to explain how rituals, spaces, music and repetition inspire people and groups.

touching our skin. Something is in the air! ‡*Oab!nâ*, 'under the wind', as people say. The way an atmosphere touches us and can lead to worry and fear is a process Schmitz describes as a narrowing of the emotional space. We close up emotionally. The scene also reveals how different atmospheres can surround two or more people, even if they are at the same place at the same time. My body is not receptive to the atmosphere he feels, partly because I have not felt it repeatedly before and because I do not have the knowledge about what will come next. Charles' reaction, to be worried and to take action to protect the animals, can be explained to a certain extent through the atmosphere that characterizes the situation and that touches him emotionally.

So how, then, does the world appear to us with Schmitz and in light of a *between-ness phenomenology*? One salient focus Schmitz develops is atmospheres. To understand them, we must recognize how they are formed between people, entities and practices. Being there, they befall us, shaping what we (can) feel, think and do. This offers a sophisticated tool for exploring emotions, especially those that are felt collaboratively and in situations like boredom, loneliness, exuberance or grief (Schnegg forthcoming a, b). In addition to that, I find that *between-ness phenomenology* has great potential because many situations we analyse – think of the 'the bridge' or 'the cockfight' – have an atmosphere. However, the affective layer and the potentialities and constraints it creates for individual and collective behaviours have rarely been explicitly theorized. The notion of atmospheres provides a means for doing this. Finally, the interest in shared affectivity that *between-ness phenomenology* expresses also resonates well with the affective turn (Berlant 2011; Mazzarella 2009; Stewart 2007; Schnegg 2023c, von Poser and Willamowski 2020).

With-ness Phenomenology (Edith Stein)

Edith Stein asks, if we compare a person to an object such as a table, do we make sense of a person as 'a whole' in the same way? The answer is obviously 'no'. When we see a person, we realize that she has a subjective body (*Leib*) and a genuine perspective too. Therefore, we want to understand what her consciousness points to, what her intentionality is. Husserl calls this process of trying to understand another person's intentionality *Einfühlung* (empathy) (Flatscher 2013; Husserl 1973a: 187).

His student Stein explains *Einfühlung* as a three-step process of experiencing another person's experience (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). First, I experience that another person has an experience (e.g., an emotion) which may be different from mine, for example, when I see the pain in a person's face when she hits her thumb with a hammer (perceiving expression). Then, because I realize that her body is similar to mine, I am pulled into her position to follow the experience through and to imagine what the experience is like for her (following through). Finally, I come to an understanding of what meaning the experience has for her by using this understanding to interpret her behaviour, for example, when she shakes her hand to counter the pain of having been struck (understanding the other anew) (Stein 2008: 18-19; Svenaeus 2018). In brief, I

recognize an expression (Step One), I am pulled in to follow through (Step Two), and I understand the other anew (Step Three).

One of the interesting aspects of Stein's theory is that it describes empathy as a multilayered process in which we could also stop after Step One or Two when, for example, I cannot imagine how the other might feel. This happens, Stein says, in the case of a plant. We interpret the expressive behaviour – its look indicates that it is feeling unhappy (e.g. a wilted houseplant that needs water) – but we still do not easily follow through because only with great difficulty can we imagine what the world is like for a plant. An expert gardener, however, who spends more time with plants, might find it easier to imagine a plant's world (Stein 2008:§5 i).

Early phenomenologists like Stein and Husserl engaged with empathy to explore the foundation of the intersubjective and intercorporeal (Merleau-Ponty) construction of reality. In this perspective, reality results from an interpretation of the world through empathic relations (*Einfühlungszusammenhänge*) (Husserl 2002:195). Building on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty further develops this view when he shows how an object (like a table) changes its significance when someone else sees it, too. Because the other's view is added to mine and because I am aware of this, the world becomes something different (and properly shared) (Merleau-Ponty 2012:369; Throop and Zahavi 2020:286). But how does combining perspectives work?

Since I realize that the other is a subject too, and different from me, I can use her perspective to confirm and refine mine. If the other were the same as me, a copy, she could hardly have this effect. This would, to quote Wittgenstein, add as much as reading the same story again in a duplicate copy of the morning paper to confirm that what the journalist says is really true (Wittgenstein 1997:94). Only by reading a similar story in a different newspaper (by a different journalist) does it alter my relation to reality. In the same way, the intersubjective experience is reinforced by engaging with other perspectives through empathy (Zahavi 2003:116).

Although beyond-humans are not the focus of their analyses, Stein and Husserl assume that we can have empathy with beyond-human beings too, including God, animals and plants (Stein 2008:§5 b, c, i). Stein picks a dog wagging her tail to explore this. We know that the dog has a perspective that is shaped by the sensory capacities she possesses. Therefore, if we see her wagging her tail (first step), we are equally trying to 'follow through' to put ourselves in the dog's subjective position to understand what the dog is experiencing (second step). In doing so, we imagine having the sensory capacity of a dog, which allows us to know the world from her perspective. Then, in the third step, we use this understanding to interpret the behaviour of the dog when we find her relaxed and we pet her (Stein 2008:§5, b).[11]

Stein's analysis of empathy has proved very productive for anthropology (Hollan and Throop 2008; Throop 2008, 2010; von Poser 2011). Recently I and a colleague

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11 Husserl uses the jellyfish to make a similar argument (Husserl 1973b: 118-120).

have used her model to explore the effect of non-human subjectivities for the social construction of a multispecies world (Schnegg and Breyer 2022).

So how does the with-ness perspective add to our understanding of the situation around the rain on ǁgamo!nâb? There are different entities involved with whom one could empathize, notably the female huriǂoab, the male tūǂoab and the animals. But which ones do people empathize with, and how does this change the social construction of the world? On the first day, Charles empathizes with the goats when he tries to understand what their world is like. He follows all three steps in Stein's model. The goats become something different for him than what they are for me – I do not empathize with them. In Charles' social construction of the world, not only do the goats become different, but the entire landscape becomes different from mine. A landscape that is arid for me becomes a threat for him, knowing what it might sound, smell and look like for goats searching for green pastures. While Charles fully empathizes with the animals, the empathetic process stops after Step One with the two winds. He is not pulled through; he does not try to understand what the world is like for them. Because of this, they do not add to the social construction of his world. Empathy changes not only the perspective of the individual, but also the social reality in which he finds himself. And sometimes this reality is not shared, as was the case with Charles and I.

To conclude, how does the with-ness perspective contribute to our understanding of how things appear? It adds intersubjectivity, which allows us to understand how those appearances construct shared social realities.

VI. Contextualizing the Mind

Phenomenology provides universal concepts for theorizing experience. They are not, by themselves, suitable for understanding the different experiences Charles and I have in a particular situation – such as being in the rain. To understand this, we need to add something to these transcendental structures of experience that phenomenologists have discovered and described. This is where the historical, cultural, social, political and economic contexts come in – and so does the anthropologist. Simply stated, my idea for phenomenological anthropology is that *what* we experience in a situation is a function of *how* we experience it plus the *context* in which the experience takes place.

But what does the context add, and how?

Let me return to Husserl's analysis of time to exemplify how the context adds to experience. Husserl has shown how, in moments, we connect the 'now' with past and future impressions to make experience meaningful. For Charles, then, ǀgurukupu ǀnanub links the rains to the seasonal cycle, the arid environment and the expectation that his livestock is likely to run to its death. The particular web of relationships only makes sense against the background of his pastoral being-in-the-world, colonial expropriation and the resulting land scarcity. If there was sufficient land, animals would not

run away, and |*gurukupu* |*nanub* would not be threatening or even exist. Thus, while Husserl's analysis provides us with a universal principle for how we experience through time, we as anthropologists must add the context to understand how this becomes a specific experience for the people with whom we work. And we must add context to explore why the experience of rain might translate differently for Charles and for myself.

Similarly, Stein's notion of empathy proposes a general principle for how we experience other subjectivities and how they impact what the world jointly becomes. Initially meant to explore relationships with humans, her three-step model can be applied to all sorts of subjectivities. But who has subjectivity, and with whom do we empathize? As we have shown, the Damara attribute subjectivity not only to humans but to animals, tricksters, winds and many other entities in their world (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). However, they empathize to different degrees with these entities. Therefore, the perspectives of tricksters and animals add to the social construction of a multispecies world, whereas that of the wind does not. This example again reveals how one can connect phenomenological concepts with the social and cultural context to understand *what* appears to a specific person.

Lastly, consider Schmitz' atmospheres. People around Fransfontein experience the time after Christmas as an atmosphere of absence they describe as *!Ūke-ai*, collective loneliness (Schnegg forthcoming a). This atmosphere is felt as something that hovers in the place and touches people, making them feel in particular ways. How does it get there? In December, most migrants return to their rural homes, filling the marginalized hinterlands with their presence, their food, their music, their cars, their noises and much more. December is *khoe-xa*, full of everything, as people say. Then, in January, when the migrants go back, only the traces of empty food cans, car tracks and memories are left. The presence of these traces creates an absence people describe as an atmosphere of collective loneliness. However, *!Ūke-ai* does not last long. After a couple of weeks, these absences are filled in. January comes after December, but at the same time it is before the next December. Things will come again. This example again shows how a universal conception – emotions as atmospheres – can be connected to a specific context to make an experience such as loneliness intelligible (Schnegg forthcoming a).

These examples, and my analyses throughout the text, reveal that *what* we experience is a function of *how* we experience it and the context in which the experience occurs. Because of this entanglement of different aspects of experience, phenomenological anthropology, even though it starts with a first-person perspective, allows us to address society if we turn the arrow around. We can address the coloniality that shapes the meaning of rain, the Damara understanding of subjectivity that influences what the world jointly becomes, and the marginalization and migration patterns that create an atmosphere of absence in January. But can we go one step further? Can phenomenological anthropology also be used to criticize some of these processes? Can it open ways of imagining a possible otherwise? And should it? These questions are at the heart of current debates (Al-Saji 2017; Guenther 2021; Weiss et al. 2020).

VII. Critical Phenomenology

A widespread critique of phenomenology is that it neglects the political and economic structures that shape what people experience (Bedorf and Herrmann 2020; for a discussion see, Desjarlais and Throop 2011:94ff.). This critique was already voiced by the Frankfurt School, most prominently by Theodor Adorno, who felt that phenomenology ranged from an 'uncritical' and 'bourgeois' philosophy at best (Husserl) to promoting a 'jargon of authenticity' (Heidegger) that fitted National Socialist ideology well (cited in, Zahavi and Loidolt 2022).

Whereas its preoccupation with knowledge and authenticity is justified, I do not agree with this critique in general. Husserl's *Krisis* (Husserl 1976c) is a critical analysis of scientific knowledge production, and Heidegger engages critically with traditions and technologies (Heidegger 2006). More importantly, phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty, Frantz Fanon, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Hannah Arendt produced classic texts that not only reflect knowing critically but (1) engage critically with the injustices in their societies and (2) support projects for a better and more just world (Guenther 2020; Zahavi and Loidolt 2022). In so doing, many of these authors draw on Marxist thinking. Already in the late 1970s, Waldenfels edited four volumes *Phänomenologie und Marxismus* (phenomenology and Marxism) to further explore this interconnection (Waldenfels 1977).

Acknowledging these contributions, an increasing number of scholars now agree that the classics were political but not political enough. To develop these aspects of phenomenology further, a new school is emerging that calls itself *critical phenomenology*, reaching out from phenomenology to critical theory (Guenther 2020, 2021; Magrì and Mcqueen 2023; Salamon 2018; Weiss et al. 2020). These philosophical texts share many of the concerns of earlier anthropological attempts to mobilize phenomenological thinking for social critique (especially, Desjarlais 2005; Good 1994; Willen 2007), turning *critical phenomenology* into a truly interdisciplinary arena (Mattingly et al. 2018; Zigon 2017, 2018). A first set of topics includes those social fields in which oppression or suffering is especially present, such as solitary confinement (Guenther 2013), Whiteness and racialization (Ahmed 2007; Yancy 2016), White policing (Guenther 2019), being-queer (Ahmed 2006), transgender and transphobia (Salamon 2010, 219), migrant lives at the margins (Willen 2007; Willen 2021), care (Aulino 2019; Mattingly 2014, 2017), dementia (Dyring and Grøn 2021), homelessness (Desjarlais 1994, 1997), loneliness (Schnegg forthcoming a, b), the war on people (Zigon 2018) and related themes. In addition to this, a second field of research broadens Heidegger's notion of *being-in-the-world* to a *being-in-worlds*, *being-between-worlds* and *world travelling*, to fully acknowledge the multiplicity of worlds people often inhabit (Lugones 1987; Ortega 2016).

But what does critical phenomenology criticize? And how?

In my understanding, there are several approaches. I use a first approach here when I refer to the social, economic and material contexts (i.e., structures) that circumscribe

what a subject experiences. A large number of phenomenological anthropologists have argued along similar lines and shown convincingly how the analysis of first-person experiences – often suffering – allows us to point critically to the injustices in which the experience is rooted (Biehl 2013; Desjarlais 1997; Good 1994; Mattingly 2010; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Willen 2021). In a highly inspiring recent article, Mattingly called this 'critical phenomenology 1.0'. She proposes moving to 2.0, in which anthropology's *perplexing particulars* allow 'defrosting' the concepts we, as anthropologists, use. In this sense, ethnographic observations, and the concepts our interlocutors use, help to destabilize and eventually strengthen the theories we have (Mattingly 2019:433).

The Gaze: Entangling First- and Third-Person Perspectives

In this article, I have foregrounded an approach that highlights the relationship between the first- and the third-person perspectives. What do I mean by that? For Jean-Paul Sartre, subjective experience (a first-person perspective) is confronted with objectifications from a third-person perspective, something which he refers to as the 'gaze' of others (Sartre 2001). These perspectives limit how we can experience ourselves and the world. For example, if you call me old, lonely, or male, these categorizations have a normative dimension that interacts with what and how I (can) experience myself, others and the world. Striving to transcend the limiting determinations of this kind is freedom, Sartre says (Sartre 1992).

While Sartre developed the idea of the 'gaze', Frantz Fanon and Simone de Beauvoir must be credited with fully – and critically – developing his argument for the purpose of articulating social critique. Their main intervention was to add that some gazes have more power to restrict than others. In addition, they argue that some people are better equipped to 'look back'. When the Martinique-born philosopher and psychiatrist Fanon describes being looked at as 'Black' in France in the 1920s and de Beauvoir as 'woman' or 'old', they both show vividly how the gazes of powerful groups (e.g., 'white', 'men', 'young') destroy subjectivity and make a free becoming impossible (De Beauvoir 1974, 1996; Fanon 2008). To explore such exclusionary processes, both authors ask which social and political conditions make possible and legitimate these gazes, and how people can shield themselves from them and resist them.

Recent philosophical works that further develops this thinking include Alcoff's (2005) analysis of racialized identity, Yancy's *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (Yancy 2016) and Ortega's (2016) work on *Mestizaje* and *Latinidad* (Alcoff 2006; Ortega 2016). In anthropology, scholarship in postcolonial studies pushes in a similar direction, adding that categories like race are not (only) in the eye of the beholder but in the practice of violence, superordination and exploitation, demarcating the rule of Europe over non-Europe (Afolayan 2018; Hesse 2016; Rosa and Bonilla 2017). With this, they further explore the power relations that make some views ('gazes') more dominant and others less so.

Some phenomenologists now refer to this as the analysis of normativity, seen as a set of quasi-transcendental structures (Guenther 2021). They are quasi-transcendental because they shape the possibilities of experiences in *specific social and historical contexts*. Quasi-transcendental structures are also referred to as 'ways of seeing', 'ways of feeling' and even 'ways of making the world', as Guenther (2020:12) says, including, for example, the patriarchy, white supremacy and heteronormativity that permeate thinking in ways that go beneath a particular thought (ibid.). We might also call them prejudices, acknowledging that all humans have prejudices. But where do these 'ways of seeing' come from? To address this, Zigon proposes the idea of a situation and shows how shared but distributed 'conditions' provide a basis for 'possible ways of being, doing, speaking and thinking within that situation' (Zigon 2015; 2018:38). To decipher these normalization processes and the consequences they have is the task critical phenomenology assigns itself.

But how can we do that?

Among Damara pastoralists, it is a common practice to demand food from one's neighbours, usually once or twice a day (Schnegg 2015, 2021b). Sharing is initiated by the recipient and applies to goods that are either so abundant or so essential that one can hardly deny others access to them. Sharing and the dependency it shows has long been a valued social practice that expresses belonging by allowing others to show how they care. Recently, however, this practice has begun to change, as those who make such demands increasingly feel ashamed. Let me exemplify this.

When I talked to Sarah about shame, she remembered one situation especially well. She had approached her uncle's house to demand some sugar and tea late one afternoon. As she was about to leave again, unexpected visitors appeared. 'Immediately I tried to hide the cup he had given to me', she said, 'but it was too late!' 'The tree has fallen (*Hais ge go !gauhe*)', meaning that the secret has been revealed. In this moment, when she thought that people had realized the intention of her visit, she felt the striking gaze of the visitor first, then her shame. But why? And how did this experience come about?

In this moment, an atmosphere of exclusion emerged, singling her out from the rest of the group. To theorize her feelings, I argue with other phenomenologists that shame is felt when the taken for granted social being-in-the-world is disrupted (Rukgaber 2018). Now, the gaze of others makes us painfully aware of our body, our position and our relation to them. In the moment the visitors see her, this breakdown leads to an atmosphere of exclusion in which she is singled out, resulting in the feelings she has.

But when does this rupture occur? And how does this allow us to critique the underlying social processes? With food-sharing, people increasingly fear that asking displays a dependency on others that could become a 'story' (‡*hôab*) in the community. But how has dependency, which was a sign of belonging, become bad? It has to do with neoliberal and Pentecostal discourses that changed the conception of the self. The self has now become *responsible for itself*. At the same time, the structural transformations

brought about by neoliberalism also imply that a large number of people are being increasingly marginalized and cannot take care of themselves.

To shield oneself from the potential shamefulness of the neoliberal gaze, people like Sarah maintain some reciprocal relationships in which they have revealed their vulnerabilities. Beyond these relationships people aim to hide their dependencies, which have become bad.

This example reveals how discourses and institutions, including neoliberal and partly Christian ideologies of the self, change what is 'normal' and, with this, the 'gazes' the subject must face. These discourses and institutions can be conceptualized as a quasi-transcendental structure that circumscribes the possibilities of experience. This structure is expressed as a third-person perspective and creates situations in which demanding, for example, a valued social relationship in the past, can become shameful.

The example also shows why I wrote so many pages on the fundamental phenomenological concepts before getting to the potential for a critical analysis, which may be the most appealing part to anthropologists. The traces these structures leave on Sarah's feelings have been carved out through the application of phenomenological concepts, including (1) the basic distinction between reflectivity and pre-reflectivity, (2) atmospheres and (3) the gaze in combination with the ethnographic context in which feeling exists. Only in combination do they allow us to make visible what the neoliberal transformation of the self does to a particular self, Sarah in this case.

This intersection is something other theoretical models, including Foucault, cannot cope with. Especially in his earlier works, he is mostly interested in understanding how a subject comes to understand itself as a subject. He puts a great deal of emphasis on the power relations that shape discourses and discipline the self. This view leaves much less room for the self as someone who is experiencing, responding creatively and resisting. Maybe even more than Foucault, Latour's Actor-Network-Theory devalues the role of human subjects that become 'one among millions', an unprivileged node in a constantly shifting network of more-than-human relationships.

Another major advantage of critical phenomenology over other approaches is that it conceptualizes knowing as irreversibly embodied. The gaze is part of my *Leib* that does not 'end' at my skin, as Schmitz says. Sarah feels it painfully before she experiences shame, an emotion deeply intertwined with body processes itself (Casimir and Schnegg 2002).

Future Directions

A generative future potential of critical phenomenological anthropology lies in further exploring the embodied relationships between self, others, categorizations and norms. The study of norms (rules, institutions, regimes) and categorizations (of others, things, etc.) has long been a concern in anthropology. And yet, I know of no *experience-based* theory that can explain how such categories emerge (and change), to which norms they are tied, and to which experiences they lead.

In my view, anthropology is in a privileged position to contribute to this aspect. More than any other approach, ethnography allows space for showing how norms and categorizations emerge in collectives where power is always distributed unequally. To theorize these processes, Marxist theories offer effective resources that spell out the link between norms, power and economic structures (Neveling 2019). While Marxism enters critical phenomenology through French Existentialism, I find that a more direct engagement with Karl Marx would be promising. Based on such an analysis of norm formation, phenomenology provides a sensitive means of studying – through the first-person perspective – how categorizations and norms shape what people *must, can* and *want* to experience and what their world becomes. To describe these linkages between subjects and the world, the phenomenological concepts I introduced (i.e., embodiment, being-in-the-world, atmospheres) provide a theoretical guide.

The focus in critical phenomenology is mostly on the exclusionary aspects of normativity and the gaze. It would, in my view, be enormously fruitful to explore its liberating and empowering potential, too. This includes, for one, the emergence of inclusionary norms, such as the appreciation of 'diversity' that undermines the exclusionary potential of the gaze. For another, it includes recognizing that gazes can empower, support, encourage, or enchant. They can make one feel welcome, attracted and hot. Adequately theorizing the empowering potential of the gaze and the larger atmospheric situations gazes create remains a key challenge for phenomenological anthropology (Ahmed 2007).

What is more, the focus on the empowering potential opens up a path towards imagining the potentialities of living otherwise – phenomenology not only *as critique* but *as hope*, if you will. This is what some scholars have in mind when they began to explore how phenomenology allows us to envision a 'being-together-otherwise' (Zigon 2018; 2021:80). In addition to scientific reflections and analyses, another way to do this is through collaborations with artists in what is becoming known as 'imagistic anthropology' (Mattingly and Grøn 2022). Yet another way is to engage with activism. Both are promising paths for not only thinking about but also initiating change (Guenther 2020, 2022).

VIII. Conclusion

There is another serious criticism of phenomenology. How can a philosophy developed in Europe and largely by men serve as a blueprint for exploring experience globally? What do *they* know? I see three promising ways to respond to this important critique. First, a growing philosophical literature is being written in other world regions, extending the vocabulary accordingly (Anzaldúa 2007; Lugones 1987). As the Latina feminist phenomenologist Ortega puts it, to her this means philosophizing not with a hammer but with a keen attunement to justice (Ortega 2016:xi). These philosophies are part

of the emerging critical phenomenology I have described. Second, some authors have begun to show how basic phenomenological ideas (e.g., the duality of reflectivity and pre-reflectivity) are salient in other world views as well, including Buddhism, Taoism and ancient Chinese philosophy (Hepach 2018; Krummel 2017; Ogawa 1998; Varela et al. 2016). If so, this would strengthen the universal claim the phenomenological program makes. Third, anthropologists can contribute to destabilizing and broadening phenomenological concepts when using them in ethnographic contexts that are significantly different. In so doing, anthropologists help to test the limits of these concepts and/or to develop them in ways that allow them to capture a broader range of experiences (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022; Mattingly 2019).

To conclude, I see three ways in which phenomenological anthropology contributes to theorizing beyond what other approaches have to offer. First, phenomenology provides a *theory of experience* that starts with the embodied first-person perspective. This allows the relationship between the knower and the known to be studied in nuanced ways. In so doing, phenomenological anthropology connects universal phenomenological concepts (some of which I have introduced) with the specific social and historical contexts in which the experience takes place. Second, by separating *how we know* from the context that frames specific experience, we can carve out the roles that material, social and normative structures play in constituting a phenomenon. This allows us to track the traces these particular structures leave in our bodies and our consciousness. No other theoretical approach has such a powerful theoretical vocabulary to describe this interaction between structures and embodied experience. Singling out structures in this way and making them visible opens up a unique opportunity for reflecting on social processes critically. Third, phenomenological anthropology applies the same concepts to the ways our interlocutors dwell in their worlds and to how we, as anthropologists, experience their world-making. With this, we do not need to make different assumptions about how we as scientists and others experience.

Jointly, then, phenomenology and anthropology can provide a sophisticated, reflexive and critical way of understanding *how* and *as what* things appear *in* consciousness *for* a subject, and thus a way of studying how worlds emerge in between ours and the other's point of view.

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The Question of Experience

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I welcome the opportunity to reflect on Michael Schnegg's fine article, 'Phenomenological Anthropology: Philosophical Concepts for Ethnographic Use'. Professor Schnegg's comprehensive overview of the intricate relations between phenomenology and anthropology is much-needed one, as it offers significant ways in which anthropologists can draw on phenomenological concepts and modes of thought and analysis in their research and writing. The article also suggests ways in which phenomenology can be informed by anthropology, particularly in expanding the scope, depth and cross-cultural dimensions of phenomenological inquiry in philosophy, the humanities and the social sciences.

There are many fine and highly significant aspects to the article, from the informed articulation of key theoretical concepts established in phenomenology through its history of concepts such as 'intentionality', 'being-in-the-world' and 'embodiment' (to name just a few) to the specific ways in which anthropologists can employ phenomenological modes of inquiry and analysis in their work. These modalities range from specific and highly useful research methods (including 'phenomenological interviews', 'free imaginative variation' and 'opening up') to a more general awareness of the phenomenological dimensions of everyday social life in diverse places in the contemporary world. All told, the article is remarkably perceptive and insightful, and holds out the promise of being read and used by diverse readers. I can readily envision the text being assigned as required reading in any number courses in phenomenological anthropology and critical phenomenology taught by anthropologists and philosophers.

The article has provoked vast swirls of thought and reflection in my own close reading of the text. I would therefore like to describe several thoughts and questions that keep coming into my mind as I reread and rethink certain arguments and conclusions at hand. In doing so I refer to my own first-person, phenomenologically inclined encounter with the text.

First, there is the question of *experience*. Michael Schnegg rightly observes that the gist and purpose of phenomenology are to look at the 'structures of experience' that are evident in how human beings and other life forms perceive the world, as the world and its many diffuse and varied phenomena appear to us and to others. While this claim is indisputable, I do think that we need to consider more closely what we mean by 'ex-

perience' or any given 'structures of experience', As I argued some years ago (Desjarlais 1994, 1997), as a foundational concept in philosophy and the human sciences, as we now know and understand that concept, the concept of experience is a relatively recent one within the history of European thought. And yet experience strikes me as a kind of 'bucket concept' that is used to hold lots of different things, such as apparent forms of perception, consciousness, affect and emotion, corporality, sensate knowing and empathy. However, the very idea and form of the bucket itself is often not considered closely. In other words, it is not enough to stand by the idea that phenomenology is the study of experience and then proceed from there. We need to dig into the implications of this idea and reflect on the many complicated forms that something like 'experience' assumes in our lives and the lives of others. The complications quietly involved are suggested by the fact that in the German language there are two words that are often considered cognate with the English word 'experience': namely, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, with the former suggesting (as I roughly understand it) something like 'to experience something' within the busy stream of life, while the latter indicates an experience that one has gone through and gained something from. This begs the question: would it be said in German that phenomenology involves the study of the structures of *Erlebnis* or of *Erfahrung* or a complicated mix of the two? The point I am trying to make it that there is a whole gamut of connotations, implications and linguistic and conceptual histories in words such as *Erlebnis*, *Erfahrung* and 'experience', or words and concepts in other languages that might resemble (or not quite resemble) these rather European/American terms. It would be good for us to reflect in careful ways on the implications of all this in moving forward with any inquiries in phenomenological anthropology and critical phenomenology. For that matter, the secure and important question, 'How do you experience X?', if posed to interlocuters while doing phenomenologically inclined ethnographic research in non-western settings, might lead to any number of tricky problems and concerns. One is how to parse the verb 'experience' within a local language and how to describe how a person does something like 'experiencing' within the world, or even if there is something like 'experience' going on for any of the given peoples involved. It is not as easy or as straightforward as it might look.

Another concern of mine relates to the genealogy of critical phenomenology, which is outlined in the article. Schnegg notes that 'a new school is emerging that calls itself *critical phenomenology*, reaching out from phenomenology to critical theory' while citing publications by philosophers, the earliest being in 2018. Schnegg goes on to note that these philosophical texts share many of the concerns of 'earlier anthropological attempts to mobilize phenomenological thinking for social critique', as though these earlier attempts were antecedent to a more fully realized critical phenomenology as launched by philosophers. Yet the idea, scope and promise of a 'critical phenomenology' had already been clearly established in the discipline of anthropology by the mid-1990s. Byron Good sketched out the key ideas involved in his book *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience* (1994), while the present author produced a definitive statement in the book *Shelter Blues* (1997):

> In my reckoning 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. Such an approach is phenomenological because it would entail a close, unassuming study of 'phenomena,' of 'things themselves' – how, for instance, people tend to feel in a certain cultural situation. But the approach is also critical in that it tries to go beyond phenomenological description to understand why things are this way: 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. In addition, the phenomenology is a critical one because it tries to take into account the makings of its own perceptions. (Desjarlais 1997:25)

The ethnography in which this statement appears goes on to show the ways in which concepts such as 'experience,' 'agency', 'selfhood', 'personhood', 'mental illness', 'body' and 'the senses' are deeply charged by complex political, social, economic and discursive forces coursing through situations of life in and around a homeless shelter in Boston. It thus calls for critical analyses and reconsiderations of the very forms of thought involved in the social sciences and the humanities, phenomenology included. From the mid-1990s on, a number of writings by anthropologists developed further the conceptual aims and concerns of such engagements in critical phenomenology (as noted, for instance, in Desjarlais and Throop 2011, and Zigon and Throop 2021). It might be that phenomenologists trained in philosophy have not been so aware, understandably, of this in-depth work in anthropology in developing their own recent forms of critical phenomenology. Presently emergent, in any event, is a rich and generative interchange between philosophers and anthropologists when it comes to the critical analysis of life and death in many crucial situations in the contemporary world. Critical phenomenology is in an exciting fecund moment, as Schnegg astutely observes.

Yet another key aspect of Schnegg's innovative article is the framework in which 'six phenomenologies' are highlighted, with salient ethnographic examples situating these ideas in concrete social contexts. *Of-ness*, *in-ness*, *embodied-ness*, *responsive-ness*, *between-ness*, *with-ness*. Schnegg's reflections on these six modalities of phenomenological inquiry are highly incisive and useful. Along with this, I think there is a need to stress the ways in which the tenors of imagining and phantasmal appearance and ghostly spectralities course through many forms of contemporary life and perception, including situations of political violence and oppression, such that a wide-ranging 'phanomenology' is called for as much as any given phenomenology (Desjarlais 2017, 2018, Desjarlais and Habrih 2022). Perhaps, then, '*imagine-ness*' might be phantasmally added as an abiding coefficient to the six phenomenologies just noted?

More generally – and I believe that Michael Schnegg would agree with this – my sense is that a next good step would be to draw on these and related orientations in undertaking comprehensive ethnographic research on certain topics within the complexities of intersubjective life, in order to grasp and to show how these orientations

intersect with and inter-affect one another. There is a need to attend to complicated arrangements in life in which many forces are at work at once, with busy interfaces between disparate but interrelated forms of life and consciousness, perception, technology, analogue and virtual media, and organic and non-organic life. The contemporary world implies a close imbrication of technology and consciousness, of technologically mediated forms of consciousness, and various breeds of techno-consciousness and artificial intelligence processors synched into animate fields of human consciousness. We therefore need to develop ways to analyze and grasp what is involved with the charged multiplicities that course through all of this. In my estimation, the future of phenomenological anthropology belongs to a mix of actualities and virtualities, to singular moments and flows of life tied to forms of collective perception and agency and virtual actualities. This future belongs to refractions of multi-vectored temporalities and energies – of affect, perception, memory, imagining, fantasies – which themselves are tied into economies of simulation and virtuality. We are far from Husserl here, far from a 'transcendental philosophy as the analysis of lived experience in the conscious, living present' (Stiegler 1998:4). The concept of 'lived experience' in itself, by itself, in anything like a discrete living present, in the purity of its claims and dimensions, now strikes one as simple, quaint and anachronistic. The future of phenomenology might well imply a post-phenomenology.

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Between Weak and Strong Anthropological Phenomenologies

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Michael Schnegg's article makes an important, inspiring, and timely contribution to debates within phenomenological anthropology that have grown in recent years and are increasingly gaining attention within anthropology as a whole. Schnegg offers a substantial and solidly grounded overview of a set of key concepts in philosophical phenomenology – *intentionality* (Edmund Husserl), *being-in-the-world* (Martin Heidegger), *embodiment* (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), *empathy* (Edith Stein), *responsivity* (Bernhard Waldenfels) and *atmosphere* (Hermann Schmitz) – which, he argues, are useful in making better sense of specific experiences during fieldwork. To substantiate this claim, he productively draws on his ethnographic encounter with a Damara pastoralist in Namibia dealing with the weather and compellingly demonstrates how the conceptual vocabularies developed within different varieties of philosophical phenomenology can be mobilized in order to perspectivize anthropological understandings of what 'rain' means locally and how it is experienced.

However, Schnegg's ambitions go beyond illustrating the usefulness of phenomenological concepts for ethnographic analysis. Instead, he wants to develop phenomenological anthropology further, arguing that '*[w]hat* things appear *as* in a situation is a combination of *how* they appear and the social context'. In other words, the universal concepts of philosophical phenomenology about the 'transcendental structures of experience' need to be contextualized historically, culturally, socially, politically and economically – and this is anthropology's contribution – in order to explain localized variations and also divergent experiences among differently situated beings that are capable of subjectivity and some first-person perspective.

Moreover, he also wants to use this phenomenological anthropology for the purpose of criticizing these socio-cultural contexts. Such a critical phenomenological anthropology may proceed, Schnegg argues, by analysing first-person experiences of suffering pointing towards structures of injustice and discrimination, as well as by using the emic concepts of our interlocutors to destabilize our own. It can also be put into practice by uncovering the 'quasi-transcendental structures' that misleadingly prestructure and thereby unduly delimit, in empirically variable ways, what is locally mis-

perceived as what is possible or inevitable. Thus, using phenomenological anthropology as a means for an experience-based critique, Schnegg insists that it may also open up a space for hope, allowing us to imagine a possible otherwise.

This thorough engagement with phenomenological concepts for potential ethnographic usage is compelling and offers food for thought in many ways. At the same time, it also raises some questions. One pertains to the extent and depth of anthropology's engagement with, and commitment to, phenomenology that the text seems to be recommending: are we ultimately dealing with a weak or a strong anthropological phenomenology?

On the one hand, there are indicators that Schnegg seems to have a weak engagement in mind, in which 'the ethnographer' may eclectically decide which of the featured phenomenological 'concepts if any are productive for theorizing the particular experiences at stake'. Moreover, the recommended *epoché* is also 'ethnographic' rather than properly phenomenological in Husserl's transcendental sense. Yet, if we are to make a distinction between phenomenology as a transcendental philosophy and a form of empirical anthropology and stick exclusively to the latter, then many of the proposed 'philosophical concepts' may boil down to reformulations of what anthropology has been doing all along: *epoché* might turn out to be mere reflexivity; *intentionality* possibly highlights merely variable social constructions of the same reality; *being-in-the-world* might just refer to the importance of different socio-cultural contexts and interests at different scales and temporalities; *embodiment* could come down to the relevance of shared sense perceptions constitutive of any fieldwork conducted in physical co-presence; *responsivity* might boil down to the need, for research partners and anthropologists alike, to handle contingency and uncertainty through finding meaningful answers; *atmosphere* may function as a mere reminder to take intersubjective affects and emotions into account; and *with-ness phenomenology* could turn into an insistence on the importance of *empathy*, which has been defining anthropology ever since the discipline set out to 'grasp the native's point of view' through extended periods of fieldwork. Of course, there is nothing wrong with using phenomenological concepts as a terminological apparatus to capture these key elements that have been characterizing the anthropological project. Yet to the extent that the engagement with phenomenology remains weak and situational, the claim possibly loses some of its appeal that using philosophical concepts allows us to explore specific experiences in the field more thoroughly than has been the case before.

If, on the other hand, this is ultimately about a strong anthropological phenomenology that is simultaneously empirical and phenomenological in the philosophical sense, then the profound ethico-onto-epistemological differences between the assembled phenomenological varieties start to matter. After all, it does make a difference whether we see our task in epistemologically preparing for describing the true and objective essence of a phenomenon (Husserl) or ontologically interpreting the true being as it reveals itself (Heidegger); it makes a difference whether we believe the world to be already routinely understood and '*zuhanden*' (Heidegger) or to be alien and continuously in

demand of a response (Waldenfels); it makes a difference whether we see embodiment (Merleau-Ponty) or empathy (Stein) as being of prime importance; it makes a difference whether we see affects and emotions as unfolding within and between subjects or within atmospheres (Schmitz). Within such a strong phenomenological project, it would thus not really be up to the ethnographer to decide eclectically from situation to situation which concepts are productive – this would rather follow from foundational meta-decisions perspectivizing the entire anthropological project.

What is more: if we are indeed to take seriously some variety of phenomenology as a first philosophy of 'experience' – and there are passages in Schnegg's text suggesting this, as when a refined phenomenological anthropology is seen as combining the universal phenomenological insights into the transcendental structures of experience with anthropological knowledge about contexts – then empirically focusing on 'experiences' in such a world might unduly delimit the field of vision. Such an approach might mistake the empirical 'experience'-in-the-world for the transcendental world-as-experience-as-all-there-is. It would run the risk of confusing, in Niklas Luhmann's rendering, the 're-entry' for the world-constituting distinction 'experience/non-experience' itself, into which it is copied again. In other words, such a phenomenological meta-anthropology would not principally reveal itself through its incessant reference to 'experience', 'intentionality' et al., but through a language that is always constitutively (but not necessarily literally) perspectivized by such a transcendental understanding (irrespective of its concrete object of reference). If this is the case, however, then the added value of a 'phenomenological anthropology' would not lie primarily in 'philosophical concepts for ethnographic use'; instead, its added value would rather consist in making explicit the criteria according to which better apprehending engagements and meaningful descriptions of human interactions as intersubjectively entangled first-person perspectives would be possible in the first place. In short, its relevant contribution would be meta-theoretical: as transcendental anthropology, not as empirical anthropology.

Schnegg's subsequent arguments about a truly phenomenological anthropology on the one hand, and its further potential for critique on the other, seem to be entangled with this question as well. Schnegg recommends complementing a transcendental phenomenology of experiences with concrete contexts of socio-cultural structures. Yet what is the ontology of these contextual structures, and what are the epistemological conditions of their knowability? Presumably these contexts or structures are experiential, too. This seems to invoke the conundrums around mutual entanglements between singularities and systemic aggregates, between agency and structure, actor and system, the micro-macro link etc. that have engaged debates in social theory for a long time. It is no coincidence that Pierre Bourdieu's proclaimed synthesis in his praxeology seeks explicitly to combine 'phenomenological' with 'objectivist' approaches, as he makes clear in the opening pages of his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). Against this backdrop, it would be helpful to clarify in more detail in what ways a renewed phenomenological anthropology may go beyond well-rehearsed ways of conjoining 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' approaches within theories of structuration.

Last but not least, the project of a critical phenomenological anthropology does indeed sound highly promising. Yet in the current rendition, some important questions seem to deserve more attention. For instance, how are we to move from an analysis of what experience in socio-culturally variable contexts is to what, transcending quasi-transcendental structures, experience *could and should be*? On what basis are we to evaluate, and criticize, structures of injustice and discrimination? And more directly to the point of this text, how are these evaluative standards of criticism related to (some variety of) philosophical phenomenology? Do they constitute an intrinsic phenomenological ethic (an entire field of study of its own)? Or do they need to be conjoined with phenomenology from the outside, mobilizing, for instance, Marxist thinking as the text seems to suggest?

The fact that this text provides the focal point for asking questions such as these within a spirited forum of the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie | Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology* attests to its importance for contemporary debates in anthropology. Much recent theorizing in the discipline has been concerned with how to practice an anthropology that is theoretically, methodologically and ethically reflexive, empirically grounded as well as socio-politically engaged, addressing current issues and challenges and actively promoting exchange between academia and non-academic publics. It is one of the great achievements of Schnegg's intervention to highlight the potential that a more profound engagement with phenomenology might offer this endeavour.

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Experience and Concepts: How Do They Relate?

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I would like to start my short commentary by expressing gratitude to Michael Schnegg for providing us with such an impressive *tour de force* of phenomenological thinking. Not only does he revisit the origins and original intentions of phenomenology, he also provides focused readings of some of its most important concepts, offers an original classification, and asks how exactly phenomenology might help answer some of the discipline's fundamental questions. He does so in the way most phenomenologists do, by taking small and apparently simple situations of everyday life – a cool breeze, clouds on the horizon – and rethinking them in phenomenological ways. By situating these small but telling events in an ethnographic setting he is very well acquainted with – northwestern Namibia – he aims to prove empirically that phenomenology makes a difference not only in how to approach such events theoretically and methodologically, but also in actually understanding them.

Phenomenology is not new to anthropology: Schnegg traces the history of this engagement himself, necessarily briefly, considering the vastness of the field, and with some originality: He makes no reference to Paul Stoller, for example, whom I consider an eminent figure in this respect; he also focuses on works in English and thus bypasses contributions from German-speaking anthropology, some of which are quite elaborate, like, for example, Till Förster's work (1998, 2001, 2011). Nonetheless, Schnegg insists on starting afresh from the original concepts, a task I wholeheartedly support for a number of reasons. First, this is always a good idea: theories that were once well-reflected and brilliantly argued tend to become shallow in the process of their reception, often being reduced to a minor set of claims and requests to be met in empirical settings. This is especially the case for phenomenological anthropology, where the claim to consider experiences is often made without taking the larger epistemological framework into account. Second, it allows us to confront new topics with established ways of thinking, and thus to approach them from relatively solid ground. Third, and maybe most importantly with respect to the topic at hand, going back to rigorous philosophical debates on the nature of knowledge allows us to reflect on how we conceptualize knowledge today and have been doing so for several decades: as an entity that is socially constructed, by and large through language. In insisting that knowledge

relates to the world itself, even if mediated by experience, Schnegg convincingly argues that phenomenology provides a means of critically rethinking social constructivism's fundamental claim that language is prior to experience (p. 8). His reflections thus provide a perspective on the non-discursive dimensions of knowledge that contributes to ongoing explorations of concepts like affect, atmosphere, material agency, human-nonhuman relationality and similar attempts to consider how knowledge relates to the world. It is another strength of the paper that it in the end attempts to prove that this epistemological concern does not rule out critique.

There is, however, a certain ambiguity in Schnegg's argument that I am struggling with, an ambiguity I already stumbled across in other phenomenological works and on which I would like to take the opportunity to elaborate. This ambiguity derives from the fact that, even though 'experience' is crucial to phenomenology, the concept remains astoundingly vague both in respect to its nature and to how it relates to reflexive, conceptual, language-based forms of knowledge. Phenomenology is, of course, an enormous field that is hard to pin down; fortunately, the paper develops the problem well, so I can concentrate on it in trying to substantiate my discomfort, which I hope will provide material for further debate.

At its core, phenomenology is a theory of experience not of reality proper, but of reality as it appears (p. 7). In denying access to reality itself, phenomenology therefore shares much with social constructivism. But while the latter approaches knowledge as a social practice that is fundamentally shaped by language and discourse, phenomenology, in Schnegg's words, claims 'an irreducible mine-ness of experience (...) which is not precisely a construct of social practices, but feeds into them' (p.8). Phenomenology thus takes a different stance toward a similar problem, which is how knowledge in its conceptual form comes into being.

In order for this juxtaposition to be of epistemological value, there must be a substantial difference between the two positions: somehow, experiences must diverge from the words and concepts we use to approach the world reflexively. Yet, this difference remains blurred in Schnegg's text as in others, which results in an argumentative vagueness already exemplified in the formulation 'not precisely' in the above-mentioned quote. Knowledge does take its departure from experience, Schnegg argues and illustrates, but it seems to translate into language quite smoothly: not only do 'language, cognition and experience' merge into one another, as he puts it in a telling sequence quoting Duranti (p. 18); he also considers experiences, and finally even the world to which they relate, to be prefigured by already existing concepts: 'I would even go so far', Schnegg states four pages later, 'to say that (...) different ways of being-in-the-world can create the rain as different ontological entities' (p. 22). From this perspective, experiences are thus either not categorically different from language, in which case phenomenology loses its original claim to draw its knowledge from the world and begins to dissolve into social constructivism. Or experiences are categorically different, but easily submit to existing concepts and discourses, which render them peripheral in respect to the resulting knowledge. In either case, a weak understanding of experience results that

ultimately fails to fulfil its original promise. Unlike social constructivism, phenomenology convincingly shows that cultural explanations are rooted in experience. The explanations themselves, however, being presented in pre-given concepts, resemble those that social constructivists would provide. I would argue that this is because experiences are not considered powerful enough to provide an actual alternative and resist their conceptual taming. In fact, the originality of Schnegg's ethnographic vignettes lies in his exposition of how experiences trigger epistemic processes, rather than in the actual explanations they put forward.

In my view, this somehow unclear relationship between experience and concepts is based on an indistinct understanding of experience. On the one hand, as their structural opposition to language and discourse implies, experiences are considered meaningful in themselves, as a kind of alternative, 'worlding' knowledge. On the other hand, they are presented as empty vessels of bodily sensation still to be filled with meaning, as indicated by concepts like 'feelings', 'emotions' and 'perceptions', which are used throughout the text to characterize experiences. Phenomenology, it seems, hesitates to take sides, unlike aesthetic theory, a related yet different body of theory on which I decided to draw for exactly this reason in my own struggle to understand experience. Here, experience is consistently understood as a form of knowledge that, because of its 'sensual' nature, cannot be translated into concepts; the result is a strong understanding of experience as a form of knowledge in its own right.[1] While 'sensual' knowledge does depend on critical conceptualization in order to rethink and elaborate on it, it will never be exhausted by concepts, language or discourse, thanks to its ontological difference. This results in an irresolvable tension that defines any attempt to grasp the epistemic content of an experience reflexively. In aesthetic theory, therefore, the act of conceptualizing experiences resembles attempts to understand art (as the term in fact already indicates): the experience of an artwork also needs to be reflected on, but will never really submit to any explanation. Seen from this perspective, therefore, experiences do not just trigger their explication into cultural concepts, but rather processes of exegesis which may soon come to a pragmatic end or result in further exploration, depending on the will – or the need – for engagement in given situations. This will, or need, for further exploration may become more significant in cases where experiences become more complex: the atmosphere at a meeting, for example, or the way in which a beautiful landscape or a tasty dish affects us. But even in those relatively

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1 Aesthetics, understood as the study of sensual perception and sensual knowledge, goes back to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* from 1750/58 (Baumgarten 1983[1750/58]); in the field of music, which I study, Theodor W. Adorno can be seen as the last thinker to provide a major philosophical system in this tradition (Adorno 1997[1970]; for a more recent and more accessible exposition of the central problems, see Wellmer 2009. In anthropology, Steven Feld's concept of 'acoustemology', which he developed in critical engagement with structuralism's overemphasis on language, is driven by a similar attempt to understand experience – in his case the experience of sound – as a form of sonic knowledge (Feld 2015, 2017); for a related idea of aesthetics in the field of visual anthropology, see David MacDougall's introduction to his book on social aesthetics (MacDougall 2005).

minor everyday situations from which Schnegg, like most phenomenologists, takes his point of departure, approaching experience from an 'aesthetic' angle does make a difference. To come back to his basic example: imagining the experience of dark clouds and a sudden cool breeze in a hot and dry landscape like that of Namibia, loaded with meanings it derives, among other things, from a range of spiritual entities, complex colonial reminiscences, and deep concern for livestock and thus finally for survival, it does not seem far-fetched to argue that any explanation that might be offered will only explore this experience in part. So, even when experiences seem to easily slip into concepts, it is crucial, I would argue, to keep them separate in order not to prevent further investigation. What is at stake is ultimately the nature of knowledge itself – the degree, more precisely, to which it is bound to language, concepts and discourse. It is one of the great merits of Michael Schnegg's paper that it reintroduces the history and relevance of this fundamental question by insisting on the actuality of phenomenological thinking and by proving that, at its core, "experience" is still crucial to reflections upon the relationship of knowledge to both words and the world.

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Affective Lives: A Critical Pheno|Psycho|Anthro Lens on the Arduousness of Experience

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For my commentary, I would like to take up Michael Schnegg's question 'what does the context add [to experience, A.v.P], and how?' I deliberately take the example of a feeling-state as a phenomenon to explore, simply because I am both a sociocultural and a psychological anthropologist who, up until now, has mostly been interested in understanding the entanglements of culture, society and the human psyche (Stodulka, von Poser, Scheidecker and Bens 2023). In order to discuss the above question, I offer a brief ethnographic glimpse into a re-occurring contextual experience that, in my view, is both charged with affects and telling in terms of affective resonance across times and spaces:

'How are you?', I usually ask Mrs. N. whenever we meet. Mrs. N. is a woman over sixty, whose name I anonymize here. Mrs. N. is a social worker who, before migrating to Germany, had been born and raised in Vietnam. In a socially highly committed way, she works in an urban psychosocial carescape in Berlin, which has been a site of my anthropological and continuous engaged research since 2015 (Ta et al. 2021, von Poser 2023, von Poser and Willamowski 2020). 'I am still alive' is the answer I usually get from her, and every time I hear these words, I feel that she utters them in a slightly moving voice. At least, and speaking in terms of 'affective scholarship' (Davies and Stodulka 2019, Stodulka, Selim and Mattes 2018), I sense that the moving voice as it appears to me epistemically affects me as a researcher. In the beginning of our ethnographic encounters, I therefore pondered why Mrs. N. framed her answer in the way she did. Why was she always saying that she was 'still alive'?

Only years later – experiential years of walking and talking together, of visiting places and people together, of sensing, silencing, and reflecting felt irritations in the relational encounters that are hers (into which I am allowed to delve to a certain degree), of walking and hanging around together without talking, of preparing and eating meals together, of touching plants together, picking strawberries together and sharing melon seeds, of sensing how eyes get widened, how eyes get filled with tears, how tears dry, how, first, a smile and, then, a laughter re-emerges – I dare to say that I am almost able to comprehend and contextualize what Mrs. N. has, in intersecting intensities,

experienced throughout her life and why the words 'I am still alive' truly have a serious weight. I am now aware that Mrs. N.'s embodied and emplaced memories entail existentially fraught experiences of war, hunger, repression and poverty, of displacement and inequality in migration, of discrimination, cultural ostracism and racism, as well as existentially mobilizing experiences of re-orientation, re-empowerment, hope, joy and success, all phenomenal layers that are repeatedly mixed with a feeling-state she describes as being 'still alive'. I am also aware that there are situations that lead Mrs. N. to enter states of remembering and even re-experiencing these multiple layers of her life in multiple affective ways.

My encounters with Mrs. N. are situated in the wider context of a collaborative research project between psychological anthropologists and cultural psychiatrists and psychologists (Heyken et al. 2019, Nguyen et al. 2021), who have jointly taken inspiration from the field of a global and interdisciplinary critical phenomenology of health (e.g., Kirmayer, Lemelson and Cummings 2015). Based primarily on a sensorially immersive ethnography (Pink 2015) of this context, I have conceptualized the arduousness of experience as a prism, which elsewhere I have called *Affective Lives* (von Poser 2018). This prism encapsulates the idea that emotional experiences are the result of complex, overlapping, sometimes exceptionally arduous and affective processes of coping with the felt irritations that shape and shake feelings of non/belonging and in/exclusion over the entire course of life. Moreover, this shaping and shaking always occurs situationally, with different intensities on the level of felt experience and in relation to people's temporal, spatial and sensorial emplacements and relational encounters in and with the world. Here, I wish to reveal this prism as a critical Pheno|Psycho|Anthro lens since, in condensing the perspective of experience as a literally 'lived' and thus much more complex, complicated and, in fact, 'abjective' (Willen 2007, 2021) experience, phenomenological and psychological anthropologists are required to be extremely cautious in their choice and use of a particular methodology.

Of course, Schnegg does hint at the aspect of 'lived' experience in his article by means of a detailed reference to a number of scholars who have been at the forefront of a critical phenomenology in anthropology (Desjarlais 1994; see also Willen 2007, Zigon 2007, Desjarlais and Throop 2011, Mattingly 2019). In my opinion, however, the very 'lived-ness' of experience, which posits complexity, ambivalence, conflict and arduousness, remains rather under-examined, at least clearly, in his *methodological* reflections. I basically share Schnegg's general observation that phenomenology is an integrative and salient anthropological approach to the theoretical and empirical study of experience. In fact, my own previous and current ethnographic works on foodways, empathy and relatedness in a rural Ramu River society of Papua New Guinea (von Poser 2013, 2017), as well as the affective efforts of migration in Viet-German care-escapes, would not have been possible had I not taken a general phenomenological stance towards the experiential dimensions of societal and subjective life and of social conduct in these settings. I also basically agree that tinkering variously with the 'of-ness', 'in-ness', 'embodied-ness', 'responsive-ness', 'between-ness' and the 'with-ness' of

the experience of (certain) phenomena might be helpful in sharpening our awareness as situated and socially committed researchers with regard to the analytical potential that is obviously inherent in phenomenology and anthropology.

I do think, however, that there is not only a need to 'defrost' *concepts* in this context, as Schnegg convincingly emphasizes with reference to a recent claim made by Cheryl Mattingly (2019), but to 'defrost' *methods* as well, depending on what kinds of 'lived-ness' we aim at investigating as anthropologists. Also, I think it is worth reflecting on what interests us most as phenomenological anthropologists and whether there are differences in the ways we categorize certain phenomena and approach them in terms of methodology. To me, wanting to know how phenomena such as a rain shower, a glass, water, a coffee machine, a soccer match or even the ritualized practice of a cockfight appear is quite different from wanting to know how individuals and collectives deal with the phenomena that appear as severe ruptures in their lives. I am quite confident that it is easier to ask someone to remember, re-experience and describe feelings related to situations that involve a rain shower, a glass, water, a coffee machine, a soccer match or even the ritualized practice of the cockfight.

Things are completely different, though, when it comes to, for instance, severe illness and suffering or feeling-states, which involve experiences of war, violence, or death, the loss of beloved ones, loneliness, discrimination, poverty and racialization, to name just a few scenarios of 'struggling along' (Desjarlais 1994), into which individuals as well as collectives can become enmeshed over the courses of their lives. In phenomenological encounters, in which such experiences take center stage, it is sometimes of the utmost importance not to ask questions in ways that might lead people to the re-experience of experience. It can likewise become mandatory to ask questions only in the company of others who are part of one's multi-perspectival research team and who can jointly (and hopefully better) approximate to an encounter. Finally, actively staying silent and perhaps even taking into account the possibility that one will not find out how things appear to others can be crucial.

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Power Relations and Phenomenological Anthropology

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In his article, Michael Schnegg provides us with important and helpful tools for conducting phenomenologically informed anthropological research. In an accessible manner, Schnegg captures the essence of complex philosophical concepts, demonstrates how anthropologists have applied them, and guides us through the different analyses and interpretations these allow based on his ethnographic material, collected among Damara pastoralists. These three aptly interwoven aims of his paper lead the reader to the crucial question of the future of phenomenological anthropology and its promising potential to reveal other ways of relating to and being in the world. In my opinion Schnegg's text shows us one of phenomenology's strengths, namely its capacity to account, via the discussion of experience, for what is universal, what is profoundly individual and what is political. We, as humans, all find ourselves in a state of 'being-in-the-world' (Husserl), in a state of 'embodiment' (Merleau-Ponty) or of 'thrownness' (Heidegger) into a world that is alien to us, to cite only a few of the currents that figure in this text. Yet, we are also fundamentally alone in how we experience this condition. At the same time, specific socio-historical contexts shape '*how* and *as what* such objects appear from a first-person perspective' (p. 1).

Although I tend to share Schnegg's hope for phenomenology's potential to 'envision being-together-otherwise' (Zigon 2021), my comment proposes to think about the kinds of relationships between researchers and research partners that allow a phenomenological approach in anthropological research in the first place. These reflections stem from my own research experience on tourism dependency in the Swiss Alps. For more than five years, I followed various inhabitants of a globalized mountain valley to understand what it meant to make a living in a place with no viable alternative to the very demanding economy of tourism. To understand tourism dependency beyond its economic aspect – that is, as a socio-historical as well as an affective and existential category shaping life in an Alpine village where local inhabitants claimed to be 'nothing without tourism' – I deployed a phenomenologically informed research framework. In an international resort that is visited by thousands of tourists every day, I turned to phenomenology [or, rather, existential anthropology as proposed by Jackson and Piette (2015)] in order to deepen my understanding of the place and its inhabitants' experi-

ences and move beyond the touristic, romanticizing narratives on the area. I selected a handful of informants whom I would visit regularly, and we talked for hours about their difficulties, their hopes and fears, for themselves, their children and their valley at a time of global acceleration, of a scarcity of snow and global warming. Thanks to the deployment of phenomenological tools foregrounding subjective experiences (p. 67), many of my interlocutors shared deeply personal experiences – of betrayal, threat, humiliation, disappointment, joy, etc. – with me. Some described these experiences as ordinary or even boring, but others felt that their (usually difficult) life stories needed to be heard or told to a greater audience. All trusted me in ways that I am still deeply grateful for.

In general, ethnographic fieldwork is based on certain levels of proximity between researcher and research participants. Participant observation and repeated, long stays belong to the anthropologists' toolkit precisely because they enable us to get a sense of how people live (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Herzfeld 2015). Yet, the phenomenological approach seems to require a specific closeness, challenging boundaries separating researcher and research partners in particular ways. On the one hand, it requires a deep form of commitment and responsibility, as well as empathy from the side of the ethnographer, to gain a profound understanding of the subjective experiences of others (this is, as Schnegg notes, also an aspect of Husserl and Stein's approaches; see also Sholokova, Bizzari and Fuchs 2022). On the other hand, it rests on the trust and vulnerability of informants, who agree to share their intimate experiences and stories with researchers. This process, as described by various phenomenological or existential anthropologists, requires time, being dynamic and intersubjective (Jackson 2013; Lems 2018). Schnegg's ethnographic material also conveys this sense of trust and proximity, if not intimacy, with his research interlocutors, many of whom he has known for two decades (p. 92).

However, the interpersonal closeness that seems to be the basis of phenomenological approaches also comes with certain limits. During my research, I met with various categories of village dwellers, such as the employees of transporting companies, farmers or migrant hospitality workers, with whom I formed long-lasting relationships. They told me about the complicated relations they had with an industry that was simultaneously creative of jobs, history and identity, as well as threatening for the environment, their heritage and the future. As time went by, it became clear that I also needed to collect the perspectives of those who shaped this industry locally, nationally and transnationally. However, when working with local elites such as hotel owners, tourism lobbyists or political representatives – usually older men – I was repeatedly faced with a certain distance. Our meetings took place in public spaces or offices, they viewed our meetings as very formal, and they expected clear questions to which they could give ready-made answers in a given time-frame. As much as I tried to develop these relationships, my meetings with them remained 'expert' interviews, in which feelings and subjective experiences were carefully avoided or minimized. The closeness and vulnerability that was so crucial when working with other informants seemed impossible to achieve with them. At best, I was a researcher who had to be informed about a given issue, and at worst (although rarely) I was unwelcome. This experience speaks to many

anthropologists' reflections on the difficulties of working with elites, the suspicion they tend to have towards researchers and also their inaccessibility, both practically and on a more interpersonal level (Gusterson 2021; Souleles 2018). As representatives of institutions and interests on a different scale, people in positions of power perform ideals of professionalism and authority where vulnerability is likely to appear as weakness.

I wonder, then, if what Laura Nader famously termed 'studying up' (1973) – i.e. the study of the wealthy, the elites, or of 'those who structure the life of others' (Archer and Souleles 2021) could, broadly speaking, be seen as one phenomenological anthropology's blind spots. This question may very well point to my own incapacity to conduct research with those situated above me in local or national politics with the tools described in Schnegg's article, for instance. However, it is striking that the majority of the scholarship in phenomenological anthropology cited here seems to cover the experiences of the suffering, the dispossessed or the subaltern. Let me emphasize here that I believe that phenomenological anthropology successfully reveals the complexity of experiences that have otherwise often been treated with miserabilism or fascination, such as the migrant condition (Lems 2018) or homelessness (Desjarlais 1997). To be clear, I also do not mean to imply that the powerful are completely absent from phenomenological anthropological scholarship, but that experiences of stability and privilege as such seem rather understudied, whereas the opposite, i.e., experiences of acute marginality and precariousness, are central to the works of many phenomenological anthropologists.

Schnegg's genealogy of phenomenological concepts provides some explanations for this focus, such as the Merleau-Ponty-derived tradition that foregrounds bodily experiences of suffering (p. 78) or the Heideggerian moments of *Störungen* that dramatically interrupt routines and thereby expose the structures of normality when they are no longer present (p. 74). A further explanation could also relate to anthropology's own historical biases and preferences to study the underdog or to insist on the 'dark' or 'harsh' aspects of life in late capitalism, as both Nader (1973) and Ortner (2016) have noted. Yet, I think that another, perhaps more practical reason stems from the difficulties ethnographers can encounter when working with people in positions of power using a phenomenological approach that calls for proximity and vulnerability.

If explicable, this lack of the powerful's experiences in phenomenological anthropology remains questionable. Like Nader and many others, I am convinced it is crucial for anthropologists to consider those who embody and live in 'cultures of affluence' (Nader 1973) and who benefit from structures of inequality being maintained for the development of a critical anthropological scholarship. A growing number of anthropologists have recently successfully accessed spheres of power and influence and revealed the complex social and affective worlds at play in sectors (e.g. banking) that usually present themselves as 'rational' and 'objective', in typically modernist fashion (Ho 2009; Zaloom 2009). Making experiences of privilege, success or entitlement visible could in my opinion also respond to the recent calls for a critical phenomenological anthropology that Schnegg mentions here (e.g. Mattingly 2019), by complexifying our understandings of power (and the lack thereof), its fragility and uncertainty, even for those who live and embody it.

However, as I have experienced myself, the level of interpersonal closeness that phenomenological anthropology requires can often stand in the way of conducting research with CEOs, lobbyists, policy-makers and experts. Should or could alternative tools be developed for a phenomenological study of elites like Nader proposed in her time? Could phenomenologically informed forms of autoethnography, for instance, help us navigate such contexts? I do not have any answer to these questions myself, but I believe that they should push us to reflect on the types of relations, whether of power, proximity or vulnerability, that allow for or impede on the deployment of a phenomenological anthropological approach in given situations.

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True Beginnings: Experiential Process and Phenomenological Critique in Anthropology

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Edmund Husserl intended phenomenology to be a 'science of true beginnings'. This sense of beginnings is not so much about temporal origins in the form of history or archaeology as it is about the human source of phenomena in themselves, as they are constituted in experience. Every time we undertake a phenomenological interrogation or project we begin again at this moment of existential beginning, penetrating to the essence of a phenomenon at its inner horizon or allowing the layers of that phenomenon to unfold to its external horizon. Every time a scholar begins thinking phenomenologically and using the method of phenomenology it is also a true beginning, not a "reinvention of the wheel" but the inauguration of a fresh perspective on the nature of human reality and the meaning of being human. Bringing a fresh perspective to phenomenological anthropology is precisely what Schnegg achieves in this article, as he explicitly acknowledges that he has only recently begun to work in this way.

In the first few lines Schnegg already previews concepts fundamental to phenomenological anthropology insofar as it defines a starting point or level of analysis and engagement: reality, how and as what things appear, the first-person perspective, experience, world. With respect to his summary of anthropology's relationship with phenomenology over the last 75 years, Schnegg identifies more phenomenological sensibility in Geertz's work than was recognized by most when his influence was in its prime. At that time in the 1970s and 80s, Geertz's evocation of the experience-near in culture took a back seat to culture as public system of symbols in the same arena as Derrida's texts, Levi-Strauss' structures, and Foucault's discourse. Regardless of this caveat, Schnegg's goal is worthy of endorsement, namely to outline a phenomenological anthropology that can identify and make visible the traces of experiential processes that would otherwise be obscured, and to elaborate its critical potential for anthropology.

Schnegg introduces phenomenological method with its basic techniques of *epoché, free imaginative variation, Gelassenheit,* followed by suggestions on how to conduct phenomenological interviews. I am skeptical about the value of creating a special purpose phenomenological interview as opposed to adopting a phenomenological standpoint toward ethnographic interviews in general, but commend how Schnegg takes care to

define 'phenomenon' and practically engages a cultural phenomenology by means of concrete ethnography. Insofar as one can 'define phenomena as things as they appear in experience', I would add that a phenomenon is 'any thing, event, process, or relationship that we perceive'. Schnegg's case in point is how rain is constituted as a particular *meaningful* cultural phenomenon in the *lived bodily experience* of Damara pastoralists in Northwestern Namibia, *transformed* by context and differing from that of Schnegg as observer from a different culture. His strategy of repeatedly returning to the ethnographic situation to demonstrate the instantiation of phenomenological insight in concrete reality is a principal strength of the article.

This strategy is at its most effective in the interesting and innovative middle section of the piece, in which Schnegg outlines and ethnographically illustrates six approaches to *how* phenomena appear in experience, each identified with a specific thinker. He observes that these approaches 'partly overlap and partly contradict each other'. However, while it is the case that a phenomenological work can fruitfully begin from any of these approaches or thinkers, I would emphasize that what Schnegg achieves is to capture across this body of phenomenological work a shared level of analysis at which one can identify a constellation of complementary and intersecting dimensions of how humans constitute and engage the world of lived experience. These are what he calls of-ness, in-ness, embodied-ness, responsive-ness, between-ness, and with-ness. The suffix 'ness', like the near-ubiquitous suffix 'ality', transforms a word of whatever part of speech into an abstract noun of quality. In the present instance these qualities do not define distinct *modes* of being but *modalities* of the phenomenal world in lived experience.

What situates these modalities at a common level of analysis, and what I would add to help consolidate recognition of their complementarity, is their shared participation in another constellation of abstract nouns of quality that form an alliterative set of what I will call the five 'i's. *Immediacy* is about the here and now, presence spatially in a situation and temporally in the present moment. *Indeterminacy* refers to never completely coinciding with ourselves, but always running a bit ahead or trying to catch up from behind. *Intentionality* is the inherent tending toward the world and others that comes with being human, regardless of whether there is an explicit intention or motivation in play. *Intersubjectivity* and *intercorporeality* are not simply a fancy way to reinstate the duality of mind and body, partly because they are abstract nouns of quality rather than things or entities, and partly because the prefix 'inter' requires us to recognize the impossibility of solipsism in the human world. Taken together, these two sets of *abstract* nouns, ironically or not, contribute to defining the *concrete* nature of our human world.

Schnegg's final section takes up the idea of a 'critical phenomenology' that engages issues of politics, economics, and social justice. While this term is acceptable in a strict sense when it is a question of synthesis or dialogue between critical theory and phenomenology, in a more general sense it is redundant insofar as phenomenology is by definition inherently critical because it insistently and relentlessly calls into question ['brackets'] basic presuppositions. To be sure, phenomenology per se does not carry a political message, and it would be juvenile to imagine that reading Heidegger would

subliminally 'turn one into' a Nazi or reading Sartre would 'turn one into' a Marxist. It is also the case that a writer does not have the same purpose or audience in mind for every text: Merleau-Ponty's philosophical and political writings were distinct bodies of work, just as Fanon's clinical and political writings were distinct. For this reason, it is preferable from an anthropological standpoint to refer to 'cultural phenomenology' that can then be put at the service of phenomenological critique.

From this standpoint, what anthropology brings to the meeting with phenomenology is its concern with meaning, which is essential on three levels: the question of what it means to be human, the question of meaning as the outcome of interpretation and hermeneutic, and the meaning of any particular act or utterance. For anthropology, the meaning of being human has always been with reference to other humans in the face of our diversity and similarity, but also in recent years it has become increasingly evident that it must also be the meaning of being human in relation to other species of living beings and to the material world as such. With respect to the interpretation of cultures, meaning means a double hermeneutic of the meanings people constitute for themselves and the meanings we construct about their meanings. The meaning of a particular act or utterance situates us in the most intimate space of performative immediacy, the bodily site of meaning's generation.

Meaning, however, is abstract and alienated from the concrete if it is separated from experience, which is everything that happens to a person or people that has meaning for them. Cultural phenomenology not only brings a phenomenological sensibility and standpoint to the study of culture and cultures, but more importantly it underscores the recognition that human phenomena are always already culturally constituted. Given the many possible definitions of culture, the one I prefer is that it is everything we take for granted about the world, ourselves, and others. Bringing this taken for grantedness to light, or thematizing it, is the central movement that animates the method and allows phenomenological description to become phenomenological critique.

Phenomena, again, are whatever appears to us in the human lifeworld, from what is usually described as a 'first person' perspective – that of an I or ego as opposed to the perspective of him, her, or them. This methodological move means that our starting point, and central concern, lies in our immediate natural attitude toward the world rather than in anonymous process, natural law, institutional constraint, or social forces. Most importantly, the first person does not refer only to the anthropologist as phenomenological analyst, but to everyone else as well. From this standpoint another person is not him, her or them, but as Merleau-Ponty said, 'another myself'. To paraphrase the classic cosmological origin myth, the world is not built on elephants all the way down, or turtles all the way down, but 'I's all the way down', experience all the way down, other myselves all the way down.

If all phenomenology entails critique insofar as it discloses the taken for granted and brackets presuppositions, and a phenomenon is any thing, event, process, or relationship that we perceive, then cultural phenomenology does not begin and end with a thick description of the anthropologist encountering their desk or picking up a utensil.

An encounter with a phenomenon takes place within two kinds of horizons that extend from the immediate to the distant spatiotemporally, and from the personal to the political with respect to relations of power and influence. Because they are all human phenomena, there can be a cultural phenomenology of race hatred and misogyny, climate change, gun violence, displacement of people as refugees, religion as practice and performance. In this respect I diverge from Schnegg's aim of reconciling first and third person perspectives, and suggest that the true challenge for phenomenological critique is to persevere in maintaining the first person perspective – that of immediacy in the lifeworld – even when addressing phenomena that appear more distant spatiotemporally and more constituted by broad relations of power and influence.

How, for example, would one develop a critique of a geopolitical phenomenon such as the current war in Ukraine (or any war, or war in general)? That which is taken for granted and presupposed in the first person perspective by those of us following the war from a distance in the media must differ dramatically from what is taken for granted by the combatants, by the civilian Ukrainians living in combat or non-combat areas within the country and those displaced internally or externally, and by political or military leaders and policy makers in Ukraine and other countries.

What would it mean to capture the first-person immediacy of this set of perspectives detached from their presuppositions? Leave aside the anonymous processes that appear to lurk behind how many tanks and howitzers are deployed in which cities, or the historical sources of Russian imperialism. Is the common thread among those perspectives perhaps a sinking feeling accompanied by the question 'how can this be possible, and how can anyone come to take this state of inhumanity for granted?'

In this potentially shared moment of indeterminacy – moral, political, existential – the phenomenon is not constituted as a flux or oscillation between anonymous macrosocial processes and the immediacy of personal experience, but between the first person perspective as mine and as that of many other myselves. Schnegg's elaboration of six modalities of how phenomena appear invites moving in this direction. His interpretation of rain in the Damara lifeworld captures the immediacy of first person experience framed by their postcolonial situation, yet it is worth pushing the point that colonialism can be construed as more than a third person quasi-anonymous contextual process, and not only a structural legacy but a legacy of lived experience. This methodological stance is at least implicit in Schnegg's thoughtful intervention into phenomenological anthropology, and it deserves further development as he pursues this line of thought.

A Critical Phenomenological-Hermeneutics of Us

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There are a lot of great introductions and reviews of phenomenological anthropology available for the interested reader (see, for example, Jackson 2005; Desjarlais and Throop 2011; Zigon and Throop 2021). Michael Schnegg has now provided us with what could become the defining text, as it offers an exceedingly clear and well-founded introduction to both philosophical phenomenology and the ways in which it has been taken up within anthropology. I know of no other text that so clearly articulates the foundational basics of phenomenology and that links them not simply to anthropological theorizing, but more importantly to ethnographic practice.

In particular, there are two parts of this essay that I find most helpful and that I think any other reader will as well: first, the section on methodological approaches; and second, that on six phenomenologies. The three methodological approaches that Schnegg discusses – *epoché, free imaginative variation*, and *Gelassenheit* – won't be knew to anyone who already knows the phenomenological tradition and method. But they are vital for anyone who doesn't, and Schnegg articulates them here expertly and in a voice that is understandable to the most uninitiated of readers. He isn't the first anthropologist to discuss these (e.g., Throop 2012; Zigon and Throop 2021; Zigon 2019), but having them here in one essay is important.

Schnegg's typology of what he calls the six phenomenologies is, to the best of my knowledge, a novel way of making distinctions within the phenomenological tradition. Again, this is done in an extremely clear and helpful manner. Ultimately, I believe the lasting contribution of this essay will be precisely this classification, for it articulates very well to an anthropological readership that there is *no one thing* that can easily be identified as phenomenology. Rather, over the course of the last 125 years or so, several different phenomenologies have, in fact, developed.

This is important for anthropologists for at least two reasons. First, those of us who claim to be doing phenomenological anthropology too often write as though there is simply one phenomenology and that we are all doing it. Any close reading of our various texts should reveal that this is, in fact, not true. This is so, even if on occasion we self-identified phenomenological anthropologists may gloss over the differences. Perhaps one of the reasons this is done is to create a united front against those anthropologists who critique phenomenology, oftentimes while knowing almost nothing

about its internally differentiated tradition. Thus, the second reason this typology offered by Schnegg is important for anthropologists is its very clear demonstration that, while some of these critiques may be more or less appropriate to one typology, they are often not appropriate to the others.

One common critique of phenomenology by anthropologists is that it focuses only on individuals or subjectivity while ignoring larger structures such as history or power or the like. Schnegg's essay, and especially his six-part typology, shows that this is simply untrue. Thus, even the phenomenology that would most easily be mischaracterized as such – the Husserlian 'of-ness phenomenology'– does not simply focus on individuals or subjects, but rather on the relationality of intentionality. And here is where I would have challenged Schnegg if I were a reviewer of this essay. For, despite clearly acknowledging that phenomenology's focus is on relations, he takes up the very same language used by Husserlian phenomenologists and many phenomenological anthropologists in describing phenomenology as concerned above all with experience from a first-person perspective. I contend that it is precisely the continuous articulation of this description by most phenomenological anthropologists, along with the engrossing narrative writing of many of them, that has reinforced the subject-focused critique. This language is even more easily heard as such when there is such widespread phenomenological illiteracy within anthropology.

It is for this reason that I prefer to speak of phenomenology as concerned above all with relationality and the ways in which different entities – both human and non-human – emerge out of the differential flows and trajectories of relations. Thus, phenomenology is not about individual subjects because such entities do not exist other than as a temporary 'knotting' – to use a concept of Tim Ingold (2016) – of relations that then give way to other intertwinings. In this way, relationality is not about connecting two already existing dots, as Marilyn Strathern argues it is so often conceived within anthropology (2020). Rather, the image we might prefer to have in mind is something like several fireworks exploding in the dark sky and the ways in which their various rays of light cross one another temporarily. This crossing – this Merleau-Pontian chiasmic intertwining (1997) – is the temporary 'knotting' that give way to us beings-in-the-world.

Thus, if we were to add a seventh typology to Schnegg's list, it might be called 'dative phenomenology' or 'us phenomenology'. Indeed, some of the most influential phenomenology done today is making precisely this claim – that what makes us (whoever and whatever each one of us is) is nothing more than a momentary knotting together or gathering of relational forces. Though this has real similarities to the 'responsive phenomenology' Schnegg writes about, and some have written about an 'us' in the dative as a response (e.g., Mattingly 2018; Wentzer 2018; Dyring 2021), these responsive phenomenologists nevertheless remain focused on a first-person perspective. In contrast, the focus of 'dative phenomenology' is precisely the becoming of each of 'us' – noting that both human and non-humans count as 'us' – from the dative perspective and not a first-person perspective. Here I'm thinking of the work of, for

example, Jean-Luc Nancy (1997; 2000) and Jean-Luc Marion (2002) in philosophy, and my own in anthropology (Zigon 2019; 2021).

It is not difficult to see how this 'dative or us phenomenology' helps us do a critical phenomenology of the otherwise. For when the starting point of phenomenology is not the first-person perspective, but rather the relational forces that intertwine to make us, one clear focus can be a critical analysis of what those forces are, how they intertwine, and how they can be made otherwise. In this way, phenomenology can no longer be critiqued for not taking account of the larger forces, e.g., history, power, capitalism, etc., that make us. Rather, now critical phenomenology can ask those very critics: 1) just how is it that their non-relational or quasi-relational ontologies give way to an otherwise?; and 2) what assumptions do they have of the subject that allows an otherwise to come about? My critical phenomenological-hermeneutic guess is that their answers will be: 1) they don't; and 2) their subject is the very agentive and willful individual they so often critique. Be that as it may, I will simply end this brief commentary by saying that I believe it is critical phenomenology that will come to have the most significant impact on anthropology today, just as it has in contemporary phenomenological philosophy.

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Towards a Phenomenological Anthropology of the Capitalist World System

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One lineage in the history of anthropological theory is the discipline's struggle to connect the experiences and worldviews of individual humans to the arena of global political economy. Michael Schnegg's article offers an important step forward from the heavy reliance of recent theories on auxiliary concepts in bridging the subjective and the intersubjective. The globalization talk of the 1990s and 2000s pretended that the impact of the capitalist world-system on everyone and everything on the planet was a recent phenomenon. The focus on neoliberalism offered a more precise dating and analysis of capitalism's global cycle and its impact on subjectivities and intersubjectivities in the 2000s and 2010s. Yet again, the global scale of anthropology's analysis suffered from an ahistorical predicament, as there was little to no interest in understanding the continuities and discontinuities from previous cycles of accumulation in the neoliberal era (Neveling 2010).

Recent research on the history of anthropology has made the reasons for this predicament easily identifiable. The strongholds of anthropological knowledge production have for many decades been universities and research centres in the West European and North American core of the capitalist world-system. The political and economic praxis sustaining that core has been the (super-)exploitation of the planet in a colonial, imperial and postcolonial interstate system. Resistance and alternatives to capitalist exploitation have been violently quashed wherever subjects resisted on shopfloors, plantations, streets, parliaments and beyond. Marxist and other anti-capitalist teaching and research in those university departments that defined anthropology's canon led to bans from the profession in many cases. Often, it had to be conducted in clandestine ways. Leading figures in the discipline's mainstream instead made their career in alliances and with funding from predatory foundations and institutions of the US and other Western colonial and Cold-War capitalist regimes (Price 2016).

Many canonical texts in anthropology thus come with an early and unwitting variant of the key form in George Spencer Brown's famous *Laws of Cognition* (Spencer-Brown 1969). Spencer Brown designed this key form a 'Cross' and explains that it demarcates the boundary between the field of research and the outside – between the

object of study and what is outside (in Niklas Luhmann's system theory, for example). The 'Cross' of the anthropological canon has for decades demarcated the impact of the political economy of colonialism and capitalism on everyone as the 'outside' of the sphere of research. This is why, in recent years, Bruno Latour's contribution to so-called Actor Network Theory (ANT) has been the most popular variant in mainstream anthropology's denial of service (DoS) attack on critical political-economy approaches, especially Marxist anthropology (Neveling 2019). A key theme linking ANT with earlier anti-Marxist DoS (aMDoS) is the statement that critiques of the political economy of capitalism were 'woven out of the same tiny repertoire of already recognized forces: power, domination, exploitation, legitimization, fetishization, reification' (Latour 2005: 249 in Holifield 2009, 653). Leaving aside the question whether such a repertoire was 'tiny', one wonders why Latour called for new paradigms when existing Marxist paradigms in anthropology had powerfully criticized a world stuck in a downward spiral of capitalist exploitation, at the behest of then being excluded or side-lined from the profession. Rather, an anthropology confronting the challenges of global warming and capitalist upper-class warfare on everyone else is thus in need of thorough implementations based on advances of existing Marxist and anti-capitalist anthropological theories.

Michael Schnegg's overview and implementation of recent phenomenological approaches is an important and potentially path-breaking point of departure in anthropology because of its rigorous attention to the long-standing philosophical concepts undergirding phenomenological anthropology. Moving from the difference between Descartes and Husserl in the latter's insistence that 'mind and world are *relationally intertwined* in constituting what appears phenomenally' to the difference between Kant and Husserl in the latter's call to take philosophical enquiry 'back to the things themselves' (Schnegg 2023:62–3, his italics), Schnegg establishes a firm intersubjective paradigm. Winds, other meteorological phenomena and climate and ecology more generally are imbued not with the Kantian *a priori* that loiters on all nodes of the ANT paradigm's insistence on a flat ontological agency of things. Instead, in 'Phenomenological Approaches', what constitutes a given situation emerges from the *longue durée* of the relational intertwining of mind and world. Importantly, Schnegg salvages the 'situation' (p. 78) with reference to Waldenfels' *Antwortregistern* (answer registers) from the grips of Heidegger's frame that has humans cast into the world with the existential thread of being cast out lurking should the replica womb of the *Volk* no longer be 'at hand' (Kapfinger 2021).

Two important additions emerge from a close reading of Schnegg's work. First, it seems appropriate to develop a critical historical approach to phenomenology itself. Heidegger's philosophy may be less suited as a general theory of being, for example. However, it may become better suited if anthropology were to employ a sophisticated understanding of Heidegger's world-views to study the unfortunate and dangerous rise of neo-fascist movements all over the planet. Such a research project has been foreshadowed in recent work by Daniel Gyollai, who shows that a critical phenomenolo-

gy can identify how the racist turn in Hungarian state politics establishes structures of relevance in the wider society that then shape the racist treatment of refugees by Hungarian border guards (Gyollai 2022). Elsewhere Susanne Klien and I have shown how ethno-traditionalist and racist communities have world-views that are closely linked to Carl Schmitt's political theology and its rejection of an epochal shift with the world-historical transition to capitalism. Where Schmitt argued that twentieth-century nation states lacked political legitimacy and thus built their sovereignty solely on earlier sources of power, in an exchange of letters the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg argued that this denial of modernity as an era of new forms of political legitimacy, largely due to the transition to capitalism, led Schmitt to relate uncritically to German fascism. Thus, Schmitt's denial of an epochal shift with the onset of global capitalism and his insistence on a political theology is mirrored in contemporary political movements' insistence that contemporary political legitimacy was rooted in long-standing ethno-nationalist and racist political formations – ignoring the fact that those political formations have never existed in the way right-wing movements imagine them (Neveling and Klien 2010).

Second, building on this suggestion to research Schmitt's and Heidegger's own 'situations' in comparative historical perspective, it seems important to respond to Schnegg's call for a direct engagement with Karl Marx's writings in critical phenomenology to supplement the derivative Marxism from French existentialism. An obvious point of departure for such an endeavour is Marx's labour theory of value, which highlights that value in capitalism is not a thing in itself, an absolute derived from the *a priori* inputs of labour, capital and rents, as classical and neoclassical economic theories had it. Instead, value and capital are social relations shaped by forces and relations of production that enable capitalists to extract a surplus from proletarians that have nothing to sell but their labour. These insights are akin to Husserl's relational analytical approach as an alternative to Kantian philosophy, in which he calls for an analysis of how things appear in reality and how mind and world relate to one another (p. 63). To Marx, the value of labour is an abstraction of different labouring activities via the fetishes of commodities and money. The very fact that value exists as an economic category and is socially constructed is the result of a historical shift in the mode of production (Marx 1962). There may thus be more Marx in Husserl than is commonly assumed as both call for a return to a philosophical enquiry of the things themselves instead of a focus on their surface appearance.

Accordingly, Marx noted that human world-views and thought may change with changes in the relations and forces of production. The alienation of labour derives from a particular appearance of both things and social relations. Now, the question is how to bring together phenomenological anthropology in the spirit of Schnegg's treatise and Marxist anthropology's critique of political economy. The theoretical insights in Eric Wolf's book, *Envisioning Power*, are a good point of departure. For Wolf's theory of power incorporates a range of theories according to their most suitable scale of analysis. His model considers four dimensions; intersubjective power, or 'how persons enter into

a play of power' (Nietzsche); charismatic/interpersonal power, or 'the ability of an *ego* to impose its will in social action on an *alter'* (Weber); tactical and organizational power, or 'the instrumentalities through which individuals or groups direct or circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings' (Gramsci); and structural power, which is 'manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows' (Foucault/Marx) (Wolf 1999:5, his italics).

Combining the analysis of the scales of power with the analysis of the scales of being and world-views, we can move forward with Schnegg's three concluding foci on phenomenology in anthropology as, first, a '*theory of experience*' (in lieu of the Nietzschean focus on the intersubjective scale in Wolf); second, 'an effective means of studying the *situationality* of knowing' (as informed by Marxist insights into the interplay of forces of production and relations of production as a macro-situation at a high intersubjectivity scale); and third, a theory for 'separating *how we know* from the context that frames experience' (as a 21st century extension of Marx's concept of fetishism; (Schnegg 2023:91, his italics).

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Response
Experience and Concepts

Michael Schnegg

First and foremost, I want to express my deep gratitude to the commentators for engaging so thoroughly with my text. In pointing out omissions and shortcomings in my argument, the commentators are developing phenomenological anthropology into the multi-layered paradigm it deserves to become.

All the comments establish good vibes (maybe 'relationality' in Zigon's terms) and create a positive atmosphere around phenomenological anthropology. At the same time, they challenge my argumentation – and sometimes the paradigm at large – and I am grateful for the opportunity to reply. To organize my text, I formulate several questions that demand a response, as Waldenfels would say. Unsurprisingly, this selection is biased and reflects my subjective experience of reading its rich feedback. It centres around experience and concepts and the relationship between the two, which I not only find in many of the comments but also anticipate being a salient and important challenge of future phenomenological anthropology.

The first question is, *what is experience, after all*? Robert Desjarlais makes the valuable intervention that my text, and maybe phenomenological anthropology more generally, does not engage thoroughly enough with the question it posits to be at the core. In so doing, he also reminds us of his seminal work in which he outlines the ambiguity of the concept and the difficulties in translating *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* into the English experience (Desjarlais 1994, 1997). Desjarlais showed some years ago in his ethnography of homeless people that, despite the many conceptions of experience in the philosophical literature, none describe how people feel living their lives. Furthermore, the literature's preoccupation with 'reflexive depth, temporal integration, and a cumulative transcendence' might – at least for some people – be much more a relic of the past than it is felt to be now (Desjarlais 1994:898). Instead Desjarlais proposed taking the concepts of our interlocutors seriously, for example, concepts such as 'struggling along'. He encouraged us to acknowledge the disrupted condition of experience, which he also highlights in his reply and in his more recent work, an experience that has become so commonplace three decades later that he suggests capturing it through a 'post-phenomenology' in his inspiring comment.

In the Namibian context where I work, the Khoekhoegowab word that comes closest to experience is *hō!â*. It is a compound of *hō*, to find, and *!â*, the front of the body. Literally it translates as 'finding something in front of one(self)'. Experiencing thus means encountering something or running into something. A phenomenon becomes something by *being-in-the-way*, to paraphrase Heidegger. This resonates well with what I have called responsive-ness phenomenology, the attempt to theorize meaning-making as something that starts elsewhere. My reference to the Namibian *hō!â* and Desjarlais' much more sophisticated analysis of 'struggling along' show how useful it is to analyse our interlocutors' understandings of what it means to them to be in the world.

Where can this lead? In my view, anthropology should oscillate between relativistic and comparative/universal poles (Schnegg 2014). Phenomenology has the potential to facilitate this more than any other paradigm. Comparing and contrasting, however, requires a conceptual language, which phenomenology can provide. For such a project and for a collaboration between anthropology and phenomenology as a philosophical discipline, I therefore propose that we begin exploring a question like *what it means to experience* with philosophically validated concepts (Schnegg 2022). The ethnographic cases and the understandings of experiences they provide – such as 'struggling along' or '*hō!â*' – would be used to broaden, destabilize, and develop them further (Bubandt and Wentzer 2022; Desjarlais 1997; Mattingly 2019). In addition to ethnographic observations, exploring similarities and differences between phenomenology and theories that emerged outside the Western philosophical context provides equally important possibilities to decentre theoretical development. Varela et al. (2016), for example, have shown that phenomenology and the Indian Buddhist Abhidharma school have many parallels and can be integrated (Varela et al. 2016). While they point to similarities, difference can be equally stimulating for developing a more comprehensive account (Aulino 2019).

Comparing and contrasting schools of thought in this way would further concepts to capture adequately the complexity and friction of experiences that characterize most moments in today's world, which Desjarlais works out convincingly in his reply, his theorizing and his ethnography. At the same time – and I will say more about this below – I read Desjarlais's comments as also supporting the notion that there is always an excess of experience over concepts requiring us to acknowledge that some things will and must remain unsaid.

In important ways, Olaf Zenker also engages with the question of what experience is, distinguishing between its empirical and transcendental dimensions. He differentiates between a 'weak phenomenology', as in the application of phenomenological concepts to ethnographic cases, and a 'strong' transcendental phenomenological anthropology, which is in search of a meta-theory for the relationship between the knower and the known and the possibilities of knowing. In his view, the weak rendering I propose does not add significantly to what is already in use. While I agree to some extent, his observation is true for some concepts more than for others, including, for example, describing emotions as atmospheres. But even for the concepts that have been

in use for a long time – embodiment is a prime example – some recent developments have not been explored and critically reflected upon anthropologically. These include, for example, 4E-cognition (embodied, embedded, enactive and extended cognition), which stresses that external objects and practices are sometimes not only *supportive* but *constitutive* of cognition and knowing (Colombetti 2014; Newen et al. 2018; Noë 2012; Rowlands 2010). 4E-cognition shows how some concepts continue to develop significantly outside anthropology (e.g., in psychology and philosophy). I therefore suggest that we keep up with these developments to avoid sticking to Schütz's reading of Husserl or Bourdieu's engagement with Heidegger and the way they entered social theory long ago.

Whereas I defend my project in this regard, I see the merits of developing a more philosophically sound phenomenological anthropology, eloquently proposed by Zenker. Such a transcendental theory would allow us to describe *how* and *what* we as anthropologists (along with all other human beings) can know and would be an enormously valuable contribution to many debates. It remains a challenge to work out in detail how this project would be carried out methodologically, whether and how it would include empirical evidence, and how its results might inform how we do and write ethnography.

These critical engagements with experience bring me to the challenging question Markus Verne asks: *How are concepts and experience related*? In my reading, this is one of the most interesting questions in terms of not only linguistic concepts but also values and norms – all representation if you will. Verne rightly remarks that my text is inconsistent in this regard. Given this messiness, which he finds not only with me, Verne proposes separating conceptual knowledge and experience more radically. To do so, he suggests aesthetic theories that treat experience in its own right as a theoretical guide (Schlitte et al. 2021; Verne 2015). I find this a very intriguing proposal and would like to take it up.

According to some aesthetic theorists, including prominently Theodor Adorno, experience and conceptual knowledge have different ontological statuses and are incommensurable, implying that one cannot be translated into the other.[1] In this view, experience can inform concepts but will never be completely absorbed in them. As I will argue, there is always an *excess of experience* over concepts. Adorno explains this by using the example of art experience when he writes,

> Artworks speak like elves in fairy tales: 'If you want the absolute, you shall have it, but you will not recognize it when you see it.' The truth of discursive knowledge is unshrouded, and thus discursive knowledge does not have it; the knowledge that is art, has truth, but as something incommensurable with art. (Adorno 1997:126)

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1 I am grateful to Markus Verne for our communication on this topic and for pointing me to the relevance of Adorno and this part of his work.

With this, Adorno makes several important points. For one, there are two different ways of knowing, one being discursive (rational) and the other lying in our sensory experiences of artworks (and one can extend this to other experiences, like walking through a forest, being in pain, etc.). Adorno has a clear understanding that knowledge that is rooted in sensory experiences is superior and ultimately the only knowledge that ever comes close to 'reality,' a transcendental truth he calls 'unshrouded' (*das Unbedingte*). At the same time, this 'truth' is more than what even art can capture, which is why the two (truth and art) are 'incommensurable'. With this, Adorno establishes both a dichotomy and a hierarchy. In his philosophy of music, Adorno develops this thesis when he argues that Schoenberg's music was able to perceive political threats like the rise of German fascism as 'truth', while language could neither grasp nor adequately convey this (Adorno 1949).

At the same time, some phenomenologists, including Husserl and Ricœur, would add that the same is true the other way around (Husserl 1999; Ricoeur 1991). Concepts that are shared by a social group as abstractions or narrations of experiences contain an excess over experience. Consider being drunk. It is certainly true that the concept and narrations only partly capture how it feels. At the same time, even as a child or as someone who was never drunk, the concept allows one to imagine and 'experience' things one never felt bodily. Or consider the idea of 'God' and what many religious traditions associate with it. The concept also contains aspects that elude experience. Both examples indicate that *while there is an excess of experience over concepts, there is also an excess of concepts over experience*!

I see the elegance of an aesthetic approach that separates experience and discursive knowledge (e.g., concepts), thus radically allowing us to focus on experiences as knowledge of its own kind. Most likely, and this is also an empirical question, it depends on the kind of experience. Therefore music and art – the focus of Adorno's work – might be especially difficult to capture conceptually. Another advantage of reaching out to aesthetics is that it opens up the possibility of including aesthetic theories from other world regions, including, for example, *rasa theory* from India and the Chinese notion of *ganying* (Iskra 2023; Menon 2017).

While I find that the approach allows us to see the properties of experience clearly, in my view it should not distract us from studying how experience shapes concepts and vice versa (even if they are different ontologically). Today, some years after Adorno's stimulating and then radical claim, this is increasingly acknowledged in aesthetic theory (Hamburger 1979). To explore the relationship between concepts and experience, the work of Hubert Dreyfus might be a productive entry point (Dreyfus 2007). To visualize the relationship, Dreyfus introduces the metaphor of an edifice with more than one floor. Experience is on the ground, concepts (and language) on the upper floors. To build on this, Shaun Gallagher proposes applying the 4E-model of cognition to it, which I agree could be constructive material from which to build a stairway between the floors (Gallagher 2017:197). In my view, this image could become a productive framework, even though it does not yet solve the problem empirically and metholog-

ically. While the floors constitute their own 'worlds', there is a stairway between them. But not everything will pass, neither up nor down the stairs. There is always an excess!

I take an initial step to explore the relationship between experience and concepts when trying to explain why Khoekhoegowab-speaking people distinguish eleven different types of rain. To do so, I mobilize Husserl's analysis of the subjective experience of time (i.e., his notions of protention and retention) and argue that past moments and future expectations fade in the experience of any particular 'now', leading to a myriad overlaps of experiences that constitute the experience of a particular kind of rain (Schnegg 2021). The analysis also shows that we still have much to learn to fully understand how concepts emerge from particular aspects of experience, practices and communication (especially socialization) and how they change if experiences and concepts do not match. Exploring the relationship between experience and concepts more thoroughly requires a sophisticated methodology, as both von Poser and Leitenberg argue convincingly when they pose the following question:

How can we study experience ethnographically? Furthermore, when might it be better to abstain from ethnographic inquiry? In her thoughtful comment, Anita von Poser points out that the study of experience needs more sensitivity than I have indicated in my text. Importantly, she notes that we should listen carefully when our interlocutors answer comparatively broadly, for example, when Mrs N replied to von Poser routinely, 'I am still alive'. Or, to quote a common response from Khoekhoegowab-speaking interlocutors, '*Hâs lguisa ta î*' (I am just there). While the (impatient) phenomenologist in us might be inclined to explore in detail what experience this entails, von Poser points very carefully to the potential consequences of such questioning, which we cannot always foresee. We may, for example, re-traumatize our interlocutors, at least with some experiences. Sometimes we need to be silent, she says. Instead of probing in the interviews, she shows how going along with people and lives might allow us to understand the weight and meaning of an experience that is communicated when someone says routinely that she is still alive.

We should also take the answer at face value. Following what I said above, the answer is a concept that resides in the upper floor and is most likely grounded by some more durable and culturally shared experience of the group. That means it is not only a window to the personal experience of our interlocutors but also a reflection of a more general understanding of *being-in-the-world*. In the Namibian case I explore, it reflects an atmosphere of loneliness and boredom that characterizes rural livelihoods in postcolonial Namibia (Schnegg forthcoming) and that emerged in the context of migratory patterns: it is said by those who stay behind (and do not migrate). Maybe it is also a form of critique. 'I am just there' indicates a feeling of pointlessness, an accusation against those who disrupted the connection with a meaningful life in a world where most promises are eventually blocked.

Danaé Leitenberg reflects equally eloquently on the limits of the methodological approach when she describes how phenomenology reached its limits for her when she interviewed the elite in an Austrian village. She knew that many of these interlocutors

were more responsible for suffering than suffering themselves. Geertz asked famously, 'What happens to *verstehen* when *einfühlen* disappears?' (Geertz 1974:28). Of course, he was talking about Malinowski and had something different in mind. But the issues seem comparable. If as researchers we do not want to be empathetic and maybe even cannot be, how far can the phenomenological approach take us? To address this question and to further a critical phenomenology, Leitenberg suggests that we might need different methodological approaches. I find this suggestion to have an enormously important appeal, especially since discussions on methodologies are not very advanced, transparent, or common in phenomenological anthropology. There is, for example, not a single overview. One way to study elites phenomenologically might be to include an analysis of social media profiles. In addition to developing novel approaches to access the first-person perspective of elite interlocutors, we should also focus on their 'ways of seeing' and thus the concepts they coin. Even if we cannot access the first-person experiences of elites in the Alps or, even more unlikely, the global capitalist elite, we are all confronted with the structures and categories they make and maintain. This brings me to another point I read in Csordas' stimulating *réplique*.

What is the use of including a third-person perspective? In his profound and thoughtful response, Thomas Csordas challenges my proposal of entangling first- and third-person perspectives for developing a critical phenomenology. He proposes instead grounding a critical perspective in cultural phenomenology where the taken for granted is bracketed and becomes the focus of the analysis, allowing us to address it critically. While I agree that this is *one* productive approach, I do not see why it excludes other ways in which phenomenology can become critical. These other ways involve, among others, reflecting on our own investigations critically as Husserl has shown so eloquently, and critically following the positive and negative traces that experiences leave in our bodies and in our consciousness to reflect the processes that leave them.

In my text, I argue that material, social and economic structures (including coloniality and its remains) challenge, confront and objectify the first-person perspective contributing to these traces. Csordas makes a convincing argument when questioning this dichotomy between objectifying and objectified, arguing that these structures are also legacies of lived experiences. This is certainly true. The challenge becomes theorizing how the two are intertwined, and this involves the more general problem or decision of whether one conceptualizes structural factors as 'external' and thus as shaping the subjective experience (my attempt in the text), or as 'internal' and thus part of the experiences themselves.

Reflecting upon Csordas' reply, I find that my theorization of this relationship was oversimplified and that a more complex view is needed. This problem about the relationship between material, social and economic structures is comparable to the relationship between concepts and experience – as simultaneously structuring and structured, which I have referred to before. I would propose that, besides the six different phenomenologies, a 4E-approach to cognition that explicitly takes materialities and

social groups into account could be promising for capturing these entanglements adequately (Gallagher 2017).

Whereas the roles of these material, social and economic structures remain ambivalent, the attempt to understand experience from the first-person perspective needs, in my view, to acknowledge that those perspectives are confronted with value-laden objectifications by others who influence what we can become. Those perspectives and the categorizations they entail come from someone and are experienced as alien (*fremd*). They can restrict becoming, while also occasionally empowering it too.

This brings me to a question Jarrett Zigon poses so powerfully: *Do we need to overcome the first-person perspective*? Zigon argues convincingly that the focus on the first-person perspective might be too narrow. He calls for a shift to relationality and what he calls a 'dative phenomenology', a perspective on 'us'. With this, he formulates an eloquent reply to two common critiques of phenomenological anthropology, namely, that it focuses on idiosyncratic experiences, and that it is unpolitical. The approach Zigon advances overcomes the Husserlian subject as an active and intentional agent and places more emphasis on the affecting relations in which it is embedded and that shape what it can become. While Zigon acknowledges that this pathic relationality is to some extent realized in the responsive-ness phenomenology, he also finds that these authors still focus too much on the individual subject and the way she is affected, individually.

In his outline of a 'dative phenomenology', Zigon goes far beyond existing attempts when he focuses on the forces that intertwine many human and non-human 'Is', often in loose, ephemeral meshworks. With this focus on relations, he opens up a path for phenomenological anthropology to analyse power and the structures that shape these interconnecting forces. In the framework I often use in my text, this might imply asking what power relations make some gazes exclusionary and hurtful and how they can be overcome. The focus on relationalities brings phenomenology into closer communication with some of Spinoza's work, which is today rendered in affect theories. Spinoza argues in favour of a relational ontology in which entities affect each other and borrow power from one another, leading to situations in which some entities have more power than others. Importantly, affect for Spinoza also includes the ideas and concepts of affection (Curley and Spinoza 2020: 154).

I agree with Zigon's suggestion to focus the analysis on the relationships that link us. Experience starts somewhere else, Waldenfels says. However, I think that Zigon would largely agree that there are good reasons to keep an interest in human subjects and their becoming and to avoid slipping into a flat ontology (Latour) that treats all entities as similar or the same. Thus, while I fully support considering the myriad forces, networks and atmospheres that shape becoming, I find that the subject and its well-being, vitality, agency and so on are what we – as anthropologists – can most adequately describe ethnographically. These descriptions also open up ways to imagine a possibly otherwise in which these forces become less restricting, more empowering, and eventually lead to a better life for the subject. While it is ethically desirable to study non-human subjectivities in similar ways, there are some challenges in doing so

(Schnegg and Breyer 2022). These subjectivities tend to be even more opaque, making it much more difficult to tell, for example, whether my non-human companion experiences an act or an atmosphere as exclusionary, empowering, or entirely different.

Other relations between bodies, however, including labour, sex and gifts, create ties that are often more lasting. Patrick Neveling has such manifest ties in mind when he explores *how power shapes those relationships in a lasting way*. Arguing from a Marxist perspective, he shows a very promising way to integrate phenomenology and political economy. This must include the analysis of phenomenological thinking and thinkers, including how and why some of them were aligned with and supported fascist theories. However, it must also include ways of tracing power in experience itself. Drawing on Wolf, Neveling eloquently suggests that power operates on different scales, including the intersubjective, interpersonal, organizational and structural. Based on this, Neveling shows how an analysis of power might be entangled with a theory of experience that acknowledges its situationality. In this view, forces that operate on different scales shape the situation in which we find ourselves, and thus the experience.

Returning to the question of experience and concepts, we might now ask how categories change and how exclusionary categorizations are overcome. A combination of political economy and phenomenology might allow us to understand the conditions under which people turn their experiences into resistance and when they may be successful in doing so. In my view, Neveling's ideas open another promising track for understanding exactly this.

In brief, the eight comments confirmed to me how important it is to search for an '*experience-based* theory that can explain how such categories emerge (and change)' and to suggest that phenomenological anthropology is in a privileged position to contribute to this. However, they have also shown me that my attempt in this direction was too narrow and that I need to consider aspects I did not see or was unaware of. Thinking about the relationship between concepts and experience as two floors has been productive for me – floors between which a stairway exists. While not everything on the ground floor of experience can or will pass, concepts allow access to realms we do not experience or that elude experience. There is an excess of both experience over words and words over experience. To fully understand this remains a major challenge for the discipline. I do not see any approach more suitable for doing this than phenomenological anthropology.

It has been said that there are as many phenomenologies as phenomenologists. As I have tried to show, there might be fewer – but still more than six, as the comments have shown. The commentators named some of them, including 'imagine-ness phenomenology' (Desjarlais), 'dative phenomenology' (Zigon) and 'post-phenomenology' (Desjarlais). To stay with the metaphor I have borrowed, these are rooms on the upper floor, concepts that evolved from the experience of thinking, communicating and ethnography. For others, although proposed equally eloquently, we might still need names. I look forward to seeing them emerge from the experiences we have with each other, existing theoretical concepts, our interlocutors and their worlds.

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