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Editorial: Thresholds and Power

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Are academic journals catalysts of hegemonic power or of democratic openness? I pose this question categorically to make the point clear, and the point is mainly self-reflective in nature: How do we, the editors, reviewers and authors of P&P, deal with the power entailed in editing and publishing? This is not to say that we consider ourselves to be more influential than other journals in phenomenology around the world. What I intend to say is that because we as a journal receive papers from phenomenological researchers of all kinds, and "speak" regularly to readers—some of whom contact us about what we write—we excercise influence. The critical, reflective question as to how we understand the power of publication, or whether we consider our influence to be justified, is not just a rhetorical one.

At the threshold, the in between inside or outside, an "accept" or "reject" decision on a submission, the question is of pertinentence not only to the editors but also to our reviewers, authors and readers. Of course, publishing in itself includes the attempt to have "impact"—as widespread concern about impact factors clearly indicates. Regardless of influence or impact factor, however, P&P seeks to provide a channel of communication for authors whose work we, as a community of reviewers, editors and readers, find worthy of publication. The dilemma of power though, seems unavoidable in scholarly publication. And it is twofold. As a journal we are by definition bound to publish. That is what journals do. By publishing some papers and rejecting others we undertake a required separation of what is published and what is passed over, again a practice that our P&P community does and is expected to do. As is stated in our guidelines for peer reviewers, we are seeking to include papers that, as van Manen (1997, pp. 151-153) describes, are:

- Oriented: showing "an awareness of the relation between content and form, speaking and acting, text and textuality."
- Strong: To "use our orientation as a resource for producing… understandings, interpretations, and formulations, and strengthen this resource in the very practice of this research or theorizing."
- Rich: "A rich and thick description is concrete, exploring a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications…engag[ing] us, involv[ing] us, and requir[ing] a response from us."
- Deep: "reaching for something beyond, restoring a forgotten or broken wholeness by recollecting something lost, past, or eroded, and by reconciling it in our experience of the present with a vision of what should be."

Now I reach my second point, and in my view, the most important dilemma we encounter as a journal: How do we relate to our own power when it is challenged by a submission that we do not understand, that cannot be readily reconciled to the criteria outlined above? Sometimes, not often, but occasionally we receive a paper that is different—original, perhaps outstanding or brilliant—but we do not know for certain. We are not able to judge. Perhaps we are not equal to the challenge that the submission, in its originality, presents to us. How then do we relate to that paper? Of course we might see aspects of its outstanding quality and send it to an extremely qualified reviewer. These papers, however, are not the papers I have in mind. We are able to appraise these papers, at least to a certain degree. The criteria suggested above can be applied—

at least more or less. What I think of are the papers that are better than us, in a way that we are not able to see. Those who think differently, outside our experiential and professional spheres. We may not see their brilliance. We might spend too little time reading and pondering their quality, and to be able to respond to their address.

You (and I) might think that in our time of rapid publication-for-profit (both professional and corporate) the huge amount of publications in journals include few really outstanding papers. We acknowledge that we publish, at least in one sense, because our authors are professionally dependent on publication of their work, and that it seems scholars are expected to write more and faster than ever. Perhaps this is true. However, it makes the problem of power to discern good from bad even more pertinent, and it challenges our ability as editors and peer reviewers to know when we deem a submission sufficient or not.

How do we encounter submissions that challenge our self understanding and our professional self-assurance by being different and by going beyond our own insights and knowledge? Do we try to understand such a paper by working with it—and with peer review feedback—again and again? Do we read and discuss it in the editorial team, with our peer reviewers and with the author—its implications, potential, consequences? Or are we tempted to put it aside as a text in which we do not want to become involved? What I am trying to come to terms with is an attitude towards what is so different that it does not fit our categories. Our integrity as an academic journal is challenged by these papers, and we know it. Texts that peer reviewers as well as editors perhaps do not feel good about because our phenomenological professionalism is put at stake. What do we do with these texts? How do we in those situations responsibly exercise our power to define, include and exclude?

In his little book *Disagreement* (1999) Jacques Ranciere talks about the "identity between understanding and understanding" and of "the gap between two accepted meanings of 'to understand'" (p. 44). His aim is to discuss the rationality of disagreement in political settings, including of course common and potentially democratic aspects. The basis of a disagreement is the idea that disagreement is a misalignment of understanding. Close to disagreement is the power of definition of positions and of who is privileged to speak and be understood. Ranciere's point is that in situations of disagreement where different understandings are at stake, the one in power can define who is "speaking [and who] is just making noise" (p. 50). Those holding power can ultimately make texts visible or invisible in publication in a particular forum and can determine whose language is excluded and whose language is "common language" (p. 50). The understandable language for us may become the common language, while a language that may ultimately be regarded as "wrong" is outside of our sphere of interest and perhaps also of our understanding. Ranciere's point is that democratic disagreement presupposes that speaking beings are equal and that their common basis is the acknowledgment that "there is an understanding within understanding" (p. 49)—one to which even very sharply divergent perspectives can be traced back. Although Ranciere is speaking of political conflict, his argument is strikingly relevant to the encounter between diverse views and understandings in academic publishing. A core point then is what Ranciere might mean by the expression: "an understanding within understanding." We must humbly seek this point of convergence, this point where we uncover an understanding within understanding.

David Seamon writes: "Like host and guest, an author and reader or a speaker and listener potentially meet via a threshold of understanding" (Seamon, 2016, p. 55). Seamon re-phrases Bernd Jager's thought of a bridging action that shapes experiential thresholds that at the same time divide and bind human beings, and separate and join worlds of difference (Jager 2009, p.10; cited in Seamon 2016, pp. 54-55). To read and reflect on phenomenological papers is to find oneself at the threshold of understanding and not understanding—a *not yet.* As a reader I am not at the inside yet, but rather not quite at the outside. But I evalute, compare, judge, and

tentatively form my opinion, and may ultimately disagree. I understand something and on the basis of my understanding I affect the chance of this particular submission in P&P. Reading a submission and in particular the submissions that provoke and challenge our self-understandings as phenomenologists, could place us in a position where our certitudes are at stake. This has the potiential to allow me to cross over from the familiar terrain of my world, and to tentatively gain access to the world of the Other—the author. The admission, though is that trying to cross this threshold may lead to misrecognition and misunderstanding at least as easily as to authentic appreciation.

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From Necker Cubes to Polyrhythms: Fostering a Phenomenological Attitude in Music Education

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Abstract

Phenomenology is explored as a way of helping students and educators open up to music as a creative and transformative experience. I begin by introducing a simple exercise in experimental phenomenology involving multi-stable visual phenomena that can be explored without the use of complex terminology. Here, I discuss how the "phenomenological attitude" may foster a deeper appreciation of the structure of consciousness, as well as the central role the body plays in how we experience and form understandings of the worlds we inhabit. I then explore how the phenomenological attitude may serve as a starting point for students and teachers as they begin to reflect on their involvement with music as co-investigators. Here I draw on my teaching practice as a percussion and drum kit instructor, with a special focus on multi-stable musical phenomena (e.g., African polyrhythm). To conclude, I briefly consider how the phenomenological approach might be developed beyond the practice room to examine music's relationship to the experience of culture, imagination and "self."

Keywords: *Philosophy of Music Education; Phenomenology; Drumming; Music and Consciousness; Embodiment.*

Introduction

> The ability to perceive oneself during the process of participation is an essential quality of the aesthetic experience; the observer finds himself in a strange, halfway position: he is involved, and he watches himself being involved. However, this position is not entirely nonpragmatic, for it can only come about when existing codes are transcended or invalidated. The resultant restructuring of stored experiences makes the reader aware not only of the experience but also of the means whereby it develops. Only the controlled observation of that which is instigated by the text makes it possible for the reader to formulate a reference for what he is restructuring. Herein lies the practical relevance of aesthetic experience: it induces this observation, which takes the place of codes that otherwise would be essential for the success of communication. (Iser, 1980, p.134)

This quote from Iser's phenomenology of reading draws out a necessity common to all modes of aesthetic activity. Indeed, "text" and "reader" could just as easily be replaced with "painting"

and "viewer" or with "music" and "listener." Whatever the case, imagination and reflexive involvement are prerequisites for fully experiencing and appreciating all forms of art. This insight implies even deeper commitments in the context of creative praxis and education: if the function of the arts is to open up previously unrecognized possibilities for experiencing, understanding, and engaging with the relationships that constitute the physical and socio-cultural environments we inhabit, then arts educators must develop pragmatic ways of sharing this phenomenological responsibility with students (Greene, 1995). This is particularly challenging in music education. In order to participate effectively musicians must seamlessly integrate and develop a wide range of embodied experience: large and small motor actions; affective-emotional responses; complex and changing patterns of sound; as well as interactions with the immediate physical and social environment in which they find themselves. The musician must also comprehend, on some level at least, the larger socio-cultural implications of what it means to participate in a given musical event, as well as the relevance of this for their own identity and sense of self. For educators, this means that simply transmitting technical knowledge and getting students to play things "correctly" is not sufficient. Involved creative music making requires the musician to become acutely aware of the process of participation from multiple perspectives and to be able to develop new understandings of the shared musical worlds being enacted. Otherwise, the impressions, embodied activities, and evolving interplay of forms and emotions that constitute the aesthetic experience will remain vague and unrefined, and the musician will continue to depend on narrow, codified or externally dictated ways of understanding. As Dewey (2005) writes,

> There is work to be done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His "appreciation" will be a mixture of scraps of learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration [...] . (p. 56)

What can we offer our music students so that they may better deal with such challenges? What kinds of conceptual tools can we present in the context of music instruction that will help students become more reflective, open minded, creative and engaged interpreters, composers and improvisers? How can we help them "see" beyond standard practices and codified understandings to develop their own unique approaches to music making and thus participate more effectively in society as the cultural agents they are? These questions seem more relevant than ever in today's fast changing world, where the development of flexibility of mind is so necessary in order to deal with the conceptual boundary-crossing and creative innovation students will need in their later professional practice. As Greene (1995) writes, we need to find ways of enabling students "to be personally present to their own learning processes and self-reflective with regard to them" (p.181).

As a philosophy of experience, phenomenology would appear to be a good starting place for examining musical experience and learning, and for developing such creative flexibility. Indeed, phenomenology is sometimes referred to as a philosophy of pure possibility (Casey, 2000). However, much of the core literature in phenomenology is notoriously difficult. Like any established intellectual endeavor, phenomenology has developed its own unique "tribal language," making its central texts (e.g. Husserl, 1960, 1970; Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 2002) almost impenetrable for the novice reader. In response to this problem a number of educators (e.g. Ihde, 1977) have developed "experimental" approaches to learning phenomenological methods, where students are first introduced to phenomenology by actually doing it. In this way, when theory and terminology are introduced they are discussed within an experiential (and experienced) context and key ideas and vocabulary are much easier to grasp. This experimental approach to phenomenological inquiry receives little attention in music

education. However, as I discuss below, it offers a useful way of initiating a reflective approach to musical practice that may developed by the student as a life-long project.[1]

I begin by introducing a simple exercise in experimental phenomenology involving multi-stable visual phenomena (the Necker Cube) that can be explored without the use of complex terminology. In doing so I discuss how the phenomenological attitude may open up a deeper appreciation of the structure and modes of consciousness. To develop this further, I then consider the central role the body plays in how we experience and form understandings of the worlds we inhabit, with a special focus on rethinking received notions of what "aesthetic" experience entails. Following this, I explain how the phenomenological attitude may serve as a starting point for music students and teachers as they begin to reflect on their involvement with music as co-investigators. Here I draw on my teaching practice as a percussion and drum kit instructor in an undergraduate music program, developing the pedagogical possibilities of multi-stable musical phenomena (African polyrhythm) in line with the phenomenological framework explored in previous sections. While I do not discuss a "study" as such, the reader may nevertheless begin to explore the examples on offer immediately and evaluate the process for themselves within the reflexive phenomenological context I provide. Furthermore, although my discussion is mostly situated within the context of postsecondary instrumental music education, I hope that many of the ideas I put forward here will be adaptable across a range of contexts. With this in mind, I conclude the paper by briefly considering how the phenomenological approach might be developed beyond the practice room to examine music's relationship to the experience of culture, imagination and "self."

Practicing phenomenology with "multi-stable" images

Students enter undergraduate music programs with varying degrees of skill and musical understanding. By this point they will all have had some experience playing in ensembles, taking lessons, and engaging in some sort of private practice. Many will also have participated in so-called informal musical practice and learning with friends and family members. For the most part, students come to understand the process of music making in terms of what works—what will get them through the performance and win them the approval of teachers, band-mates, and friends. Put simply, music making at this stage is pragmatic (in the more superficial sense of the word) and in many ways it makes sense that it should be so. However, students may become locked into ways of understanding musical experiences that are vague, narrow, repetitive, or even dogmatic. Indeed, while many early childhood music education programs maintain a rather playful and creative approach to musical development, in high school and university more conformist attitudes tend to dominate. This often involves a focus on prescriptive (and often competitive) performance practice associated with the "correct" reproduction of "works" (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). As a result, students often enter private music lessons and ensemble situations at the post-secondary level seemingly oblivious to the idea that there might be a myriad of possibilities for experiencing and understanding even the simplest of musical activities. Others appear to have more awareness of possibilities but have no idea where to begin. Whatever the case, as music educators it is our task to help open new possibilities for musical experience whereby students will be able to develop new knowledge and understandings—to help raise conscious awareness beyond taken-for-granted ways of experiencing the world, develop the creative imagination, and thus foster a sense of agency. In

[1] While phenomenological approaches form a major part of qualitative research in the social sciences, psychology and education (Creswell, 2014; van Manen, 2014), my goal here is to introduce how phenomenology may be applied in a more "radically empirical" context—how it may offer a useful way of researching one's own lived experience and for expanding the possibilities of what that might entail.

brief, we must be able to help our students better understand the nature and structure of (musical) experience so that they may engage with it more fully as the creative, world-making beings they are.

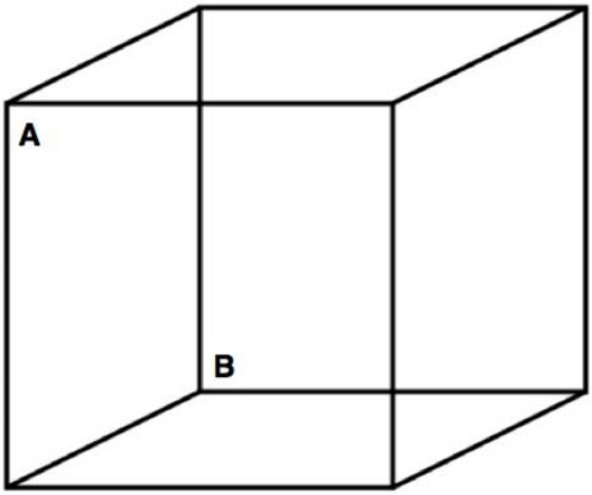


Figure 1. The Necker Cube

One way to begin this project is through the introduction of simple phenomenological exercises involving "multi-stable images" (see Ihde, 1977; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Roholt, 2014; Christensen, 2012). For example, Figure 1 shows a form known as the Necker Cube (Necker, 1832). This image is well known in psychological circles as an example of a "bi-stable" phenomenon—perception of the image spontaneously reverses itself between two three-dimensional spaces (Attneave, 1971; Morris, 1971). Very often, viewers will first experience the cube as if they are oriented above it with a square on the left facing "forward" (A). This is not surprising as similar objects in our day-to-day lives (tables, bricks, chairs, boxes) are generally viewed and interacted with from such a perspective (i.e. above). However, the cube may also be perceived from "below" with a square facing towards the viewer's right (B) and when looked at for a period of time it will often appear to "shift" unpredictably between the above and below perspectives. With a bit of practice, the viewer can hold on to and learn to move willfully between the above-left and below-right points of view.

The phenomenological approach allows us to develop our experience of the image still further. By suspending (pre)judgements and explanations, and by focusing on a clear description of the phenomena at hand, the viewer may begin to develop a deeper awareness of the possibilities of the experience, as well as the process of experience itself. I have already suggested that our tendency to experience the Necker Cube first as a "cube" and not in some other way is indicative of the *natural attitude* (Husserl, 1960; Merleau-Ponty, 2002) we adopt in our encounters with analogous objects in our day-to-day lives. However, by identifying this taken-for-granted perspective we may attempt to suspend or "bracket" it (*epoché*) and thus open up previously unrecognized possibilities. By suspending the form's "cubeness" the viewer may explore, experiment with and describe the object of experience from a variety of new focal points; by moving habitual perspectives into the background other relationships and interpretations may begin to come forward. One possibility that emerges is that the intersections of lines may now be experienced in a two dimensional context (Christensen, 2012; Ihde, 1977). From this perspective one may notice the vertically oriented rectangle at the center of the image, which is bounded by two right triangles, on the top left and bottom right respectively, and

trapezoidal figures above, below, left and right. The result is a strange "belt" shape with a hexagonal exterior and rectangular interior; an abstract image with no deeply *sedimented* relationship to everyday experience. Interestingly, this "flat" perspective is "uncomfortable" and considerably harder to maintain than the cube experience. However, with practice the viewer can learn to make controlled movements between above-left and below-right cubes and the two dimensional "belt." One can blend the three together in in-between states or hold various features of each in place while allowing the rest of the figure and the viewer's relative "position" to move to other orientations. What was formerly bi-stable now becomes multi-stable and transitional states may be identified. More experimentally minded viewers may now catalogue the results of such investigations in order to build up a richer description of the possible experiences the Necker Cube affords (see Ihde, 1977; Mereau-Ponty, 2002).

Although more could be said here about the Necker Cube and other multi-stable images, what has been discussed thus far already allows us to investigate some fundamental aspects of experience that might normally not be considered. First, we tend towards *naturalized* ways of organizing the relationships that constitute experience. These are informed (*sedimented*) by our histories as embodied and ecological (i.e. "located" or "situated") creatures—e.g. the tendency to position ourselves in relation to the image (above, below, facing). Thus a sense of movement and/or bodily orientation in space (whether actual or imagined) is a central aspect of experience (Benson, 2001; Dewey, 2005; Johnson, 2007). Second, the awareness of even the simplest phenomena may be extended beyond the initial taken for granted perspective (*the natural attitude*) through a reflexive open-ended exploration of possibilities. And third, conscious experience is not simply the retrieval of a preexisting environment (the attitude of *objective thought*; see Merleau-Ponty, 2002, pp.77-83), rather it is an emergent, constructive or "enactive" process (Maturana & Varela, 1998; Varela et al., 1993). This last point is especially relevant when we consider that the Necker Cube is not a cube at all but rather 12 lines that intersect in various ways and that the mind projects in three-dimensions. Nevertheless, from a radically empirical point of view the *experience* of "cubeness" (as well as its variations) is quite real and requires no further proof of validity; we can return to it repeatedly (the phenomenon is *apodictic*).

Intentionality and the modes of experience

In addition to the points outlined above we may now discuss a perhaps even more fundamental observation, namely that there appears to be a "directedness" to experience (*intentionality*)—i.e. "if I experience at all I experience something and do so in a certain way" (Ihde 1977, p.43; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Or, to put it another way, consciousness is always consciousness of some thing *as something* (Gallagher, 2012). Indeed, we began with an awareness of the "cube," which was experienced literally as such. However, an exploration of *how* we consciously attended to the cube expanded the possibilities of experience to the point where the image was no longer experienced as a cube at all. We began to move from the *prescriptive* "literal mindedness" of the *natural attitude* or taken-for-granted stance (non-reflective/constrained) towards the "polymorphic mindedness" (reflective/open to possibilities) of the phenomenological attitude (Ihde, 1977).

The first thing we may note about this move is that a certain degree of self-awareness or reflexivity was needed in order to recognize the taken-for-granted stance and to develop alternative points of view. It brought into play *my* location in relation to the object (and/or the object's location in relation to me); it entailed *my* struggle to develop other perspectives and *my* awareness or involvement in the exploration and construction of experience. This said it is also important to recognize that the "I" is not always explicit or *thematized* in experience (Ihde, 1977; Benson, 2001; Varela et al., 1993). Indeed, in most mundane experience we are often

outside of ourselves "in the world of [our projects]" (see Ihde, 1977, p. 47; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). This is to say that in most of the everyday activities we engage in require the development of a repertoire of skills (seeing, hearing, doing) and ways of thinking that we come to take for granted—e.g. cooking, chopping wood, playing and listening to music. Such modes of experiencing (skillful coping) are not lacking in awareness *per se* but are not those in which we are explicitly self-conscious. Moreover, intense modes of experience where one is almost completely immersed in the experience itself can be pleasurable and rewarding; they may lead to "positive modes of absorption" that are central to aesthetic experiences and that may ultimately afford an expanded and shared sense of self, as well as the cultural and therapeutic benefits that follow (Benson, 2001). By contrast, modes of experience where acute self-awareness dominates can be uncomfortable. Such experiences may be associated with boredom, loneliness, isolation, as well as with physical and psychological pain. Extreme examples of this are found in experiences of forced confinement and torture—under such conditions one might say that the system of experience is narrowed, confined, or trapped within the self: extended consciousness is restricted; descriptive, imaginative, and narrative capacities are reduced; and a sense of dislocation or alienation from one's social, physical or bodily milieu dominates (Benson, 2001).

Everyday experience tends to move between the objects of experience, an awareness of the situations we find ourselves in, and a shifting sense of our own agency (the *noematic* to *noetic*; see below). Indeed, we engage in alternating periods of absorbed consciousness and self-consciousness often without reflecting deeply on how such states of awareness arise or where they could lead. For example, we may consider here how a more reflexive or self-aware mode of experience may emerge out of a state of absorption due to an unforeseen occurrence. This might involve a breakdown in whatever tools one is using (a broken string or hammer; see Heidegger, 1962), or an unexpected event in the environment (a dropped glass; the sound of an alarm; a wrong note played in the woodwind section; a dropped beat by the drummer; an audience member creating an annoying disturbance). It may also be noted how a heightened and uncomfortable level of sustained self-awareness, and even temporary feelings of alienation, and psycho-physical discomfort often emerge when we are required to learn new skills—i.e. new ways of thinking, perceiving and doing. We saw this in a very simple context when we tried to advance the possibilities of the Necker Cube (more on this shortly in a musical learning context). Although such experiences may not always bring the "self" to mind explicitly, they nevertheless involve a shift in the mode of experience and therefore demand a level of phenomenal reflection. Such reflection moves towards the *how* of experience and highlights the agency of the experiencer (What's going on? What am I doing here? How can I fix this? What am I doing wrong? Why is this so difficult?).

Thus, while the starting point of experience is the "something" that is experienced (e.g. the "cube"), the conscious agency of the "I" moves towards the foreground of awareness when we are encouraged to examine and interpret experience. This, in turn, allows experience to be developed beyond its initial state. And indeed, we need not wait for dramatic events such as I have just described to initiate reflexive shifts in our awareness or modes of experiencing—one may actively and creatively choose to develop the mode of experiencing from one that is more absorbed to one that is more reflexive and back again. Again, Dewey (2005) puts it well when he writes:

> [A]bsorption in a work of art so complete as to exclude analysis cannot be long sustained. There is a rhythm of surrender and reflection. We interrupt our yielding to the object to ask where it is leading and how it is leading there. (p. 150)

Likewise, one may also actively shift the focus of attention to differing areas within the field of experience and consciously work on developing new relationships between them. Recall that in order to advance the experience of the Cube the viewer was required to develop new focal points and to practice moving others into the background. However, although the focus of experience may have been on developing the "topography" of the image itself, some residual awareness of the total field of experience was never far off. Thus a central aspect of phenomenological analysis involves making distinctions between those things that lie in the *foreground* or core of experience, those that lie in the *background*, and those that occupy the fringes of perception (closer to the *horizon* of experience). Here a viewer might experiment with expanding, shifting or sharing the core of experience with other objects present in the environment at large; he or she might try viewing the image at distance while simultaneously-alternately attending to other objects, sounds, physical movements and so on while noting changes in character of the experience.

To summarize, phenomenological inquiry may be understood as an examination of the structure or "directedness" of experience that begins with the *what* of experience as it appears in the "literal," non-reflective, or taken-for-granted experience of things (*the natural attitude*). This inquiry then questions retrogressively from the *what* of appearance to the *how* (conscious-reflective development of the possibilities and modes of experience); and that ultimately develops back to the *who* of experience **(**an awareness of the "self" as an active embodied agent in the construction of experience**)**. The schema in Figure 2 is adapted from Ihde (1977).

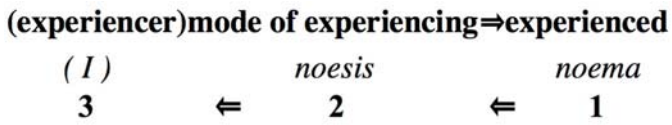


Figure 2. The circularity of experience.[2]

By this view consciousness is understood as a "circular" process that continually moves between the poles of "experiencer" and "experienced,", where the "I" as a full-blown embodied awareness of self comes "late" to experience. In other words, the "situatedness" of the self and its sense of being is an ongoing reflexive process; its relative significance is enacted "through its encounter with things, persons, and every type of otherness it may meet" (Ihde, 1977, p. 51; this is why it is placed in parentheses in Figure 2). The self therefore cannot be pinned down as a fixed entity, but rather appears as an emergent phenomenon, inextricable from embodied organism-environment interactions that give rise to it (Thompson, 2007; Varela et al, 1993).

Put simply, phenomenology provides a means by which we may begin to develop the experience of any number of phenomena through a recognition of the taken for granted ways we attend to them, and therefore open up alternative possibilities. And of course, this may involve the integration of many more perceptual modes (auditory, tactile, bodily, emotional, social and so on) than the almost purely visual dimension that characterized our exploration of the Necker Cube. Indeed, creative engagement with music necessarily involves cross-modal, embodied and intersubjective forms of awareness and attention sharing (Clifton, 1976; Johnson,

[2] The terms *noesis* and *noema* originate in the Greek word *νόημα*, which refers to the "aboutness" of a given thought. They were introduced in phenomenology by Husserl (1913) to distinguish the basic (and inseparable) elements of conscious thought or "intentionality." Put very simply, *noesis* (or the *noetic*) refers to the mental act of perceiving something in a certain way, while *noema* (or *noematic*) concerns the intended object of experience. These terms have been developed by various ways by a range of thinkers (Woodruff Smith, 2007, pp. 304-306; see also Sokolowski, 2000; Solomon, 1977).

2007; Leman, 2007). For example, as a listener one might decide to focus on specific instruments in an ensemble—perhaps one that normally plays a background role—and thus develop a new perspective on a well-known piece of music. In doing so one could also actively seek out new aspects (overtones, harmonics, rhythmic and dynamic nuances and so on) in order to develop the experience of the sounds one engages with (Roholt, 2014). Additionally, one could attend to the sonic properties of the space one occupies (acoustics, reflections, reverberation, diffusion; Ihde, 1976; Blesser & Salter, 2006). Along these lines, a "focus, core, field and fringe" delineation similar to the one discussed above is taken up in an auditory/musical context by Ihde (1976; see also Schafer, 1986, 1994; Machin, 2010), who points out that unlike visual experience, the auditory field is omnidirectional and explicitly temporal. In this way, musical experience arguably surrounds, permeates and transforms our being in a way that visual experience does not; even in seemingly "passive" listening contexts it actively engages the body and does not first impose a strict subject-object separation. This observation is taken up by Clifton (1976) in a listening context, "I intend, or tend-toward the object of feeling, but at the same time submit to it by allowing it to touch me. Possession itself is thus two-directional: I possess the music, and it possesses me" (p. 76).

This all adds an interesting musical dimension to the rhythm of absorption and reflection described by Dewey (above). It also highlights the fundamental existential experience of actuality and potentiality, of coming-into and going-out of being—the continually transforming nature of experience (van der Schyff, 2015). Among other things, such insights may encourage a more nuanced awareness of time perception, where the focus may shift from the narrow (onsets and the "trailing off" of sounds) to the broad (the evolution of a tone or form). This may also involve an exploration of the relationships between the "just past" to the anticipation of what is to come next, the *retentions* and *protentions* that characterize the temporal nature of intentionality (Husserl, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). In connection with this, one could examine how perception of the various attributes of the musical sound develop in relation to bodily-emotive states (i.e. synaesthetic perceptions of movement, location, space, texture, feeling; see Clifton, 1976; Johnson, 2007, Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Similarly, as a performer, one might explore how experience is transformed through the embodied agency of those with whom we co-enact musical worlds (Reybrouck, 2005; Krueger, 2014). Or indeed, one could begin with an examination of *sedimented* conventions and attitudes in the cultural context (e.g. Small, 1999; Clayton et al., 2011), examining one's relationship to them and considering alternative ways of thinking.

In brief, all of these activities involve a process of moving from taken-for-granted ways of listening, perceiving and thinking towards a more reflective, present or "mindful" attitude—one that may foster more pluralistic, relational and imaginative ways of attending to the world (van der Schyff, 2015). What is important to recognize here is that while the phenomenological attitude seeks to draw out such previously unrecognized aspects of experience it does not reduce experience to such aspects. That is, in contrast to the categorizing trends in empirical science, phenomenology maintains a holistic and relational perspective that strives to develop a greater understanding of the unity of experience as a complex, living, transforming, embodied-ecological phenomenon—albeit one that may be attended to and developed from a range of interacting perspectives (Clifton, 1975).

Embodiment and the primordial meaning of aesthetic experience

As I have begun to consider, phenomenological inquiry affords a deeper understanding of how experience happens in a relational, ecological and living-embodied context (Benson, 2001; 1966; Krueger, 2011, 2013, 2014; Merelau-Ponty, 2002). This reveals that what is experienced

(*noema*) cannot be separated from the mode(s) of experiencing (*noeisis*) as well as the embodied "I" (*ego*) who reflects upon experience and who forms the (interpretive) historical background narrative that gives it meaning (Gallagher, 2012; Benson, 2001). By this light, the what, how and who of experience stand in an evolving, reflexive, and co-emergent relationship to each other and to the background context with which they are inextricably enmeshed. As Benson (2001) points out, the self, body and world are "of a piece, albeit a very big piece" (p. 31).

Here it should be noted that while *conscious* experience may be understood as explicitly "object directed," phenomenological inquiry also reveals that there is a strong sense in which all experience may be understood as *passively motivated*. It is important to understand that in this context the term "passive" is not synonymous with "inactive." Rather, it refers to a fundamental openness to the world—to how the lived body actively constitutes its relationship to the environment though primordial, affectively motivated (or affectively valenced) activity, resulting in patterns of behavior, dispositions and moods, recurrent affective episodes (i.e. emotions), memories, habits and so on (Colombetti, 2014; van der Schyff, 2015). Phenomenologists sometimes use the term "passive synthesis" to describe this process, which is explored to better understand how the object-directed (or "intentional") structure of experience discussed above (*I-noesis-noema*) emerges from more primordial ways of being-in-the-world that do not always entail an explicit correlational subject-object structure (Thompson, 2007, pp. 28-31; see also Carman, 2008; Gallagher, 2012; Merelau-Ponty, 2002).

Among other things, this (re)reveals an understanding of "aesthetic experience" that goes much "deeper" than the rather detached, rationalizing and analytical approach inherited from Enlightenment thinking (Johnson, 2007). It brings us closer to the original Greek notion of *aesthesis*, which is grounded in the senses. Indeed, from the phenomenological perspective, aesthetic "sense-making" is primordially rooted in our embodied nature—in feeling, moods, emotion, movement and affectively motivated action; in our non or pre-linguistic capacities for developing relational cross-modal understandings of the worlds we are involved with (Johnson, 2007; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). It is thus understood as a fundamental way we structure experience as embodied, empathic and social animals beginning at the earliest stages of life. Increasingly, musicality is seen as a primary example of such aesthetic forms of primordial meaning-making, including the embodied forms of "participatory" musical sense-making that occur between infants and caregivers[3] (Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007; DeNora, 2000; Trevarthern, 2002). Put simply, such research highlights the interpretive, empathic-relational, embodied, and improvisatory character of such primary forms of aesthetic meaning-making. In doing so, it reveals a much more nuanced and embodied view of what musicality entails, as well as its deep significance for human development and well-being beginning at the earliest stages of ontogenesis.

The point I would like to stress here is that even at the primordial origins of embodied awareness associated with "passive synthesis", experience (musical or otherwise) is not pre-given. It does not simply involve things "out there" with objective relationships and meanings that are to be perceived and processed "in the head." Rather it is an *enactive* process that develops though the embodied interactivity between an organism and its environment (Thompson 2007; Varela et al., 1993). And as I have just mentioned, "environment" may also include other agents, where experience and meaning-making becomes a co-operative or "negotiated" process (Fantasia et al., 2014). Again, this speaks to the "extended" nature of musical cognition as a shared phenomenon, where worlds of meaning are brought forth though embodied intersubjective (musical) action-as-perception (see also Reybrouck, 2005).

[3] In such interactions infants are no longer understood as simply responding passively to (or simply imitating) pre-given stimuli in the environment. Rather, they actively co-create a repertoire of (musical) sounds and movements that facilitate meaningful interactions with the primary caregiver (Fantasia et al., 2014; see also Krueger, 2013).

Despite the primacy of such relational aesthetic-embodied processes, however, our awareness of such modes of being-in-the-world often becomes obscured. This is partially due to the fact that while our embodiment provides the very means and context by which all experience takes place, in much of day-to-day life the body tends to "hide out" (Johnson, 2007) or retreat into the background of consciousness as our intentionality is directed "out into the world" (Polyani, 1969; Gallagher, 2005). This may also be exacerbated by what Heidegger (1962) sees as our reluctance to own up to our fundamentally interpretive way of being. This involves the anxiety associated with the realization we are not objects with fixed essences and relationships to the world, but rather fundamentally self-interpreting creatures "all the way down" who are nevertheless socialized into particular understandings of being (Dreyfus, 1991). Thus the often-tacit fear of the groundlessness inherent to human existence leads us to become attached to certain ways of being-in-the world that come to be seen as normative—as wholly constitutive of a given experience (the *naturalized* ways of attending to the world I began to discuss above).

Of course such naturalized attitudes are, in many ways, necessary for day-to-day coping in the world—they are an essential part of the structure of human being (Heidegger, 1962; Dreyfus, 1991). However, when simply taken-for-granted they may also narrow the possibilities of human experience. In this way, our fundamental embodied openness to the world becomes *sedimented* into rigid ways of perceiving and knowing that come to be misinterpreted as having some kind of essential or fixed ontological status. This often involves the formation of reified notions of what are in reality relational dynamic processes (e.g. mind, self, music, education, culture, emotions, knowledge and so on; see Bai, 2001, 2003; van der Schyff 2015). With this in mind, encouraging a deeper phenomenological awareness of the embodied and transformational processes and perceptions that allow us to make sense of the world may help raise our consciousness to see that experience need not be understood simply in terms of the mental recovery of a pre-given world out there—fixed ways of doing, thinking and perceiving—but rather as arising from our histories of interaction with the (physical, social, and cultural) environment. Indeed, from this perspective experience may begin to be explored in an *active* and *relational* context—i.e. in terms of shared *worlds* that we "open up" or "disclose" for ourselves and each other, and that we may transform through interactive and transformative practices like art and music making (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011; Borghman, 1984; Greene, 1995). As the words of Iser and Dewey (above) suggest, such activities allow us to consciously participate in the imaginative *restructuring* of experience beginning at the most fundamental levels of embodied being-in-the-world—where, again, experience is revealed as a situated, *enactive* embodied-ecological circularity (Varela et al., 1993; Thompson, 2007).

Importantly, this embodied view stands in contrast to many assumptions common to Western academic musicology, aesthetics and music psychology, which often tend to understand musical experience first in terms of depersonalized cognitive *responses* to specific (objective) features intrinsic to the musical "work" or performance thereof (Bohlman, 1999; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; van der Schyff, 2015). As Roholt (2014) points out, this standard *analytical* perspective artificially brings certain elements to the foreground and treats them as determinate quantifiable phenomena (pitch, timing, structure and so on), effectively putting other elements out of play. In musical contexts this generally involves the assumption that musical experience occurs according to a linear schema, whereby specific objective antecedents intrinsic to the "music itself" (the score or performance) are understood to *cause* responses in listeners in a more or less passive, disembodied and decontextualized sense. Put simply, the analytical perspective tends to ignore the active modes of experiencing; it focuses on developing "objective" points of view and thus can only describe the more complex *relational* qualities of subjective musical experience as "ineffable" (Roholt, 2014). This is not to say that such categorical forms of analysis, whether in psychological or musicological contexts, have

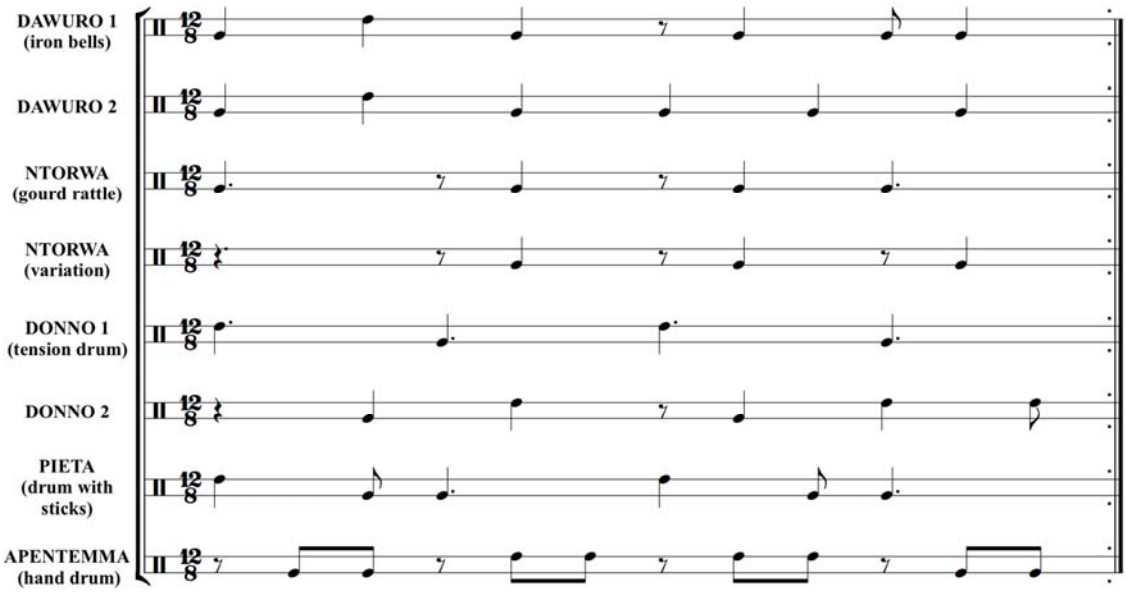
no role to play in music education (e.g. as heuristic tools). However, when wholly decoupled from an exploration of the broader contextual or embodied-situated aspects of experience they offer only a limited (and often misleading) perspective on what musical experience entails. Indeed, it is important to recognize that such objectivist points of view are not based in any fundamental lived reality. Rather they are the products of the theorist—something left over when we *inhibit* actual lived involvement with the world (Dreyfus, 1991; see also Clifton, 1983; Roholt, 2014).

As we saw with the Necker Cube, and as we will see shortly with African polyrhythm, the features that contribute to the experience of music are not simple, fixed or discreet. Rather they are *indeterminate* or equivocal—their relative meanings shift due to the active and embodied nature of perception (Bowman, 2004). Thus while the phenomenological approach does seek to draw out and analyze the manifold elements that constitute a given phenomenon, it does so in order to build up a rich account of experience as a *relational* process that unfolds in time and in specific contexts. Indeed, phenomenology describes the transforming quality of experience through the careful use of metaphor and comparison (see Clifton, 1976; Johnson, 2007; Roholt, 2014; van Manen, 1990, 2014). In the process it embraces the active circular relationship between action and perception (Nöe, 2006), highlighting the purposive, creative and interpretive nature of musical behavior (listening, performing, composing, improvising); as well as the interactive bodily or "motor intentionality" at the root of all experience and meaning-making (Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Johnson, 2007).

Multi-stable musical experiences: African polyrhythm

Students tend to enjoy exploring the Necker Cube and similar images, as well as the analyses, discussions and speculations that ensue. But while the image of the Cube provides a convenient way to begin developing a phenomenological perspective, its utility is limited and it quickly becomes time to examine more complex phenomena that engage us in the more explicitly embodied, affective and intersubjective ways I have just described. A relatively easy jump can be made from the more abstract experience of the Necker Cube to the living world of musical practice through the introduction of multi-stable musical phenomena such as repeating polyrhythms. These are roughly analogous to the visual example of the Necker Cube in that they are comprised of patterns whose relations may be experienced in multiple ways (Christensen, 2012). Consider the example in Figure 3, a partial representation of the Adowa rhythms played by the Ashanti people of Ghana in West Africa (see Hartigan, 1995, p.33-56). When I work on these rhythms with drum-kit students I choose groups of two or three rhythms, play them together and ask the student to attend to them in various ways. For example, the combination of the *dawuro 2* and the *donno 1* rhythms creates a simple 3:2 (*hemiola*) relationship that many students will have experienced previously (the "2" pulse is a represented as dotted quarter notes in the *donno 1*, while the "3" pulse is represented as quarter notes in the *dawuro 2*). However, many students soon discover that the way they initially experience the two pulses is limited to a certain culturally *sedimented* way of listening. Indeed, Westerners are accustomed to encountering triplets over binary groupings or duple subdivisions of a central beat—i.e. "3" "against" or "over" the grounding "2 ;" we experience this both in how we listen to music and represent it in notation. Factors such as tempo and relative dynamics and timbre of the pulses may bias perception towards the "3" pulse (see Handel, 1984). But whatever the case, we in the West often tend towards a hierarchical perception of polyrhythm, where one pulse is often understood as central—a conditioned representation that African musicians would not necessarily share. And indeed, one of the reasons I choose to introduce these rhythms early on with drum students is because they offer an opportunity to discuss other cultural alternatives to the taken-for-granted ways of thinking about and perceiving meter, rhythm and time keeping

in the West (this may help students better understand their own *naturalized* ways of listening and doing and thus begin the process of discovering new possibilities).



https://soundcloud.com/dylan-van-der-schyff/adowa-rhythm-study-for-phenomenology-practice

Figure 3. West African rhythms (adapted from Hartigan, 1995, p.33).[4]

Students are asked to shift the focus of their attention between the two pulses, maintain a "neutral" position between the two, and to attend to how the experience develops. They recognize this as somewhat analogous to developing the possibilities of the Necker Cube, and may draw on the insights into the structure and modes of experience that exercise offered. The "flipping" back and forth between the up and down position of the Cube image is recalled by alternatively attending the "3" and "2" (or "slow" and "fast" perhaps) perspectives of the polyrhythm. Likewise, both pulses may be encountered equally, which may be seen as analogous to developing the "flat" (or 2D) experience of the Cube. The addition of more complex rhythm, such as the *ntorwa*, develops things further. As the new rhythm emerges against the background polyrhythm, students see how they can transform the experience of this rhythm depending on which of the other pulses they associate with it. For example, the dotted quarter pulse of the *donno 1* pattern with the *ntorwa* maintains a *hemiola* quality. However, in

[4] The sound file demonstrates the 3:2 pattern and some of the Adowa rhythms presented here. Listeners will first hear the bass drum playing the "2" associated with the *donno 1* and the cross-stick playing the "3" associated with the *dawuro 2.* The tom-tom drums enter playing a simplified version of the *donno 2* pattern. Shortly after this the cowbell and bongo drum add variations of the *ntorwa* and *apentemma*, respectively; and the *dawuro 1* is introduced on a woodblock. A maraca is also added to reinforce the "2" of the bass drum. The sound file concludes with an improvisation on a high drum. It should be noted that this example uses Western percussion instruments; a traditional African ensemble will sound quite different. Also, these patterns are usually played at a much faster tempo and a number of additional rhythms are involved. Listeners may tap along, first with the "2" of the bass drum, and then with the "3" of the cross stick. Following this they may try using both hands and/or feet to play both pulses along with the example, or even attempt to play some of the rhythms simultaneously. In doing so one might explore some of the phenomenological insights discussed above.

association with the quarter notes of the *dawuro 2* pattern, the relationship takes on a distinctly even eighth note flavor. As before, students are asked to bring the various rhythms and combinations of rhythms to the foreground (the focus); to clap one of the rhythms while I play the others; to move between states of absorption, reflexivity and analysis; and to note the developments in the experience. They are also encouraged to develop evolving narratives of the experience—to describe the aesthetic effect of the combinations of rhythms with metaphors of movement, tension, space and location (e.g. speed, density, position in a rhythmic landscape; see Johnson, 2007). Most importantly, students are asked to embrace the inherent ambiguity and multiplicity in how these patterns may be experienced, and to reflect on how such experiences are enacted and developed through their own agency.

This work becomes even more interesting when students begin to practice such rhythms themselves. As students work to simultaneously develop the physical coordination and aesthetic understandings that will allow them to enact the various rhythms individually and in various combinations, they are required to break from habitual ways of thinking about and physically interacting with their instrument. For kit drummers this challenge involves incorporating the bodily extremities—the feet and hands must work together and independently; the voice may be included as a fifth element. This phase of learning is generally accompanied by a certain amount of discomfort and frustration. Interestingly, what makes this initial process of exploration so uncomfortable is precisely what makes it so informative.

Here students are confronted with a diverse range of new focal points and relationships that must be attended to and advanced reflexively without losing contact with the larger musical-polyrhythmic context from which they emerge. These are spread across the audible, visual, bodily, and abstract fields of experience; and each may reveal naturalized inclinations that must be identified and developed. The phenomenological attitude encourages the student and teacher not to ignore or rush through this process, but rather to attend to it carefully. Initially the experience is frustratingly disjointed and the awareness of one's own body and its relationship to the new musical environment it is involved in creating is uncomfortable. However, a reflexive analysis of this state may help the student become more aware of the body's proclivities—its *sedimented* ways of doing and being—and thus develop more nuanced ways of experiencing their embodied musicality. In the process, students may begin to see that what was once taken-for-granted as "naturalized" may be better understood as a historical process of embodied and conceptual sedimentation; and that new possibilities may emerge with sustained phenomenological work—new musical worlds in which they may come to feel increasingly "at home."

Once again, students are asked to shift and share the focus of attention between various bodily, auditory and musical relationships as they play more complex three or four part groupings; and to incorporate the musical activities of others into the shared musical ecology (Reybrouck, 2005). Students may also be encouraged to explore the various and shifting relationships they enact between the musical tools they employ. That is, how new forms of awareness (and extensions of "self") may occur through "instrument-embodied perceptions" (Heelan, 1967; and Ihde, 1974).[5] In doing so, they may come to better understand the central role the body plays in enacting the (musical) worlds they inhabit (Benson, 2001; Gallager, 2005; Johnson, 1987, 2007; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Nöe, 2006; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Additionally, such investigations might also open deeper insights into the situated and intersubjective (or extended) nature of cognition, learning and musical meaning-making—including the primordial forms of the "aesthetic" and "participatory" sense-making I began to discuss above (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Krueger, 2013, 2014). In brief, the cultivation of a phenomenological attitude may help students better understand and discuss the embodied

[5] See also Heidegger's notions of *present-to-hand* and *ready-to-hand*, and equipment; Heidegger, 1962; Blattner, 2006, Dreyfus, 1991).

and dynamically relational nature of musical experience. That is, how the evolving experience of the musical ecology is characterized by the ongoing interactivity between one's own actions and thoughts, and the tools, spaces and other agents that co-constitute it (Borgo, 2007a&b; Mathews, 2008; Reybrouck, 2001, 2005, 2012).

To summarize, as students develop richer phenomenological skills and understanding they gain the ability to orient themselves within the music from different perspectives and in a controlled manner. They may now play with different interacting, and embodied musical relationships (e.g. sonic-environmental, embodied-instrumental, interpersonal and abstract) and learn to reflect creatively on what they are doing as they do it—i.e. to play "in the moment." In this way students may be encouraged to develop the ability to fluently shift and share attention between multiple focal points; to imagine and develop new relationships with greater ease; to improvise; and to become more mindful of the process of musical experience as creative agents—crucial skills for the development of high-level musicianship. Indeed, it is extremely rewarding for students when they begin to realize that they are capable of imagining and enacting multiple approaches to their musical experiences and activities. They now begin to "look" at familiar musical experiences in a new light; and may be encouraged to develop the phenomenological attitude, as well as other approaches to reflective practice and mindful-awareness across the range of their musical practice (Biswas, 2011; Gibbs, 1998; Lowe, 2011; Lyons, 2010; Gyamtso, 1986; Sarath, 2006; van der Schyff, 2015). [6] In doing so they may begin to discover that the path to musicality does not lie in fixed approaches and *sedimented* ways of acting and thinking, but rather in flexibility, freedom, the ability to maintain multiple perspectives—in a kind of open-minded readiness to participate reflexively and imaginatively in an ongoing process of relational and transformative experience (Small, 1999; Bateson, 1979/1980).

Conclusion

Due to restrictions of space I have given here only a brief sketch of what phenomenological analysis entails. Readers familiar with the phenomenological literature will note that I have basically adopted a simplified Husserlian/Merelau-Pontian approach—these core ideas offer a good place to begin phenomenology, even if eventually other approaches become more relevant to the inquiry at hand. Moreover, the speculative examples of phenomenological analysis I have offered have been abbreviated; and my practical examples have been limited to one (important) aspect of my practice as a music educator. Other writers have offered related analyses from different musical perspectives (e.g. Clarke & Clarke, 2011; Christensen, 2012; DeNora, 2000; Ferrara, 1984; Ihde, 1976; Krueger, 2009, 2011a&b; Pio & Varkoy, 2015; Sudnow, 1978; Small, 1999; Roholt, 2014). Additionally, a number of excellent introductory texts have appeared in recent years that may help readers gain a wider perspective of the relevance of phenomenology across a range of domains (e.g. Gallagher, 2012; van Manen, 2014). This said, I hope that what I have discussed here will resonate in various ways with broader aspects of musical experience and learning. At the very least, I hope it will provide a useful introduction to the kinds of insights phenomenology may afford with regard to the project outlined in the introduction—namely, the challenge music and arts educators face in getting students to

[6] The Alexander technique is also relevant here. This practice involves becoming more mindful about one's movement and posture, with the goal of revealing and correcting unhealthy habits and promoting well-being (see Gelb, 1996).

become more aware of their active participation in the process of embodied aesthetic experience.[7]

For philosophers, phenomenology offers ways of exploring the structure of experience and developing new knowledge about it. Likewise, researchers in psychology and the social sciences may employ phenomenological methods to include first person perspectives in qualitative empirical research. For artists, musicians and arts educators, however, phenomenology may be explored directly in the context of creative (pedagogical and aesthetic) *praxis.* As I have considered, fostering a phenomenological perspective may aid in developing a certain open, reflective and *agentic* attitude towards experience—an attitude that every artist must cultivate in someway or another if they are to open themselves up imaginatively to the world and thus participate effectively as the cultural agents they are. In line with this, I have discussed the ways phenomenological reflection can help us better understand how meaningful relationships may be developed and transformed through a structuring and restructuring of the equivocal (e.g. multi-stable phenomena; Merlau-Ponty, 2002). Such a process is central to all imaginative and creative activity. Indeed, the arts "practice possibility" (Ihde, 1977) through imaginative aesthetic explorations of auditory, visual, spatial, linguistic, bodily-kinetic, and self-world interactions (Bowman & Powell, 2007; Johnson, 1987, 2007). They naturally develop their own forms of suspension (*epoché*) of the taken-for-granted. And they strive to instill a sense of transformation—new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling doing and understanding that often "shock" us out of our more complacent modes of being-in-the-world (Greene, 1995).

With this in mind, I would like to conclude by pointing out that the phenomenological approach to musical practice I have begun to develop here may be extended well beyond the private lesson, the practice room, or performance situations. This is to say that practice-based approaches to phenomenological inquiry in the arts may in fact serve as the foundation for more far-reaching, comparative and critical investigations into the discourses and activities that constitute self and society. For example, as I suggested earlier, the West African rhythms considered above might be employed to initiate a discussion and exploration of differences in how music is understood and used in other cultures. Along these lines, a growing number of writers are developing phenomenologically based approaches to the experience of culture and self (e.g. Benson, 2001). Such work may further aid students in moving beyond *sedimented* ways of understanding the socio-cultural milieu they participate in; it may afford them an opportunity to consider their own cultural relationships more deeply—and with a more critical eye—and to imagine transformative possibilities for creative expression. This might result, for instance, in new conceptions of what constitutes an "ensemble", or new ways of collaborative composing. It might also inspire a deeper interest in integrating music with other expressive and academic disciplines—e.g. social-cultural studies, perhaps in conjunction with forms of critical multi-modal media analysis (see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Machin, 2010).

Perhaps most importantly, the phenomenological attitude also has important ethical and critical implications when it seeks to develop richer and more authentic ways of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962). Indeed, by encouraging our students to open up to the interpretive, creative or, indeed, *enactive* nature of their own embodied consciousness we may help them see that what is often taken as "normative" is in fact a product of various *sedimented* socio-cultural relations or "conditioning" that may be re-conceived in new ways (Krishamurti, 1970; Nakagawa, 2000; see also De Jaegher, 2013). In this way, the phenomenological attitude also resonates strongly with the so-called *praxial* philosophy of music education, which sees music education as a deeply social and cooperative activity that is (ideally) concerned with human

[7] I would also like to point out that much of what I have considered above resonates with the remarkable insights and practices introduced by the composer, R.M. Schafer (1986; 1994), whose pioneering work in 'soundscape studies' is highly relevant in pedagogical contexts. Readers who wish to develop the phenomenological attitude further in sonic-musical contexts will find much that is useful here.

flourishing (Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Higgins, 2012; Silverman, 2012). By this light, the phenomenological insights students develop in their musical studies may be extended to the broader context of their social and cultural life-worlds. This may help them develop more empathic relationships with the people, things and the "natural" ecology that make our lives possible (Mathews, 2008; van der Schyff, 2015). With this in mind, the phenomenological attitude may also inspire a more general life-affirming orientation that seeks to continually renew itself though imagination and the exploration of new ways of thinking and being.

> [...] the human mind thrives on variation, even as it seeks unification; and imagining, more than any other mental act, proceeds by proliferation: it is the primary way in which the mind diversifies itself and its contents. Mind is free—indeed most free—in imagining. (Casey, 2000, p. 200)

In brief, phenomenology and the arts ask us to open up to the world as we find it and develop new ways of perceiving, understanding and communicating our experience as the embodied, social and cultural beings we are. They both demand that we confront the limitations imposed by our complacent and taken-for-granted attitudes and look towards the possible. Greene (1995) reminds us that it is this *releasing of the imagination*—this critical embracing of the possible, the heterogeneous, and the transformative—that is so central to the role of the arts in education. And indeed, as Casey's words convey so well, it is precisely in those moments when we catch ourselves in the creative act of imagining, restructuring and transforming our experience of the world that we may truly sense what freedom means.

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A Phenomenological Investigation of the Presencing of Space

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Abstract

In this paper the author explores certain fulfilling personal experiences that he describes as the presencing of space, i.e. the way in which an individual's spatial involvement may put him or her in contact with reality as a whole. These experiences are investigated from a phenomenological perspective, and the differences between them and other similar experiences, such as that of the sublime or *topophilia,* are highlighted. A neologism is introduced: *topoaletheia* (from the Greek *topos*, space understood as region, and *aletheia*, disclosure) to name a distinctive type of spatial experience. This concept may enrich the discussion about our involvement with space in our built environments.

Preface

When I think of buildings and cities, I find that most discussions in the literature leave out something that is important. On many occasions, my involvement with certain spatial realities has provided me with a sense of fulfillment or intellectual enjoyment of such a special quality that it is difficult to describe. It is on those spatial involvements that I want to focus.

I start with a few examples, my initial aim being to articulate the breadth and uniqueness of the kinds of experiences just described and their relation to phenomenological inquiry. Besides, these are not phenomena that only I have experienced. For years, I have shared comments on the sense of plenitude triggered by such spatial experiences to other people, including students and colleagues, and have realized that most of them have somehow lived similar moments. Also, one may find several similar instances described in the literature of geography, especially that of the 1970s and 80s, when there was widespread use of phenomenology in humanistic geography thanks

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to the works of Relph (1976), Tuan (1974, 1975, 1977), Seamon (1979, 1982, 1993), Seamon and Mugeraurer (1985), and Pickles (1985).[2]

In this essay I will follow Spiegelberg's (1960) definition of the stages of phenomenological methodology. Thus, I will firstly investigate particular phenomena and their description by intuiting and analyzing them. In this stage the focus is on identifying how the phenomena appear in one's consciousness. Descriptions of personal experiences can be readily found in the literature[3] as starting points for inquiry into the essence of the object of investigation. Secondly, I will investigate their general essence through a form of eidetic intuiting. Thirdly, I will apprehend the essential relationship among essences of similar experiences, in order to understand the nuances between those experiences. Lastly, I will draw some conclusions about the understanding of those experiences.

I

Phenomenology begins in silence. Only he who has experienced genuine perplexity and frustration in the face of the phenomena when trying to find the proper description for them knows what phenomenological seeing really means. (Spiegelberg, 1960)

Describing the kind of fulfilling experiences of space that I aim to analyze has never been an easy task. I have certainly had such experiences since I was a very young boy. And yet, all my life I have struggled to put them into words; words that somehow always managed to escape the point that, ultimately, seemed to hold the key. Probably words have always failed me because they can only establish correspondences within the limited realm of previously established concepts or words, and the experiences I aim to describe seem to refuse that measure. However, when I experienced them, I was certain of their distinctive character.

What is more, as happened to the fictional Lord Chandos[4] in Hofmannsthal's "Letter", the moment I attempt to give a few examples of these phenomena, they strike me as supremely foolish. But without examples I cannot hope to understand and be understood.

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[2] For an in-depth explanation of the formulation of humanistic geography, and its commitment to the multi-dimensional nature of the lived-world, see Seamon and Lundberg (2015). Understanding the meaning of space and place for individuals has always been at the core of phenomenological inquiries carried out by humanistic geographers.

[3] Descriptions of personal experiences can be found in the literature as starting points of inquiry into the essence object of investigation. See, for instance, Kim (2002) on the experience of nostalgia; Adnams (2002) on the experience of singing together in mass, and Wu (2002) on being a foreigner. Also, Relph (1976) and Tuan (1974) are identify essences from personal experiences.

[4] The *Letter of Lord Chandos* is a fictional letter written by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1902 about a writer named Lord Philip Chandos who is experiencing a crisis of language. Having achieved great literary accomplishments in the past, Lord Chandos had recently lost his ability to express himself adequately after he experienced a series of epiphanies and moments of transcendence triggered by everyday life events. He made efforts to fight the deterioration of his writing skills, and thus he returned to the classics, but he found them of little help. Soon the epiphanies were lost in his inability to express them, and his life turned stagnant and grey, as his self-confidence and creativity were gone (see Hofmannsthal, 2008).

I remember when, being a little boy, no more than five or six years old, my father took me to the soccer stadium for the first time to attend an important match. When we went through the tunnel and accessed the bleachers, I suddenly saw the great volume of space contained in the stadium, much bigger than any other space I had so far entered. And not only its size overwhelmed me: it was filled with strong lights (it was at night) and with the loud roar of nearly ninety thousand people singing the same tune as if they were one. All of a sudden, I felt I was no longer confined to my body, but had somehow expanded to the limits of the stadium and merged with it in a moving experience that I still remember to this day.

I remember another time, when as teenagers and unable to find any vacancy in camping sites, my friends and I were forced to sleep through the night out on a remote wide, empty beach. That night, unable to fall asleep since I could not find comfort on the sand, I looked up to the sky, and saw an enormous number of stars. I never had seen so many. That beach was so remote and devoid of any human interference that the stars managed to literally light it up. Also, I witnessed the wonderful spectacle of shooting stars: dozens of them—hundreds I would say—filled the infinite sky that night. The sea breeze on my face and the distant roaring of the waves transported me to all the remote limits of that wide beach—and I felt at home, secure, confident, full of energy. Those thousands of stars that I could see were obviously very far away, and yet I felt no distance. Something inside me leapt to the stars, and that giant elevation, combined with the feeling of being in unison with the whole extension of the beach, made me weep in joy. I transcended my limited world and found myself floating in a space that, despite being almost infinite, was so near to me—even nearer than my friends, who were sleeping just a few meters away. I have never felt more fulfilled than that night.

Yi-Fu Tuan describes what seems to me a rather similar experience when he visited the Death Valley for the first time and was forced to sleep out in the open:

> When I woke up, the sun had risen high enough to throw its rays on the range of mountains across the valley and presented me with a scene, totally alien to my experience up to that time, of such unearthly beauty that I felt transported to a supernatural realm and yet, paradoxically, also at home, as though I had returned after a long absence. (Tuan, 1974, p. xi)

One may also experience similar phenomena in more prosaic landscapes, even those that may seem most unlikely, such as in a large metropolis. To give a personal example, during my first visit to the United States, when I was 16, I went to Los Angeles, and the few days I spent there provided me with this elusive experience of plenitude. Although I never actually managed to see the ocean, the shoreline was continuously present in my intuition, somehow enclosing the vast volume of space I was witnessing. The view of the mountains on one side and my sense of the ocean on the other—with the massive city spread out in between—provided me with a sense of joy as I felt something inside me was growing. I became aware of that vast volume of space, so full of life, full of activity around me.

Architect Le Corbusier describes a somewhat similar experience that he had when he was first confronted with what it was a new phenomenon for him, fast traffic:

> On that first of October 1924, I was assisting in a titanic rebirth of a new phenomenon: traffic. Cars, cars, fast, fast! One is seized, filled with enthusiasm, with joy… they joy of power. The simple and naïve pleasure of being in the midst of power, of strength. One

> participates in it, one takes part in the society that is just dawning. One has confidence in this new society: it will find a magnificent expression of its power. One believes in it. (Le Corbusier, as quoted in Dear 2000)

The same enthusiasm at being flooded with energy that Le Corbusier describes is what I felt in that trip to Los Angeles, and have subsequently felt when visiting bustling cities in exotic environments. Nevertheless, in his experience there is something missing that I believe might be important: either spatial points of reference or boundaries that may help us become aware of the space contained between them and ourselves.

Retrospectively, I can now say that it was not only the view of natural landmarks that triggered the experience; the skyscrapers of the downtown area also provided me with what Norberg-Schulz (1979) would call anchors of reference. They provided me with a sensation as if my mind was extended up to them, hence heightening my awareness of the whole volume of space. However, the expression "mind being extended" may be misleading. I was not drawn to those natural or man-made landmarks as to objects standing over against a subject; what I experienced was rather a sense of being at one with the volume of space in between those landmarks and myself. That large volume of space seemed to both separate me from and join me to those landmarks: this space was as if, in its size and fullness, it was enveloping subject and object in unison.

Apart from the mountains, the oceanfront and the downtown, many other places made me embrace that volume of space: symbolic anchors of reference, i.e. places that reminded me of Hollywood movies which I was so used to watching. Not only specific places, such as the Beverly Hills Town Hall did that, but also ubiquitous things such as those typical tall palm trees that seemed so exotic to me at that time. One object in particular triggered in me the elusive phenomenon I aim to analyze: the Hollywood sign. My first sight of what I had watched innumerable times on TV gave me goose bumps, and no matter where I went, its location remained very much alive in my intuition—together with that of the downtown, the mountains and the ocean. Being aware of all those places in between the entire volume of space structured my awareness of the whole space and gave me the sense of fulfillment that I mean to analyze here.

Interestingly, I have heard many accounts by my students and other people about similar experiences they had whenever they visited other landmarks for the first time, regardless of their function, beauty or age (e.g. the Eiffel Tower, the Giza Pyramids, the Taj Mahal, the stadium of their favourite sports team, Disneyland, etc.). It seems that one's relation to them—i.e. how present they had been in one's life up to that moment—is more important than their inherent characteristics.

I could provide several other examples of similar experiences but, as Spiegelberg (1960) points out, it is more important to find the appropriate genus or class for the phenomenon[5] and describe what it is about. The phenomenon we are dealing with is one of fulfillment, something deeply moving when it is experienced to its fullest—as in the case of the beach under the stars—suggesting it may be a phenomenon that has a range of intensities. While having these experiences, one may feel a sense of plenitude, an elevated joy, and feel in harmony with the world, whose

[5] Spiegelberg (1960, p. 672): "When we want to describe new phenomena or new aspects of old phenomena, we can do little more than assign them places within the wider framework of classes with whose other members they show at least some similarity or structural resemblance."

totality seems able to embrace one's singularity.[6] This may be what Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos felt when his mind was absorbed by the sweet and foaming nourishments of his milk and his book, and felt that his life was expanding in all directions: "Everywhere I was in the centre of it, never suspecting mere appearance."

It is difficult to express these and many other similar experiences, let alone define them. In my own struggle to name them during my youth, I initially adopted the term horizontality, unaware of the use Bollnow (1961, 1971) and Jager (1971) had made of it. There seem to be a few commonalities between all the examples given above and the phenomenon of what we may call horizontality for now. In all examples, the spatial situation heightens awareness. This occurred as a consequence of the contrast these spatial situations presented with the everyday experiences of space. As Heidegger would put, once we are thrown out of the ordinary, we see more clearly, and indeed those dislocations give a sense of existing more fully. We seem to be expanding to embrace a massive volume of space, and yet we may also feel at home, joyful. This suggests that our experience of space is personal. In these moments, one's personal experience of space is clearly different from Cartesian space, and its impersonal equidistance between units of measure.[7]

The other aspect of this point is that such a dislocation can be triggered by a spatial reality—be it a natural or man-made landmark, by a structure's interior or even the stars. Indeed it seems that almost anything could trigger them. The exalting and moving character of the experience does not come from the intrinsic properties of the situations per se, but rather from one's relation to one's spatial reality. Thus, the literal material value of some world famous landmarks (such as the case of the Hollywood sign I mentioned above) may not be much, whereas the value of the experience they trigger may be vast. In other words, the meaning those places may have for the individual discovering them seems to be more important than their intrinsic characteristics—or their socially accepted meaning, for that matter.

Moreover, there seems a relation between the phenomena in question here and the experience of light. It seems that the larger the volume of space one can embrace and the brighter the light that fills it up, the easier it may be to experience the exaltation I am discussing. However, light here is relative to expectation, not measurable in absolute terms. In fact, some of the most moving phenomena, such as the night on the beach I described above, can only occur in relative darkness, at night.

Perhaps there are actually two metaphorical directions in which we may become enveloped by space: horizontally and synchronically, in "space" itself, what I previously called horizontality; but also diachronically, through time, resulting in a sort of tension between the two.

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[6] This relates to the experience of "flow" popularized by Csikszentmihalyi (1992), which he describes as those times where action and awareness merge. This occurs when music moves us, or when reading books whose stories involve us so much that we get lost and time passes with us being aware of it (Adnams, 2002). The experiences I have described seem to fall into this class.

[7] Bollnow's (1961) concept of lived-space seems related to the phenomena we are addressing, as they both refer to an intuitive experience of space that causes an emotional response. Nevertheless, one might say that Bollnow utilizes the term horizontality to refer to a quality of the category of space that may be experienced equally by anyone. Conversely, I was looking for a term to describe an individual feeling of expansion—expansion of one's awareness, a plenitude produced by being exposed to certain spatial contexts.

Consider the case of Kyoto's Golden and Silver pavilions (figures 1 and 2). The walls of the upper floors of the Golden Pavilion (*Kinkaku-ji*) are covered in gold leaf and shine very strikingly, making the reflection of the pavilion on the lake an astonishing view. The Silver Pavilion (*Ginkaku-ji*), instead, is not covered in silver foil. In fact, it is hidden behind very deep vegetation and is not easily visible.

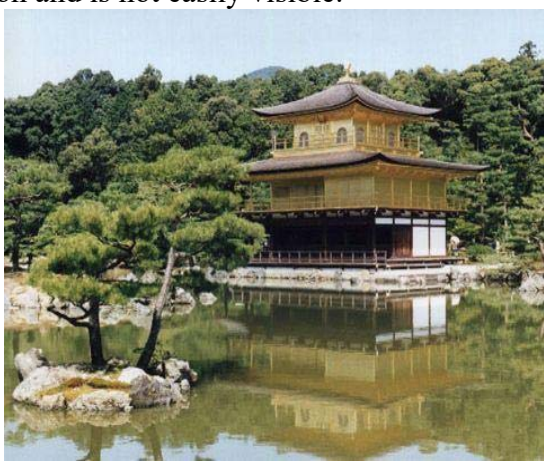

Figure 1, left: Kyoto's Golden Pavilion (*Kinkaku-ji*). Figure 2, right: the Silver Pavilion (*Ginkaku-ji*).

These two pavilions present both similarities and differences in their ability to disclose space and make us part of it. Both pavilions rest within carefully designed landscapes, crafted according to traditional Japanese gardening techniques. The Golden Pavilion is surrounded by a garden suitable for strolling, and the Silver Pavilion has a rock (Zen) garden next to it. These gardens are all significant in traditional Japanese architecture; in fact, the building is less important than the landscape that surrounds it or the views that the combination of building and park can provide.

The experience of these enclaves is likely to unfold in terms of horizontality, as one becomes part of the landscape with the help of the figures that are scattered across the garden: from the temple, which becomes just another element of the landscape, to the lake, to the carefully pruned tree to the last stone of the rock garden, which breaks the waves of gravel. If the awareness of the in-between is a necessary condition to experience the joyful feeling of being at one with space, being able to enter these Japanese gardens, with all their elements disposed in careful balance, truly helps one achieve that feeling. The beauty of these spaces makes us feel embraced by them, making us feel them as very liveable. This is in clear contrast to the self-assertive character of Western monumental architecture, with its towers, spires, naves and pinnacles always aiming high—protruding into the sky, rather than embracing us on the earth.

But it is the differences between these two pavilions in the manner they disclose space that should be pointed out. The view of the Golden Pavilion is striking, even breathtaking. Visitors standing on the other side of the pond may easily become aware of the volume of space comprised between the conspicuous walls of the pavilion and themselves, making it easy for them to feel in unison with the whole landscape. But after the first realization of that space, however strong it may be, there are limited opportunities to expand. The pavilion is closed to visitors, hence preventing any possible disclosure of the interior space. In short, the intensity of our experience of this pavilion, the space it discloses, may diminish with time.

The Silver Pavilion, in contrast, does not show itself so rapidly, and instead seems to be trying to conceal its being. It is nothing extraordinary at first in any sense: no striking color, no

special material, and no outstanding size. Nothing. In fact, it even seems to be unfinished.[8] The building, however, roots us in the soil, from which it seems to have emerged as naturally as the vegetation that surrounds it and the moss that covers the pavilion's wooded grounds.

Having been denied the kind of quick disclosure one had in front of the Golden pavilion, the patient visitor eventually gets his reward, as the Silver pavilion discloses such important meanings in piecemeal such as the central role it occupied in the development of Japanese culture at the time of Yoshimasa (15th century). This is revealed not directly, but through interpretive signs one encounters on one's way to the pavilion. After building this pavilion, former shogun Yoshimasa spent his retirement in it, a time during which he greatly contributed to the development of what Keene (2003) dubs "the soul of Japan." He developed the art of cultivating Japanese gardens, as well as encouraged Noh Theater, as well as the arts of flower arrangement and ink painting. Most importantly, one small room of this pavilion witnessed the origin of the tea ceremony.

Learning about these important meanings of the Silver Pavilion makes one extend one's intuition by reaching out to the past (i.e. to the time those significant meanings came into existence), while being anchored in the present by means of the perception of the authenticity of the pavilion, which itself seems organically grown out of the soil together with the gardens. This can result in an extended presence—of space. It is not that the disclosing ability of this pavilion lasts longer (while one is learning about those historical meanings); or at least not only. One's intuition may be stretched out from a well-rooted present to a past that—by virtue of its meaning—is as conspicuous as the gold-leaf walls of the Golden Pavilion. This reinforces one's experience of identification with that space.

The more one finds out about the Silver Pavilion, the more one may identify with its space, especially in its symbolic side, by means of its duration. This occurs as the pavilion opens up rich meanings that have been bestowed upon it without disrupting the continuity of meanings through a reduction down to the original one, when the logos of its architecture named its being. The realization of this continuity, and the space that is disclosed in the process, is what we could call the diachronic dimensions. We used the adjective diachronic, as it implies a development through time.

In summary, we can distinguish between two kinds of expansion: horizontal, i.e. expansion through becoming aware of the space in between distant places and myself—space that both separates us from and joins us to those places; and diachronic, which means expansion by understanding the ethos of the place through the different layers of signification.[9] In other words, this diachronic expansion supposes becoming aware of the duration of the meaning of a place.

In conclusion: space may present itself in both directions, hence producing a certain tension within which there is room to manoeuvre. For instance, think of the great possibilities that a new theme park may strike within us, hence dislocating us from our everyday world and making space

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[8] This appearance of neglect is in fact rooted in the Japanese *wabi-sabi* worldview that, with its focus on the transience of things, represents the exact opposite of the Western ideal of great beauty as something monumental, spectacular, and enduring.

[9] "A townscape is born of the relationship between man and his culture and a particular natural environment; it is a manifestation of a community's temporal and spatial conception of its existence. Trying to change the fundamental character of a townscape is thus as difficult as attempting to alter the entire climate and culture of the locality" (Ashihara, 1983, p. xi).

emerge. But a new theme park will not be able to disclose itself diachronically in this way. At least it will not be able to do this, for example, an old hut that may not be conspicuous at all. An old hut will make us think in a different way, by reference to the person who lived there. The world of that person will in turn be composed of a whole range of meanings that will seem to have arisen spontaneously out of the landscape, out of the soil. In contrast, a theme park is a space of simulacra, which borrows meanings from the lives of other people, from other worlds, to create a self-contained imagined-place, and therefore its meanings are not rooted in its soil. In any case, it seems that it is in the hands of the architect or city planner to design, alter or respect spaces that may provide us with opportunities to disclose space in either directions or both, with the subsequent fulfillment it provides.

Another implication of these reflections is that, since some of the phenomena we are considering imply more than just a form of 'horizontal' expansion, the term horizontality may not do justice to those phenomena and might in fact be misleading. We therefore need to find a new name for these fulfilling phenomena triggered by space.

II

Some parts of our description of these fulfilling experiences of space may have reminded the reader of Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974) concept of *topophilia*. Indeed, Tuan also focused his geographical investigations on the question of how the environment provides the individual with joy and contentment, and came up with the term *topophilia*, which he defined as "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (1974, p. 4). As an example: one may experience *topophilia* when visiting one's hometown, and being surrounded by environmental elements that remind one of very fond childhood memories.

The joyful phenomena we are addressing and *topophilia* present themselves together in many situations—e.g. a young child going to Disneyland for the first time. Additionally, it is very reasonable to think that places that triggered an immense joyful experience will become very dear in one's memory. However, and despite that they may overlap in numerous occasions, the phenomena we aim to analyze and *topophilia* present sharp contrasts.

In the first place, and crucially, the role time plays in the experiences we are describing is very different from its role in *topophilia*. For instance: one may experience *topophilia* in a certain place during all of one's life—but this is one in which time might enhance that experience. In contrast, habituation seems to work against the fulfilling phenomena we are dealing with.

Habituation caused by a prolonged exposure to a certain spatial situation seems to diminish the joyful phenomena one experiences, and ultimately leads one to indifference towards the very locale that had triggered the phenomena in the first place. Let me give an example: a beautiful starry night sky like the one described above will always be beautiful, but were we to look at it continuously in an endless night spanning days and days, our initial response may wane and we would no longer feel ourselves to be expanding, and therefore we would no longer feel such exaltation.

The rationale is that if it is precisely the contrasting character of our involvement in certain spatial situations that triggers those joyful phenomena, once those spatial situations gradually become part of our everyday life, they may lose their revelatory character. This may occur along time (i.e. prolonged exposure) as well as in space, for in case there was no contrast between the stars and the darkness of the night sky (i.e. if we were witnessing a plenum of stars in the sky), the

lack of contrast would prevent our spatial involvement with each star, thus rendering the joyful spatial phenomena perhaps less likely. Besides, it seems that there is room for different intensities, and thus not all spatial situations trigger pleasing phenomena to the same extent. Those that provide us with more intense joyful experiences seem to last longer; it seems intensity is correlated to the time they will continue to produce a contrast to everyday life. Hence, variations of one's involvement with space seem to be necessary if one is going to experience that sense of exaltation or joy.

It seems important to point out that habituation caused by repetition has a very different effects. Repetition is used for example, in rituals or festivals as a re-enactment of the meaning of the festival. It is repetition itself that reminds us of the importance (the intensity, or the meaning) of what is being celebrated (Prat-Ferrer, 2008). Hence, repetition strengthens a kind of projection, the thinking ahead of the event to come, which is part of the extended presencing of the event. This presencing envelopes the memory of the past event, the projection of the one to come, and the perception of the one being re-enacted, stretching one's involvement with the event in what Bergson (1913) would call flow (*durée*). Therefore, habituation to the repetition of certain events may indeed help provide those joyful phenomena (think of anniversaries), whereas habituation due to prolonged exposure may diminish their effect.[10]

Furthermore, and to highlight other differences between *topophilia* and the phenomenon we are addressing, one could wonder whether *topophilia* is somehow related to beauty. We feel at home in those places with which we have affective bonds (i.e. *topophilia*), as well as we experience positive emotions when exposed to the beautiful. We were saying that we also feel at home being exposed to those spaces we were describing above. However, we mentioned that the meaning that a place has for us seemed to be more important than its intrinsic value in its ability to provide us with this sense of plenitude (e.g., remember the example of the Hollywood sign). Therefore, an explanation of the subtle differences between *topophilia*, beauty and the phenomenon we are analyzing may be helpful.

A discussion about a positive, affective bond between person and place, *topophilia*, is related to the traditional consideration of beauty. When we experience the beautiful, we feel drawn to the revelatory object. It attracts us, makes us care for it. In fact, Edmund Burke (1757) defines beauty as "that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it". Burke's understanding is in turn based on Plato's definition of beauty as the object of love (or *eros*). To define beauty as the object of *eros* is to understand it as the object of our deepest concern. Hence, the strong emotional connection between places and ourselves defined by *topophilia* means that those places are the objects of our concern. This points to a significant difference between the phenomenon we are exploring and *topophilia*: no relationship of concern, and certainly no affective bond, between an individual and a place is required to experience the joyful phenomenon we are analyzing. For instance, I had no relationship of concern whatsoever with Los Angeles. Rather, my experience of that phenomenon occurred with no apparent reason,

[10] We may remember here *Alice in Wonderland,* where they celebrated un-birthdays so that they could make merry all days a year bar one, which seemed to them a better idea than the usual birthday celebrations, as these only happen once a year. However, one could easily argue that habituation would render all those un-birthday celebrations almost useless, as participants would find no event to celebrate and in the end those parties would become part of their daily lives' routine.

often triggered by places that were not of explicit interest. This phenomenon occurred as if it were a gift to me[11]—a kind of presentness.

One may argue that our joyful experience *per se* was the beginning of a relation of concern, and that one is probably no longer indifferent to that particular locale after that experience, since one's memory of that place becomes meaningful henceforth. This being so does not reduce the experiences of horizontality to those of *topophilia*, mainly due to a twofold reason: on the one hand, the joyful experience may begin at first sight, before any emotional bond has been established between the location and the observer. On the other hand, the longer the time that passes after such a bond is established, the less acute will be the effect of the phenomenon that triggered the experience in the first place. One becomes habituated to the phenomenon, and this necessarily diminishes the feeling of plenitude or expansion in the sense we are exploring.

The experience of *topophilia* is associated with relationships of care and concern, and thus it is bound to time. "Care and concern usually place us beyond the present; we are ahead of ourselves in hope or fearful anticipation, behind ourselves in anxious reconsideration of what has happened" (Harries, 1990, p. 7). Conversely, when one experiences what we were calling horizontality (i.e. the first dimension of the phenomenon we are exploring), time stands still while one is in the presence of something: one can be said to be "presencing" space. Due to its existence outside of lived time, it is very difficult to capture the significance of this presence from our finite perspective (i.e. within time). However, it seems that one could approach presence by indirection: through the spatial elements that surround one in those situations. They allow us to hold the oneness of reality in our intuition, for one realizes how all entities share the features that make us experience presence as space in the first place (i.e. our involvement within a volume contained by spatial realities). It is as if the spatial relationships of other entities among themselves also came to the fore, allowing us to participate in them. Hence we are able to intuit still further and further relationships of concern with farther entities that in turn may disclose space up to infinity.

We have mentioned the term presence and its derivatives presencing and presentness, but the term itself is in need of further discussion. In fact, understanding the meaning of presence is crucial to the description of our spatial experiences of plenitude. Presence is the most fundamental experience of reality, and yet it is so close to our being as humans that it is extremely difficult to consciously apprehend it in its pure state. It is not easy to define this term, and Harper (1991) describes it as follows:

> When I am moved by a painting or by music, by clouds passing in a clear night sky, by the soughing of pines in early spring, I feel the distance between art and nature dissolve to some degree, and I feel at ease. I then feel that there is no past and no future, and I am content. […] It is not monism or dualism; it is a unitary experience and an experience of totality in the midst of shattering differences. (pp. 6-7)

There are a number of ways we can understand presence. It may be defined as the state of being present, meaning immediateness. Or it can also refer to a sense of transcendence, of something

[11] This might bring one to recall Marion (2002), for whom "every phenomenology is a phenomenology of *givenness*" and calls for an "origin," something that gives what is given. This interest in the origin and hence in the property of *givenness* of that which is given differentiates Marion's understanding of *presentness* from Heidegger's, which I will discuss shortly.

beyond to what is actually being presented to us. I hope to explain that these two understandings of the term are not at odds with each other.

Presence is characterized in the literature as implying immediateness. As Fried (1998) asserts, presence (or presentness) occurs as a kind of instantaneousness that one experiences. This refers to an instantaneousness of meaning beyond the burden of time that binds us in our everyday life. This experience may be associated with a sense of intellectual enjoyment. To cite an example from Hofmannsthal's Letter (2008, p. 76), the revelatory experience of immediateness when seeing everyday gives him a sense of

> an immense sympathy, a flowing over into these creatures, or a feeling that an aura of life and death, of dream and wakefulness, had flowed for a moment into them—but whence?

He suggests that the source of this immense sympathy is the presence of the Infinite, which gives him a shudder—"running from the roots of [his] hair to the marrow of [his] heels"—that may remind the reader of some of my experiences described above.

Another possible explanation for this "immense sympathy" can be found in Kant's approach to beauty. For Kant, the beautiful is associated with a disinterested satisfaction that is, first of all, disinterested because it disrupts our relation of concern to the object we consider beautiful. Concern, or interest, is linked to desire, to will, and therefore the real existence of the object (i.e. as regarded in the "natural attitude") that triggers this interest is not itself a matter of interest. In contrast, in the beautiful we lose ourselves to the presence; we enjoy the presence without further qualms. Secondly, beauty may lead to satisfaction because this is a feeling that arises on the achievement of a purpose, or at least the recognition of a purposiveness (finality). Presence as rose, to follow the example above, is completed in itself: "A rose is a rose is a rose", as Gertrude Stein said, which reminds one both of Heraclitus' assertion that the ground of existence belongs intimately together with Being, and also of the "is-ness" (*Istigkeit*) of Meister Eckhart. This finality is what produces satisfaction, following the Kantian approach to beauty. The Platonic sense of beauty as an object of love or eros, however, cannot lead to satisfaction since, as mentioned earlier, loving something is making it the object of our deepest concern.

When we are concerned with something, we are bound to time and, thus, presence will slip between our fingers, rendering us unable to experience the presentness of the object of our concern, hence leaving us dissatisfied. Therefore, having strong emotional interests in a place, like the affective bonds Tuan defined as the essence of *topophilia*, prevents us from experiencing presentness.

However, the question of time requires further explanation in relation to the phenomena we are exploring. Fried argues that presence saves us from the burden of everyday existence, which he identifies with the burden of time. For him, presence is out of time. It implies timelessness, and makes us realize of our own finitude through the interaction of our present attention and our projections. This makes presentness endless in its duration. This endless duration is in turn understood in contrast to the actual passage of time as one stands in front of the object that presents itself. "It is this continuous and entire presentness, amounting, as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of instantaneousness" (Fried, as quoted in Harries, 1989, p. 27).

If presence is outside of time, there must however be a conflict with the phenomenon we are exploring, since time does seem to matter in the experience of the diachronic dimension of a phenomenon. This diachronic side implies an understanding of the meaning of a place, and it is

related to the meaning that has been incarnated into the spatial entities that provoke the experience. This incarnation of meaning in matter is akin to what Walter Benjamin (1968) understands as aura: an incarnation of spirit in matter so complete that there is no distance between the two. This incarnation necessarily needs time to emerge, marking a difference between the phenomenon we are exploring and presentness—including the presentness of beauty: the diachronic dimension of this phenomenon is not tied up with presence as just defined.

III

We mentioned above that with the beautiful we feel at home, as we establish affective bonds that make us experience it as if it had been made for us. The experience of the beautiful thus "places" us, and it is difficult not to become attached to it. Once we fall into the temptation of becoming attached, familiarity ends up breeding indifference. Familiarity makes even the most beautiful object lose its conspicuous character; it renders the object unable to stand out of the ground that other objects and spatial involvements embody. In short, it makes us too closely bound to the object.

Having explored the relations between the concepts of beauty and presence and the phenomena we are analyzing, one could argue that it is necessary to tackle those exalting experiences of space from the view that is opposed to *topophilia*. This view must signify the opposite of being bound to objects, and thus it must deal with such an unrepressed search for freedom that one exposes oneself to the unknown and even to the threatening.

We have mentioned above that one may long for bigger volumes of space to be disclosed to oneself. The bigger the volume of space we could become at one with, the more fulfilling our experience might be, and the more intense our feeling of freedom might also be. "A spacious horizon is an image of liberty," as Addison (1712) states, an expression that Harries (2001) interprets as follows:

> What matters in this context is how the vast expanse observed […] becomes a figure of an even vaster interior space. Spatial extension becomes a metaphor for the boundless extension of the spirit, which leaves behind not only every here but also every now. (p. 155)

Indeed, in my own experience, the larger the volume of space I become aware of, the more empowered I felt. The presentness of this space was so immediate to me that it is as if my spirit was being stretched out to the limits of that space—i.e. to the spacious horizon Addison mentions. Rather than making me feel liberty, or rather free, in a strict sense, these large spaces made me feel confident, full of energy.

However, this search for freedom or empowerment can be frightening. Whenever one is searching for what we used to call horizontality, and puts oneself in situations in which one may perceive larger volumes of space, one runs the risk of losing sight of the limits of such a volume, in which case one will likely feel *kenophobic*.[12] One may have this fearful experience since one

[12] Kenophobia (from the Greek κενό, blankness, gap, vacuity; and φόβος, fear), sometimes spelt cenophobia, means the fear of open, vast, empty spaces, and it is oftentimes mistakenly associated with agoraphobia, which is most commonly described as the fear of crowded spaces. Nowadays,

has no anchors of reference and, therefore, one is unable to become aware of any volume of space. For example, when out at sea, departing from the coastline, and heading farther and farther into the ocean, one comes to be in the midst of a vast extension of limitless water. *Kenophobia* is in fact the opposite of being placed—the being at home that comes with *topophilia*.

There is a tension between our longing for freedom and our desire to be placed; between our care for the beautiful, familiar places that surround us in everyday life and the lure but also horror that comes with exposure to the unknown. Therefore, in those joyful instances it seems one achieves a certain point of equilibrium in this tension between one's desire for freedom and the fear of reaching a state in which one might feel *kenophobia*.

If those joyful spatial experiences that we have described bring *topophilia* to mind, mentioning the threatening character of the unknown makes us think of the concept of the *sublime*. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines the sublime in nature and art as that "affecting the mind with a sense of overwhelming grandeur or irresistible power; calculated to inspire awe, deep reverence, or lofty emotion, by reason of its beauty, vastness or grandeur." So far, it seems that the phenomena we are exploring are not too far off from this description, although we already explained how beauty does not necessarily correlate to the nature of those phenomena—to their relative importance of size or grandeur (e.g. think of the Hollywood sign).

Let us now be more specific. For Burke, the sublime experience unleashes the strongest emotion in human beings, since it consists of a sort of terror and pain caused by one's exposure to the violent, uncontrollable might of Nature, which renders one weak and insignificant. He argues that the passion caused by the experience of the sublime in nature is "astonishment."

> Astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other. (Burke, 1757)

Burke argues that whereas the beautiful attracts our passion of love (i.e. one feels at home with or drawn to the other), in the experience of the sublime we feel homeless, defenceless. We can see this in "The Monk by the Sea," a painting by Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) that captures the defenceless feeling we may experience when our will is in collision with the might of Nature (see figure 3). Friedrich himself comments: "Close your eyes and your inner eye will see all the more clearly".

The main difference between the phenomena we are analyzing and the experience of the sublime, as described by Burke, does not seem difficult to grasp. For Burke, the sublime experience arouses awe and respect in the face of Nature's power and vastness. This renders one humbled; one feels frail and insignificant before the might of a world or reality that defies one's will—and yet it is this threatening aspect that is a key part of the aesthetic experience. On the contrary, the experiences we are exploring are fulfilling, for one feels in communion with the spatial situation one is experiencing. Far from horror, in these experiences we feel at one with our surroundings. We feel as if they are not separated from us, but joined with us in a continuous spatial reality—something impossible to achieve in a scene like the one depicted in "The Monk by the Sea." It is in those situations that one feels confident, as we discussed above.

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the neologism "space phobia" (also called pseudoagoraphobia) seems to be gaining popularity, and it is also used to describe the fear of big, empty spaces (see Gelder, 1982).

Figure 3: "The Monk by the Sea", by Caspar David Friedrich (1808-10).

Kant, however, regards the homelessness into which the sublime displaces us in a more positive way than Burke. In fact, one might say that for Kant such homelessness is even exhilarating. He looks at this homelessness as an unbounded freedom that encourages that which is most human: our reason. Kant provides us with a significant revision in one understanding of the sublime: it is our reason which becomes the object of the sublime, and not vast boundless spaces, huge mountains or fierce storms. To explain: what is properly sublime are ideas of reason, such as the ideas of absolute totality or absolute freedom. However huge the size of the sea or the mountain, they are greatly outsized by an absolute totality. However powerful the storm, it is puny compared to absolute freedom.[13]

One might point out that, in realizing the totality of space by means of sublime spaces, Kant is dealing with the disclosure of space, which we put at the core of the phenomenon we are addressing. In a sense, he is also expanding himself to the extent of the space of the sublime, since he is apprehending within his reason the totality of space, which is necessarily larger than the sublime space.

However, there is an important difference between the effects sublime places have upon us and the fulfilling experiences of space we are discussing: sublime places appear boundless. One of the features Burke enumerates of sublime places is that they are "apparently infinite, because of the uniformity and succession of their elements." Likewise, Kant argues that whereas beauty is connected with the form of the object which has boundaries, the sublime is to be found in a formless object, represented by a boundlessness (Critique of Judgement, §23). Conversely, one may experience the fulfilling phenomena we described at the beginning of this essay when one perceives—or intuits—the limits of a volume of space.

A limit is "what first makes a being into a being as differentiated from a non-being. Limit and end are that wherewith a being begins to be" (Heidegger, 1959, p. 60). The limit is, therefore, that from which something begins its presencing: limits make it simultaneously possible and impossible for us to feel at one—while retaining our being—with the volume of space they delimit.

Therefore, we must distinguish between the type of disclosures enabled by the sublime and those at the essence of the phenomenon that we are analyzing. Following Kant's approach to the subject, sublime places represent a disclosure of space—of the endless, unlimited or empty space

[13] For Kant (1790) the experience of the sublime results in the realization of the ideas of totality and reason. There are, however, several things that are experienced before one gets to that point. These initial movements of the mind—like encountering an object that cannot be comprehended by reason or imagination—do seem more related to the spatial realities associated with the joyful phenomena we are exploring.

that ancient Greeks named κενόν. In turn, one may experience that exalting experience that we are exploring when one is able to disclose the space contained within boundaries—i.e., space as τόπος, or region.

> Dwelling spaces are always finite, bounded. Space in its original meaning of 'place cleared or freed for settlement' is cleared and free…within a boundary,' a boundary being 'not where something stops but…that from which something begins its presencing.' (Heidegger, 1971, p. 154)

The experience of space as τόπος, or region, is to be positive and enjoyed; it allows us to dwell not only because we feel somewhat protected by virtue to its limits, but also because it is these limits that, following Heidegger, allows us to experience space as presence. In contrast, the vastness or infinity of experiencing space as κενόν may lead one to feel kenophobic—perhaps the sort of terror Burke described as coming with the experience of the sublime.

Let us look once more at the scene depicted in "The Monk by the Sea." The monk, one can speculate, cannot perceive the limits of the nature that he is contemplating. The vastness of the sea and heaven in front of him, enhanced by their obscurity, renders the monk free and homeless. The vast expanse observed, as was quoted above, "becomes a figure of an even vaster interior space. Spatial extension becomes a metaphor for the boundless extension of the spirit" (Harries, 2001, p. 155). But the monk is not at one with the space that surrounds him, since he cannot perceive or intuit its limits.

There is a further difference between the experience of the sublime and that of the phenomenon we aim to understand. The meanings one associates with a place can enhance or hinder this fulfilling phenomenon—e.g. the enhancing effect that the symbolic images Los Angeles had for me as a teenager. In contrast, the experience of the sublime at a given location may be more easily experienced by different individuals, as it is often the intrinsic characteristics of a place, its boundlessness, that make it sublime.

One may point out that there is a major similarity between the sublime experience and the features one may find out about the phenomenon we are studying: both suggest openness to transcendence[14]. For instance, in The Monk by the Sea, Friedrich is showing us a monk whose spiritual self can be interpreted to be expanding precisely due to the features of the landscape he is involved in:

> In the sublimity of nature human beings recognize their own sublimity, recognize that within that allows them to transcend all that is finite and thus puts them in touch with the infinite. (Harries, 2001, p. 150)

[14] It is worth pointing out that we are considering the sublime here in its Romantic notion, which is the one explored in this essay as based on Addison (1712), Burke (1757), and Kant (1790), and as interpreted by Harries (2001), Weiskel (1976) and to some extent also in Newman (1948). Contemporary discussion on the sublime has taken another direction, regarding it more as an issue of immanence—see Lyotard's (1994) *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*. Also see Freeman (1995) for a related feminist approach to the sublime, as well as Jameson (1991) for a postmodern approach.

Sublime places make us realize that our lives are not the measure of all things. Likewise, in the phenomena we are exploring, one feels at one with those entities with which one establishes spatial relationships.

Similarly, the experiences we are exploring have some resemblance to the concept of the numinous, as popularized by Otto (1923) to describe the non-rational, non-sensory experience that, according to him, underlies all religion. Both experiences produce an exhilaration of noticeable quality, and lead one to experience what seems to be a communion with a "wholly Other", as Otto put it. This experience of believing that one is coming into communion with the "wholly Other" gives one a sense of transcendence very close to the experience of the sacred, understood in the way Eliade (1957) describes it when he studied the features of sacred space. One might argue that Eliade's notion of the sacred is related to the diachronic dimension of the phenomena we are studying, as sacredness irrupts into and across landscapes by virtue of the collective narratives bestowed upon them over time. This implies an involvement with the ethos of a community, which facilitates the provision of the diachronic dimension of the phenomena. Along this line, in his wonderful book *The Landscapes of the Sacred*, Belden Lane (2000) describes sacred space as "storied space" that requires poetic insight and analysis. Most relevant to our discussion is Lane's description of how space is transformed from a static locale into an energy field that captivates the imaginary by means of unique, significant events (*kairos*) that break into the temporal process (*chronos*). This intersection of time and space in the experience of the sacred corresponds with the intuition of those who may have experienced the phenomena we are discussing.[15]

The numinous, however, is an experience that is both terrifying and fascinating at the same time—one could possibly summarize it with the word "uncanny." This makes the experiences we are exploring different from those of the numinous. The phenomena we described can be associated with intellectual joy. One's awareness is heightened, and one finds oneself feeling more lucid, having a sense of existing more fully through the experience of a spatial location. This spatial experience, despite not being ordinary, is not uncanny—let alone terrifying—but one that gives one a sense of plenitude; it is a positive experience.

The concept of the numinous, however, does seem to have certain similarities with the experiences we are describing, especially due to its connotation of feeling wonder and awe.[16] Wonder and awe are feelings that one may experience when exposed to certain landscapes that, due to their out-of-the-ordinary features, make one feel at a loss; making one unable to express the new sensation one may be having, exposing a sense of inadequacy, even vulnerability (Hove, 1996). Hence, resorting to religious vocabulary is a common response, because our identity seems to be challenged; we may feel the need to feel rooted again by naming what we feel.

Awe is indeed a common initial response to the dislocation of our everyday spatial relations we were discussing above. Wonder, however, is a more reflective feeling, which occurs while one tries to comprehend a new situation (see Verhoeven, 1972). Awe motivates wonder, and wonder "suspends our habitual views of things, revealing them in a 'new light', and as a

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[15] Other interesting sources exploring the relation between the sacred and space are: Barrie (1996), Brown (2004), Jones (2000), Turner (1979) and White (1995). For more general studies on the phenomenology of the sacred and religion, see Flood (1999), Hick (1989), O'Hear (1984) and Smart (1973).

[16] There are numerous phenomenological investigations on the phenomena of wonder and awe and on the evocative nature of certain landscapes that seem to bring with them. See, for instance, Bonner and Friedman (2011), Elkins (2001), Elkins et al. (1988), and Parsons (1969).

consequence, propels us into, and establishes anew, our relations with the world/other" (Hove, 1996, p. 437). Attentiveness to wonder, and to the many dimensions of experience that it reveals in our lives, can cultivate a sensitivity to the emergence of wonder in others. Thus, it has significant implications for the way in which we can be pedagogically oriented towards students[17] (Hove, 1996).

However, the phenomena we are exploring are shaped by a second response: the expansion of one's awareness to the extent of the landscape we are exposed to, and hence to the fulfilling experience of plenitude. The spatial relation one establishes with the surroundings in those situations induces in many a sense of awe, and wonder. However, the emphasis is on this third movement: fulfillment.

The upshot of this discussion is that, as Jaspers (1971) points out, one acquires knowledge of one's perceived transcendence by contemplating the evanescent ciphers of transcendence, which signify the limits of human consciousness. In the case of the experiences which we are exploring, these ciphers, as Jaspers explains, can be encountered in nature, in art, in religious symbolism. They are the spatial realities (places) that function as the limits of volumes of space. Without them, no perceived expansion is possible and, in fact, one may succumb to the kind of horror associated with the sublime experiences described by Burke.

Epilogue

We need to find a term to describe the fulfilling phenomenon that is the subject of this essay. The term "horizontality" is incomplete and even misleading; *topophilia* and the sublime are related to it, and are even overlapping at times. However, they also do not capture it. The presentness of space is also subtly different, for the experience in these cases is taken to be out of lived time. After investigating this phenomenon, it is my understanding that its essence is the disclosure of the space contained within a region. Thus, I would like to put forward the neologism *topoaletheia*: from the Greek τόπος, space as contained within limits, i.e. region or place; and ἀλήθεια, discloure, or truth. I speak, however, of a different kind of understanding of truth than as correspondence between a proposition and its object. *Aletheia* is composed of the privative prefix *a-* (un- or dis-) and the root *lethe* (hiddenness, concealment, closure). It thus refers to the truth that first appears when something is revealed, whatever proposition we may use afterwards to refer to it—in short, it is the truth of bringing things out of concealment (see Heidegger, 1959). To disclose something is to momentarily rescue it from its prior unavailability and to witness its presencing. Similarly to light, that presents itself by allowing us to see other objects, Being presents itself to us in making all things seem present. In *topoaletheia*, Being presents itself to us making the space contained within a region emerge.

The neologism *topoaletheia* presents two sides of the same coin: a) *topo-aletheia* as the truth of the space contained within a region—i.e., the presencing of a region as it emerges for the human being to experience it. And b) disclosure of Being through the space contained within a

[17] There is a body of literature on the uses of wonder in pedagogy: see van Manen (1986, 1991), Hove (1999), Hansen (2010, 2012), and Goble (2013). Speaking of wonder, van Manen argues that "rather than see a child's question as something that needs a quick and simple answer, the adult should try to help in his or her natural inclination to live the question" (1986, pp. 40-41).

region—i.e. region as a means to know Being; as means for a human being to be exposed to the spatial availability of Being that can be disclosed.

I believe that introducing this neologism to name the distinctive type of spatial experience that is the subject of this essay may enrich the discussion about space. Perhaps bearing the concept of *topoaletheia* in mind may also prove useful when designing built environments, as it points at a kind of fulfilment experienced through our spatial involvement. This possible practical implication, however, should be developed in further research, as it goes beyond the scope of this essay.

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Thinking, Longing, and Nearness: In Memoriam Bernd Jager (1931–2015)

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> *To dwell on earth in a human way means to enter into a rhythm that alternates between work and celebration, between conquering obstacles and seeking to come into the revealing presence of what surrounds, undergirds, and overarches us. To enter into this rhythm means to move back and forth between, on one hand, the fields and orchards that demand our labor and, on the other, the contemplative center of the garden where we seek to come into a full and festive presence of our world. Neither the orchards nor… the garden can be dispensed with, nor can the one be substituted for the other. Only a rhythmic going back and forth between the labor-demanding periphery and the contemplative center can change chaos into cosmos and transform wilderness into a fully human world.*
>
> —Bernd Jager (2007, p. 420)

Phenomenological psychologist Bernd Jager died in Montreal on March 30, 2015, at the age of 83.[1] For many readers of *Phenomenology & Practice,* Jager was a greatly admired scholar who regularly attended and presented at the annual International Human Science Research conferences. His home institution, the Department of Psychology at the University of Quebec at Montreal, hosted the 2012 conference in which Jager played an instrumental role in organizing and hosting that event.

Born in the Netherlands in 1931, Jager studied agronomy at the Royal Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Deventer and became an agricultural assistant in West Africa to the renowned physician and philosopher, Albert Schweitzer, whose kindness and intellectual acumen inspired Jager to study psychology, in which he earned a doctorate from Pittsburgh's Duquesne University in 1967. At the time, Duquesne was a world center of phenomenological research, and one could study with such eminent phenomenological and hermeneutic thinkers as Amedeo Giorgi, J. H. van den Berg, and Adrian van Kaam, who was Jager's doctoral advisor (Jager, 1967; Giorgi, Barton and Maes 1983, p. 323).[2]

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[1] For an obituary, see B. Mook (2015), A memorial dedication to Prof. Bernd Jager, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 46, 227–28.

[2] Van Kaam and Giorgi were both tenured Duquesne faculty members, and van den Berg was a visiting Duquesne professor in 1967, 1970, 1973, and 1978. I thank Max van Manen for locating van den Berg's years at Duquesne; these dates are provided in Dreyer Kruger's (1985) edited collection, T*he Changing Reality of Modern Man: Essays in Honor of J.H. van den Berg* Johannesburg: JUTA. I also thank Christian Thiboutot, one of Jager's colleagues at the University of Quebec at Montreal, for reading a draft of this essay and making factual corrections.

Beginning in the 1950s, van Kaam was an important figure in founding humanistic psychology and eventually developed "a comprehensive, empirical-experiential theory of human and spiritual unfolding" (Muto and Martin, 2009, p. 356; van Kaam 1987). Van Kaam joined Duquesne's Department of Psychology in 1954 and played a central role in developing "a psychology of the human person faithful to lived human experience and behavior, a psychology liberated from nonhuman categories and distorting philosophical assumptions, either rationalistic or positivistic" (Smith, 1983, p. 261). In Jager's efforts to understand and renew the symbolic, spiritual, and mythical dimensions of human being-in-the-world in ways appropriate for our current time, one recognizes the considerable impact that van Kaam had on Jager's thinking (e.g., Jager, 1998, 2007).

Jager was also influenced by the ideas of Dutch psychiatrist J. H. van den Berg, who founded the discipline of *metabletics*, the systematic study of how, over historical time, human experience, understanding, and being-in-the world shift and take on different lived expressions that, in turn, provoke different, often conflicting, human worlds (Jager, 2011; Mook, 2009). In editing and co-translating van den Berg's provocative metabletic study of the two laws of thermodynamics (van den Berg, 2004), Jager wrote in his introduction that the radically new scientific and technological world partly founded by these laws "could not be fully analyzed in terms of material causes and their effects but must be understood in terms of a fundamental shift in the relationship between human beings and their world" (Jager, 2004, p. 41). This theme of lived relationships and their constructive intensification was a signal theme for both van den Berg and Jager. In a commentary on van den Berg's life work, Jager (2011, p. 35) quoted his contention that "All thinking and longing seeks to bring the other person or the other thing nearer" (van den Berg, 1983, p. 202; also see Giorgi, 2015). This concern with lived connectedness was central to Jager's efforts to understand how people and their worlds might be drawn together more closely. "All exploration," he wrote, "becomes at the same time also self exploration; all revelation concerning the world also becomes self-manifestation. The 'what is this' has as its correlate a 'who am I?'" (Jager, 1971, p. 214).

By the 1960s, Duquesne's philosophy and psychology departments had become a major international hub for phenomenological research, particularly after a doctoral program in psychology was established in 1961 and Amedeo Giorgi joined the psychology faculty in 1962. Bringing to the program "a strength and emphasis for rigorous empirical research following a phenomenological approach" (Smith, 1983, p. 269), Giorgi was a co-editor of the four remarkable volumes of phenomenological and hermeneutic research that he and his Duquesne colleagues assembled from 1971 to 1983 (Giorgi, Fischer, and Von Eckartsberg, 1971; Giorgi, Fischer, and Murray, 1975; Giorgi, Knowles, and Smith, 1979; Giorgi, Barton, and Maes, 1983; also see Cloonan and Thiboutot, 2010). At the time, these collections were unique in their existential-phenomenological emphasis, and Jager contributed chapters to all four.

Though Giorgi's research was grounded in an exacting scientific, phenomenological method, he recognized the importance of other stylistic and methodological approaches to phenomenological work, including Jager's creative hermeneutic perspective. Stunning in their topical and methodological range, these four Duquesne volumes all included sections incorporating interpretive studies, with volumes 2–4 giving this work its own topical headings: Thus, in volume 2, we find "Explorations within the Phenomenological Attitude;" volume 3 offers a focus on "Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Psychology;" and in volume 4, "Hermeneutics and Phenomenological Psychology" is featured. The research focus of all four volumes is well described in volume 1 when the editors phrase the common theme as a question: "How can we

approach and describe the phenomena of human life such that man the human being is revealed as such?" (Giorgi, Fischer, and Von Eckartsberg, 1971, p. 87). As I suggest below, seeking an answer to this question was the main task that Jager set himself throughout his scholarly career.[3]

Discovering Jager's Writings

I began this tribute to Jager with his Duquesne connection because it was via the first and second volumes of the Duquesne series that I first learned of his work. In the early 1970s, I was a doctoral student in the School of Geography at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. At the time, the two largest graduate programs at Clark—geography and psychology—were establishing an interdisciplinary doctorate in "environment-behavior research," which was to be grounded in the standard quantitative, nature-science model that then dominated the social sciences. In both disciplines, however, a humanistic alternative had begun to appear, and one professor keen on this possibility was Clark psychologist Joseph de Rivera, who sponsored what he called "Thursday phenomenology lunches."

Partly through these weekly discussions, I discovered the possibilities of phenomenological research. I vividly remember one momentous Thursday when a psychology master's student from Worcester's Assumption College came to his first lunch gathering. He had studied with Assumption psychology professor Frank Buckley (who would join the Duquesne psychology faculty in 1971) and brought to our gathering the just-published first volume of the Duquesne Series, edited by Giorgi, William Fischer, and Rolf Von Eckartsberg (Giorgi, Fischer, and Von Eckartsberg, 1971). I eagerly asked to peruse the book and was astonished to discover a group of researchers actually conducting "empirical" phenomenological work. At that point in my academic career, I had chosen phenomenology as my future research direction but was stymied by the question of how, in terms of real-world phenomena relevant to social science, phenomenological research might be conducted. Here, suddenly, was a clear answer, and one immediately important directive was Jager's chapter, "Horizontality and Verticality: A Phenomenological Exploration into Lived Space" (Jager, 1971).

This chapter was crucial for my thinking because it indicated how geographical and spatial phenomena like verticality and horizontality could be examined phenomenologically, using lived dialectics as a conceptual structure. In addition, the chapter illustrated a mode of methodological openness whereby research could become "a confident outward and inward movement, a mobile exploration of the world [that] cannot be grasped as a sum total can be grasped but… must be infinitely approached. Exploration stands in the service of *presence* to the world rather than in that of conquest" (Jager, 1971, pp. 212–213).

Beginning with this chapter, Jager's use of "lived binaries" like verticality and horizontality became a major theme in many of his writings, particularly his attention to geographical and temporal motifs like dwelling and journey, body and city, city and cosmos, and work and festivity (e.g., Jager, 1975 1976, 1983, 1985, 1997, 1998, 2010). One insightful example was Jager's

[3] For discussions of Jager's oeuvre and tributes to his memory, see the special "memorial issue" of the *Journal of Metabletica* 5(10; summer/autumn), 2015. For a collection of essays honoring Jager and a bibliography of his writings, see C. Thiboutot, (Ed.), *Essais de psychologie phénoménoguique-existentielle: Réunis en homage au professeur Bernd Jager.* (Montreal: *Cercle interdisciplinaire de recherches phénoméologiques,* 2007); one particularly illuminating essay in this collection is by Rojecewicz.

elucidation of theoretical effort, which he depicted as an intellectual journey encompassing several "spatial" movements: *away from* the taken-for-granted; *out toward* the unknown but discoverable; *finding* the discoverable; and *returning homeward*. Making reference to ancient Greece, Jager explains:

> Theorizing made its first appearance as *an arduous journey to a place of divine manifestation in the service of community.* It required first of all a leaving behind of the familiar and comforting sounds and sights of habitual life and the acceptance of the discipline imposed by the requirements of a strenuous voyage. Once the theorist had achieved the object of his journey… he faced *the task of finding and following the path that would lead him from the festive heights back to the plane of everyday existence,* which he shared with his fellow citizens. *Only such a return would complete the task* of the theorist… and link up the festive events of a faraway place to the everyday concerns nearby. (Jager, 1983, p. 157)

A Dissertation Epiphany

Realizing that much of human experience could be understood phenomenologically via lived structures conceived dialectically was a point of view also highlighted in the writings of phenomenologist of religion Mircea Eliade (1957) and humanistic geographers Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), Anne Buttimer (1976, 1980), and Edward Relph (1976). But Jager's portrayal of lived opposites was more thorough in that, for each binary, he located and described a multivalence of lived meanings—for example, his applying the dwelling-journey dialectic to a continuum of human experiences ranging from daily getting-around routines to the experience of travelling to intellectual and spiritual exploration (as in the passage quoted above). This interpretive multivalence would come to have important personal significance as I began to write my dissertation.

In 1975, Giorgi, Constance Fischer, and Edward Murray published the second volume of the Duquesne series, which included Jager's superb chapter, "Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling" (Jager, 1975). In his very first sentence, Jager emphasized the multi-dimensioned resonance between the geographical and existential, between the experiential and the symbolic: "There appears to exist a persistent and deep inter-relationship between the themes of intellectual, theoretical or spiritual effort and those of traveling, exploration and sightseeing. The very language of intellectual effort constantly refers us to the road" (Jager, 1975, p. 235). Jager's exhaustive explication of the dwelling-journey relationship in this chapter became important for the thematic structure of my dissertation, which was a phenomenological explication of a phenomenon I called "everyday environmental experience"—"the sum total of a person's firsthand involvements with the geographical world in which he or she typically lives" (Seamon, 1977, p. 6; Seamon, 1979/2015, pp. 15-16). Through a phenomenological explication of some 1,500 first-person observations provided by committed members of three "environmental experience groups," I eventually arrived at three overarching themes—*movement*, *rest*, and *encounter*—that delineated a common lived core of everyday environmental experience. The dissertation's first section on movement examined the habitual nature of everyday environmental behaviors and actions, and the second section on rest considered people's attachment to place, giving particular attention to at-homeness and sustaining affective relationships with places and environments. The book's third

section on encounter explored the multifaceted ways in which people make or do not make attentive contact with their surroundings and identified such modes of awareness as obliviousness, noticing, watching, and heightened contact.

What my dissertation owed to Jager was its concluding section, which examined the lived relationships and interlinkages among movement, rest, and encounter. The writing problem I faced here was locating a conceptual structure that would allow for a dynamic interconnectedness among these three separate lived structures. One afternoon, stymied with no ideas at hand, I happened to remember Jager's chapter and reread it quickly. I recognized immediately that the key to my integration dilemma was the dialectical relationship between movement and rest and associated modes of potential encounter. Via Jager's encompassing portrayal of the dwelling-journey relationship, I saw that my findings reflected the same dialectic but mostly at the mundane, everyday lifeworld level. With this understanding in mind, I realized that movement and rest are not separate phenomena but integrally intertwined in a continuous lived dialect that leads to a series of resolutions. Just as Jager said, rest is associated with center, home, and at-homeness, whereas movement is related to horizon, reach, and unfamiliarity. The deepest experience of rest becomes dwelling, which involves a world of regularity and repetition grounded in care and concern. I quoted Jager's mindful depiction of dwelling as a "round world":

> The round world of dwelling offers a cyclical time—that is, the recurring times of seasons, of the cycles of birth and death, of planting and harvesting, of meeting and meeting again, of doing and doing over again. It offers a succession of crops, of duties, generations, forever appearing and reappearing. It offers a place where fragile objects and creatures can be tended and cared for through constant, gentle recurring contacts. (Jager, 1975, p. 251)

In contrast, movement is associated with such active qualities as search, exploration, alertness, and exertion toward an aim. Through movement, human beings extend their knowledge of distance, place, and experience. They become aware of geographical and existential horizons obscure or undisclosed before. In this sense, movement is associated with journeying. Again, I quoted Jager, who described how the journey incorporates a lived sense of forward and back, past and future, and moves them outward along a path toward confrontation with places, experiences, ideas, or creative insights:

> Journeying forces [the] round generative world of [dwelling] into the narrow world of the path. The path offers the progressive time of unique and unrepeatable events, of singular occurrences, of strange peoples and places to be seen once and possibly never again…. Journeying breaks open the circle of the sun and the seasons and forms it into a linear pattern of succession in which the end no longer seems to touch the beginning and in which the temporal world shrinks to a before and after, to backward and forward. Here the beginning is no longer felt to lie in the middle but instead appears placed behind one's back. The future makes its appearance straight ahead, making possible *confrontation* (Jager, 1975, p. 251).

I ended my discussion by highlighting Jager's claim that, because of their dialectical interconnectedness, movement and rest each incorporate aspects of the other. Through movement and journey, people leave the unself-conscious taken-for-grantedness of their place or situation and extend their horizons. Through rest and dwelling, people return to familiar places and collect

themselves in preparation for future ventures outward again. Both movement and rest each requires its opposite in order for itself to be so. In part because of this continual lived exchange of opposites at a wide range of environmental and situational scales, human beings gain both stability and serendipity in their ordinary and extra-ordinary lives (Seamon, 1979/2015, p. 134).

Dwelling, Place, and Environment

In the early 1980s, I made contact with Jager directly because philosopher Robert Mugerauer and I had begun organizing special sessions on "environmental and architectural phenomenology" at the annual meetings of the Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS). In 1981, we invited Jager to participate in a session on "Phenomenologies of Place," for the SPHS meeting held at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. His presentation was entitled "Dwelling: An Exploration in the Human Sciences," and eventually became the chapter, "Body, House and City: The Intertwinings of Embodiment, Inhabitation and Civilization," published in *Dwelling, Place and Environment,* a 1985 compilation of revised SPHS presentations and additional articles edited by Mugerauer and me (Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985). Two years earlier, in the fourth volume of the Duquesne series, Jager had published a complementary chapter entitled "Theorizing and the Elaboration of Place," which was said by the volume's editors to illustrate "the creative tensions and efficacy of a hermeneutic emerging out of meditating thinking that recapitulates the originary and embodied mutual implication of theorizing and the mundane realm of human praxes" (Giorgi, Barton, and Maes, 1983, p. 151).

Because my central research interest is understanding more precisely how material, spatial, and environmental dimensions of lifeworlds contribute to human well being, these two chapters were revelatory because they located and described, in a particularly approachable way, the lived nature of inhabitation as grounded in an integrated, unspoken dialogue between lived bodies and worlds at hand. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of perception, body-subject, and embodied place (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968), Jager wrote:

> The process of inhabitation cannot be instantaneously accomplished. We are seldom immediately at home in a new place…. "To inhabit" refers to a kind of having (*habere*) that permits us a radical access to material objects and allows us to treat these objects as extensions of our own body. To approach inhabitation in this way means to be able no longer to make such a radical distinction between flesh and matter, between bodies and mere things. Bodily existence floods over into things, appropriates them, infuses them with the breath of life, draws them into the sphere of daily projects and concerns. A fully inhabited world is at the same time also a fully embodied world. (Jager, 1985, p. 219)

What Jager provides here is a lucid phenomenological explication of the lived body's integral role in facilitating inhabitation, at-homeness, and dwelling. First of all, the typical lifeworld is a habitual, taken-for-grant ordinariness sustaining and sustained by the everyday environments of which it is part. Everyday things, actions, events, and places support and depend on a lived extension of our bodily presence, allowing us to do what we need to do in a mostly automatic, unnecessary-to-plan manner. Who we are and what we do ground and are grounded via material, spatial, and built dimensions of human worlds. Jager makes this point most succinctly when he writes that place "is a giver of access to a world" (Jager, 1983, p. 169).

For me what remains even more exceptional about these two chapters is Jager's relating this lived-habituality-in-place to particular modes of human being as grounded environmentally and architecturally (Seamon, 2010). He wrote:

> The home, the factory, the hospital, the laboratory, the city no longer appear in the first place as finished material things, as containers of people and their activities. Rather, these buildings themselves make their appearance as a certain embodied grasp on the world,… as particular manners of taking up the body and the world, as specific orientations disclosing certain aspects of a worldly horizon. The first architecture then appears to be that of taking up a particular bodily attitude. Architecture is then at first a certain manner of standing or sitting or lying down or walking….
>
> To enter a building, to come under the sway of a certain choreography, means at the same time to become subject to a certain disclosure. Like a certain bodily attitude, a building opens a particular world of tasks, of outlooks, of sensibilities…. In this intimate alliance with the body, the building itself has become a particular access to the world. I no longer am contained within a thinglike construction, no longer remain within the building as one thing enclosed within another. Rather, I have drawn this building into the sphere of my body. I have appropriated it and have drawn it around me like a coat on a windy day to inspect a certain sight or to face a particular task. (Jager, 1983, pp. 154–156)

In this marvelous interpretation, Jager provides an extraordinary account of how the lived body outreaches to accommodate and appropriate its surrounding world, including its architectural and "palatial" parts. Via lived bodies, selves meld with worlds beyond. As claimed by Merleau-Ponty (1968), the environment is no longer just something only separate and visible but also "a source of vision and light according to which we see" (Jager, 1985, p. 218). In inhabiting place, we automatically find ourselves present and engaged in a particular way that could not be otherwise: "To enter and finally to come to inhabit a house or city means to come to assume a certain stance, to surrender to a certain style of acting upon and of experiencing the surrounding world…. (Jager, 1985, pp. 218–19).

In both *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) and *The Visible and Invisible* (1968), Merleau-Ponty pictured the lived relationship between people and world as a kinship and mutual intertwining. Jager's invaluable contribution is to describe this lived people-world intimacy in a clear, everyday way whereby the lived body neither envelops world nor world envelops lived body. Instead, there is a lived "co-envelopment" supporting or stymying an environmental and place wholeness and fluidity. Via this unique interpretive language, the dualism of people and world has been circumvented, and two analytically and instrumentally (human being separate from world) has become one existentially and experientially (human-being-immersed-in-world. Jager indicates that, on one hand, we must better understand how the sensory, perceptual, and motor dimensions of the lived body contribute to place making, inhabitation, and human well being. On the other hand, he suggests that we also must pay heed to the complementary role of architectural, environmental, spatial, and platial elements and qualities. It is this dynamic communion between the "flesh" of the body and the "flesh" of the world that is the fulcrum of possibilities for an environmental and architectural phenomenology.

Thresholds and Human Habitation

Since its start in 1990, I have been co-editor and editor of the triannual journal, *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology,* which in 2009 marked its twentieth year of publication. To celebrate this benchmark, I assembled a special autumn issue of essays by several key figures in the field, including phenomenological geographer Edward Relph and phenomenological philosophers Karsten Harries and Jeff Malpas. Jager generously contributed an essay entitled "Thresholds and Inhabitation," which highlighted a theme in which he was particularly interested throughout his scholarly career (Jager, 2009).[4] Jager envisioned thresholds as a distinguishing feature of human civilization because they both keep apart and join together human commonalities and human differences. "A threshold," he wrote, "constitutes the ultimate foundation of a human world reflected in all building projects from the most primitive cave or hut to the most magnificent palace or city, all of which we might even consider as mere variations on the theme of the threshold, the essential function of which is to hold separate and distinct worlds together" (Jager, 2009, p. 8). On one hand, the threshold "guards an inhabited domain" and thereby helps sustain what Jager regularly called "the workaday world" of practicality, employment, and material subsistence. On the other hand, Jager related the threshold to "the festive world," whereby we "come more fully into the presence of self, world, and others" (Jager, 2011, p. 43).

In a 2007 semi-autobiographical essay, Jager described a consequential childhood experience that kindled his lasting interest in thresholds (Jager, 2007, pp. 395-398). In the small Dutch village where he grew up, there lived an eccentric man unkindly called "John the Nose" because of his unusually shaped face and head. Most villagers saw this man as odd and dimwitted. Jager and the other village children regular harassed and embarrassed him. One evening at dinner, having encountered the jeering children, Jager's father explained that "there was no absolute way to measure the worth of a person and that we therefore could never be entirely sure who might be the real fools or sages of our village" (Jager, 2007, p. 396).

His father's reprimand was eye-opening for the young Jager because he suddenly realized that situations different from his own may be significant sites for understanding and discovery: "I had entered an engrossing dialogue with an entirely new and different world that stood in sharp contrast to my own" (Jager, 2007, p. 396). He continued:

> It seemed that the power for things to reveal themselves was intimately connected with our ability to take a distance from our certitudes and with our willingness to see the existing world as we understood it against the background of *another* world. For the first time in my life, I touched upon the mystery of the renewal of our world, which takes place when the guest begins to see his own world against the background of that of his host and vice versa…. Understanding our world is therefore not simply a question of our mind wholly absorbing and grasping a preexisting and unchanging natural reality. It rather is a question of countering the quotidian world of force and habit with a contrasting, festive world of myth and poetry. Such understanding perpetually crosses the bridge spanning the distance between two adjoining worlds. (Jager, 2007, p. 397)

[4] This essay was originally part of Jager's keynote talk, "Toward a psychology of homo habitans: A reflection on cosmos and universe," presented at the annual International Human Science Conference held at Ramapo College, Mahwah, New Jersey, June 2008. A full version of this talk was published as Jager (2010).

For Jager, this bridging action incorporates thresholds, which divide and bind human beings just as they separate and join worlds of difference (Jager, 2009, p. 10). Though it shelters the thing, place, or situation as they are unto themselves, the threshold is also a "place of meeting whose beauty and order inspire hosts and guests to open their hearts and minds to one another" (Jager, 2010, pp. 242–243). Likewise, a threshold is present when one is writing an article or preparing a lecture. One begins with an incoherent set of partial, uncertain ideas that must be clarified and integrated to make a coherent whole. As Jager explained,

> Beginning such a task always places us before a chaotic tangle of half-understood, confused and mutually incompatible images and ideas that must be disentangled and properly arrayed before we can find a place for them within the "cosmic" whole of a lucid essay or speech. This labor of tidying, ordering, and embellishing serves the purpose of text or speech the way our guests enter a properly ordered and welcoming home. Writing or speaking in an intelligible and orderly fashion can thus be understood as a creative, welcoming act that derives its ultimate inspiration from creation myths that tell of the "ordering" and the coming into being of the human world. (Jager, 2010, p. 243)

Like host and guest, an author and reader or a speaker and listener potentially meet via a threshold of understanding. Thresholds not only join commonality or difference together via physical closeness but also offer a potential site for discovery and deepening self-awareness. In this sense, Jager's writings are thresholds themselves whereby the quotidian becomes surprising, and the everday is understood in new, unexpected ways. As Jager discerningly explained: "We do not seek the dissolution of distance between self and the other but rather its miraculous transformation from an abyss that cannot be bridged into a place of encounter and mutual revelation" (Jager, 2011, p. 46).

Just as Jager first discovered the threshold's transformative possibilities through an empathetic engagement with "John the Nose," so we might unearth practical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual means to broach the other and thereby strengthen mindfulness and care. The task, he emphasized, is to

> contribute to our understanding of all practices, whether ancient or recent, whether indigenous or foreign, that invoke the sacred distance of the threshold while evoking the appearance of the *other*. Such practices include, besides prayer, meditation, and the remembrance of the dead, the craft of writing and the hermeneutic task of meditative reading. They include the arts of painting, sculpting, and drawing, together with those of pantomime and theatre. They include singing and dancing and all forms of making music. Each of these practices places us before a door to which we have no key and that can be opened only from the other side and by an *other*. (Jager, 1998, p. 107)

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The Quest for Traditions, or a Case of Philosophy of Education

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A review of: Siljander, P., Kivelä, A. & Sutinen, A (Eds.) (2012). *Theories of* Bildung *and Growth. Connections and Controversies between Continental Educational Thinking and American Pragmatism.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

The review of an anthology always is a special task as there are many different elements and perspectives to be taken into account. On one hand there is the overall structure of the collection which is the result of a specific question or theme that the book aspires to address. In this case, such a theme or question is made clear by the editors in an extensive introduction and answered in the final chapter, which is also written by the editors and which refers to only very few contributions of the collection. The introduction and concluding chapter provide a frame for the other essays which are to contribute in different ways in response to the book's main question or theme.

On the other hand there are of course the different essays which are usually part of academic discussions concerning specific problems which do not fit so neatly with the book's overall question, one that is only occasionally reflected in the micro-structure of these essays. A review that aims to take those different dimensions into account is a very difficult thing: Whereas it seems to be quite straightforward to reflect the overall structure of the volume, it would be hard to argue that the reviewer is equally an expert for all the specific academic discussions to which the single essays contribute in their own special ways. This is true all the more as it is one of the basic assumptions of this volume that there are two very distinct traditions of pedagogical thinking which shall be introduced and whose relation has yet to be clarified. If this assumption is right, it might be very difficult to find someone who is an expert for both traditions in a way that allows her or him to evaluate all essays with equal facility. Keeping that in mind, this review will make only brief remarks about the single essays and focus more on the structure of the whole volume.

Already the title of the book reveals its nature: It is not only oriented towards the presentation of theory, but is also linked to philosophy: Even if one does not know much about what is referred to in the book's title as *continental educational thinking*, the title's reference to American Pragmatism is revealing. It should prepare the reader for the table of contents, where the chapter titles show just how strongly philosophical the theories in the book are. This could well be the first moment of revelation: Continental educational thinking as it is presented here is closely tied to the tradition of continental philosophy; names like Rousseau, Kant, Fichte and Humboldt are as much classics of philosophy as of educational theory. And it might be useful to remember that even the famous educational theorist Herbart did not hold a chair solely in pedagogy, but rather in philosophy *and* pedagogy – being the successor of Immanuel Kant in Königsberg. Educational thinking in this tradition is part of the all-encompassing endeavor to give an interpretation of the *condition humana*, known in the German speaking world as *Anthropologie*

American Pragmatism is not so much different in its aspirations as it evolved out of and in discussion with this continental tradition of philosophical and educational thinking. But

it was not only the Pragmatists who had strong personal and theoretical connections to the old world – the continental tradition was familiar to North American educational theorists and practitioners in the 19th century, and at least until time of the first World War: Fröbel's *Kindergarten* was perhaps one of the first educational imports into America, with the first private kindergarten opened in 1856 by Margarete Schurz in Wisconsin, followed by the first public kindergarten in 1873 in St. Louis. Also, 1861 saw the opening of the Pestalozzi-inspired *Oswego Normal and Training School* in New York State, and William T. Harris, schools inspector of St. Louis and later US Commissioner of Education, introduced an emphatically Hegelian perspective on education both locally and nationally. Finally, between 1885 and 1912, over 200 American pedagogues travelled to Jena to study with the followers of Herbart who were active there, bringing the educational philosophy of Herbartianism back to the United States.

However, this strong and steady stream of influence, flowing from Europe to North America, was reduced to little more than a trickle by the early 20th century. Indeed, if there is any Transatlantic influence to speak of today, it clearly flows the other way, with American trends and buzzwords appearing ever more frequently in German-language discourses. Looking historically, educational research can be said to have been reinvented similarly but independently in both worlds, becoming what we nowadays call *empirical research*, and with philosophically informed thinking significantly marginalized. Research into education now usually means collecting (often short-lived) insights into educational reality (consisting of brute facts and raw data). This is despite the fact that it is somewhat ambitious to refer to this as a "reality", since the foundations for giving a 'thick description' (to borrow a term of Gilbert Ryle and Clifford Geertz) of what is represented by 'facts' and 'data' are not already included in the collection of those data. Simply put, brute data on their own just don't make *sense*.

Still—something only makes sense precisely if sense is *made from it*. And this is what we are forcefully reminded of when reading a book like the one in question: We still need an interpretation of what it means to be human and what this has to do with anything we might call pedagogy. We need this in order to understand what's going on in the (educational) world. Such needs cannot be easily satisfied—as the book also shows. But in presenting different views and perspectives upon the world of pedagogy, the book invites us to firstly appreciate and, perhaps, remember the necessity of this kind of thinking. Secondarily, it invites us to muse about what we generally have to think about in attempting to address these needs and the questions that lie behind them.

The overall assumption on which this volume is based and structured is introduced with notable understatement on the first page of the introduction: "The tradition of modern European educational and educational-philosophical thinking, with its variants, usually appears different than the tradition of Anglo-American educational-philosophical research." (p.1) This difference is connected to (or maybe even caused by) the different key texts upon which those traditions are built: Whereas the continental tradition rests upon writers like Comenius, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Herbart, Humboldt etc., American educational thought often looks to the pragmatists, Dewey, James, Mead, Mann and others. However, recent philosophical research has been pointing towards connections between these different ways of thinking –and so it seems natural to expand these connections and investigations.

This is the aim of the book: "In this work, a dialogue is sought between the educational thinking of the classics of American pragmatism and the so-called *Bildung*-theoretical tradition of thought, which took shape mainly in the German language area" (p.2). This approach is narrowed down by identifying two central notions which apparently lie at the core of those traditions: *Bildung* (continental) and *growth* (Anglo-American). Expecting that not all readers may be familiar with these concepts, the editors offer a brief introduction into each of and identify historical connections between several exponents of these concepts. Such explanations

mark the transition to the essays which are grouped together into two main sections: Whereas the first investigates the continental tradition of *Bildung* and its modern guises (e.g. Comenius, Rousseau, Fichte, Kant, Herbart, Humboldt, Adorno) the second chapter examines proponents of the American (pragmatist) tradition (e.g. Emerson, Mann, James, Dewey, Mead). In general, the essays presented in the book can be characterized as historical and/or systematic, where the different authors vary in their specific emphasis on either presenting a theory in its systematic context or in its historical connections. However, the overall theme of the book is hardly addressed in its individual contributions, at least as is stated by the editors:

> Although the ideas of *Bildung* and growth form—when very broadly interpreted—a theme central to those reviews, most of the articles are not limited to *Bildung* and growth, but rather open an examination of wider education-related questions and contexts. Each article is an independent work and can be read as such. (pp.11-12)

Besides the one essay of Hein Retter, it is only in the closing essay that the editors take on the titular question of the book and elaborate on connections and controversies between what has been introduced as two different traditions.

As has been stated before, it would not be reasonable to review the individual essays as such for that would demand specific types of expertise that are not possessed by this reviewer. However, given the structure of the volume, the articles should cope with a two-fold task: On one hand they should contribute to the academic discussion within their specific field of investigation on the other, they should establish an intellectual horizon within which the specific question of the volume can be reflected upon by the reader.

There is no doubt that the single essays are inspiring and enlightening contributions to the specific debates within their field. They manage to convey the conceptual and historical atmosphere that surrounds the two educational approaches. Whichever tradition the reader is more familiar with, she will find that the articles deepen her own understanding of what is already known on one hand and offer an accessible path into the realms of the lesser known tradition on the other. In addition, the reader will be sensitized to the fact that the picture of those traditions is not at all self-evident, but made up of different interpretations. For example it becomes obvious that Kant's theory of *Bildung* has a quite different shape depending on which works one focuses upon: Whereas Kivelä relies solely on Kant's lecture on pedagogy (which does not belong to the critical philosophy of Kant and is handed down only as unauthorized listener's notes of a public lecture), Siljander draws the connection between Herbart and Kant based upon an analysis of Kant's critical philosophy and its pedagogical implications. The resulting picture is very different and illustrates how much interpretation goes into presenting positions as "positions," let alone traditions as "traditions."

It therefore does not come as a surprise that the editors in their final chapter also address the matter of connections and controversies between two traditions by refuting the question: The essays have shown that there are more controversies between the (interpretations of the) specific positions within the so-called traditions than between the traditions itself; what has been introduced as a "tradition" and therefore in a sense as a conceptually closed entity turns out to be a conglomerate of very different approaches which might present some historical coherence, but not a conceptual unity. This is the picture that may well dawn on the reader as she compares the different articles to each other in an attempt to answer the overall question of the volume. This impression is deepened by recognizing that although the editors do present broader concepts of *Bildung* and growth in their introduction, the essays themselves are very much independent from those assumptions and tend to introduce their own ideas of these concepts when necessary. As a result, the overall question regarding the connections and controversies between traditions seems itself difficult to sustain. Indeed, as the editors suggest

in their final paper, it seems to be much more beneficial to ask about connections and controversies *between* specific theories and ideas within each tradition, than try to bring whole traditions into broader interrelationship. Consequentially the editors then present their very own interesting and inspiring concept of education, taking into account the theoretical discussions about *Bildung* and growth that have been introduced in the essays of the book.

However, the result is ultimately ambivalent: As much as one might want to put the book's central question itself into question, the question remains why it has been posed as such in the first place.

It cannot be denied that this approach has offered a brilliant scheme for a collection of inspiring essays, each of which make a great contribution within academic discussion to which they are particular. However, at least three further sets of questions arise for the reader: Which traditions are sufficiently self-contained on a conceptual level to be presented as a whole and to be compared to each other? And what does it mean to homogenize different concepts to create the image of a tradition in order to then ask after connections and controversies between traditions? If this remains unaffirmed on the level of individual authors, why dare to talk about whole traditions? Why and to what end is it useful?

The attempt to answer this question brings us to the second question: Even if the essays presented here show that it is very difficult to talk about loose groupings of historical contributions as traditions, the reviewer shares the impression that there is a fundamental difference between the educational approaches of the Anglophone and continental world (perhaps reminiscent of the traditional differentiation between continental and analytic philosophy). However, once this difference is granted, it should be asked whether it is rooted in the difference between continental philosophy of education and Pragmatism, whose connections and filiations to European philosophy are widely known even amongst educational theorists: Dewey is never absent in any historic or systematic portrayal of the Progressive Education or *Reformpädagogik*, Mead has been made famous as an important contributor for the modern German theory of recognition as proposed by Axel Honneth. Indeed, the connections are clearly illustrated in Hein Retter's contribution to the present volume.

So perhaps we have to look elsewhere to find the basis of difference. Which brings us to the last of the three questions: Is it not simply too problematic pose the question of the relationship *between* the two traditions, however they may be conceived? In the light of the success of empirical research on international level, philosophical approaches towards education have long been embattled, a situation which has led to the almost complete eradication of philosophy of education as a sub-discipline in both worlds. With regard to this development, the evaluation of a book like the one discussed here has to take a completely new path: Whatever reservations we might have concerning the book, should we not be very happy to have it? Are we not lucky that a perhaps slightly misleading question guiding it has resulted in a volume that generally shows how beneficial and necessary this type of reflection can be? Have not the editors, in planning such a book, offered the opportunity to keep alive what is in danger of dying?

Keeping that in mind, all the somewhat picayune reservations towards the book enumerated above lose substantiality and the books shines as defender of an ultimately unified tradition of philosophical and historic-systematic reflections about education. Any comparatively minor differences between these traditions are obviously less important than the fundamental differences that distinguish it from the international empirical research that has invaded and conquered Departments of Education all over the world.