

Introduction

RECONSIDERING THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Luna Dolezal and Danielle Petherbridge

The essays collected in *Body/Self/Other: The Phenomenology of Social Encounters* examine the lived experience of our relations with others as well as the complexity of embodied interaction and forms of sociality. Deploying phenomenology along with a variety of other philosophical approaches, including critical theory, social philosophy, feminist theory, and post-structuralism, the contributions in this book describe and critically interrogate existential, material, and normative features of self-other relations in a range of contexts with contemporary significance. The book questions, for example, what it is to perceive or be perceived in terms of race, gender, sexuality, animality, criminality, or medicalized forms of subjectivity. If these are habitual patterns or attitudes built up in everyday experience within our lifeworlds, how do we transform, or even rupture, these perceptions and experiences? Moreover, if we, as social beings, are constituted through intersubjective relations, what are the costs of the absence of this relationality in conditions of isolation or imprisonment, or, why might such relations manifest fear and anxiety in public space or in old age? Moreover, what is the nature of our intercorporeality and what ethical obligations, if any, does the fact of our embodied relationality imply for us?

Following the work of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre, phenomenology has articulated various aspects of self-other relations making salient the intercorporeal and constitutive nature of our encounters with others. This book significantly extends

these phenomenological insights and takes the notion of the “phenomenology of social encounters” in its broadest sense. With rich descriptions of lived phenomena occurring in experiences such as racism, solitary confinement, surrogacy, dementia, agoraphobia, and violence, among others, the essays in this book yield important and original insights about embodied social relations, or the enduring interrelation between body/self/other. Interrogating modes of embodied interaction such as vision, speech, pregnancy, recognition, and objectification, the essays collected here not only provide a description of the lived experience of social encounters but also develop alternative ways of relating subjective experience to a broader analysis of social structures and institutions across a range of contexts. Challenging the criticism that phenomenology, as concerned primarily with subjective experience has little to offer social critique, the contributions in this book demonstrate the importance of phenomenology when considering questions of social justice and critique that hinge on the textures of lived experience. Many of the authors represented here develop a critical phenomenological perspective that is not only alert to embodied lived experience and interpersonal interaction, but also to the broader structures, institutions, and discursive practices that shape our perceptual and social frameworks.¹

Social injustices and inequalities are not abstractions played out in the realm of law or politics; rather, they are matters that impinge on our embodied lives and our lived relations with others. A phenomenological approach to social encounters enables us to take account not only of the way in which embodied habits and forms of perception become sedimented in particular social contexts but also the ways in which particular practices and habits are taken up and reiterated in our lived bodies in an active manner. Exploring the intertwining of body/self/other through the fabric of lived experiences framed by variable normative structures, this book offers a unique contribution to scholarship within contemporary phenomenology.

While the contributions in this collection articulate various types of encounters between “self” and “other,” it should be emphasized that these are by no means discrete entities. In fact, the essays all take body/self/other as their starting point, demonstrating that intersubjective and intercorporeal relations are simultaneously constitutive of and constituted by subjects and forms of sociality. However, it is important to note that from the perspective of the different philosophical traditions represented in the book, the notion of intersubjectivity carries various connotations. It may refer to interpersonal

or face-to-face and embodied encounters, for example, as explored extensively in the phenomenological tradition, but is also understood to form a background of norms and meanings that constitute the social or “lifeworld,” prominent not only in phenomenology but also in social-philosophical accounts.² Importantly, embodied intersubjectivity is also constitutive of subjects and social life, designating an existential, ontological, or anthropological category and may also refer to normative or ethical forms of relation that are built into the fact of our sociality or are present as a potentiality.

For some theorists, then, the notion of social “encounters” between self and other is in many ways a nomenclature, as it tends to indicate that we begin from the assumption of isolated individual consciousness, or suggests a view of monadic or atomistic subjects who only secondarily “encounter” one another. In contrast, for some theorists it might be more appropriate to speak of an original fabric of social relations into which we are interwoven, or of primary ethical relations in which we always already move.³ The notion of “social encounters” represented in the book is then intended to capture various aspects of interrelation and interaction—both positive and negative—whilst taking into account the broader social and political frameworks of meaning in which these interactions take place. Moreover, despite the fact of our sociality and dependency upon others, many of the essays examine the ways in which intercorporeal and intersubjective relations become overdetermined by forms of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, and so on, which become sedimented into habitual patterns of meaning and perception that structure our social lifeworlds.

The book is divided into three thematic sections: “Embodied Politics: Encountering Race and Violence”; “Relationality, Ethics and the Other”; and “Embodiment, Subjectivity and Intercorporeality,” which draw on or emphasize different aspects of the phenomenological tradition or undertake alternative levels of analysis.

The essays in Part I, “Embodied Politics: Encountering Race and Violence” explore the lived experience of race, violence, homogenization and isolation. Engaging phenomenology with critical race theory, social philosophy, and feminist theory, the first four essays engage with the complexity of embodied politics, exploring the manner through which social injustices color and shape the texture of our lived experiences. These four essays, in their various ways, explore how injustices such as racism, criminalization, and symbolic violence are inscribed and reinforced on and through the body, or the way

in which racializing or criminalizing perceptions become “epidermalized,” to use Frantz Fanon’s term.⁴

Rosalyn Diprose’s essay, “The Body and Political Violence: Between Isolation and Homogenization,” opens the book with a provocative analysis of embodied politics and violence, which she argues operate through processes of isolation and homogenization. In previous work on corporeal generosity, Diprose highlights the ways in which bodies are socially constituted through an intertwining with others who are also already social beings.⁵ In this sense, habitual patterns and attitudes of intolerance toward otherness are built up over time and, in turn, these forms of intolerance limit modes of bodily comportment in attitudes of sexism, racism, or heterosexism, for example. Diprose extends these insights here and offers an analysis of the kinds of violence that structure sociality within liberal democratic polities that incite divisiveness and conflict rather than promoting uniqueness and forms of interrelatedness and belonging. She not only draws attention to the centrality of the body in understanding political violence but also to the ways in which embodied politics create complexes of meaning that generalize and categorize, consequently erasing alterity and difference or denying the uniqueness of particular persons.

Deploying insights from Merleau-Ponty, Hannah Arendt, and Jean-Luc Nancy, Diprose seeks to develop a political ontology that is based on a notion of corporeal intertwining and modes of dwelling together that can also account for alterity and difference. She argues that political violence not only damages the subjects upon whom it is inflicted but also the broader social fabric by closing down the potential for dynamic modes of intercorporeal dwelling. In response, Diprose highlights a notion of affirmative interrelation or affectivity—a notion that is explored in different registers in several essays in the book—that she suggests is intrinsic to forms of relationality and is required for the mutual disclosure of individual uniqueness.

Diprose’s analysis of isolation and homogenization resonates with Lisa Guenther’s work, particularly her analysis of the “collapse of personhood” for prisoners contained for long periods in solitary confinement.⁶ In her work on isolation practices in prisons, Guenther highlights the pathologies that develop from the systematic deprivation of social relations with others, such as paranoia, panic attacks, or hallucinations, that lead to the eventual breakdown of self and the world, and which highlights the way we become “unhinged from ourselves by being separated from others.”⁷ In her essay “A Critical Phenomenology of Solidarity and Resistance in the 2013

California Prison Hunger Strikes,” Guenther moves beyond her previous phenomenological analysis of the effects of solitary confinement on individuals to develop an account of solidarity and resistance between prisoners subjected to conditions of extreme isolation.

Drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre’s work on collective praxis, Guenther articulates a critical phenomenological account of the action taken by prisoners in Northern California’s Pelican Bay State Prison, who put aside their differences in order to collectively protest against conditions they faced within the prison system. As Guenther notes, many of the ways in which prisoners are identified or treated, such as body searches, body cuffing, surveillance, detention, isolation, gang identification, and internal daily punishment, are not based on specific actions they have undertaken within prison but on racializing and criminalizing perceptions, stereotyping and profiling about perceived personas or identities that cohere to entrenched and naturalized attitudes and norms. This, of course, is the case not just behind prison walls but is acutely apparent in U.S. policing practices more generally, such as “stop and frisk” policies or being pulled over on suspicion of minor traffic violations that disproportionately target black Americans (also known as the “offense” of “driving while black”), which have resulted in high numbers of deaths in police custody and shootings.

Engaging the work of Fanon, Guenther points to the way in which racial and colonial structures not only effect political and social institutions but also psychic life and lived experience. Moreover, she highlights the manner in which one’s mode of being becomes undermined or distorted through the systematic deprivation of or exclusion from generalized patterns of social relations. However, she is also concerned to articulate the modes through which the logic of racializing and colonizing structures and frameworks of meaning can be both critically assessed and transformed, creating new modes of being with others and new forms of thought and action. Guenther suggests that by bringing a critical phenomenological perspective to such forms of experience and collectivization it is possible not only to reveal historical, social, and material structures that condition and constrain all forms of action but also to develop transformative practices for reforming the world.⁸

In her essay “Sedimented Attitudes and Existential Responsibilities,” Gail Weiss provides a reflection on how white privilege operates and the ways in which perceptual habits are maintained by failing to acknowledge and neglecting to take existential responsibility for them. She provides an insightful analysis of social encounters characterized by perceptual and embodied

habits with respect to racial stereotypes, taking place against a background of unwritten rules or typical patterns of social interaction. Weiss points to the ways in which perceptual habits are relational phenomena that connect us not only to others but also to broader cultural, social, and historical frameworks. She highlights how perceptual habits become sedimented in forms that privilege some individuals and are oppressive for others.

Weiss's aim is to disclose the psychic and bodily advantages that attach to racial privilege and the ways in which ignorance and lack of acknowledgment of such privilege contributes to the sedimentation of racializing perception. She suggests that the figure/ground model explicated by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty offers an alternative account of the way in which habits function in the background of our experience, blending in such that they remain unnoticed until an unexpected experience brings them to our awareness. In this manner, an unsettling event or transformative experience may reveal perceptual habits such as racism by bringing them to the fore, and can be the catalyst for changing entrenched habits such as white privilege.

It is precisely this kind of new experience that is described by Simone de Beauvoir in her memoir, *America Day by Day*; a work that recounts her travels in southern parts of the United States in 1947, through which she is confronted by her own white privilege. Drawing on the writings of Alia Al-Saji, Weiss demonstrates that Beauvoir's experiences of race can be read as unsettling such that they rupture preconceived ideas and habits of perception. As Al-Saji suggests, if we take into account the temporality or duration that structures habit, we can see that such habits or patterns of perception rely on repetition or reiteration for their existence and maintenance over time, but it is this very requirement of ongoing repetition that also opens a space for such patterns to be interrupted. In the very repetition of habits of perception, ways of seeing may falter or be dislodged and a new way of seeing may emerge.

It is also this sense of challenging racialized forms of perception that Danielle Petherbridge explores in her essay, "Racializing Perception and the Phenomenology of Invisibility." In contrast to Weiss, who draws on Al-Saji's work to help deconstruct white privilege, Petherbridge brings Al-Saji's work on hesitation and perception together with Axel Honneth's work to examine the phenomenology of invisibility and racializing forms of perception more generally. Through a reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Petherbridge explores the phenomenon of invisibility and race and questions what factors contribute to the

deformation of perception in the sense that a subject fails to see the other in a manner that grants her social validity. In order to examine this set of issues, Petherbridge brings together resources from Axel Honneth's recognition theory, Merleau-Ponty's existential-phenomenology, and Fanon's account of racializing perception to explicate how racism fosters dialectical modes of being between visibility and invisibility. Racialized subjects no longer experience themselves as body-subjects but as objects, which in different contexts manifests as either a form of heightened visibility or as a form of objectification, denial, or dehumanization that renders subjects invisible. Petherbridge argues that the phenomenological account of embodied lived experience and perception can productively be brought together with Honneth's insights in regard to the relation between cognition, perception, and recognition. To this end, she argues that Al-Saji's rich account of hesitation, which points to the temporality and space required to interrupt habitual patterns of perception, can be augmented by an account of recognition that potentially provides the normative force required for transforming racializing forms of seeing and for ethically reorientating forms of perception.

Following on from the substantive accounts in Part I, the essays in the second part of the book, "Relationality, Ethics and the Other," explore the theoretical and experiential foundation of social encounters. Each chapter in Part II considers questions of alterity and difference and various modalities of interacting or engaging ethically and corporeally with others. Many of the essays in the second part explore ethical accounts of relationality or the potential for ethical encounters and the reconstruction of intersubjectivity, for example, in relation to sexual difference, to speaking and listening, or in the development of a relational notion of autonomy based on primary responsiveness. Through examining the question of encountering the other, or *other* others, the essays in this section explore themes such as autonomy, wonder, ethics, performativity, and recognition as they arise in our embodied lived experience and offer substantial new theoretical insights.

In his essay "Social Interaction, Autonomy and Recognition," Shaun Gallagher also explores interconnections between phenomenology and Axel Honneth's critical-theoretical approach to intersubjectivity, more specifically with regard to connections that can be made between recognition and enactive approaches to cognition or interaction theory. Gallagher highlights how a "social encounter," or face-to-face interaction, is not only central for the development of autonomy but also for establishing broader forms of social

organization, which transcend interpersonal interaction and are reflected in broader social and political institutions. With reference to recognition theory and developmental literature, Gallagher articulates a feedback loop between autonomy and interaction such that individual autonomy depends on cognitive forms of interaction. In turn, he argues that more generalized patterns of autonomous interaction can be achieved only on the basis of the ongoing autonomy of participants in interaction.

In this regard, autonomy is not conceived as an individualistic category, as one based on self-determining and self-legislating subjects, as in the Kantian tradition, or as isolated subjects depicted as masters of their own sovereignty or self-mastery. Rather, for Gallagher, autonomy is a relational category shaped through social interaction and dynamic intersubjective processes. In addition, he argues that forms of interaction not only have resonance at the interpersonal level but also develop into complex patterns of interaction that transcend individual social encounters to form what he terms a dynamic system of “autonomy of interaction.” He compares this notion to Levinas’s account of the transcendence of the face-to-face encounter, pointing to a post-metaphysical notion of ethical responsiveness and mutual engagement generated by ongoing forms of autonomous interaction around which certain practices are built.

In this sense, like Petherbridge, Gallagher seeks to develop a notion of “elementary responsiveness” or primary affectivity that he suggests can be found in Honneth’s work. However, he argues this notion of primary responsiveness is somewhat obscured in Honneth’s own work by its conflation with secondary or more developed linguistic and normative forms of recognition. Gallagher argues that Honneth downplays or overlooks the embodied dynamics of social interaction that begin at a primary level of intersubjectivity, and that crucially form the basis for more mature and ongoing normative forms of interaction. It is through these elementary forms of responsiveness, which refer to emotional and embodied responses rather than cognitive ones, that the subject is called to respond to the other and for interaction of any kind to be ongoing.

In his essay “The Weight of Others: Social Encounters and an Ethics of Reading,” Donald A. Landes offers a reconsideration of the way in which the “problem of the other” and of alterity and difference has been interpreted in Merleau-Ponty’s work. Instead of moving to the later ontology of the flesh in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Landes offers a detailed reading of Merleau-Ponty’s earlier existential phenomenology as represented

in *Phenomenology of Perception*, which he argues is the more productive place to begin in order to trace the status of the other in Merleau-Ponty's *oeuvre*. Landes suggests that, for Merleau-Ponty, encounters between self and other can be understood as a type of "reading" in which subjects read the expressive gestures of one another and gear onto the open trajectories of sense, which are always ongoing and never complete. He therefore highlights not only the existential-phenomenological but also the temporal aspects of Merleau-Ponty's account. In this sense, embodied relationality always carries the weight of language, culture, and the past but also points toward open trajectories beyond the present and lived moment, those that transcend us but which we also take up and live in new and unexpected ways. Landes suggests that the other can be understood as "the speaking traces of an existence" and, consequently, that it is more appropriate to understand that embodied encounters are never complete nor reduced to a particular way of "knowing" or to enclosed interpretations. Rather, the notion of "reading" suggests there are multiple ways of engaging with and responding to the other, and that as with reading a text, the practice of reading is always a "reperformance" that elicits new modes of meaning that are never ultimately encoded but open to an on-going hermeneutical process.

Landes suggests that social encounters as "reading" offer the potential for ethical encounters between self and other. However, there is no designation from the outset regarding what such a reading will elicit or whether it will be characterized by positive or negative modalities. In fact, Landes suggests that the best we can claim is for the *possibility* of an ethical response to the other rather than one that can be guaranteed or grounded either anthropologically or ontologically.

Whereas Landes's essay traces the possibility of an ethics of reading the other in Merleau-Ponty's work, in her essay "Linguistic Encounters: The Performativity of Active Listening," Beata Stawarska points to an ethics and politics of hearing with reference, not only to Austin's speech act theory but also to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, and Luce Irigaray. In this sense, Stawarska outlines a phenomenology of speaking and listening, which breaks down the components of speech acts to uncover the ways in which everyday linguistic encounters can express or reinforce relations of power. However, she also emphasizes the way in which such micro-acts are never isolated forms merely enacted in interpersonal or face-to-face encounters, but always already situated in broader social structures of power that either lend or deny legitimacy to the status of speaking subjects.

Stawarska explores the way in which, particularly for women, a perfectly appropriate and audible speech act may be expressed but fails at the illocutionary level. As she explains, however, the failure does not lie in the initial locutionary act but rather in the neglect or refusal of uptake on the part of the listener. She argues that in social encounters it is the interlocution of speech acts that is central, in the sense that communication depends not merely on making an appropriate and audible utterance but also on the receptivity of the other to the utterance. In this respect, “failures” of listening and hearing can become a disempowering strategy that works to reproduce habitual and inequitable patterns of interaction and reinforce power relations by deauthorizing a marginalized speaker. Drawing on Bourdieu’s work, Stawarska suggests these are not isolated incidents specific to particular social encounters but that language and linguistic interaction take place within and reflect social structures or conditions of power, which delegitimize the speech of those who have not been granted a particular social status or authority.

This sensibility is also reflected in Judith Butler’s work on the performativity of speech and interpellation, in which she examines the way in which subjects are constituted linguistically and whereby subordination is understood to take place through language. Stawarska draws on Butler’s analysis of the performativity of speech acts but augments it by turning to Irigaray’s arguments about active listening. Irigaray’s account does not assume that the listener has a preconceived knowledge or comprehension of the speaking subject but rather listens to each utterance with an openness that provides a space of freedom in which new forms of becoming might emerge. In this way, Stawarska redirects an analysis of the potential empowerment of linguistic encounters away from Butler’s focus on speech and the reclaiming of words through their reiteration, to a focus on the ethical and political practice of listening and hearing. This has the effect of reauthorizing the status of a previously disempowered speaker in a new way, enabling the subversion of gender roles and assisting in challenging positions of power and authority.

Irigaray’s work also provides a point of orientation for Sara Heinämaa’s essay, “Wonder as the Primary Passion: A Phenomenological Perspective on Irigaray’s Ethics of Difference.” While Stawarska focuses on the reorientation of speech acts and the responsiveness of the other in terms of the hearer’s uptake to reorientate intersubjective relations, Heinämaa takes up Irigaray’s notion of ethics based on what she terms a sense of “wonder.” Heinämaa draws on Descartes’s work on the passions and Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of the phenomenological reduction in order to further explicate what Irigaray means

by referring to wonder as the basis for ethical renewal of the relation between the sexes. Her contention is that wonder is central not only for developing an ethical account of sexual difference but of intersubjectivity and difference more generally.

For Heinämaa what is most striking about Descartes's account in *The Passions of the Soul*, is the manner by which he not only posits wonder as the primary "emotion-passion" but also articulates it as a primary form of affectivity that precedes all forms of evaluation. In this sense, wonder, which is grouped with emotion-passions such as love, hatred, and desire, is also distinct as a passion that has no opposite. More important, it is the first and most significant of the passions because it designates a form of engagement with others and the world that is non-instrumental, non-objectifying, and prior to classification. Instead it lays the ground, so to speak, for an "active grasping," that is, of a responsiveness to the other that opens up new forms of experience or perception in social encounters.

However, Heinämaa argues that in order to fully understand Irigaray's claims about wonder, we need to view wonder not merely as a primary passion that evokes new forms of responsiveness, as implied in Descartes's work, but also as a goal or a task. In order to explicate this project, she claims we need to reconsider the phenomenological account of the reduction found in Merleau-Ponty's work and described, following Eugene Fink, as a form of wonder or surprise. Heinämaa argues that Irigaray's notion of wonder can be understood in a manner similar to the phenomenological attitude; it requires a suspension of judgment and perception, of common-sense conceptions and experiences of the other sex in order to make possible new forms of ethical relation. This is, of course, an ongoing task, one that not only makes possible an altered form of receptivity toward the other but also self-transformation. Applied to philosophical practice, wonder opens new interpretations, new readings, and new spaces and creates the possibility for redefining and reshaping entrenched institutions, including philosophical ones.

In her essay "Merleau-Ponty on Understanding *Other Others*," Katherine J. Morris engages Merleau-Ponty's work in order to address the perennial question that continues to preoccupy analytic philosophy regarding the problem of understanding others: How do we know that other minds exist? Morris argues that Merleau-Ponty not only transforms these traditional philosophical problems but also offers a radically different approach that effectively dissolves the question as it is conventionally posed. Through a detailed reading of Merleau-Ponty's work, Morris points to several epistemological

and conceptual strategies through which Merleau-Ponty tackles the “problem of others.” This includes not only a reconceptualization of the body that challenges the mind-body distinction but also the idea that the body is merely another object in the world. In this respect, for example, the notion of the body schema is remarkable for describing the way in which bodies are “in the world,” and also provides the basis for knowing there are other “equivalent” body schemas for those persons with whom I interact or with whom I exist in the world.

However, Morris’s point is not just to address the standard question of the problem of others posed by analytic philosophy. Instead, she turns to consider how this approach might apply to an understanding of “*other* others.” By this she means to refer to those categorized as other others in Merleau-Ponty’s work, including “animals, children, primitive peoples and madmen.” Morris suggests that there are two ways in which the problem of understanding *other* others is approached in Merleau-Ponty’s work that stem from the basic manner in which he reconceives the problem of the other more generally. One is by replacing the notion of cognitive understanding with the phenomenological notions of “conduct” and “milieu,” and the second, which is more speculative, is to extend the notion of bodily reciprocity to the mode of understanding *other* others.

The first claim is based on the notion that although *other* others dwell in the world in “their own fashion,” we can understand that they have their own milieu and their own forms of conduct or movement to which we can relate, without assuming others are the same as us. In other words, we can understand their conduct as conduct with vital significance for them, despite it being structurally different to our own. The second claim Morris makes extends Merleau-Ponty’s insights beyond his own, to suggest how it is possible that we might have a *bodily understanding* of *other* others. Key here, Morris suggests, is a consideration of the acquisition of habits together with Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus.” Morris argues that understanding *other* others is akin to acquiring what might be termed a “second habitus” (similar to learning a second language or culture). She argues that by way of a system of equivalences we can, for example, come to understand the purr of the cat as she sits in my lap as a bodily gesture equivalent to my smile, or the flick of her tail as equivalent to a frown. In this way, Morris highlights not only the way in which Merleau-Ponty’s work deconstructs traditional philosophical problems by challenging the very presuppositions that underlie them, but also offers a unique way in which phenomenological solutions

to perennial problems create a means to radically reorientate our understanding of *other* others.

The essays in Part III, “Embodiment, Subjectivity and Intercorporeality,” explore in further detail the primacy and complexity of intercorporeality, particularly in regard to the development of subjectivity and the body schema, and the ways in which embodied relations are pivotal for understanding gestation, anxiety, and aging. While the insights of the canonical phenomenologists were primarily concerned with articulating the structures of what might be called “ordinary” or “non-pathological” embodied experience, the essays in this section push these initial insights to explore variations of experience through dementia, pregnancy, and agoraphobia, demonstrating how these experiences are intertwined not only with others but with the normative structures of the broader world.

In his essay “Lived Body, Intersubjectivity, and Intercorporeality: The Body in Phenomenology,” Moran traces the concepts of embodiment and intercorporeality through the phenomenological tradition, demonstrating the contributions of both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to questions of embodiment and the phenomenological modalities through which we experience our own lived bodies and through which we encounter the “other.” Moran elucidates the concept of embodiment with reference to Husserl’s work on the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper* and in relation to important concepts such as the double sensation, “mineness,” and bodily sensings. Furthermore, through a careful lexical consideration of the key concepts in Husserl’s account, Moran demonstrates the influence of Husserl on Merleau-Ponty and other twentieth-century thinkers and traditions. With particular reference to concepts such as the “body schema,” “intertwining,” and the “flesh,” he argues that the phenomenological account of embodiment has provided an important corrective to some strands of contemporary philosophy of mind, which now recognize that consciousness is not only embodied but also relational. With reference to Gail Weiss’s insights on intercorporeality, Moran notes that the first “encounter” with the other occurs in the womb, demonstrating that we are always already enmeshed in an intercorporeal nexus from which our individual experiences emerge.

In her essay “Phenomenology and Intercorporeality in the Case of Commercial Surrogacy,” Luna Dolezal takes up a similar set of issues and provides a detailed examination of primary intercorporeality within the womb as the basis for both the development of the body schema and future forms of embodied relationality. Dolezal’s point, however, is not just to highlight the

way in which intercorporeality in gestation is constitutive of primary intersubjectivity but to draw attention to the way in which this complex state is largely overlooked in contemporary literature on surrogacy. In particular, she argues that the role of the surrogate is not just one of “gestational carrier” or “womb donor” but in fact should be considered as providing the “fleshy foundation” for the embodied subjectivity of the growing fetus. Dolezal argues that we need to rethink and critically examine the way in which commercial surrogacy has been conceived. She suggests that surrogacy cannot be viewed merely as a form of “labor” akin to other forms of production, or in terms of a “gifted womb,” but rather that the surrogate should be understood as intertwined in primary embodied and affective experiences with the child that are not only life-giving but also have kinship-generating capacities. In other words, Dolezal’s claim is that in commercial surrogacy the role of the surrogate mother—as a woman with a primary embodied relation to the gestating child—should be brought more centrally into philosophical, bioethical, and medical analysis. She therefore demonstrates not only the importance of gestation and pregnancy for phenomenology and for any understanding of primary relationality but also provides the basis for critiquing and transforming conceptions and practices of commercial surrogacy, effectively putting the role of the surrogate and the sociality of the surrogate-child relation at the center of the analysis.

Where Dolezal emphasizes the affective and life-giving aspects of sociality and our being with others, in his essay “Agoraphobia, Sartre, and the Spatiality of the Look,” Dylan Trigg turns to an examination of the way in which forms of intersubjectivity can equally evoke fear or anxiety. With reference to Sartre’s account of the look and an early twentieth-century case study of an agoraphobic subject, Trigg explores the relation between embodiment, intersubjectivity, and spatiality, providing insights not only into agoraphobia but also forms of social relationality more generally. In this sense, Trigg contests conventional understandings of agoraphobia as a pathology, instead arguing that agoraphobia amplifies certain themes of everyday existence in regard to the more general relation between self, others, and the world as well as our spatial orientation. He suggests that Sartre’s account of intersubjectivity in *Being and Nothingness* is helpful for revealing the way in which relations between self and other are structurally based on exclusion or negativity, and for explicating the manner in which I not only become an object of the other’s gaze but in like manner become an object for myself. It is this sense of both being othered and surrounded by the condition of alterity that the agoraphobic subject responds to with dread and anxiety. As Trigg suggests, however, the

sense of being looked at does not disappear when there is no one literally present but is extended beyond perception such that it becomes a general condition of otherness. For the agoraphobic subject, open, unmediated spaces are particularly threatening as otherness permeates all things, appearing everywhere as engulfing and omnipresent such that the subject feels literally “lost in space.” It is through this sense of spatiality, Trigg suggests, that the agoraphobic subject constructs forms of relationality with the other and tries to avoid incorporating the other into his or her existence, refusing alterity despite being immersed in a world in which otherness is everywhere infused.

In her essay “Intercorporeal Expression and the Subjectivity of Dementia,” Lisa Folkmarson Käll takes up some of these themes from an alternative vantage point by examining the care of subjects with dementia. Through an examination of clinical practice in dementia care, Käll highlights the way in which the capabilities of dementia patients are fostered and encouraged intercorporeally. However, she argues that what is remarkable about such practices of relational capacity building are that they make acutely apparent how subjective capacities are intercorporeally constituted more generally. In this respect, Käll’s essay highlights many of the themes explored throughout the book, including the foundational nature of embodied interconnectedness and the processes of individuation in which subjects develop their singularity through constitutive forms of embodied relationality. In this regard, social encounters can be understood to be based on a constitutive openness and accessibility to the other, which as Käll points out, is prefigured in the experience of the “double sensation” in which the subject has a double experience, for example, when touching one hand with the other. The double sensation as described by Merleau-Ponty discloses a reversible structure, one that is constitutive of identity and also extends to interrelation with others and the world.

Käll demonstrates the way in which primordial intercorporeality provides the basis for all future forms of face-to-face intercorporeality, in the sense that it is foundational for relationality as well as the body schema. She also draws attention to the situatedness of the lived body and its endlessly changing and future-directed paths of becoming. Primary intercorporeality then opens new possibilities for action and the ongoing, dynamic configuration of bodily space, which she argues is important for understanding dementia. Following Merleau-Ponty, Käll argues that subjectivity can be understood as an expressivity that is experienced through our intercorporeal relations with others such that interiority is expressed and disclosed. The significance of this analysis for understanding conditions such as dementia is that subjects

can be understood to continue to express their interiority and continue to “become who they are” through expressive interaction with others rather than assuming that subjectivity becomes dormant, as in conventional analyses. In a manner that insightfully brings together many of the issues explored in the book, Käll’s essay demonstrates that we are always already intercorporeal and intersubjective beings who not only grow, change, and express our uniqueness in relation to others but who also suffer and are diminished when deprived of interaction and encounters with others, despite the complexity through which those encounters might unfold.

As all of the essays in the book highlight, primary forms of intercorporeality and intersubjectivity form the basis for ongoing forms of relationality and modes of interaction. Moreover, an underlying agreement runs throughout the chapters that more general forms of sociality are built up through our embodied interaction and everyday social encounters, and that patterns of interaction and intersubjectivity shape, alter, and amend the background norms and meanings that structure our social lifeworlds. In this regard, many of the essays explore the form, texture, and differential experience of social encounters and examine the ways in which habitual attitudes or patterns of perception become sedimented and expressed in forms of inequality and oppression, in the denial of uniqueness and alterity or social validity. To challenge the disavowal of difference through exclusion and privilege, many authors in the collection investigate ways in which such attitudes, habits, and experiences might be ruptured, resisted, and transformed. In different ways, the essays demonstrate the normativity built into the fact of our sociality or embodied relationality and the ways in which social encounters might be ethically reorientated. The authors rethink the materiality and normativity of social encounters, taking into account not only intersubjective and embodied relations but also investigating the ways in which lived experience might inform the critical analysis of broader social structures, institutions, and contexts. Most notably, the book reveals the richness and diversity of our intercorporeal existence and the necessary intertwining of body, self, and other in ways that demonstrate both our uniqueness and diversity as well as our fundamental social interdependence and the potential for new and ever-changing forms of relationality.

NOTES

1. See Helen Ngo, “Racist Habits: A Phenomenological Analysis of Racism and the Habitual Body.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, DOI:

10.1177/0191453715623320, 16 February 2016, 14–15; Alia Al-Saji, “A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing.” In Emily Lee (ed.), *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014, 133–172.

2. See for example, Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, D. Carr (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970); contrast Alfred Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations* (ed.) H.R. Wagner (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); and Jürgen Habermas who takes up and transforms Husserl’s notion of the lifeworld in *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume Two, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, T. McCarthy (trans.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

3. See for example A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, J. Anderson (trans.) (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995). See also M. Merleau-Ponty, for example, *The Visible and the Invisible*, A. Lingis (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), for an account that is suggestive of an originary ontological fabric into which we are all interwoven (although this is not necessarily an explicitly ethical claim it can be argued it gestures towards such an account).

4. F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Richard Philcox (trans.) (New York: Grove Press, 2008); also see Al-Saji, “A Phenomenology of Hesitation.”

5. See R. Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), esp. 69, 55.

6. L. Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2013), 29.

7. Guenther, *Solitary Confinement*, xi, xii.

8. Guenther, *Solitary Confinement*, 60. Also see Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*.

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