PUNCTA
Journal of Critical Phenomenology

RELIGION, MULTICULTURALISM, AND PHENOMENOLOGY AS A CRITICAL PRACTICE: LESSONS FROM THE ALGERIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

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On September 30, 1956, Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired, and Samia Lakhdari—women in their early twenties and members of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)—crossed the checkpoint between the Arab quarter and the European quarter of Algiers, dressed in European styles for a day at the beach and carrying bombs to be planted in cafés and bars popular with French colonial settlers in Algeria, or *pieds-noirs*.[1] This militant action was carried out in response to an attack by right-wing French *ultras*—with police complicity—on the Rue de Thèbes some months previous, attacks that had killed 70 Muslim Algerians, including children. Two out of three of the revolutionary women's bombs exploded, killing 12 and injuring 50 *pieds-noirs*, including children. The coordinated attacks were instrumental in bringing international attention to the Algerian situation and to the eventual victory of the FLN against French colonial rule in 1962 (Horne 1989, 184-86; Vince 2010). Importantly, Drif, Bouhired, and Lakhdari's clothing played a pivotal role in their success. In the decades leading up to the Algerian Revolution, French colonialists saw native Algerian society as "backwards," a "backwardness" exemplified in the widespread oppression of women and metonymically expressed in the Muslim practices of veiling women. The French campaigned for Algerian "natives" to abandon religious practices in order to embrace more modern French customs of dress and behavior (Al-Saji 2010, 876). Educated women who already at times dressed in European fashions, Drif, Bouhired, and Lakhdari defied the exotified stereotype of the "native" Algerian woman. Exploiting the colonial assumption that Algerian women dressed in European clothes and engaging in flirtatious banter with the French guards were opting to leave behind their oppressive, traditional culture and assimilating to "emancipated" modern French values, they were able to pass the checkpoint without suspicion (Drif 2017, 115; Vince 2010, 451, 454). When it suited them on other occasions, these same women again deployed clothing in order to play upon the French stereotype of the ignorant and submissive Algerian woman, donning

[1] This scene is famously dramatized in Pontecorvo (1966).

traditional veils (which in different circumstances also worked well to disguise one's face and to smuggle bombs and other supplies) and keeping their eyes downcast (Vince 2010, 451, 454). Ironically, throughout the years of the Algerian War of Independence gender relations did transform, with woman fighting alongside men and taking on substantial leadership and decision-making roles in the revolutionary efforts. However, this transformation was not thanks to the assimilation of French cultural values and practices on the part of the "native" Algerian subjects, but thanks to the experiences of Algerian women and men fighting alongside one another *against* French colonial rule (Russon 2017, 116-17).

This bloody historical episode is a rich one for helping us to understand the nature of human agency, freedom, and transformation, particularly in contexts of political oppression and multiculturalism. As Frantz Fanon (1965) explores in his essay "Algeria Unveiled," what we witness in the Algerians' evolving relationship to women's "traditional" dress is both the violent rejection of the domineering economic, political, and cultural incursion of the colonizer, and the creative (re)birth of the Algerians as a nation. However, familiar liberal conceptions of human agency can obscure the lessons that the Algerian War of Independence has to offer concerning the nature of agency and authentic transformation in unchosen, and often oppressive, multicultural contexts. Emerging predominantly—but not exclusively—from the lineage of early Christianity and the modern European culture birthed by the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, the now familiar liberal conception of agency emphasizes the sacredness of the human individual as the subject of freedom and the locus of value. This Enlightenment emphasis on individualism has historically gone hand-in-hand with the increasing secularization of European culture, which asserts a strict distinction between the secular public sphere and the private domain of religious commitment, and which thus treats religion as a separate, optional domain of human existence rather than as integral to it. These two premises of the post-Enlightenment worldview—the premise of individualism and premise of secularism—tend to lose sight of themselves *as* historically-developed, contingent premises, assuming a kind of modern objectivity of vision that contrasts with that of more collectivized and religious—read, more "traditional" and "backwards"—ways of thinking and living.

Phenomenology as a philosophical method helps us to identify cultural and historical prejudices that inform our perception of ourselves and the world, enabling us to bracket these prejudices so as to allow the world of experience to show itself in new and richer ways. In this paper, I draw on diverse phenomenological resources in order to "denaturalize" some of the individualistic and secularist prejudices that structure many of our perspectives on our own and others' experiences as cultural beings—prejudices that, I argue, have deleterious political consequences—so as to better draw out some of the principal lessons about cultural belonging and dynamic cultural transformation offered by events such as the Algerian War of Independence.

In Part I, I draw on phenomenologists Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty alongside the memoirs of Zohra Drif (one of the revolutionaries responsible for the 1956 attacks against the *pieds-noirs* in Algiers) in order to argue that rather than agency being

a matter of an individual's self-conscious rationality, agency is always formed in worldly, habitual, and intersubjective contexts. In Part II, I challenge some of the prejudices of modern secularism, drawing on phenomenologist John Russon's interpretation of religion in order to argue that rather than being a foregrounded matter of private, individual choice, religion is more basically a "background" structure of cultural worlds themselves, and thus inherent to the fabric of historical human agency. Our ways of understanding and capacities for acting as individuals are deeply cultural; crucially, however, cultures are not monoliths but rather, in Russon's words, "always *palimpsests*, always texts written on top of earlier writing" (2017, 73). What we call "Algeria" and what we call "France" are not static essences but multicultural palimpsests of Berber, Arab, Turkish, Jewish, Muslim and, since 1830, modern European sources by way of French colonization, in the case of Algeria, and Greco-Roman, Medieval Christian, their regional European neighbors (themselves complex palimpsests), and the fruits of their colonial adventures in North America, the Caribbean, India, Africa, and Indochina, in the case of France. I conclude, in Part III, by arguing that phenomenology can help us to bracket common prejudices regarding both the neutrality of our own cultures and the monolithic simplicity of other cultures, allowing us to see the manners in which our cultural horizons offer us diverse resources upon which to draw in our self-understandings in the present, and enabling more honest and just visions of multicultural human existence and political transformation to come to the fore.

I. THE WORLDED, HABITUAL, AND INTERSUBJECTIVE NATURE OF AGENCY

Enlightenment conceptions of freedom that inform much of contemporary liberal thought—what we might call the "natural attitude" of liberalism—typically hold individualistic and rationalistic conceptions of agency.[2] It is common to think of agency both in terms of a freedom from external constraint or interference, and in terms of a capacity for rational self-government in one's own behaviors and choices (see, for example, Berlin 2002 and Christman 1991). From this perspective, it is easy to see individual agency and participation in "traditional" cultural practices—particularly practices perceived from the outside as "oppressive"—as in opposition to or tension with one another. This is certainly a tendency in the discourse of liberal feminism, as Uma Narayan (2002) points out. Narayan identifies two widespread constructs in popular discourse in the "West" concerning the situations of "non-Western" women, both of which put into binary opposition individual agency and cultural oppression. The first construct Narayan calls "the prisoner of patriarchy": women are seen as the unwilling victims of such practices as veiling, *purdah* (seclusion), and arranged marriages (418). The second construct Narayan calls "the dupe of patriarchy": women are seen as uncritically "buying into" the patriarchal norms and practices of their cultures, such that what appear to be their "own" choices really are not (418-19). We can see both of these constructs at play, for example, in Susan

[2] On the natural attitude, see Husserl (1999, 33-37); see also Gadamer (1989, 300) on the seemingly "self-evident" results of understanding.

Moller Okin's (1999) "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?," in which patriarchal practices in "fundamentalist" countries and immigrant communities in the West, such as polygamy, are understood as unmitigated violations of women's individual rights, and women are presented either as vocally unwilling prisoners of these cultures (see, for example, Okin 1999, 10), or as willing participants whose willingness can only be accounted for thanks to having "imbibe[d] their sense of inferiority virtually from birth" (Okin 1998, 675).

Even when authors in the liberal tradition resist the constructs of "the prisoner of patriarchy" and the "dupe of patriarchy" and attempt to take "non-Western" women seriously as agents, a binary opposition between (individual) agency and (cultural) oppression is often still apparent. Consider the following hypothetical case from Marina Oshana of a woman who voluntarily chooses to live under Taliban law in pre-2001 Afghanistan:

> Having previously enjoyed a successful career as a physician, this woman has since chosen, under conditions free of whatever factors might disable self-awareness, and with a considered appreciation of the implications of her decision, a life of utter dependence. She can no longer practice medicine . . . She is not permitted to support herself financially. She has no voice in the manner and duration of any schooling that her children, particularly her daughters, might receive. She must remain costumed in cumbersome garb—a burqa—when in public…But a life of subservience is consistent with the Taliban woman's spiritual and social values, provides her with a sense of worth, and satisfies her notion of well-being. . . . I think it is evident that the Taliban woman is not autonomous . . . Although the Taliban woman is "master of her will"—her original decision was made autonomously, she willingly renounces her rights, and she continues to express satisfaction with the life that she has selected for herself—she now has no practical authority over her situation… Although the Taliban does what she wants, what she wants frustrates the exercise of autonomy. (2003, 104-05)

Though this woman counts as an agent in the broad liberal sense—she is free from overt external constraint and she makes choices as "master" of her own will—Oshana argues that she nevertheless gives up her autonomous agency in the meaningful sense of that term: she gives up her own "practical authority over her situation," and can thus be said to be genuinely oppressed as an agent by her religious culture.

Phenomenologically, the lived experience of agency does not admit to the binary conceptions of (individual) freedom and (cultural) oppression at play in both Okin and Oshana's arguments. Rather, phenomenological description that attends to the lived experience of some of the women in question themselves reveals that before agency is a matter of individual choice *within* a given situation, agency is born *of* meaningful situations themselves: agency is a matter of *world*. The "world" is the meaningful context in which lived experience unfolds: it is the horizon in which we are at home, in which things matter

to us, and in terms of which we can meaningfully effect our agency as individuals.[3] Rather than a collection of objects, the world is the "clearing" [*Lichtung*], as Heidegger says, in which self, things, and others assume their meaningful identities and capacities in mutual relation (1962, 171). In *Inside the Battle of Algiers: Memoir of a Woman Freedom Fighter*, Zohra Drif describes the world of her childhood, a world that was lived as inseparable from her own sense of self:

> I knew from a young age who and where I was: an Algerian in her own country. I also knew early on that my land was occupied, seized for no purpose other than rape and theft, and that the *roumi*—the Roman, the foreigner from the north—was both the rapist and the thief. I lived every moment with such an acute awareness of this fact that it became like my skin, my blood, or the beating of my heart, and was frequently revived by the events around me. As a child, when I accompanied my mother and my aunts, traipsing together across vast fields to visit the tomb of *wali salah*—a local patron saint—the women explained to me that in truth these lands belonged to such-and-such tribe, which had been dispossessed in favor of such-and-such colonist. In doing so, they transmitted to us the history, sociology, and true map of our country. (2017, 4)

In the world of the young Drif, the fields are given not as "mere things," as Heidegger says, but as "belonging to such-and-such a person" (1962, 97, 153). In other words, things are always already charged with shared meanings—and embody a shared history—within the larger context of a world, and one's own identity is inseparable from this larger context, which is felt, in Drif's words, in one's skin, blood, and the beating of one's heart. As Heidegger writes, "a bare subject without a world" is never given (152). We are never individual, worldless subjects in a position to make an "original decision" (in Oshana's words) about the world in which we would like to belong; rather we always already find ourselves, in Judith Butler's words, within "a realm of social norms that we do not fully choose, but that provides the horizon and the resource for any sense of choice that we have" (2004, 33).[4]

Another premise tacitly presumed in the kind of liberal thinking identified above is that individual agency is largely a matter of self-conscious rationality. A phenomenological account of agency, by contrast, reveals that our capacities as agents are more basically pre-reflective and habitual than self-conscious and rational. One's habitual skills open up the world in specific ways: it is because one can walk that the fields between home and the

[3] On the existential experience of being at home in the world, see Jacobson (2009, 2010) and Russon (2017, 35-60). On the way in which our developed identities are reflected back to us in the things with which we are educated to skillfully engage, see John Dewey's discussion of the human environment as "the things with which a man *varies*" (2008, 15).

[4] See also Heidegger's discussion of "thrownness" (1962, 219-24), and Young's discussion of this concept in the context of inherited group identities (1990, 46-47).

tomb of *wali salah* are given as traversable, because one can speak Arabic that the stories of one's mother and aunts can be incorporated into the map of one's country. This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he argues that "[c]onsciousness is originarily not an 'I think that,' but rather an 'I can'" (2012, 139). These embodied powers for action are for the most part not foregrounded in self-conscious or rational experience, but rather persist in the background of our experience as "the darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance" (103).

When certain aspects of the world are illuminated through habit, however, other aspects are obscured; as Iris Marion Young argues, "[f]or any bodily existence…an 'I cannot' may appear to set limits to the 'I can'" (1980, 147). We can see the dynamic of capacity and incapacity at the heart of all embodied, determinate agency in Drif's description of her experience living on her own for the first time as a student at the University of Algiers, a French colonial institution at which Drif was one of a small minority of Muslim students, and one of an even smaller minority of Muslim women students. Drif reports that her mother, who passionately supported the education of Muslim girls and women, sent her off to university with the admonition to make her people proud, which meant both excelling academically and upholding the Muslim Algerian code of behavior for young women, specifically when it came to the strict separation of the sexes outside of immediate family members. Drif's mother said to her: "'[Y]ou must never forget that we are not French: they have their culture and traditions, and we have ours. Keep in mind that you are responsible for your honor and all your people's, and that by your conduct, you will either be the key that will open the door of all possibilities to our other girls, or you will close it forever" (2017, 35). Drif writes that she and her close friend and classmate Samia Lakhdari (one of the other women bombers)

> threw ourselves into this challenge as one would into a new religion . . . Looking back, I can now see that we were very unpleasant—even unbearable. So much so that one day in the study hall, when a fellow "native" student approached me to ask for some information about one of our classes, my instinctive reaction to reject him was so brutal that the poor boy took to his heels without even asking for explanation. (37)

Drif's mother's injunction, which simultaneously gave her a specific route into being a passionate and able young scholar and forbade certain kinds of interaction, became imbued in her habitual ways of perceiving and responding to the world, making certain things appear as possible and others as impossible at the level not of self-conscious understanding but of "instinct," or second nature.

These considerations point to the limitations of individualistic and rationalistic conceptions of "choice." They indicate that when we want to change things in our lives, effective agency requires not the escape from habit into thinking—and not the triumph of

reason over passion—but rather the formation of new and different habits.[5] Paradoxically, it is by submitting ourselves to new disciplines and practices that we develop new capacities as agents. Saba Mahmood writes:

> To clarify this paradox, we might consider the example of the virtuoso pianist who submits herself to the often painful regime of disciplinary practice, as well as to the hierarchical structures of apprenticeship, in order to acquire the ability—the requisite agency—to play the instrument with mastery. Importantly, her agency is predicated upon her ability to be taught, a condition classically referred to as "docility." (2005, 29)

As an example of such agency through submission, Mahmood describes the content of a conversation between two women participating in an after-work women's group at a mosque in downtown Cairo in the mid-1990s, in the context of the Egyptian women's piety movement. One woman describes difficulty waking up at dawn for the first of the five daily prayers [*salawāt*] required of Muslims, and the other offers her the following advice: treat the dawn prayer [*salāt*] as something that one *must* do—as important as eating—and one will find that, with *Allah* closer to one's mind as a result, the difficulties of mundane life become easier. Over time, one will *want* to wake up for the morning prayer: it is not desire that leads to action, but disciplined action that is productive of desire; not good character that leads to good *malaka* (habit), but the disciplined practice of good *malaka* that give rise to good character (2005, 125-26, 134-39). Changes in one area of life will reverberate throughout one's existence. We can see the truth of these points about habituation in Drif's personal transformation while at the University of Algiers, during which time she and Lakhdari sought out and joined the armed wing of the FLN. "Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world," Merleau-Ponty writes (2012, 145). Militant discipline to the cause of an independent Algeria distinctly broadened Drif's horizons and radically changed her everyday life. For example, in her desire to make contact with the FLN, Drif could be seen walking and talking passionately about her aspirations to change the Algerian situation with young Muslim men to whom she was not related, hoping to find a route into the necessarily highly-secretive organization. The perceived possibilities and impossibilities of Drif's habitual world underwent a dramatic change.

Implicit in these phenomenological discussions of the "worlded" and habitual nature of agency is the manner in which individual agency is deeply bound up with other people. The narrative arc of Drif's life from childhood through to her militant involvement in the Algerian War of Independence as a young woman is certainly one of increasing individuality and independence—Drif displays a striking mind of her own—as she moves from the family home into the wider world of Algeria, but it is at the same time one of developing, changing, and inaugurating relationships with other people, from the stories

[5] For an excellent discussion of this point, see Russon (2003, 75-121, esp. 86-87).

of her older women relatives that mapped her landscape, to her mother's injunction at the heart of her habits at the start of her university studies, to a deep and abiding friendship with her "sister" and comrade in arms Lakhdari, to the "brotherly" relationships Drif came to form with Ali Ammar (Ali La Pointe) and Saâdi Yacef (El Kho), key male leaders in the FLN. Throughout her burgeoning as a revolutionary, Drif was also nourished by the example of figures from the history of Algeria and of the Islamic community [*ummah*] more broadly, as well as from ideas and events from the French tradition studied at the *lycée* and at university. Who we are and what we can do as individuals is inherently intersubjective, and the determinate ways in which we realize our agency always requires, in Simone de Beauvoir's words, an "apprenticeship of freedom" (2015, 37).

If our choices always take place within the unchosen context of a meaningful world and through our pre-reflective reliance on our habitual powers, then we are never simply "'masters of our will,'" as Oshana says (2003, 104). And if our identities are always already intersubjectively bound up with the identities of others—interpersonally, culturally, and cross-culturally—then we are never in a position to make a self-conscious, "original choice" concerning our group belonging—concerning the intersubjective context that gave birth to choices *as* meaningful, and to our identities *as* choosers, to begin with. As Russon argues:

> [B]ecoming a member of society—becoming self-conscious—really requires *not* knowing who one is, not knowing what it means to be a member of society, not being explicitly self-conscious in one's social identity. One becomes a reflective self precisely through not being reflectively self-conscious of this process of becoming such. (1995, 516)

Understanding free agency in terms of an extra-worldly self in a position to make "original choices" with regard to her agency as an individual or with regard to her cultural belonging misses the mark; worse, such impoverished understanding can have deleterious political consequences. Before making this case in Part III, however, let us turn to a phenomenological account of religious life, and of how we become self-conscious individuals only within the meaningful parameters of what is "religiously" given as obvious and of value.

II. RELIGIOUS GESTURES AND CULTURAL HORIZONS

The unduly individualistic and rationalistic vision of agency also extends to our understanding of religion. Two of the principal marks of secularization in post-Enlightenment European modernity are, first, the separation of religion and state and, second, the increased differentiation of society into discrete religious, economic, political, scientific, aesthetic, educational, and familial spheres (Mahmood 2005, 47). From a secular perspective, religion is viewed as an optional matter of private conscience rather than as pervasive in human existence. We see such a perspective tacitly at play in Oshana's argument about the Taliban woman quoted above: this hypothetical woman's participation in a

conservative religious culture is conceived in terms of this woman's private reason and will as an individual agent, and in terms of her personal preference satisfaction. Furthermore, religion is not uncommonly seen as recalcitrant to Enlightenment reason and as responsible for much of the violence, oppression, and war in the contemporary world (see, for example, Dawkins 1977 and Russell 1957, 22). We find a feminist version of this attitude with both Okin and Oshana: individual women are understood as needing to have their individual rights protected against the religions that oppress them.[6]

In *Sites of Exposure: Art, Politics, and the Nature of Experience*, Russon argues that before religion is a matter of individual belief it is a fundamentally cultural matter (2017, 81). First and foremost, religion is the way in which a culture collectively affirms its sense of what is of ultimate value, and correspondingly defines itself in relation to that "absolute" (2015, 45-46). Indeed, in an earlier essay, Russon argues that the phenomenon of "world" described by Heidegger is already inherently religious. He explains:

> It is in the ritual laying out of how to behave—which means how I should act, and how things should be acted upon—that what will count as the obvious and immediate significance of things is established. It is the world made significant through ritual which allows the members of a society . . . to find themselves reflected and confirmed in the stuff of their environment. . . . Thus, far from being the experience of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the *core* of religion is precisely the experience of things as *familiar*. (1995, 517-18)

Understood thusly, religion is most basically not a powerful, foregrounded personal experience, but a shared, background condition *of* experience. The things and structures of our built world and the multitude of our embodied practices work together to give voice to our collective, pre-reflective understanding of what is of ultimate value—that is, to our collective, pre-reflective understanding of the "divine"—as historical communities.

Contra the understanding of religion as a discrete domain of human existence, religion can phenomenologically be understood to pervade all aspects of cultural existence. Architecture is a prime example of how a people's sense of who they are is "reflected and confirmed in the stuff of their environment." As G.W. F. Hegel describes in his *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* and as Heidegger makes vivid in his essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," a structure such as a Greek temple is expressive of a people's tacit religious commitments concerning the relationship between nature, the gods, and the human community. Hegel identifies a number of key features of the Greek temple: it is built with an eye to the natural environment that surrounds it, into which it fits seamlessly; it is at the same time built according to the mathematical laws of harmony and regularity; it is a

[6] For a helpful criticism of Okin's impoverished view of religion, particularly in the context of Islam, see Al-Hibri (1999).

public, open enclosure that is built on a human scale, emphasizing breadth over height, and that does not clearly demarcate between inside and outside; and it provides a house for the god it is built to honor that is incorporated into, rather than made remote from, the human world (1975b, 660-83). Compare the collective self-understanding that both contributed to and was reinforced by the existence of the Greek temple to the kind of dwelling opened up by the Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul, as described by Russon:

> Seen from a distance, the gentle, billowing curves of the massive domes suggest an attitude of spiritual serenity, especially when complemented by the ethereal call to prayer that emanates from the *muezzin* singing high in the minaret and that pervades from above the whole city environment. The huge, unarticulated interior space similarly communicates a calm vastness that embraces and exceeds the community of worshipers. Rather than being a building on a human scale that communicates unity with the natural world, the mosque seems to point to our need to submit ourselves to an infinite beyond—a beautiful, beckoning reality that offers itself precisely when we withdraw from the everyday terms of natural life. (Russon 2017, 70)[7]

Very different visions of nature, of the human community, and of ultimate value are built into the cultural landscape itself, shaping what is "obvious" and generally unquestioned for the individuals who dwell within its familiar horizons. Works such as the Greek temple and the Islamic mosque, as Heidegger writes, articulate "what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave" (1993, 169). Religion does not take place "in" the minds of the devoted; rather, the beliefs and practices of the devoted emerge and take place against the meaningful background of the religious.

Clothing, like architecture, does not merely fulfill a utilitarian purpose; it can be a religious gesture. This is certainly true of Islamic practices of veiling, practices that have some basis in the Qur'an but that probably did not become widespread until three or four generations after the Prophet Mohammed's death, largely influenced—cultures being palimpsests—by the Byzantine Christians' practices of segregating and veiling women (Armstrong 2002, 16). Islamic veiling traditions have been highly diverse historically and regionally, and, in the colonial and postcolonial contexts, have been a potent symbol of

[7] Compare Russon's discussion of the Mosque to Hegel's discussion of romantic architecture, with its focus on European cathedrals (1975b, 684-700 and 1975a, 517-612). It is important to note that European cathedrals were heavily influenced by Islamic architecture, with Crusaders bringing many of the latter's concepts back to Europe in the twelfth century (Wainwright 2020).

both religious piety and cultural preservation for many Muslim women.[8] Learning to wear a veil is not a simple matter: it is a matter of learning and discipline. Marnia Lazreg describes the violence of having to forego the carefree relationship to one's own body and the outdoor environment enjoyed in girlhood in order to learn to wear veils of varying levels of restrictiveness in adolescence, and Drif describes the prohibitive awkwardness of attempting to wear the traditional *haïk* of the Casbah neighborhood in Algiers for the first time, as a revolutionary disguise (Lazreg 2009, 29-31; Drif 2017, 65, 150). But when girls and women do become habituated to the traditional veils of their regions or neighborhoods, these religious garments can become incorporated into what Merleau-Ponty calls the "body schema": they become like extensions of the bodily "I can" itself, and thus can become a part of, rather than an obstacle to, the girl or the woman's agency, in the background of her experience rather than the foreground (2012, 100-05).[9] This is a complicated matter, since identity, and hence agency, is dynamic and can habitually realize itself in different manners in different circumstances. For example, Drif describes her lived compulsion to re-don the veil that she had been wearing since the age of twelve when she went home to her family for holidays, even though she had ceased wearing it at the university in Algiers (2017, 20). Removing one's habitual, religious clothing is, therefore, no small thing. Drawing on his work as a psychiatrist in Algeria during the early years of the Revolution, Fanon reports that newly unveiled women dreamt of their bodies "being cut up into bits, put adrift; the limbs seem[ing] to lengthen indefinitely . . . The unveiled body seems to escape, to dissolve. She has an impression of being improperly dressed, even of being naked" (1965, 59). It is in light of the veil becoming an extension of the lived body that we should understand the particular violence of the French pressuring Algerian women to remove the veil: Fanon argues that masquerading as the secular desire to modernize or civilize a "backwards" and oppressive traditional culture, it in fact betrays a desire to undress the Algerian woman akin to voyeurism and rape (42).[10] Rather than being an optional garment that she can don or discard at will and without consequence, Fanon sees the veil is intimately related to the individual's sense of identity and belonging in relationship to the practices and values of her world, and the French's desire to "unveil" the Algerian women is at once a bodily violation of individuals and the domination of a world.

[8] On the regional variation of the veil in Algeria, see Fanon (1965, 36n1, 36n2, 36n3, and 36n4) and Horne (1987, 49). For a discussion of the resurgence of veiling practices in the wake of the French colonization of Algeria in 1830, see Lazreg (1994, 53-54). For a discussion of how the veil has become used as a symbol of resistance to colonization and imperialism following the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, see Armstrong (2002, 166) and Hoff (2018, 347).

[9] For other analyses of the experience of wearing a veil that draw on Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body schema, see Al-Saji (2010, 890) and Deyhim (unpublished).

[10] Indeed, the French engaged in public, ritualistic unveiling of Algerian women in their attempt to demonstrate the cooperation of the "natives" with the colonial regime. In Lazreg's analysis, "to unveil women at a well-choreographed ceremony added to the event a symbolic dimension that dramatized the one constant feature of the Algerian occupation by France: its obsession with women" (1994, 135). See also Drif's regular comparison of colonialism to rape, as well as reports of the ubiquity of actual rape of Algerian women civilians and militants as a military tactic on the part of the French (2017, 4, 70; Lazreg 1994, 124; Vince 2015, 84-85, 240-44).

If we understand religion in Russon's sense as the inherited, collective manner in which "a world becomes comfortably available for us" before it is a foregrounded matter of self-conscious, personal belief, then it no longer makes sense simply to contrast the modern Western, secular worldview with traditional, religious worldviews (1995, 517). This is true because—as we shall discuss further in Part III—"traditional" cultures do not exist as monoliths stuck in the past but as dynamic realities that are what they are in ongoing dialogue with the world around them. But it is also true because since its emergence with the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, modern secular culture has come to constitute a kind of "religion" of its own—a disenchanted religion, but a religion nonetheless. The individual human being is what is of ultimate value in this "religion." In Shannon Hoff's characterization, modernity has taken shape "around the demand that respect be accorded [the] individual, whatever her beliefs, values, or qualities . . . [and] involves an assertion of the priority that the individual be able to live *on her own terms*" (2014, 355). We can see this way of "enframing" things (as Heidegger says in "The Question Concerning Technology") according to the supreme value of individuals resonating in all spheres of modern life, such as the spheres of science, economics, politics, and aesthetics—and this despite secularism's supposed division of existence into discrete spheres (1993, 324-26). Against traditional hierarchies and the monopolistic claims of the Church over human knowledge, the modern scientific method celebrates the equality and interchangeability of human individuals as knowers; as we see in its emphasis on repeatability, modern science values what *anyone* can observe through experiments in the controlled setting of a scientific laboratory (Russon 2017, 89-90). Modern capitalism quite swiftly overtook the traditional social hierarchies of feudalism, proclaiming, in Karl Marx's words, the values of "Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham" for all individuals (1994, 273).[11] And the institution of universal human rights celebrates the dignity of each individual human being as a rational agent capable of self-determination and deserving of protection against social institutions that would deny her the flourishing of this capacity (Russon 2017, 81-86, 88-89, and 91-92). On the one hand, the "sacred" value of individualism is enormously emancipatory: it in principle frees individuals from the fetters of hierarchical social arrangements that once defined their possibilities from birth. On the other hand, and ironically, individualism comes at a cost; the sacredness of each individual can turn into what Russon calls "indifferent individuality," where the equality of each and all is transformed into the interchangeability of one atomistically-conceived individual for any other (100). We can see this ambivalence of the "religion" of modernity expressed in the architectural structure of the skyscraper, which, in stark contrast to the Greek temple or the Islamic mosque, asserts human power over nature—elevating the human being to the status of "lord of the earth," as Heidegger says—and, with its efficient design and "panoptically" arranged cubicles, transforms human

[11] See Russon's discussion of modern capitalism (2017, 93-95).

individuals into "human resources" (Heidegger 1993, 332).[12] Individuals who fervently believe in the liberating values of capitalism or in modern progress are nourished by the cultural backdrop that makes these beliefs seem obvious. From the other side, individuals who take a self-consciously critical stance on such values might find themselves pre-reflectively living in terms of them all the same: such is the power of religion—understood in terms of the collective cultural background in which individuals are formed *as* the individuals that they are—to render the dominant ways in which we colectively live largely unquestioned.

Insofar as they define the domain of what is lived as largely obvious and unquestioned, all religious worldviews must render invisible their status *as* worldviews. However, with its emphasis on atomistic individualism and with its unparalleled imperial success, Western modernity has been perhaps uniquely recalcitrant in acknowledging its own worlded, historical, and "religious" character. In what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice," Western modernity tends to insist on its own view as uniquely objective rather than acknowledging and clarifying its own cultural and historical vantage point (1989, 273). As we shall see in what follows, this is not only an epistemological error, but has deleterious political consequences—harmful political consequences that phenomenology as a critical practice can help us to address.

III. PHENOMENOLOGY AND INTERCULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

When the rituals and practices of the dominant culture are rendered obvious and unremarkable, the rituals and practices of non-dominant or minority cultures are enabled to stand out, in their foreignness and exoticness, precisely *as* (stereotyped) cultural practices (Khader 2016, 731; Russon 1995, 519-25; Young 1990, 58-61). The opening lines of Fanon's "Algeria Unveiled" show us how such cultural imperialism operates at the level of perception itself. Fanon writes: "The way people clothe themselves, together with the traditions of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness, that is to say the one that is the most immediately perceptible" (1965, 35). As Alia Al-Saji argues, however, when we read these lines we should ask ourselves, "most visible to whom?" (2010, 883). Fanon is taking on here the voice of the French colonialist or the tourist, who typically sees upon arriving in Algeria the prevalence of a homogeneous symbol of a backwards, oppressive, monolithic culture in the form of its traditional clothing. By contrast, for the Algerian, as we have seen, the traditional clothing of women is both heterogeneous and rendered largely invisible through habituation; it becomes less spread out in front of the gaze as it hides behind it, incorporated into the body schema. Russon makes a parallel point in his discussion of the "religious" nature of language. He writes:

[12] On panopticism, see Foucault (1997, 195-230). For a discussion of modern skyscrapers that extends Hegel's discussion of architecture into contemporary practices drawing on Heidegger and Foucault, see Delikta (2018).

> I once went to hear a Russian poet giving a reading of his work. He performed some of his works in English translation, and some in the original Russian. I do not speak Russian, and when he read the Russian poems I heard only the sounds. Periodically people in the audience would laugh or applaud, but I could in no way draw the connections between their actions and what he was saying. What I could do, however, was listen to the "music" of the language, that is, I could attend to *how it sounded*: I could notice whether it was full of hard sounds or soft, I could notice frequently repeated sounds, and so on. Then he would speak English, and everything would change. Suddenly I heard *meanings*: a world of human significance was *immediately* communicated to me when he spoke . . . just as I am sure that my reader cannot fail to find the words of this printed text immediately intelligible. Further, when I tried to isolate the mere audio component to compare English "music" to Russian "music," I could not, and in all honesty I must say that I do not know what English sounds like. (Russon 1995, 520-21)

We can say, likewise, that the French colonialist did not in all honesty know what modern Western clothing looked like: the subtleties of how this or that French individual dressed immediately conveyed meanings—say, about wealth or taste—but these subtle variations in meaning actually concealed, rather than revealed, the "look" of this cultural practice *as* a cultural practice. The French's stereotypical positing of the veil as a metonymic symbol of the oppression of Algerian women goes hand-in-hand with a rendering invisible of their own "enlightened" practices as themselves cultural and religious; for example, it goes hand-in-hand with obliviousness to the manner in which modern French apparel such as high-heeled shoes and adornment practices such as makeup might not be merely the expression of individual choice but a cultural norm contributing to the sexual objectification of women (Al-Saji 2010, 876, 890; Narayan 2002, 424, 426).[13]

Cultural imperialism's "Othering" is not simply reversible, as it is, arguably, for the Russian and the English speaker in the context described by Russon: the situation is definitively not equivalent for the respective invisibility and visibility of cultural dress for the Algerian and for the French. With a military and economic stranglehold on Algeria—a stranglehold that hypocritically denied the rights of freedom and equality to the "native" Algerian population—the French wielded modernity as a weapon. In addition to asserting

[13] Indeed, we can see a version of this problem in Western feminist responses to "Othered" women such as that of Okin—misapprehensions of the nature of agency and religion that have been linked in this century to support for state coercion and foreign intervention in the name of "saving" women. See, for example, Pollitt's (1999) support for the outlaw of veiling in France and the American organization Feminist Majority Foundation's support for the American invasion of Afghanistan (Rich 2014). See also Narayan's (2002, 425-31) and Al-Saji's (2010) criticisms of Western feminist support for state coercion with regard to practices said to harm women in non-Western cultures. For a discussion of the manner in which the discourse of European feminism has been used and abused in colonial contexts in the Middle East, specifically with regard to veiling, see Leila Ahmed (1992, 144-68).

the unremarkable "normality" of their own ways of dressing, the French asserted their own cultural values with regard to gender relations as "emancipated," and expressed paternalistic consternation at the Algerians' "backward" failure to happily embrace these values. From the perspective of Muslim Algerians, the European values in question were not themselves necessarily the problem. As Karen Armstrong argues, during their early encounters with an increasingly powerful Europe during the eighteenth century,

> [t]here was . . . no intrinsic reason why Muslims should reject the ethos of the new Europe. Over the centuries they had cultivated virtues that would also be crucial to the modern West: a passion for social justice, an egalitarian polity, freedom of speech and . . . a de facto . . . separation of religion and politics. (2002, 136)

What the Algerian Muslims resisted when they refused to change their clothing or for wives to accompany their husbands to *pied-noir* parties was rather the violence, hypocrisy, and paternalism of colonialism itself (Drif 2017, 124; Fanon 1965, 40; Horne 1987, 50-51). As Fanon writes, "[b]ehind these psychological reactions, beneath this immediate and almost unanimous response, we again see the overall attitude of rejection of the values of the occupier, *even if these values objectively be worth choosing*" (1965, 62-63, emphasis added).

Phenomenology as a philosophical practice provides a powerful route to identifying and uncovering the specific kinds of epistemological and cultural violence at play in such situations as colonial Algeria. It enables us to estrange and interrogate the relationship between perception and what is perceived, which ordinarily remains familiar and unquestioned. Phenomenology requires that we turn our attention from the *contents* of our lived experience in the natural attitude to the *forms* of our experience itself, bringing to the foreground the structures of vision that normally reside in the background.[14] Sara Ahmed identifies two senses of background that are relevant for this kind of phenomenological work:

> A background can refer to the "ground or parts situated in the rear" . . . or to the portions of the picture represented at a distance, which in turn allow what is "in" the foreground to acquire the shape that it does, as a figure or object. Both of these meanings point to the "spatiality" of the background. We can also think of background as having a temporal dimension . . . We might speak . . . of "family background," which would refer not just to the past of an individual but also to other kinds of histories, which shape an individual's arrival into the world. (2006, 38)

[14] On phenomenology as a special kind of estrangement from the natural attitude, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of phenomenology as an attitude of "'wonder' before the world," and as "loosen[ing] the intentional threads that connect us to the world in order to make them appear" (2012, lxxvii) and Gayle Salamon's discussion of these passages, which she argues renders phenomenological description not a form of mastery that confirms what the transcendental subject already knows, but a kind of "rupture, a making-strange of the world" (2018, 11).

Phenomenological description enables us to begin to seek out "the conditions of emergence" for both things in the perceived world and for the embodied, situated perceiver her or himself (38). "Spatially," the attitude of cultural imperialism can learn to interrupt the naturalness of its own stereotypical, Orientalist enframing of the Muslim world, so as to recognize this enframing *as* responsible for the appearance of the veiled Muslim woman as a monolithic symbol of the oppressed Other rather than as a personally and culturally complex subject with her own intelligent point of view on the shared situation. "Temporally," the attitude of cultural imperialism can learn to estrange and interrogate what is normally given as familiar and unquestioned, so as to let the complex histories sedimented in its own vision and in the things of the world begin to come to light *as* historical rather than natural. Much as Marx teaches us to see everyday commodities not as naturally given values but as congealed human labor, phenomenology can help us to experience both one's own ways of seeing and the appearance of things and others not as natural givens but as the manner in which long histories of unequal relations of power show themselves in the world (1994, 230-43; Ahmed 2006, 41).

When one ceases stereotyping and exotifying other cultures, then possibilities for more honest kinds of criticism of oppressive practices become possible (Russon 1995, 519-25). Phenomenology can help with this, too. When we attend phenomenologically to the forms of experience as it is actually lived in diverse geographical and historical contexts, then individuals are enabled to appear not as stereotypical victims of monolithic, oppressive cultures, but as complex beings who have become who they are, with the specific capacities that they enjoy and struggles that they face, in particular, habitual, and intersubjective cultural worlds.[15] On the one hand, identity and agency in all their richness and complexity are revealed as concrete, particular, embedded, and historical rather than abstract, universal, unencumbered, and ahistorical. On the other hand, identity and agency in all their richness and complexity are revealed as sharing certain common features across great empirical variation: they are shown, precisely, to always be matters of world, habit, and intersubjectivity. When we recognize this, we can criticize *both* the liberal-secular human rights discourses that advance their claims as if individual identity and agency were not deeply dependent upon worlds, processes of habituation, and intersubjective support, *and* cultural practices that work to suppress the emergence of agential individuals from the worlds, processes of habituation, and intersubjective support that nurture this emergence (even when these cultural practices wish to deny the claims of this individual agency).

Consider the following description from Drif of a special domain of women's agency in the context of colonial Algiers in the 1950s:

[15] On the imperative of engaging with a diversity of cultural experiences in our phenomenological studies of human existence, see Merleau-Ponty's re-working of Husserl's method of imaginative variation (1964b, 70, 90, 92 and 1964a, 120).

> The only domain where women enjoyed unquestioned, inviolable sovereignty was the *hammam* [public baths], where women of all backgrounds, social standings, and ages gathered in solidarity, momentarily free from the twin powers that imposed themselves upon us—men and the French . . . This was where the details of great exploits and achievements reached us, narrated as only Algerian women could do. They wove tales like they wove carpets or embroidery, with meticulously recounted places, dates, names, and other minutiae. As if anticipating our imaginations' wanderings, they also added links to our own history and legends, our illustrious ancestors, our mythical heroes, and even to the *souhaba*—the companions of our Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). In the *hammam*, women told us that henceforth our heroes were called *moudjahidine*, or combatants, and that those who were killed by the French army would be known as *chouhada*, or martyrs . . . We lapped up the words, not missing a single detail of their stories, which could be divulged only in this haven of trust and secrecy. (Drif 2017, 41)

What we witness here is diverse women who are very much *of* a cultural world, but not simply reducible *to* this world: we witness creative agents in the process of realizing their agency precisely in terms of a shared cultural and historical world that they know intimately and love. To know and love one's own cultural and historical world is not to be incapable of criticizing it, however; to say that individuals are cultural through and through is not to say that they are simply the passive "dupes" of culture, to adapt Narayan's phrase. Drif describes a potent domain of women's agency that bypasses oppressive forces *within* their own culture—"men"—precisely in order to advance the cause of Algerian independence and oppose the forces that undermine this cause—"the French." But this is done not by insisting on the rights of individual women *apart from* cultural world, habit, and intersubjectivity, but rather by adopting a critical stance towards oppressive practices from *within* a cultural world, and deploying one's agency to realize the potentials of this cultural world in an emancipatory and inclusive manner.[16]

What we witness in Drif's description in addition to the "worlded" and intersubjective nature of agency is, therefore, the palimpsestic richness of cultures: our cultural heritages are not monolithic, but open to multiple, fecund, and divergent interpretations (Russon 2017, 73). Indeed, there is no religious culture "in itself"; rather, as many *ulama* [religious and legal scholars] have recognized since the early days of Islam, religious cultures are *always* a matter of interpretation on the part of those living them. Even the most traditional and conservative visions of how societies should be organized on the basis of their foundational

[16] Narayan criticizes the conservative or fundamentalist strategy of pitting feminism against a nationalist love for one's own culture, and of accusing women who embrace feminism are "cultural traitors" or "stooges of Western imperialism" (1998, 91). See also Lazreg's discussion of Algerian women's rejection of French feminism—and rejection of French women's attempts to advocate for Algerian women's rights—but concurrent admiration for emancipatory changes in women's status in Middle Eastern and Asian countries (1994, 94).

religious principles are, precisely, *visions*: they are situated, interpretive stances on how a people should relate to its own past, and on what in its heritage should be taken up and what ignored. However, ultra-conservative or "fundamentalist" religious groups—such as the Taliban in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001—seek to deny the interpretive and hence agential nature of their own stance, on the one hand, and the ineluctably interpretive and hence agential nature of the individuals they seek to control, on the other.[17] A story about 'Ali, one of Mohammed's close companions and his fourth successor as leader of the Muslim community [*ummah*], captures this insight from an Islamic perspective. As recounted by Khaled Abou El-Fadl:

> . . . members of the Khawarij accused 'Ali of accepting the judgment and dominion (*hakimiyya*) of human beings instead of abiding by the dominion of God's law. Upon hearing of this accusation, 'Ali called upon the people to gather and brought a large copy of the Qu'ran. 'Ali touched the Qu'ran, commanding it to speak to the people and inform them about God's law. The people gathered around 'Ali and one of them exclaimed, "What are you doing! The Qu'ran cannot speak, for it is not a human being." Upon hearing this, 'Ali exclaimed that this is exactly the point he was trying to make! The Qu'ran, 'Ali stated, is but ink and paper, and it is human beings who give effect to it according to their limited personal judgments. (2003, 319)

When we recognize the ineluctably interpretive nature of even the most submissive existence, Oshana's imaginary Taliban woman can be seen to inhabit an inherently self-contradictory stance, however much she—or any advocate of a "fundamentalist" interpretation of any religion—might labor to cover over this contradiction. As Armstrong argues, "[a]ny 'reformation,' however conservative its intention, is always a new departure, and an adaptation of the faith to the particular challenges of the reformer's own time" (2002, 76).[18]

In contrast to Oshana's imaginary Taliban woman, observe Drif, Lakhdari, and Bouhired's creative relationship to their own identity as Muslim women in the following anecdote from Drif, in which she describes the three young women breaking into hysterical laughter at something while hiding out in the Casbah in the wake of the young women's bombings in Algiers:

> It wasn't long before Lalla [the young women's elderly host] came and lectured us to remember that our Prophet (peace be upon him)

[17] As Hegel demonstrates in his analysis of lordship and bondage, even the active submission and carrying out of orders on the part of the slave requires the exercise of understanding, agency, and the capacity to reshape the things of her world (1977, 111-19). For an interpretation of Hegel's analysis of Sophocles's *Antigone* in light of the master-slave dialectic and the inevitability of interpretation and conscience, even when one takes oneself to be simply playing one's prescribed "role," see Russon (2004, 59-69).

[18] See also Armstrong's interpretation of religious fundamentalism as a particularly modern phenomenon, and one intimately related to European colonialism and its legacy (2002, 164-75).

> recommended total discretion for women, whose voices should stay inaudible even when they prayed! We teased her in response, recalling that our Prophet (peace be upon him) loved women and music, and fell into another fit of uncontained laughter, leaving her to conclude that we were three truly sorry *moudjahidate*. (2017, 142)

For Drif, Lakhdari, and Bouhired, what it meant to be women and pious Muslims in Algeria in the 1950s was not a question that came with ready-made answers handed down from a static past, but a question that required creative interpretations of a dynamic past in light of the realities and demands of the present situation. Sometimes—as we already saw in our discussion of changing habits in Part I—being a pious Muslim required breaking social rules for women that, though they were by no means the only way to interpret Mohammed's teachings on the proper relationship between the sexes, had previously been lived as inviolable.

Something is fundamentally amiss in political situations that fail to recognize and honor the historically complex, dynamic, and interpretive nature of human existence, be these political situations those of colonial violence or of "traditional" cultural regimes. But phenomenology as a critical practice can do more than help us to identify modern liberal-secular prejudices that deny the formative powers of world, habituation, and intersubjectivity, and it can do more than help us to criticize social and political institutions that fail to live up to the inherently interpretive and agential nature of human experience. Phenomenology as a critical practice can also help us to articulate more honest forms of cultural identity and more just forms of cross-cultural engagement in a thoroughly multicultural world. Above, we spoke of cultural, "religious" worlds as horizons of significance, but, as Gadamer argues with his concept of a "fusion of horizons," it is important to note that horizons are not prisons but rather openings onto a beyond (1989, 299-306; see also Alcoff 2005, 94-102 and Taylor 1995, 67). Horizons are not fixed in space, but move with the one moving, changing and expanding in our encounters with other perspectives and *their* horizons. We can see a fusion of horizons at play in the manner in which emancipatory social and political change in fact occurs in history, and, by descriptively attending to the nature of such change, we can arrive at some normative prescriptions for how we should approach intercultural criticism and dialogue going forward.

With Algeria officially gaining independence from French colonial rule in 1962, the Algerian War of Independence became a potent symbol for decolonial movements around the world. There is much to learn not only from the victory of the Algerian revolutionaries, but also from the strategies deployed to achieve this victory. In order to obtain freedom and independence, the Algerian revolutionaries drew in surprising and creative ways on cultural resources from their own (palimpsestic) national history and from the history of Islam. For example, Berber Muslims, integral to the Algerian struggle against the French occupying forces, were formerly a people informed by Jewish culture in North Africa before being "unified" during Muslim conquest of the Maghreb in the seventh century A.D—an invasion which, as legend has it, the Judaized Berbers resisted under the military leadership

of Dihya, the "Berber queen" or "Jewish sorceress," who continues to be a potent symbol of both resistance to foreign invasion and feminine power (Lazreg 1994, 20-21). Though women in the FLN had to engage in activities that would normally be in violation of Islamic principles as widely interpreted in Algeria in the 1950s, they were presented with examples to emulate of women who had fought alongside men throughout Islamic history (Lazreg 1994, 137). The FLN also maintained certain forms of "traditional" gender relations by recontextualizing them in light of present needs, organizing battalions according to familial structures with men and women calling each other *khouya* (brother) and *oukh't* (sister) and with traditional gestures of respect for elders (men and women) maintained (Vince 2010, 465). As well as drawing in creative ways on Algerian and Islamic history, the revolutionaries drew in subversive ways on cultural resources from their French occupiers. As we have seen, women revolutionaries donned modern French clothing, hair dye, and makeup in order to smuggle weapons across French checkpoints, and they also drew on their French educations—which allowed them to study philosophical and literary works from Ancient Greece and Rome, from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and from Marxism and Existentialism—for spiritual inspiration and intellectual support (Vince 2010, 452-54; Drif 2017, 103, 108, 112). Finally, the Algerian revolutionaries had their courage and conviction bolstered by the examples of other successful armed resistances and revolutions, such as the victory in Indochina (now Vietnam) against French colonialism in 1954 and—ironically—the French Resistance against the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1944.[19]

What we see here is a complex fusion of horizons in which two remarkable things occur. First, modern European ideas—such as the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen—are given new, concrete life and, arguably, are enabled to become more fully themselves by being "transpose[d]," as Gadamer says, into new contexts (1989, 302). Second, Algerian culture—including its social norms around gender—becomes irrevocably transformed, as well. Though it would not be immune from fundamentalist backlashes in the ensuing decades, "traditional" gender relations in Algeria—including the "traditional" dress of women—could never simply be the "same" again. As Fanon argues, after the Algerian victory the veil was "stripped once and for all of its exclusively traditional dimension" (1965, 63). And as Russon argues, the French got what they wanted, but not in the manner expected or hoped for (2017, 116-17).

Fusions of horizons need not be peaceful. Algerian culture was irreversibly transformed in bellicose dialogue with French colonialism—and by no means simply for the worst. John Dewey writes: "the alleged benefits of war, so far as more than alleged, spring from the fact that conflict of peoples at least enforces intercourse between them and thus accidentally

[19] See Drif's pained description of meeting with Germaine Tillion, a member of the French Resistance and an ethnologist working in Algerian on behalf of the French government: "Was it because she was French that she couldn't bear to hear us compare an Algeria occupied by her people to France occupied by the Germans?" (2017, 277). Of course, many members of the French Resistance wholeheartedly supported the Algerian War of Independence in the late 1950s, notably Jean-Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

enables them to learn from one another, and thereby to expand their horizons" (2008, 92). To grant this is not to justify colonialism or war, but only to acknowledge that we *have* and we *will* change in our contact with other cultures, whether we like it or not. In the case of the Algerians, cultural self-determination was possible not on the basis of a nostalgic return to a "pure" national past. Rather, Algerian self-determination was the projection of an imaginary unity that was not a pre-existing reality but a revolutionary *response* to the French occupation; it was a way of making use of a violent history in their own way and on their own terms.

IV. CONCLUSION: PHENOMENOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Certain normative imperatives can be gleaned from phenomenological attention to the nature of emancipatory social and political change as it has actually taken place in the historical experience of real women and men. Drif had her own cultural horizons expanded through her study of classical Greek and Western European writings, and at the same time let the insights of these texts speak anew in her own situation as a Muslim in Northern Africa in the mid-twentieth century. Similarly, rather than stereotyping and exotifying the foreign Other, a modern Westerner might rather seek what is insightful and valuable in the practices of other cultures, finding alternative expressions of some of their own meanings and values "transposed" there. For example, instead of looking with suspicion and discomfort at the veils worn by some Muslim women in the Middle East or in European or North American contexts—instead of seeing them, as in Russon's description of listening to the Russian poet, as sound without sense—one might seek in them meaningful religious and political gestures. Or, instead of looking with incomprehension at the "terroristic" deeds of the Algerian revolutionaries and finding nothing of oneself in them, one might listen to the voices of the revolutionaries themselves and discover in them the same kind of courage, commitment, and desire for independence that one most likely admires in, say, those who fought in the French Resistance. An epistemological commitment of this sort makes room for the meaningful perspectives and voices of others, and begins to transform one's own perspective in ways that one cannot know or control in advance. This epistemological commitment must also be an ethical-political commitment to the value of multiculturalism, that is, to the development of a domain in which we can actually encounter one another, not insisting on one's own "normality" and superiority, but instead enabling new, surprising, and often challenging truths to emerge in a palimpsestic, dynamic historical world.

Acknowledgments: This paper grew out of a talk I gave on John Russon's Sites of Exposure *in the University of Guelph Philosophy Speaker Series in January 2019. I am grateful for the invitation to speak at that event. I am also grateful to helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper from John Russon, from two anonymous reviewers, and from the participants of the first meeting of the Critical Perspectives in Phenomenology research seminar: Shannon Hoff, Susan Bredlau, and Karen Robertson. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of a Faculty Research Fellowship from Eastern Michigan University in the completion of this paper.*

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PUNCTA
Journal of Critical Phenomenology

BOOK REVIEW

50 CONCEPTS FOR A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

EDITED BY GAIL WEISS, ANN V. MURPHY, AND GAYLE SALAMON (2020)

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When the history of critical phenomenology in the early twenty-first century comes to be written, it will be the story of a thought whose time had come. Certain books and articles will feature in the timeline and certain thinkers' names will be prominent on the lists. Indeed, the possibility of a Newton-Leibniz style debate over who started it all cannot be ruled out. But it seems clear already that critical phenomenology did not have a single point of origin at all, and will turn out to have emerged in several places at once as thinkers of the new century took up and took on the tradition of phenomenology that had ripened in the old. Many will have had the experience of thinking up the term, or finding it showing up surreptitiously in their writing and teaching, or having it trip off the tongue as they described what they were working on, only to then start finding it everywhere. At a conference in 2017, I was discussing it with a handful of colleagues when a new person joined the conversation, interjecting: "Critical phenomenology? Is that a thing?" Without hesitation and in unison we replied: "Yes, it's a thing."

One great advantage of this work, *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, is that it quickly corrects the hopes of anyone who would come in search of a definition; we will not be told by any of the 52 contributors and editors exactly what sort of *thing* critical phenomenology is. The title alone gives it away. If critical phenomenology has become a thing, it declares, it's because a lot of people have started doing a lot of different sorts of work, along the way producing tools for an approach to the world that will be critically phenomenological, and phenomenologically critical. The first line of the editors' introduction presents Maurice Merleau-Ponty's question: "What is phenomenology?" The second notes that it is a question that remains unanswered. The third sets aside the project of answering it and instead commits the volume to the work of honoring the generative principle contained in that question. In this sense, critical phenomenology is nothing new, and it might be argued that phenomenology has been critical all along. After all, rejecting the natural attitude is the first move of any phenomenological investigation, and that means encountering the world otherwise, undermining all at once the processes of naturalization that work to enforce

the conviction that how things are is the only way they *can* be and/or the way they *ought to* be. Suspending the natural attitude is the first step toward imagining the world otherwise, which is also the first step toward revolution.[1]

Learning the history of phenomenology in the late twentieth century, one could have been forgiven for missing that. All of the following facilitated an understanding of phenomenology as methodical, transcendental, serious, scientific, beautiful, even therapeutic, but not political: studying consciousness, intentionality, and cognition; navigating examples of lecterns, tables, and hands touching hands; knowing of the famous and infamous political engagements of the practitioners of phenomenology but being encouraged to think that they happened elsewhere, off-stage, in other texts; accepting the received wisdom that engaged political thinking could only happen within the apparently unsurpassable horizon of Marxism; ceding the field of revolutionary thought to critical theorists who oriented themselves to this horizon, and, in the process, losing access to the political use of the word *critique* itself; seeing thinkers whose work was both phenomenological and critical energetically reject being described as phenomenologists (as Michel Foucault did) or indeed as philosophers (as Hannah Arendt did). The sort of objects regarded as suitable for phenomenological investigation appeared not to include power, sovereignty, political institutions, or the *res publica*. The phenomenological method, with its transcendental aims, was assumed to work independently of the differential positions of the worldly, flesh-and-blood phenomenologists doing the work. Now, with so much compelling work under way and the right conceptual tools laid in front of us, we have no excuse for not recognizing the imbrication of phenomenology and the political, which is to say for not acknowledging the *critical* dimension of phenomenology.

An exhaustive review of this volume would be hard to make comprehensible, so I hope the reader will bear with me as I try to capture how the volume has pushed my thinking, knowing that I will fall short in the process. The chapters are bracingly short—2,500 words—and several treat classical phenomenological issues such as method, immanence and transcendence, time and temporality, the ontological difference, and the natural attitude. Many deal with the body—intercorporeality, the habit body, confiscated bodies, the racial epidermal schema, the normate—while many more deal with recognizably political themes—decoloniality, model minorities, borderlands, collective temporalities, and trans phenomena. Yet these sub-divisions are hardly helpful, since, for example, the chapter on epistemological ignorance is about knowledge and also racism; the one on ontological expansiveness makes us think about ontology but also privilege; and both "Queer Orientations" and "*Sens*/Sense" make us think about directedness, queerness, and meaning. Themes resonate from chapter to chapter throughout the book in surprising and generative ways. For this reason, the editors were wise to avoid corralling the contributions

[1] Revolutions may be a matter of politics or science, but the word may also be used more broadly to describe the shift that happens as a new generation takes on the work of inheriting the world. See Hannah Arendt (1968).

under sub-headings. Instead, the chapters, listed alphabetically by title, are allowed to stand on their own terms, which is to say, free to take a place in the context a reader builds for them on any given occasion. So, while a reader might sometimes approach it as an anthology and sometimes as a handbook, it is above all a book of provocations. As Arendt might put it, the thinking encountered here will have the effect of keeping thought in motion.

This is my justification for a review that traces the path of this particular reader's thinking. As I open the volume now, I have in mind a particular question about critical phenomenology, springing from a colleague's comment about the transcendental move in phenomenological research. "Does there have to be a transcendental element?" someone asked. "Of course," my colleague replied. "Without that you're just doing autobiography." I am puzzling over what's at stake in that *just*. What is it about the difference between phenomenology and autobiography that makes possible—even requires—the demotion of *mere* autobiography? What is the difference between what becomes of my lived experience when it is the beginning of a phenomenological investigation, and what becomes of it when it is part of the writing of a life?

At the same time, more specifically, I am asking how what's in front of me addresses the project I happen to be working on right now, the thing that preoccupies me. In this case, I'm thinking about democracy as a break with the rule of *genos*—family, clan, tribe—and the time of *demos* as a rupture with the time of *genos*. In Athens, access to rule was allocated on the basis of birth and inheritance until Cleisthenes's reform of 508 B.C.E. He designated districts or *demes* so that one now participated in political life as the member of a *deme*, not a family. That is to say, he created a distinctively democratic space that lacked its own version of the temporal ordering principle that is central to *genos*-life, and created the problem of democratic time. Can there be a distinctively democratic temporality? Can some of these 50 concepts help?

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"The Phenomenological Method" is the place to start, and Duane H. Davis's initial move is an excellent opener, in all senses. He writes: "[Edmund] Husserl . . . invokes a transcendental turn that is grounded in the reflective power of the transcendental ego, but surely all of this matters to us only if it pertains to matters-at-hand" (3). The transcendental element is always a turn, a move, a reaching towards and, if it has been understood as reaching towards a transcendental universality, we should not forget that it is also a matter of reaching from here. The eidetic reduction aims at providing access to invariant essential structures, but it happens at the same time as the phenomenological reduction, which aims to give free access to real experience of the phenomena (5). Together they reach not for *the* transcendental subject, but for a field of transcendental subjectivity. We can think of many sorts of first person narrative that fall short of that ambition—chit-chat, telling anecdotes, or giving descriptions of one's meals on Facebook and Instagram—but the form of autobiography, the writing of one's life, involves reaching for a plane on which

my experience opens access to something general, whether experience of growth, love, pain or loss, or the very experience of the arc of an existence.

At this point, Dorothea Olkowski's "Time/Temporality" offers an array of phenomenological approaches to time from Husserl to Simone de Beauvoir and Alia Al-Saji, and a study of autobiographical time might find a place here in Olkowski's piece. Linda Martín Alcoff's "Public Self/Lived Subjectivity" describes the disjuncture often felt by persons of color and others between their public selves and their lived selves, provoking questions about what the *auto* in *autobiography* might mean. And peppered through several chapters are references to Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), with its mining of autobiographical elements in Husserl's phenomenology and phenomenological reflections on the specifics of her own experience. "Just autobiography" might be a reference to bad autobiography that never manages to reach beyond narcissistic musings, in which case phenomenologists do right to establish their distance from it. It may express a lack of understanding of the thought and craft required to write one's life and of the forms of truth that emerge in autobiographical writing. In this case, distinguishing phenomenology from autobiography is warranted, but the dismissal of mere autobiography as though it fell short of phenomenology is not. Yet "just autobiography" may also be evidence of a commitment to the value of phenomenology as a method of purification and a desire to preserve that quest for purity. This last is where Davis's article comes to bear most pointedly. The pursuit of a reliable mechanism for the purification of knowledge was a constant in Husserl's thinking, since it is the only thing that would win out against the limitations, biases, errors, and vicissitudes of everyday experience and theoretical presuppositions (5). The result is not thin or merely formal, and the natural attitude remains available even as it overlaps with other attitudes—the biological attitude, the geographic attitude or—why not?—the autobiographical attitude. At the same time, existential phenomenology allows that our identities are intersectional identities where differences overlap. Subjectivity is intersubjective; our relations with others are co-transcendental; the transcendental ground is not holy ground, as Davis so aptly puts it. Subjectivity is always subject to structures it cares about and describes critically (8).

Which structures we care about, and which we decide we need to describe critically, is not a phenomenological matter, but phenomenology does have something to say about *how* we come to care. We generally approach the world in the natural attitude, taking it for granted and experiencing it as no more than what *is*, but in the chapter on the natural attitude, Lanei M. Rodemeyer points out that, for Husserl, the natural attitude is "neither just a self-evident fact nor a mere starting point but rather an approach that garners its own phenomenological insights, [which] contemporary and critical approaches in philosophy today are able to employ in a variety of effective ways—as can be seen in this volume" (240). In terms of my present project, I know that certain pre-phenomenological experiences of the world led me to attend to the phenomenon of *genos*, among the many that contributed in ways I will never know: the universal experience of being a child of somebody; the experience of family and extended family; the autobiographical particularity of growing up in the cultural and political context of nationalist Ireland; the experience of emigration,

first to England and then to the United States; a philosophical curiosity about the experience of belonging to a generational group, which grew as I became teacher and a parent, and as the older generation began to pass away; and a curiosity about how political institutions attend to the crimes of their past, which led to the study of patterns of Holocaust commemoration and an interest in the political phenomenon of genocide. The compulsion to attend to this, here, now arises in the midst of a life, and the method we choose for responding to it might be a matter of placing experience in the narrative arc of a biography, working to make good on the implicit promise of biographical writing that the part will make sense in the whole of a life, and that this sense can be shared. Or we may respond by undertaking phenomenological analysis, which uncovers sense in the shared structures of experience. What this volume demonstrates is that the phenomenological method entails a way of reflecting on the questions and questioner, on intersubjectivity, and on the transcendental, co-transcendental, and quasi-transcendental that makes sure that we never take the sharing of sense for granted.

Phenomenology requires an experience to get to work on, and the crucial one here is that of belonging to a generational group, the sort of group I gather under the name *genos.* In the natural attitude, we can pass over experiences of *genos* as just what it is to be a daughter, a descendant, an Irishwoman; we belong to a family, a group of relatives, a nation. Suspending the natural attitude and setting the experience of generational belonging between brackets means becoming attentive to a set of relationships with those who came before us as well as those who come—or *may* come—after, and attending to the temporality that characterizes our overlapping with those who are older and younger in a shared world. Mark Ralkowski's "Being-toward-Death" encourages us to think, after Heidegger, of anxiety in the face of death as a way "to make our lives our own" (43). From the point of view of generations, this suggests that my life *becomes* my own as I receive it from those who gave it in bringing me into the world. We are for others before we are for ourselves, and by the time we come to think of ourselves as beings in a world, we have already been here for some time. This is the syncopated temporality of natal existence. Likewise, we receive the world from those who went before and we bequeath it to those who come after according to the overlapping temporality of generational existence. Kyle Whyte's "Collective Continuance" extends this thought of relation, and at the same time shows the contingency of Heidegger's decision to start with the experience of death as one's ownmost possibility. While Heidegger described our temporality as futural, Anishinaabe thinkers instead begin from a set of relationships experienced according to a spiral temporality, and describe them in a language that has just one word for both *descendant* and *ancestor* (54).

We are the sort of beings that exist in relation, but the relations we first emerge into do not always form a context for belonging. Fit cannot be taken for granted, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's thought of misfitting asks us to rethink the experience of non-belonging as itself politically powerful (225-30). Misfitting is offered here as a way of experiencing disability, but is also a universalizable "contingent and fundamental fact of human embodiment" (229). Language of generational continuity and the natural cycles of birth and death encourage us to think of our arrival as a matter of coming into a world that

has a place prepared for us, but the arrival of a misfit forces us to think again. What norms shaped the expectations of the ones who anticipated us? Who did they think we would be? Perhaps the place I came into was a nurturing and protected place, but it could have simultaneously been a constricting and oppressive place. Garland-Thomson's attention to marginalized experience shows the contingency of belonging both as a universal experience and as the starting point for a phenomenological project. "Misfitting" makes me confront the thought that coming to be in relation is a matter of both arriving into a place made for us and making a place for ourselves, reshaping the world in the process.

These relations are embodied relations (see Scott Marratto's "Intercorporeality," 197-202) and they happen in the geographical places we inhabit or travel through (see Natalie Cisneros's "Borderlands and Border Crossing," 47-52). Yet the body is never a mere body or a merely natural body (see Jenny Slatman's "The *Körper/Leib* Distinction," 203-10) and the very experience of border crossing and being crossed by borders shapes other ways of belonging, other ways of understanding and being a *genos*, and other sorts of embodied, mixed consciousness (see Elena Ruíz's "Mestiza Consciousness," 217-23). Belonging will have to be approached as a matter of givenness and as an activity charged with political potential for those who, perforce or by choice or, like Arendt's conscious pariah, perforce *and* by choice, move between places. Andrea J. Pitts calls it willful world-traveling ("World-Traveling," 343-50, following María Lugones). Mariana Ortega describes her response in "Hometactics": "We engage in practices that allow us to feel comfortable and to get a sense of belonging in various spaces, including ones that are not welcoming or that highlight membership in communities with whom we don't share identity markers" (169).

If *genos* is a matter of embodied, generational identity, then *demos* responds to that way of being. In sixth century B.C.E. Athens, it was a way to disrupt the power of the city's quarreling aristocratic families, and to put an end to the fanatical study of parentage that was being used as a way of excising all but true-born Athenians from the citizenship rolls. Families were not abolished but set aside. Since the *demos* is not given, and everyone had to choose his *deme*. *Demos*, then, is the community that has no identity markers other than its own; one belongs as a demesman, without adjuncts or hyphenations.

Yet do citizens of real existing democracies experience their citizenship like this now? Despite decades of philosophical deconstruction and theoretical critique of nationhood and statehood, we continue to organize ourselves into nation states; when it comes to political belonging, national identity and state administration are what give it its shape and character. That is to say, turning our phenomenological attention to the experience of belonging to a *demos* will have the advantage of setting these aside, recognizing them as social imaginaries generated by and around us (see Moira Gatens's "Imaginaries," 181-87), often taking the form of controlling images that both offer and deny us possible ways of being, or offer possibilities for some and constraints for others (see Patricia Hill Collins's "Controlling Images," 77-82). The critical response to oppressive imaginaries is counterimaginaries, creative appropriations of a disputed past that open new paths to a projected future (185), but it is not yet clear that the *demos* can be imagined in these

ways. The *demos* is a thought without a figure, an aspiration that constantly sloughs off its descriptors as overdeterminations; it is the citizenry, being and acting now, and we belong to the *demos* by virtue of our being and acting together.

Part of the problem is this "now." *Genos* constitutes a pattern of inheritance that marks continuity in generational change; for Cleisthenes, *demos* was the interruption of that *genos* temporality. The Beauvoirian perspective on time Olkowski describes may help here: "We come into the world that is already there and that contains meanings sedimented through other lives so as to give us a sense of the world as real. This world is thus intersubjective but also open to the creation of new possibilities" (325). *Demos* time will have to be thought in tandem with *genos* time, as the time of interruption and openness in the face of continuity. This is also the time of revolution, and the thought of an irruptive community without identity will always be a powerful critical tool. But *demos* time is not just about miraculous or messianic intervention. The interruption itself is an opening to the expression of other temporalities: election cycles, sessions of legislatures, rituals of leadership, festivals of citizenship, the sovereign temporality of war, the seasons of migration, the routines of policing and the time done in prison, to be sure, but also the temporalities of work, home, sickness, social care, and social reproduction. More than an imagined phenomenon, *demos* is the scene of imagining and counterimagining. Far removed from the glory of a revolutionary interruption, but also removed from the identity-generating structures of the *genos*, there is the mundane temporality of maintenance, what psychologist Lisa Baraitser calls the time of the "on-go." It is the time of "the disavowed durational activities behind every person, situation or phenomenon, behind every institution, and art object, and behind the maintenance of everyday life" (Baraitser, 2015, 27, 21). Perry Zurn's "Social Death" (309-14) picks up the thought of social death initiated by Orlando Patterson and developed by Claudia Card in a way that is provocative here; his re-reading suggests that failures on the level of the "on-go" produce an insidious, slow violence that spreads suffering while remaining all but invisible because those who suffer are marginalized people, already pushed toward oblivion such as young people caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline in the U.S., rural communities sickened by toxic drift, or island people losing their land to rising seas. He quotes Lauren Berlant: "Slow death prospers . . . in temporal environments whose qualities and whose contours in time and space are often identified with the present-ness of ordinariness itself, that domain of living on, in which everyday activity; memory, needs, and desires; diverse temporalities and horizons of the taken-for-granted are brought into proximity" (Berlant 2007, 759-60, cited by Zurn on 312). The democratic interruption means turning to what is not given and what may not be taken for granted. It also means that, after the interruption of *genos* time, temporality is an unsettled question for the ensuing democratic forms of life. This would seem to set democracies up for a habit of examination not seen in other political forms; if democracy is the scene for the expression of many temporalities, it will matter *which* temporalities are given expression. That is to say, democracies are subject to calls to responsibility for preserving the ability of citizens to be and act together, and constitute a *demos*, in ways that may not be wholly prescribed, and that will not always be punctual. They are also subject to demands for justifications in the case of specific exclusions, as in the exclusion of immigrants as late-comers. Why then do

real existing democracies appear unwilling or unable to see the violence that traps people in a school-to-prison pipeline and legislates poverty? Why is it still the case that, as Zurn puts it, violence leaks across taxonomic boundaries and borderlands? Why are the borders and seas that separate the democracies of the North from the Global South the scene of growing violence and mounting death? Why is this understood as "the immigrant problem" rather than an effect of the perennial contingency of democratic boundaries?

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I moved through the chapters of this volume as if I were choosing my own adventure in a Netflix episode. But the point of the Netflix trick is to give viewers a sense of agency by allowing them to follow different routes to one of a few possible endings, whereas I have reached no end: neither the end of the book nor an end of thinking about my current question, nor the end of my questions about critical phenomenology. The volume has resources I have not touched upon and the question of my *demos/genos* project has been complicated by what I have read. Meanwhile, my questions about critical phenomenology have multiplied. Lewis R. Gordon argues for the compatibility of transcendental phenomenology, Marxism, and existential thought (20); could that be the beginning of an account of how phenomenology and critical theory diverged historically, and the ways in which they may converge now? Foucault surfaces in several chapters, but in the introduction to *The Order of Things* (1994) he can't find enough bad things to say about phenomenology. What currents of philosophical and political thinking intersected in that historical moment to make that rejection essential? Meanwhile, Arendt liked to state publicly that she did not consider herself a philosopher, but her training was in phenomenology and her writings in political theory enact her version of the method *as critique*. What forces made the disavowal of philosophy necessary while the tacit avowal of phenomenology remained possible? Heidegger's philosophical might and political shame will be part of the story in both cases, though only part. It is worth noting that, though virtually all the contributors to this volume are philosophers, phenomenology escaped the bounds of the discipline a long time ago; critical phenomenological work has been going on among sociologists, anthropologists, feminist theorists in various fields, and others for a long time, and is increasingly theorized as such (see Desjarlais and Throop 2011, Ram and Houston 2015). In those disciplines, scholar practitioners think a lot about the relation between theory and practice, their commitments constantly challenged by deep experience in the field. Workers in those fields will certainly find this volume useful, though they may also wonder what took philosophy so long. I hope they will bear with us. Marx and Engels told us long ago that philosophers interpreted the world when it was also necessary to change it. Lisa Guenther ends her "Critical Phenomenology" chapter with a reference to that thesis: "The ultimate goal of critical phenomenology is not just to interpret the world, but also to change it" (16). Change requires interpretation, which requires attentive experience, which at its best broadens and deepens our sense of the world.

I recently heard a young scholar describe plans for her doctoral thesis, a sophisticated politically-oriented work of phenomenology. Summing up the project she said, simply: "I'm trying to make sense of my own experience." In writing this review I have had her and a new generation of phenomenologists in mind, thinking to empower them further in the work of inheriting a tradition and renewing it by putting it to work in the examination of their complex, intersectional, twenty-first century lives. But I think they already feel empowered. Scholars training in phenomenology now have easy access to the language and techniques of critique, thanks to the work of these editors and contributors, among others. Rather than feeling compelled to shed their overlapping identities as a condition for thinking, they understand the power of thinking in and through those identities and speaking from a distinctive place in the world.

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