



Articulating experience

C. Jason Throop

University of California, Los Angeles, USA

Abstract

This article engages in critical dialogue with what appears to be an emerging *fin de siècle* concern with the unexamined theoretical usage of the concept of 'experience' in anthropology. The article begins with a brief review of the work of a number of scholars who share a growing dissatisfaction with the problem of experience in contemporary anthropological and social scientific writings. In order to evaluate and situate these recent critical perspectives, the article then shifts to explore in greater detail the writings of two anthropologists who have significantly contributed to contemporary anthropological theorizing of experience: Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz. Finally, in an attempt to lay the groundwork for a 'return to experience' in anthropological theorizing and research, the article concludes by outlining a 'complemental' model of experience. Drawing from insights into the temporal organization of experience found in the phenomenological writings of William James, Edmund Husserl, and Alfred Schutz this model attempts to bridge what some scholars believe to be a controversial gap between 'granular' and 'coherence' theories of experience that permeate many of the anthropological (and philosophical) discussions of the topic.

Key Words

anthropological theory • experience • phenomenology • temporality

'Experience, I believe, has no . . . inner duplicity; and the separation of it into consciousness and content comes, not by way of subtraction, but by way of addition.'

William James, 1904a

'The word "experience" is the most deceitful in philosophy.'

Alfred North Whitehead, 1927

'To reach reality one has first to reject experience.'

Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1955

I. INTRODUCTION

There are certain concepts in anthropological theorizing that are foundational. Because these concepts provide the ground upon which anthropologists are able to construct

their theoretical edifices, they are often taken for granted and tend to remain largely unquestioned. One such concept is that of 'experience'. While experience has remained a key concept throughout much of the history of the discipline, it has, until relatively recently, remained largely unexamined in critical literature. And yet, its proliferation throughout contemporary anthropological writings is truly remarkable.¹ Indeed, experience has become a central construct for a number of divergent perspectives in anthropology, including feminist theory, phenomenological anthropology, psychological anthropology, medical anthropology and critical ethnography. In all of these approaches, while the importance and centrality of experience is evident, the definition and operational properties of the construct remain largely elusive. This lack of conceptual clarity seems rather surprising given that these theoretical perspectives often look to experience not only as a central area of investigation, but also as the ground upon which all later speculation, description, and explanation are erected.

This article engages in a critical dialogue with a number of key works representing what appears to be an emerging *fin de siècle* concern with this unexamined theoretical usage of the concept of experience in anthropology.² The article begins with a brief review of the work of four scholars, Joan Scott (1991), David Scott (1992), Robert Desjarlais (1994, 1997), and Cheryl Mattingly (1998), who share a growing dissatisfaction with the usage of the concept of experience in contemporary anthropological and social scientific writings. In order to evaluate and situate these scholars' concerns, the article then shifts to explore in greater detail the writings of two anthropologists who have significantly contributed to contemporary anthropological theorizing of experience: Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz. Finally, in an attempt to lay the groundwork for a 'return to experience' in anthropological theorizing, the article concludes by outlining a preliminary model of experience that draws from the writings of William James, Edmund Husserl, and Alfred Schutz. The hope is that this model will demonstrate how a more phenomenologically grounded understanding of the temporal organization of experience might serve to bridge what some believe to be a controversial gap between 'granular' and 'coherence' theories that permeate many of the anthropological (and philosophical) discussions of the topic (see Schrag, 1969).

II. *FIN DE SIÈCLE* CULTURE THEORY AND THE PROBLEM OF EXPERIENCE³

In the work of the historian Joan Scott (1991),⁴ and the anthropologists David Scott (1992), Robert Desjarlais (1994, 1997), and Cheryl Mattingly (1998), we find what appears to be a growing *fin de siècle* concern with the problem of experience in anthropological and social scientific theorizing. In the writings of these scholars, experience has been characterized as a common sense, taken-for-granted construct that permeates theorizing in anthropology. Moreover, these authors argue that the unexamined centrality of experience in anthropological theory requires that a careful exploration and reformulation of the concept's current usages be made in order to ensure that researchers do not build their theoretical edifices upon putatively vacuous foundations.

Most pointedly, both Joan Scott (1991) and David Scott (1992) argue that it is time for social scientists to reject the concept of experience. In grounding research in the rhetoric of experience, which is intimately tied to notions of 'visibility', 'transparency', 'individuality', 'immediacy' and 'authenticity', Scott and Scott hold that social scientists

have become increasingly blind to those processes and structures that give rise to the historicity and possibility of experience, shared or otherwise.

Desjarlais (1997: 17) makes a similar argument when he asserts that 'discourses of depth, interiority, and authenticity, sensibilities of holism and transcendence, and practices of reading, writing and storytelling have helped to craft a mode of being known in the West as experience: that is, an inwardly reflexive, hermeneutically rich process that coheres through time by way of narrative'. Unconvinced by the universality of these dimensions of experience, Desjarlais (1997: 24) proposes a 'critical phenomenology' that will place the concept of experience itself into brackets to examine why it is that phenomenology 'after Hegel has been centered on the study of personal experience, individual consciousness, and subjective perception' and to recognize that 'what we take as "experience" and "agency" are born of a gamut of cultural, political, biological, linguistic, and environmental factors'. In accord with this critical stance, Desjarlais goes on to suggest a new 'form of life' that he believes better suits the individuals he studied in a homeless shelter in Boston; a non-reflective, punctuating and sensorial form that he calls 'struggling along'.

In another recent work, Mattingly (1998) also devotes considerable attention to the problem of experience in relation to narrative and the sense-making properties of the human mind. In contrast to Desjarlais, Mattingly suggests that anthropologists often define experience in opposition to narrative, which is understood to be a 'distortion' of life-as-lived-through, that results from the functioning of a retrospective stance, temporal remove and the condensation of complexity. Indeed, she (Mattingly, 1998: 32) argues that the general picture of experience emerging in anthropology is as largely non-narrated, formless, structureless, fragmented and lacking in coherence and continuity. Against this view of experience as an incoherent 'prelinguistic bombardment of the senses', she (Mattingly, 1998: 45) asserts that 'narrative imitates experience because experience already has in it the seeds of narrative'. Ultimately, she sets out to challenge the 'anthropological dichotomy between experience as narrated and experience as lived', for she argues that lived experience is ordered by remembrance and anticipation and is thus not merely the blind succession of events in a linear series. According to Mattingly, there is an intrinsic 'toward which we are heading' quality of lived experience that is situated in the context of anticipations partially predicated upon a recalled past.

In the context of the work of these four scholars we are thus confronted with a general dissatisfaction with the usage and definition of experience in anthropological theorizing that is based on differing perspectives on how the term should be conceived of and used in anthropology and the social sciences more generally. For instance, where Joan Scott and David Scott are happy to reject the term on the basis of its highly subjectivist and totalizing tendencies that supposedly efface 'difference' while obscuring those constitutive processes that provide the conditions that support its usage, Desjarlais would like to advocate a position where the 'traditional' anthropological (and philosophical) view of experience in terms of its interiority, coherence, hermeneutical depth, immediacy and authenticity is tempered by the recognition that there are other ways of being-in-the-world that are not consonant with these definitional criteria. In contrast, Mattingly makes the case that it is not so much the coherence and hermeneutical depth of experience that is problematic, but the prevalent and strict distinction between experience and narrative which postulates the former as an unorganized field of sensory impressions that

is only retrospectively organized into a coherent form through the structuring properties of the latter.

Here, I think that it is safe to say that while there is some consensus that the usage of the concept of experience in anthropological theory is certainly somehow problematic, there is no consensus with regard to how these various thinkers characterize the use and definition of experience in anthropological theorizing, nor is there consensus with regard to how anthropologists should go about rectifying the putative problems with its usage. For these reasons, I would like to now turn to a brief review of two thinkers who have done much to inform our present understanding of the concept in anthropology, Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz. Through this review, I hope to demonstrate a breadth, depth and variety to their definitions and usages of experience that defies any simplistic rendering of their work into either what I would like to call, following Schrag (1969), the 'coherence' or 'granular' views of experience that are variously construed to be characteristic of anthropological theorizing and practice.

III. ANTHROPOLOGIES OF EXPERIENCE

Turner's anthropology of experience

Influenced early in his career by the likes of Emile Durkheim, Arnold Van Gennep, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Max Gluckman and Kurt Lewin, Victor Turner is perhaps best remembered for his detailed theoretical and ethnographic analysis of Ndembu symbolism and ritual life. While it is certainly true that some of his most celebrated work deals with the problems of social drama, the ritual process and the anti-structural properties of 'liminality', in the context of his mature work Turner can be viewed as one of anthropology's foremost theoreticians of experience.

In his earlier writings (see Turner 1967, 1969), Turner's understanding of experience is most often tied to the physiological, bodily, sensory and emotional dimensions of human existence. While in these writings Turner seems to have been only marginally interested in the problem of experience and did not devote much time to explicitly outlining the concept's definition or theoretical import, inspired by the writings of the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Turner's mature work demonstrates a clear shift to an explicit and detailed theoretical discussion of the concept. In the context of his dialogue with Dilthey, Turner's early 'physiological' understanding of experience is transformed to encompass a trichotomy of cognitive, affective and volitional dimensions. Indeed, throughout his later works we find Turner repeatedly following Dilthey in his attempt to outline a model of experience that is predicated upon the integration of cognitive, affective and volitional elements as they are directly 'lived through' by social actors.

In the book *From Ritual to Theater* (1982), we find one of Turner's first published discussions of experience from the perspective of a Diltheyan framework. In this work, Turner points out that in contrast to Kant's belief that it is only with the conceptual patterning of sensation that the 'raw data' of experience are given definite form, Dilthey holds that every distinct 'unit of experience' is given to an individual's awareness with a certain structure, which is not merely the result of the categorical impositions of the human mind (Turner, 1982: 13). In addition, Turner outlines various 'moments of experience' that Dilthey understands to be integral components to the eventual

organization of any distinctive 'structure of experience'. After outlining five such moments – the perceptual core, the evocation of past images, the revival of associated feelings, the emergence of meaning and value and finally the expression of experience – Turner (1982: 15) argues that it is only really in the fifth moment of 'expression' that the 'structured unit of experience' can be said to reveal itself. It is in this context that Turner first recognizes Dilthey's distinction between the immediate 'living through of experience' as a sequence of events (*erleben*) and the retrospective attribution of meaning tied to the structuring of 'experience' as a particular coherent unit or form (*erlebnis*).

Building upon these insights, Turner (1982) explores the multilayered structuring of experience in terms of the temporal organization of 'meaning', 'value' and 'ends' (see also Turner, 1985: 214–15). According to Turner's reading of Dilthey, where 'meaning' is essentially a cognitive structure oriented to the past, 'value' is an affective structure tied to the vicissitudes of the present moment, while 'ends' are volitional structures tied to goal-directed behavior oriented toward an emerging future. As Turner argues, while 'ends' do play a role in structuring experience, it is primarily the cognitive category of 'meaning' as mediated through memory that provides the reflexive articulation of what would otherwise be the affectively infused experience of mere temporal succession through value. Where meaning is tied to memory, cognition and coherence, the category of 'value' is tied to those affective structures of experience that are immersed in the present arising moment. For this reason, Turner, again following Dilthey, asserts that there is little to no cognitive coherence in the 'unarticulated quality of value'. Indeed, it is only with the interconnection of what are otherwise latent 'tonal-affinities' that disparate 'values' are able to be organized into a coherent structure through the 'ligatures' provided by personal and cultural forms of 'meaning' (Turner, 1982: 76). In contrast to the transient sequentiality that is characteristic of value as it manifests itself in its immediate immersion in the 'conscious present', '[m]eaning is apprehended by *looking back* over a temporal process' [emphasis in original] (Turner, 1982: 76). It is interesting to note that for Turner the relationship between meaning and value can also be tied to questions of determinacy and indeterminacy. Where the cognitive and mnemonic organization of meaning most often brings a historically patterned determinacy and 'indicativity' to the 'structure of experience', the prehension of value in the conscious present is suffused with a generative indeterminacy that operates primarily in a 'subjunctive mood' of fluidity, creativity and potentiality (Turner, 1982: 76–7).

In his posthumously published collection of essays entitled *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (1985), Turner further elaborates upon the relationship he sees between the fluidity and indeterminacy of experience in its sequential unfolding in the present moment and the 'fixing', 'ordering', 'framing' and 'regularization' of 'structures of experience' with the retrospective imposition of meaning. In a much neglected essay that actually pre-dates his in-depth exploration of Dilthey's philosophy of experience, entitled 'Process, System and Symbol', Turner (1985 [1977]) briefly draws upon Husserl, Schutz and Garfinkel in an attempt to outline those processes underlying the 'typification' of experience. Directly quoting Schutz, Turner (1985: 154) explains that the meaning assigned to an 'experienced object' stems from a process of 'relating by its typicality to pre-experienced things of similar typical structures and we accept its open horizon referring to future experiences of the same type'. Turning to the work of Sally Moore (1976), he goes on to argue, however, that by examining more closely these

'processes of meaning assignment' we can come to see more clearly how 'social reality is "fluid and indeterminate," although regularizing processes continually transform it into organized or systemic forms' (Turner, 1985: 155). Here, then, we find Turner attempting to outline a model of experience that rests on the assumption that its temporal structure creates an ever-present tension between its coherence, order and fixity and its fluidity, flux and indeterminacy.

Later in the same volume, Turner reiterates the ambiguity inherent in 'experience' by explaining that while *erlebnis* as a 'structure of experience' is 'inherently structural, not a flow of ephemeral moments' (Turner, 1985: 212), it may also have the connotation of 'presence', which is much closer to the concept of 'life' as a sequential, somewhat indeterminate, flow of succession (Turner, 1985: 212). This ambiguity aside, Turner argues that a 'structure of experience' has a tendency toward expression and in its expression it has the possibility of being crystallized in an intersubjectively accessible form – what Dilthey called 'objectified mind' (Turner, 1985: 217; see also Throop, 2002). According to Turner, the assorted collection of expressions of experience in the form of 'objectified mind' is nothing other than 'culture'.

Turner's last published discussion of the problem of experience is found in his short contribution to the collection of essays compiled in his co-edited volume *The Anthropology of Experience* (1986). In this essay we find what is now a much-cited passage where Turner draws again from Dilthey (1976: 210) to distinguish between 'mere experience' and 'an experience'. As Turner explains,

Mere experience is simply the passive endurance and acceptance of events. *An* experience, like a rock in a Zen sand garden, stands out from the evenness of passing hours and years and forms what Dilthey called a 'structure of experience.' In other words, it does not have an *arbitrary* beginning and ending, cut out of the stream of chronological temporality, but has what Dewey called 'an initiation and a consummation'. (Turner, 1986: 35, emphasis in original)

Ultimately, it is important to recognize that even with a somewhat simplified version of Dilthey's rendering of the various moments of experience (see Throop, 2002), Turner still presents us with an account of experience which can by no means be reduced to an understanding based solely upon Desjarlais' criteria of hermeneutical depth, interiority, integration, wholeness, authenticity and coherence. Indeed with his reformulation of Dilthey's understanding of the expression of experience and its crystallization in 'objectified mind', Turner clearly moves beyond the subjectivity and interiority of the individual experienter to the world of intersubjectively mediated cultural and social forms. Moreover, with his distinction between 'mere experience' and 'an experience' and with his detailed discussion of the difference between the unarticulated unfolding of value apart from its organization through the cognitive 'ligatures' provided in a retrospective imposition of meaning upon the unfolding temporal steam, Turner by no means reduces experience to either hermeneutical depth or strict and rigid coherence.

Geertz's significant symbols and the organization of 'experience'

Influenced by the likes of Max Weber, Ernst Cassirer, George Herbert Mead, Talcott Parsons, Suzanne Langer, Walker Percy and Gilbert Ryle, Clifford Geertz's approach to

experience can perhaps most simply be characterized as 'semiotic'. In his now famous appropriation of Ryle's (1949) 'thick description', Geertz clearly establishes his position that 'an I-am-a-camera, "phenomenalistic"' approach to anthropology is necessarily insufficient for any attempts to uncover the 'structures of signification' that serve to give meaning to all observed phenomena (Geertz, 1973: 6). Following Weber, Geertz asserts that his vision of an 'interpretive science', whose purpose is to explore the 'webs of significance' that serve to constitute culture, is predicated on the idea that culture is a public, ideational and yet non-mentalistic system of 'construable signs'.

Attempting to move beyond the 'cognitivist/subjectivist' fallacy, Geertz argues that it is time for anthropologists to recognize that 'culture', 'mind' and 'experience' are, in the end, symbolically mediated public interpretations and actions. For this reason, Geertz makes a point of distinguishing his position clearly from phenomenologists like Husserl, who tend to advocate 'strong subjectivist tendencies' that 'place stress upon a supposed inner state of an actor rather than on a certain sort of relation – a symbolically mediated one – between actor and situation' (Geertz, 1973: 110, footnote 34).

Building on Ryle and G.H. Mead, Geertz argues that the assumption that culture is both public and social leads inevitably to the insight that cultural processes do not 'happen in the head' but consist, in contrast, of a traffic of significant symbols that serve to '*impose meaning upon experience*' [emphasis mine] (Geertz, 1973: 45). Geertz holds, in fact, that '[u]ndirected by culture patterns – organized systems of significant symbols – man's behavior would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his *experience virtually shapeless*' [emphasis mine] (Geertz, 1973: 46). In other words, without the medium of culturally infused significant symbols Geertz asserts that experience would be relegated to incoherent and impenetrable behaviors and sensations. For Geertz then, the imposition of meaning on an otherwise chaotic stream of stimuli and responses is one of the key defining aspects of our existence as cultural beings. Drawing from the work of Walker Percy, Geertz maintains that, '[e]very conscious perception is . . . an act of recognition, a pairing in which an object (or an event, an act, an emotion) is identified by placing it against the background of an appropriate symbol' (Geertz, 1973: 215, emphasis added).⁵ Ultimately, he argues that everything in experience 'is tinged with imposed significance, . . . [is] apprehended only through a screen of significant symbols which are the vehicles of their objectification' (Geertz, 1973: 367).

Geertz can thus be read as emphasizing a conceptually grounded understanding of experience, for it is not the putatively private world of subjective experience that interests him but 'the conceptual world in which our subjects live' (Geertz, 1973: 24). Indeed, the degree to which Geertz understands experience to be infused with conceptual and symbolic determinants is clear in his belief that 'interpretation . . . goes all the way down to the most *immediate observational level*' [emphasis mine] (Geertz, 1973: 28). In his view then, culture is construed to be the very 'fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action' (Geertz, 1973: 145). In one of his most clearly articulated passages on the concept of experience Geertz explains that:

. . . *human experience – the actual living through of events* – is not mere sentience, but, from the most *immediate perception* to the most *mediated judgment*, significant

sentience – sentience interpreted, sentience grasped. For human beings, with the possible exception of neonates, who except for their physical structure are human only *in posse* anyway, *all experience is construed experience*, and the symbolic forms in terms of which it is construed thus *determine . . . its intrinsic nature* [emphasis mine]. (Geertz, 1973: 405)

Turning to the ‘problem of meaning’, Geertz argues that without the coherence provided by culturally elaborated systems of significant symbols, humans would find themselves on the brink of chaotic dissolution, since the lack of ‘interpretability’ of experience ultimately leads, in his estimation, to anxiety, angst and disquiet (Geertz, 1973: 100). The quest for meaning is thus understood as a response to the ‘opacity’ of certain events, such as the ‘dumb senselessness of intense or inexorable pain’ (Geertz, 1973: 108). To this end, Geertz (1973: 128) argues that the efficacy and significance of symbolic forms lie in their ability to organize experience. He suggests, therefore, that symbols are perpetually serving to fuse what would otherwise be ‘wholly disparate’, ‘incomprehensible’ and discrete ‘elements of experience’ (Geertz, 1973: 128).

Finally, in an epilogue to Victor Turner and Edward Bruner’s collection, *The Anthropology of Experience*, Geertz (1986: 374) asserts that while the concept of ‘experience’ is unsatisfactory for many, ‘it is equally true that without it, cultural analyses seem to float several feet above the ground’. That said, Geertz (1986: 380) still holds that experience is never simply ‘mere experience’ but is always ‘an experience’, that is, an ‘interpretive replay [of an event] as we recollect it to ourselves and recount it to others’.

Again, while Geertz’s emphasis on coherence, meaning and hermeneutical depth clearly aligns him with Desjarlais’ and the Scotts’ assessment of anthropological and philosophical views of experience, his emphasis on the external, public, intersubjective and material nature of the significant systems of symbols that serve to mediate experience seems to go against the idea that anthropologists should be faulted for stressing primarily the interiority and subjectivity of experience. In Geertz’s case this could not be farther from the truth. Indeed, Geertz consistently emphasizes the notion that experience is not something to be found ‘between the ears’ or in ‘the head’ but in the publicly accessible world of social action and cultural symbols.

IV. A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE: ASSESSING THE GROUND UPON WHICH WE STAND

From this brief review of the work of Turner and Geertz, we are confronted with a number of positions that do not simply or clearly map onto either Joan Scott’s, David Scott’s, Desjarlais’ and/or Mattingly’s formulations. While it is the case that these two thinkers have, at times, characterized experience as aligned with ‘subjectivity’, ‘internality’ and ‘privacy’, we see that this is clearly not always so. Indeed, both Turner and Geertz have sought at different times to stress the suprapersonal, external, collective, shared and public nature of ‘experience’ as mediated through culturally shaped systems of linguistic, symbolic and representational forms. Moreover, the hermeneutical depth, narrative structuring and coherence of experience is similarly absent from a number of the definitions explored in the writings of these two scholars. With the allusions made by these theorists to what is often characterized as the indeterminate, fluid, discontinuous, disjunctive, chaotic and/or fragmentary structure of experience – especially in its sensory

or immediate variants which are only thought to be given form, organization and coherence through the patterning proclivities of a culturally shaped mind's conceptual and interpretive overlays – it seems that in many instances Mattingly is most accurate in her characterization of the 'traditional view of experience in anthropology' as predicated upon an incoherent flux of sensory impressions that is in its immediate apprehension without narrative structure or coherence.

Significantly, the writings of Turner at times demonstrate a clear attempt to leave room for a definition of experience that is in no simplistic way organized exclusively by linguistically mediated interpretive frameworks that serve to pattern experience into coherent structures. Moreover, for Turner there also seems to be some recognition of the fact that there may often be a pre-given coherence to experience that is not merely the result of the impress of hermeneutical, semiotic and/or linguistic forms. All that being said, the most important point to take away from this review, however, lies in the fact that these thinkers seldom present us with any one clear definition of experience, but, in contrast, rely upon relatively complex, and at times contradictory, understandings of experience that seem to largely defy any simplistic categorization according to 'coherence' or 'granulated' theories (Schrag, 1969).

That there is a complex integration of such seemingly contradictory understandings of experience in the work of these two anthropologists, who have arguably been most influential in shaping many current theories of experience in the field, is not that surprising when we turn to look at the various ways that experience has been discussed in the context of western philosophy. For instance, whether it is in terms of Locke's (1979 [1689]) definition of experience as a synthesis of active reflection and passive sensation, Kant's (1990 [1781]) *a priorist* rendering of experience as arising out of the categorical structuring of what is otherwise an undifferentiated sensory flux, or Gadamer's (1975: 61–6) historically grounded discussion of experience (*erlebnis*) in terms of a fluctuating 'immediacy that precedes all interpretation' and as a mediated coherence that 'makes a special impression that gives . . . lasting importance', we are confronted with views of experience that seldom simply conform to either 'coherence' or 'granulated' poles. Indeed, it seems that each of these perspectives seem to resonate, at least to some degree, with *both* 'coherence' and 'granulated' varieties of experience.

That so many minds have set out to define experience along what seems to be such contradictory lines points, in my estimation, to the fact that experience should be understood as encompassing the entirety of this definitional range. The antimonies, contradictions and conflicts embedded in these various models of experience must, in other words, point to something fundamental about the structure of experience itself. A structure that encompasses the indeterminate, the fluid, the incoherent, the internal, the disjunctive, the fragmentary, the coherent, the intersubjective, the determinate, the rigid, the external, the cohesive, the conjunctive *and* the unitary. At this juncture then, I would like to conclude the article by turning to outline a model of experience that is drawn from the phenomenological writings of William James, Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz. A model that I believe will help us to bridge these seemingly divergent poles of understanding.

V. OPEN HORIZONS: JAMES, HUSSERL AND SCHUTZ ON THE TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION OF EXPERIENCE

Before turning to outline the model, it is important to note that I am certainly not the only anthropologist to have explored links between pragmatist and phenomenological perspectives in an attempt to demonstrate their significance for anthropological theory; such connections have already been made by the likes of Berger (1997, 1999), Csordas (1994a), Jackson (1989, 1996), Laughlin and McManus (1995), among others (see Throop and Murphy, 2002). Neither am I the first scholar to highlight the explicit connection between James', Husserl's and Schutz's perspectives on the temporal structure of consciousness; such linkages have been long noted by a number of philosophers including Casey (2000 [1987]), Edie (1970), Gurwitsch (1964), Schrag (1969), Schutz (1966) and Wilshire (1968). That said, I do believe that the model outlined in the pages that follow is unique in emphasizing how the phenomenology of time consciousness serves as an important window to understanding the variable structures of experience and in arguing for the significance of this perspective for recent debates over the articulation of experience in anthropological theorizing.

William James: From the 'fringe' to 'pure experience'

One of the most memorable metaphors used by James (1950 [1890]) in his attempt to detail the nature of human consciousness and the contours of lived experience is found in his comparison of the structure of consciousness to a stream: a stream that ebbs and flows continually forward while retaining the undercurrents and residues of past experience. Another central metaphor used by James in his various discussions of consciousness and lived experience, however, lies in his distinction between the focal and fringe elements of awareness, which he holds to permeate all cross-sections of the stream as it comes into being and passes away moment by moment.

For James, who wanted to create a position that mediated between synthetic Kantian models of experience and disjunctive Humean models, the key to understanding that the stream of consciousness is neither a completely unified and coherent field nor a disjointed, fragmented conglomeration of mental contents lies in better understanding those processes and constituents that arise at the fringe of our stream of awareness. In this respect, James notes that every content of consciousness is surrounded by a 'fringe' or 'halo' of anticipatory and residual movements which serve to frame and give definition to the focus of our present moment of awareness as it arises in the context of the 'here and now' (James, 1950 [1890]: 254, 255, 258, 259, 606). With regard to the residual contents of the fringe, James argues that each moment of conscious awareness is permeated by two basic forms of mnemonic structure. These he calls 'primary' and 'secondary' memory.

According to James, 'primary' memory can be understood as the lingering traces of an immediate past that are still retained in the present moment of awareness. These echoes of the past reflect the immediate mnemonic residues of an individual's previous concerns, motivations, feelings, perceptions and beliefs, which are often attuned to the context of personal and situational determinants. In contrast, 'secondary' memory reflects those more enduring mnemonic structures that also serve to organize the present moment of awareness but which are not necessarily tied to the immediately fading traces of past moments of experience that unfold in the context of ongoing interaction, feeling and thought.

In addition to these residual mnemonic aspects of the fringe of awareness, James (1950 [1890]: 613) also importantly notes those anticipatory elements of awareness that are encapsulated in the 'forward fringe'. That is, James not only details the effects of the past upon the structuring of the present moment, but is also able to demonstrate how it is that a future orientation – that is at least partially informed by those lingering traces of past experience – is also part and parcel of each moment of the stream of consciousness as it feeds forward to anticipate the horizon of future perceptions, feelings, sensations, motivations and actions. It is precisely the nexus of primary memory and anticipation that James terms the 'specious present'. As he explains, 'the practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched and from which we look in two directions into time. The unit of composition of our perception of time is a *duration*, with a bow and a stern, as it were – a rearward- and a forward-looking end' [emphasis in original] (James, 1950 [1890]: 609).⁶

There are a number of important affinities between this earlier rendering of the temporal structure of experience as it unfolds in the context of the stream of consciousness and James's later writings on 'radical empiricism'. First elaborated in two essays published in the same journal in the same year (see James, 1904a, 1904b), James's 'radical empiricism' can similarly be read as a response to what he understood to be the all too polemical renderings of conjunctive and disjunctive varieties of experience in *a priorist* and empiricist philosophies respectively. In this light, James provides a perspective that attempts to bridge what he views to be the problematic gap that arises between Kant's synthetic understanding of all varieties of experience as conjunctive and Hume's atomistic stance which characterizes experience only in terms of continuously unfolding conglomerations of disjunctive sensory impressions without definite form or coherence.

Of particular import in this regard is James' postulate of 'pure experience', which he understood to be a non-reflexive, non-verbal, preconceptual 'feeling' that grasps the 'immediate flux of life' in terms of its undifferentiated unfolding in the field of sensory immediacy, prior to its organization into distinctive contents, forms and structures (James, 1996b [1912]: 13, 37, 46–48; see also Laughlin and McManus, 1995; McDermott, 1976; Myers, 1986). According to James (1996b[1912]: 7), in its most 'pure' state, 'experience' is prior to distinction between subject and object and is thus without 'inner duplicity'. In 'pure experience' there is no split between consciousness and what consciousness is 'of', there is no differentiation between thing and thought, self and world, since the identical 'bit' of pure experience once reflected upon functions as both the qualities of objects in experience and the various states of consciousness in which those qualities inhere (James, 1996b [1912]: 7, 13, 37).

James not only understands 'pure experience' as the pre-reflective ground for all later forms of conceptualization, verbalization, narration and understanding, but further argues that this postulate suggests that it is possible to equate experience with reality. The implications of effectively equating experience and reality for James lie in the fact that no element or phenomena that is directly experienced can be excluded from reality and therefore, even the experience of transition between experiences should be understood as part and parcel of reality. Just as he pointed out in the continuity arising between the backward and forward fringe in the stream of consciousness, James believes that the experience of transitions, what he calls the 'conjunctive relations', are necessarily as much a part of experience and reality as discontinuous and disjunctive elements.

Arguing against 'rationalistic' (e.g. Kantian) and 'conventional empirical' (e.g. Humean) views of experience, which either explain continuity in terms of an abstracted 'Absolute', or leave experience 'permanently disjointed', James (1996b [1912]: 26) asserts that 'conjunctive relations' as felt in experience are equally as 'real' as those 'disjunctive relations' that involve discrete, atomistic and discontinuous ideas, images, feelings and/or impressions. In other words, for James 'experience' must always be construed as organized according to *both* 'conjunctive' and 'disjunctive' relations and elements such that it is never simply a matter of 'coherence' and 'fragmentation' or 'differentiation' and 'nondifferentiation' that characterizes its structure as lived. As he argues in *A Pluralistic Universe* (James, 1996a [1909]: 279–80), '[e]very examiner of the sensible life *in concreto* must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are and that conjunctive relations are just as true members of the flux as disjunctive relations are' [emphasis in original].

Edmund Husserl: On internal time consciousness, protention and retention

Influenced by James' writings on the 'stream of consciousness' and its residual and anticipatory 'fringe', Husserl also presents us with a view of experience that is grounded in a careful phenomenological description of the forward and backward facing 'horizons' of awareness (Husserl, 1962 [1931], 1964 [1905/10], 1993 [1931]).⁷ According to Husserl, every intentional object is surrounded by a 'horizon' that contains multiple arrays of 'retention' and 'protention' which serve to partially structure what is given focally to our awareness at any given moment, while also serving to connect the existing moment of awareness to both its antecedent *and* subsequent arisings. In Husserl's opinion (1964), the horizon is therefore organized according to a quasi-spatial/temporal frame that extends forward in anticipatory 'halos' of protention toward the next arising moment of awareness, while simultaneously 'sinking back' from the nucleus of the present moment in the form of a 'comet's tail' of retentional residues from past moments of awareness.⁸

In addition to the moment-to-moment organization of experience in terms of retentional and protentional extensions, Husserl further discusses 'recollections'/'secondary remembrances' (Husserl, 1964: 57–9, 68–70, 74–8) and 'expectations'/'hopes' (Husserl, 1964: 79–81; Dostal, 1993: 146–7), which he characterizes as intentional structures that have a far more heightened durative form when compared to the more rudimentary temporal, mnemonic and anticipatory processes that make up retention and protention. We have here in Husserl, therefore, a duality of mnemonic and anticipatory structures (see also Casey, 2000 [1987]: 49–52; Berger, 1997: 470), for in conjunction with the microgenetic structure of past and future orientations accounted for in the concepts of retention and protention, we also have the more fully elaborated and enduring structures found in fully articulated 'recollections' and 'expectations' that arise in the confluence of *noesis* (acts of consciousness) and *noema* (distinct contents of consciousness). In this model, the coherence, form and structure of experience are predicated for Husserl on the 'thematic unity' that arises with retrospective apprehension. From this perspective, polythetic acts of consciousness are held to establish a 'thematic object' through the 'retrospective apprehension by which the [pre-predicative] set [of constitutive acts] is given to the ego as an object, something that is identifiable' (Husserl, 1997: 246).

In his book *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl (1997 [1948]) further argues that all the mental operations which underpin the formation of the 'natural attitude' – that attitude in which individuals take the world as given to everyday experience for granted including operations of interpretation and judgment – are based upon a substrate of pre-predicative experience. For Husserl, this substrate is itself founded upon a passive synthesis of polythetically constituted percepts (*noema*) which derive their form and coherence through acts of consciousness that are patterned according to the sedimentation of past experiences.

While fully predicative and reflexive, experience is intentionally 'given' to awareness in the definite form of a meaningful coherence. When understood in the context of its temporal organization in the stream of 'internal-time consciousness', however Husserl argues that there is a fluidity and flux to experience that is never completely obfuscated in the organizational synthesis provided through the monothetic glance back over the temporal stream; an idea that is also noted elsewhere by Husserl (1964: 157–60) in his discussion of the 'double intentionality of the stream of consciousness'. As he puts it:

Every lived experience, every consciousness, is subject to the original law of flow. It undergoes a continuity of alterations which cannot be indifferent to its intentionality and which must, therefore, come to light in its intentional correlate. *Every concrete lived experience is a unity of becoming and is constituted as an object in internal time consciousness in the form of temporality.* This is already true of all immanent data of sensation, but, further, it is also true of the apperceptions which encompass them and likewise of all other intentional lived experiences [emphasis in original]. (Husserl, 1997 [1948]: 254)

By characterizing lived experience as a 'unity of becoming', Husserl is struggling to articulate a position where experience is understood to integrate both coherence and granular perspectives. Indeed, Husserl argues that in any perceptual synthesis there is a *co-perception of the given along with appresentative entailments*, that result in what he refers to as a 'presentative/appresentative structure'. According to Husserl:

appresentation as such presupposes a core of presentation. It is a making present combined by association with presentation, with perception proper, but a making present that is fused with the latter in the particular function of 'co-perception'. In other words, the two are so fused that they stand within the *functional community of one perception*, which simultaneously presents and appresents [emphasis in original]. (1993 [1931]: 122)

Here Husserl wants to delimit active and passive, predicative and pre-predicative, monothetic and polythetic modes of experience.⁹ He is, in other words, attempting to account for the vicissitudes of the 'flowing subjective process' while still recognizing those aspects of the stream that are organized into both pre-reflective and reflective varieties of synthetic unity (Husserl, 1993: 42). As Levinas explains, from Husserl's standpoint, experience is simultaneously understood as an intentionally structured 'presence' and a 'temporal flux of a sensuous matter' (Levinas, 1998: 143).¹⁰ Husserl's understanding of experience (*erlebnis*) is therefore, much like James', carefully delineated to include both

synthetic and disjunctive varieties as it effectively encompasses 'a kind of *passivity in activity*' [emphasis in original] (Husserl, 1997: 108; cited in Casey, 1996: 18). As Edward Casey phrases it, Husserl thus understood perception and experience 'to be absorptive yet constitutive, both at once' (Casey, 1996: 18).

Alfred Schutz: On duration, reflection and action

Building on Husserl and Bergson, Schutz (1982 [1924–28], 1967 [1932]) also recognizes that time plays a crucial role in coming to understand the interplay of creativity and constraint, event and structure, in any given theory of experience, meaning and social action. Using Husserl's concepts of protention and retention, Schutz argues that experience is temporally organized and that there is always the presence and persistence of the past in the present moment of awareness, which is also simultaneously oriented toward a future that is partially scaffolded upon these preceding mnemonic structures. Schutz explains that the relative objectivity of experience is predicated upon the extent to which individuals are able to immerse themselves in either the undifferentiated flow of pure duration or in the 'typifying' imperative of reflective awareness (Schutz, 1967; Schutz and Luckmann, 1989).

According to Schutz, the key to understanding the variegated structure of experience lies in comprehending the relationship between a reflective monothetic glance and time. In Schutz's model, it is the reflective glance that serves to 'single out an elapsed lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful' (Schutz, 1967: 71).¹¹ Prior to reflection upon an elapsed lived experience, Schutz (1967: 51) holds that consciousness is immersed in the felt flow of duration and as such reflects a series of 'undifferentiated experiences that melt into one another in a flowing continuum'. Schutz (1967: 70) thus conceives an ever-present tension between 'living experience within the flow of duration and reflection on the experience thus lived through'. In other words, Schutz argues that it is only through a glance of attention that experience can be fixed into a definite 'structure' or 'coherence', otherwise it remains without formal definition.¹²

Significantly, Schutz (1967: 65) argues that 'the meaning of an action is different depending on the point in time from which it is observed'.¹³ According to Schutz, behavior as it occurs in pure duration, is 'pre-phenomenal', without explicitly formed goals, motives, projects or recollections. In the immediacy of the 'deed in the doing' there is no reflection upon the act in progress or upon the goals to which that act may be directed. In this pre-phenomenal stage, behavior is still directed, however, by 'halos of retention and protention' that serve to pattern the unfolding of awareness and action at least partially according to the dictates of the individual's past experiences. That being said, Schutz is also careful to distinguish between pre-phenomenal behavior and phenomenal action – the latter is behavior carried out in service of an explicit recollection or projected act. In this respect, the conscious project 'anticipates not the action itself but the [completed] act' (Schutz, 1967: 67). As Schutz (1967: 64) makes clear, depending on whether or not a theorist is focusing upon the pure project stage, the action in progress, or the act as it has been already executed, there will be very different ways for us to interpret an agent's conscious attention to their motivations, intentions, plans and goals.

For Schutz, then, it is never simply the case that either a practical, pre-phenomenal sense or a reflective, phenomenal project serve to direct an individual's action, since at

different stages of action there will be differing contributions from pre-reflective and reflective experience. Moreover, it is clear that practical experience itself must be understood to interpenetrate with representational and intentional processes such that any attempt to argue for the priority of either sphere must certainly do a disservice to the actual lived experience of agents in their day-to-day interactions within their social and physical environments.

VI. TOWARD A COMPLEMENTAL MODEL OF EXPERIENCE

In the writings of James, Husserl and Schutz, I believe that we find a basis for outlining a model of experience that works to integrate the immediacy of temporal flux and the mediacy of reflective assessment. We find that for all three thinkers it is never simply an 'either/or', but a 'both/and' perspective that best characterizes the structure of experience.¹⁴ From the perspective of this model we can see that Mattingly is correct in her position that there is an important structural homology between narrative and experience. However, this model also incorporates those varieties of experience, significantly highlighted by Desjarlais, that even in their temporal structure, do not simply conform to the ordered coherence that is often implied in emplotted narrativity,¹⁵ a point that Mattingly (1998: 154) also recognizes in her assertion that it is perhaps not coherence but drama that serves as the pivotal link between narrative and experience.

As James might have put it, there is both conjunction and disjunction in the stream of experience and, as such, neither should be given exclusive priority if an accurate definition of experience is to emerge. Indeed, it seems that even moments of active reflection cannot simply be equated with the coherence of experience. As Schutz notes (1967: 52–3), there are experiences that, even when reflected upon, defy our abilities to secure typification and thus remain fundamentally discontinuous and indeterminate in structure. Moreover, disjunction cannot simply be equated with pre-reflective experience. As Husserl argues, it is also possible for coherence to emerge in the pre-reflective field of immediate duration. For even in the unfolding stream of fluctuating and pre-predicative internal time consciousness there are often emergent and coherent elements of experience that arise in the midst of a stream that is characterized as a 'passivity in activity' and a 'unity of becoming'. In other words, conjunction and disjunction may arise in *both* reflective and pre-reflective varieties of experience.

While James, Husserl and Schutz recognize that the ligatures that bind experience into coherent, conjunctive forms are intimately tied to the very temporal structure of experience itself in its forward and backward fringes that are mutually integrated through multiple acts of protension and retention, all of these thinkers are also careful to leave room for the 'gaps', 'disjunctions' and 'fragments' that might break up an otherwise coherent temporal stream. As Schutz points out, both pre-phenomenal behavior and phenomenal action intertwine in the field of experience and are often co-equal contributors to the structure of social action. Correspondingly, what Mattingly (2000) has characterized as the 'three fold' structure of the present does not thus necessarily entail that all experience is relegated to coherence. In addition to Mattingly's (1994: 812) important insight that in the 'midst of action' humans are always seeking to give order to simple succession, she also makes clear that our ability to map meaning upon experience may often fail. 'Mere' temporal succession, fragmentary disjunction and meaningful coherence are thus each important potential constituents of the structure of experience.

Here I believe it is possible – and important – to distinguish between the *retrospective ends* that serve to partially structure the field of past lived experience and the *projected ends* that arise in the immediacy of the present moment of duration that do not necessarily ensure experiential coherence. It is indeed in instances where our potential horizon remains open, unfulfilled and/or discordant with an arising moment in the temporal flux that we fail to find our footing in the coherence of experience. During these moments there may be perceived breaks and disjunctions in our experience of lived temporality. To this end, I think that in addition to what Heidegger (1996 [1953]), following Husserl, characterizes as the ‘deep temporality’ of ever-recurring patterns of retention and protention, we can discern at least four different temporal orientations that may each differentially structure the experience of self and world. These include: (1) an orientation to the present moment that consists of unfulfilled protentions as open anticipations toward an indeterminate future; (2) an explicit future orientation that consists of imaginal anticipations of a determinate future that are predicated upon residues of past experience that emerge, as Mattingly points out (1998: 155), ‘even in the midst of action’; (3) a retrospective glance that entails the plotting of beginnings, middles and ends over the already elapsed span of a delimited field of experience; and (4) the subjunctive casting of possible futures and even possible pasts, across the ‘fluid space between a past and a future’ (Mattingly, 1998: 96; see also J. Bruner, 1986, 1990; Good, 1994; Ricoeur, 1981).

While it is true that we often maintain an attitude toward the world that is structured according to a future orientation of goals and desires (see Mattingly, 1994, 1998; Heidegger, 1996), it is also the case that there are moments where it is not merely attention to the future, but attention to the past or the contingencies of the present that directs our action. Indeed, in the context of extreme forms of suffering, it is often the case that individuals have little other choice than to deal with their immediate immersion in the present moment (see Good, 1994; Leder, 1990; Scarry, 1985). In these moments, protentions remain unfulfilled as what were previously taken-for-granted properties of self, body and world are recurrently challenged in the face of pain, illness and/or disability.¹⁶

Finally, I think it is useful to follow Drew Leder (1990) in his appropriation of Freud’s (1962: 106; 1966: 347) concept of a ‘complemental series’ in order to better highlight the relationship between these seemingly divergent varieties of experience. According to Leder, a ‘complemental series’ is any series that ‘exhibits a full range of intermediate examples as well as those of the polar extremes’ that are structured such that the two poles maintain a relationship of mutual inhibition, where the rise of one pole affects the necessary decline of the other. That is, the polar ‘etiological factors’ in any given complemental series interact such that ‘the arising of one is necessarily correlative with the other’s decline’ (Leder, 1990: 28). While Leder utilizes this concept to account for differing forms of bodily ‘disappearance’ where the modification of attention works to ensure that ‘as a part of my body is taken up focally, it can no longer play a background role relative to that activity and vice versa’ (Leder, 1990: 28), I believe that this same concept can serve to outline the general relationship between conjunctive and disjunctive varieties of experience.

A ‘complemental model of experience’ that is grounded in the *organization of attention* according to the dynamic structuring of what is foregrounded and backgrounded

in awareness (Leder, 1990; see also Berger, 1997, 1999; Csordas, 1993, 1994a), would thus leave ample room for a range of intermediate experiences which do not display either full coherence or full disjunction, while also serving to help explain why it is that absolute coherence and disjunction are in the moment of their immediate occurrence mutually exclusive categories.¹⁷ This is not to say that what was once a disjunctive experience cannot be fashioned into a coherent experience through the meaningful structuring entailed in a retrospective glance, nor that coherence and disjunction cannot follow one another in close temporal succession.¹⁸ What this model implies, however, is that while there is indeed a spectrum of possible articulations of experience in terms of coherent and disjunctive forms, *it is not the case that experience will emerge as coherent and disjunctive simultaneously in either the foreground or background of awareness.*

VII. CONCLUSION

Aside from serving to mediate disparate perspectives on 'experience' in anthropological theorizing, this model also has direct significance for anthropological research. As Jackson (1996: 42) notes in his own discussion of James's and Husserl's writings, a key insight stemming from this tradition lies in noting the fact that there are 'significant differences between the way the world appears to our consciousness when we are fully engaged in activity and the way it appears to us when we subject it to reflection and retrospective analysis'. Moreover, there are not only important differences that are attributable to retrospection and immersion in ongoing action, but also potential differences in the structure of experience as mediated through a number of differing temporal orientations. As mentioned earlier, by paying careful attention to the temporal orientation of our informants when engaged in, recollecting, or anticipating social action, it may be possible to gain some insight into how these different orientations engender differing varieties of experience that are to a greater or lesser extent aligned with such descriptors as 'fragmented', 'coherent', 'disjunctive' and 'conjunctive'.

On a more practical level, an acknowledgement of the effect of temporal orientation on the structuring of experience leads to important questions concerning the effects of different types of methodologies used to elicit data on the varieties of experience that are attributed to the informants we observe and interact with in the field. Indeed, it appears that there are a number of methodologies used by anthropologists that tend to privilege one or another temporal orientation, and as such, tend to privilege one or another variety of experience in our ethnographic accounts. It seems that there might very well be an important connection between the fact that Desjarlais, for instance, relied primarily upon observation and little upon interviewing when collecting the data for his work in *Shelter Blues* and his conclusion that his informants did not 'experience'.

In conclusion, what this model thus highlights is the importance of employing methodological strategies that complement the collection of explicitly retrospective assessments – in the form of the recollective meaning seeking that *often* emerges in the context of interviews, questionnaires and other forms of elicitation that depend upon those explicit reflective processes that *tend* to give coherence and definite form to experience – with strategies such as the video taping and/or systematic observation of everyday interaction that focuses upon capturing the *often* pre-reflective, real-time unfolding of social action. The necessity of using methodologies that differentially access both pre-reflective and reflective varieties of experience and the significance of exploring more

carefully how differing methodologies may privilege accounts that draw from one or another form of temporal orientation seem to be essential to ensuring that experience is explored ethnographically throughout the entire range of its various articulations.

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Notes

- 1 See for instance: Csordas (1994a, 1994b); Ewing, (1990); Good (1994); Hastrup (1995); Howes (1991); Jackson (1989, 1996); Kleinman and Kleinman (1991, 1997); Marcus and Fischer (1999); Wikan (1991).
- 2 It is interesting to note that arguably the most prolific era of writing on experience in philosophy also began at the end of a century: see Bergson (1910 [1889]); Dewey (1958 [1929], 1980 [1934]); Dilthey (1985 [1887], 1989 [1883]); James (1950 [1890], 1996a [1909], 1996b [1912]); Husserl (1970 [1900/01], 1962 [1913], 1964 [1905/10], 1993 [1931]); Oakeshott (1933) and Whitehead (1978 [1929]), among others.
- 3 This is a play on the title of Jeffery Alexander's book, *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason* (1995).
- 4 I would like to thank Mariko Tamanoi for bringing this article to my attention.
- 5 Walker Percy was a physician turned philosopher and author who drew from Peirce and Mead to argue that human consciousness is symbolic and intersubjective to its core (see Percy, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1961).
- 6 See also Whitehead (2001 [1920]: 343–4).
- 7 See Casey (2000 [1987]); Gurwitsch (1964); Schrag (1969); Schutz (1966) and Wilshire (1968).
- 8 As Levinas (1998: 143) points out, for Husserl '[c]onsciousness of time is not a reflection upon time, but temporalization itself'.
- 9 Husserl (1997: 108).
- 10 In Husserl's terminology 'streaming hyletic data'.
- 11 See Schutz (1967 [1932]: 51).
- 12 Schutz (1967 [1932]: 81) calls these 'structures', 'coherences', or 'patterns' that arise in the reflexive arc of monothetic attention 'schemes of experience.'
- 13 The following section is based on a reworking of a paragraph from Throop and Murphy (2002).
- 14 A comparable perspective is advanced by Peirce who argues that

we hear only what is present at the instant, and an orderliness of succession cannot exist in an instant. These two sorts of objects, what we are *immediately* conscious of and what we are *mediately* conscious of, are found in all consciousness. Some

elements (the sensations) are completely present at every instant so long as they last, while others (like thought) are actions having beginning, middle, and end, and consist in a congruence in the succession of sensations which flow through the mind. They cannot be immediately present to us, but must cover some portion of past or future. Thought is a thread of melody running through the succession of our sensations' [emphasis in original] (Peirce, 1992 [1878]: 129; see also Ricoeur, 1991: 212).

- 15 See Ochs and Capps (2001) for an insightful discussion of narratives of personal experience that do not conform to standards of emplotted coherence.
- 16 For instance, in the anthropological and phenomenological study of pain, there is a growing consensus that pain is often experienced as 'disjunctive' and 'world-destroying' (see Daniel, 1994; Good, 1994; Leder, 1985, 1990; Scarry, 1985; Throop, 2002).
- 17 See also Ochs and Capps' discussion of the tension between poles of 'coherence' and 'authenticity' in the context of everyday narratives (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 2–6, 17–18, 24, 156, 278–9, see also 1997).
- 18 See Berger (1997: 481); see also Berger (1999: 124); Berger and Del Negro (2002: 71–72).

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C. JASON THROOP is a doctoral candidate in the program for psychocultural studies and medical anthropology in the Department of Anthropology, UCLA. He is currently conducting his dissertation field work investigating the experience of chronic pain sufferers on the island of Yap (Wa'ab), Federated States of Micronesia. Address: Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 341 Haines Hall, P.O. Box 951553, Los Angeles, CA 90095–1553, USA. [email: jthroop@ucla.edu]
