

Phenomenological Approaches in Landscape Archaeology*

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Abstract

This review explores why phenomenology has been such a popular theme in landscape archaeology in the last two decades—and why it has also provoked anger and controversy. The article concentrates less on the philosophical essence of phenomenological traditions than on their practical applications and context, particularly within British landscape archaeology. Criticisms of phenomenological approaches are reviewed and suggestions for future research made. The review concludes that research into landscape and human subjectivity will continue to be a strong research theme, whether or not such work explicitly derives its theoretical approach from phenomenology.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenology of landscape has been a highly popular theme in the last two decades of archaeological theory. A raft of books and articles, starting with Tilley (1994) and Gosden (1994), has set the task of exploring the philosophical foundations and essence of phenomenology as a philosophical tradition and how it can be applied to archaeology and to the study of landscape in particular. A series of case studies, the majority from British and European later prehistory, has been developed and extensively discussed and critiqued (Bender et al. 2007; Cummings & Whittle 2004; Tilley 1994, 2004a, 2008). At times, at some theoretical conferences in the last decade, talk seems to have been of little else.

At the same time, however, the impact of this phenomenological turn has been both patchy and highly controversial. Many have seen it as a largely British phenomenon [see Robin 2006 (p. 13), who terms it “the British school of phenomenological studies,” and also Fowles 2010], with limited impact on scholarship outside the British Isles. Phenomenological interpretations have been heavily criticized, in particular with reference to their epistemological status and the evidential criteria employed. For its critics (Fleming 1999, 2005, 2006; Liddiard & Williamson 2008; Shennan 2002), phenomenological approaches to landscape seem to have freed themselves of any kind of adherence to empirical evaluation, leading to what Barrett & Ko (2009) have termed “a crisis in British landscape archaeology.”

Why has phenomenology become so popular in one particular scholarly field—British prehistoric landscape archaeology—and not in others? Why, more so than other controversial areas of theory, does it make people so cross? Why has it aroused such strong passions both for and against? What can answers to these questions tell us, in turn, about the nature and place of materiality in archaeological explanation?

This review concentrates less on the philosophical essence of phenomenological

approaches and more on the historical development and wider context of archaeological interest in phenomenology. It critically examines the way such approaches have been deployed in practice in order to understand the archaeological record; it reviews theoretical and evidential critiques of phenomenological interpretations and concludes with some observations of possible ways forward.

INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS

I suggest that the rise of interest in phenomenology should be understood, in part, as a logical outcome of the theoretical debates of the 1990s. The postprocessual critique of the 1980s established the intellectual necessity of exploring issues of symbolism, meaning, and human subjectivity, however these terms were defined (Hodder 1987, Hodder et al. 1995). However, an immediate question arose as to method. If material culture and landscapes were indeed meaningfully constituted, and if some understanding of those meanings was necessary in order to develop a satisfactory account of the past, how could or should archaeologists access those meanings?

Early postprocessual work tended to utilize ideas and concepts derived from structuralist and poststructuralist thought. It proposed that material culture was like a text and could be read as such (Hodder & Hutson 2003, Moore 1987, Tilley 1990). However, the limitations of such an approach soon became apparent for reasons that are now well rehearsed. Material objects do not signify in a manner analogous to texts (or at least they do not do so much or do not do so most of the time).

Most crucially, and pertinent to this volume, the materiality of past landscape and material culture was lost in such a textual approach. If material culture, the stuff of archaeology, is also to be explained with reference to the foundational basis of language, then the central theme of archaeology is diminished and archaeology becomes a secondary field. A stress on materiality proposes, in part, that the material nature of stuff—whether things, dwellings,

or landscapes—is important and irreducible to a nonmaterial baseline.

Phenomenology, then, arose in part as an alternative method to textual metaphors. An instructive comparison is between Tilley's (1991) *Material Culture and Text: The Art of Ambiguity*, a study of rock carvings at Namförsen, Sweden, in which he used a formal model of the kind familiar from the work of Levi-Strauss to first build up a structuralist understanding of the meanings in the art before deconstructing that understanding, and Tilley's (1994) *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, his first exploration of phenomenological themes. At the same time, Chris Gosden's (1994) *Social Being and Time* is informed by a dissatisfaction with textual models and a search for locating meaning in material practices.

I suggest that there were three background influences at work in the exploration of the phenomenology of landscape. The first was a growing interest in the landscape as subjectively constituted. This interest was interdisciplinary but sprang from human geography in particular, though the writings of the literary critic Raymond Williams were also influential (in particular Williams 1973 on perceptions of urban and rural landscape). The work of Cosgrove and Daniels (Cosgrove 1984, 2006; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988; Daniels 1993), Gregory (1994), Soja (1996), and later Olwig (2002) formed a powerful critique of the objectivist claims of earlier geographical traditions. In what is now a familiar critique, Cosgrove and Daniels argued that approaches to space and time that, they claimed, had hitherto been seen by geographers as objective were not neutral or objective at all. Rather, they sprang from a specific historical context, that of the Renaissance or more broadly of nascent capitalism. The use of perspective in Renaissance art, both in Italy and in the Low Countries, was interpreted as being implicated in the development of abstract and commodified concepts of space. Objective measures of space and time were seen as Cartesian, the product of a particular top-down view. In particular, "landscape" was shown to be "land-scape"; in

other words, it was always viewed and framed as an object of study. Feminist geographers (Massey 1994, Rose 1993) argue the objectivist view was also gendered, in that it was a product and consequence of the male gaze.

The historical specifics of this critique can be argued back and forth—I have argued that eighteenth-century Romanticism, rather than the Renaissance, was the historical origin of much of the present practice of British landscape archaeology (Johnson 2007)—but its central premise is extremely familiar, to the point of tedium, 20 years later. It is established that landscapes are never viewed in conditions of absolute objectivity but are always seen in a certain way. In the wake of this insight, human geographers, and also cultural anthropologists, historians, and literary theorists, produced a raft of studies of how past landscapes were created and meaningful in a variety of contexts from the forests of eastern Europe to perceptions of the colonial (e.g., Bate 1991, Ingold 2000, Schama 1995).

The second background influence, one that I have argued to be particularly important (Johnson 2006), was the nature of the archaeological data themselves. Much of the initial interest in the phenomenology of landscape sprang from a group of British postprocessualists—Chris Tilley (1994, 2004, 2008), Julian Thomas (1999, 2004a,b), Barbara Bender (1998), Mark Edmonds (1999), and others. These archaeologists were working in a distinctive context in both practical and theoretical terms. In British theoretical circles, the postprocessual critique was taken for granted by the 1990s, but as important in my view was the practice of archaeology, in particular, the presence of local landscapes with a dense concentration of linear and other archaeological remains a few hours' drive from home. For example, most of the classic prehistoric monuments and landscapes of Wessex, including Stonehenge, Avebury, Silbury Hill, and the Dorset Cursus, are within two hours drive of at least five university departments that have produced significant contributions to the field—Southampton (Jones 2007), Bristol (Corcos

2001), Reading (Bradley 2000, 2003), Oxford (Gosden 1994), and London (Bender 1993; Tilley 2004, 2008). Prehistoric landscapes, then, can be easily visited and “experienced” in an apparently direct way that encourages repeat visits in different seasonal and weather conditions. Further, the density of the archaeology and the importance of linear features such as dykes and avenues makes the walking of these features and the description of the experience of walking them in sequential terms both easy and appealing.

The study of such landscapes had already given rise to a distinctive tradition of British landscape archaeology and history, engaging in the close and particularist analysis of small-scale and local landscapes, whose genesis can be traced back to eighteenth-century antiquarians such as William Stukeley and which flourished in the decades after WWII (Crawford 1953, Hoskins 1967, Johnson 2007). Crawford, Hoskins, and others advocated the combination of map evidence, aerial photographs, and walking the landscape; excavation was only one technique among several in this form of study. This tradition was seen by Crawford (1953, p. 52) as “an essentially English form of sport,” and the tradition became known as the English school, especially after the publication of W.G. Hoskins’ (1955) hugely influential *The Making of the English Landscape*.

Such landscapes had also given rise to a cultural, artistic, and literary discourse. From Wordsworth’s Lake District to Constable’s East Anglia to Hardy’s Wessex, close links between cultural engagement with the landscape and scholarly analysis of it had always been present in intellectual life (Hauser 2007; Matless 1998, 2008). The idea of subjective engagement with the English landscape, then, was not in any way a novel or a new idea—it was part of the cultural baggage that archaeologists had always brought to prehistoric landscapes. Further, this cultural baggage, in contrast to the New World, was not, on the face of it, one that was tainted with the dispossession of indigenous peoples [though Celtic nationalists can interpret the fifth- to sixth-century cre-

ation of Anglo-Saxon England in these terms (Higham 2007)]. It was not, then, one with a sharp divide between colonial and Indigenous views of the landscape and was one where a discourse of ancestry was not immediately politically problematic.

The third background influence can be found in the development of an explicitly political agenda to the archaeological and interdisciplinary study of landscape. The proposition that there are multiple and conflicting views of landscape in both past and present, and that the archaeologist should engage with these views, was fuelled by the conflicts of Stonehenge and its landscape in the 1980s. New Age travelers and others were barred from Stonehenge by English Heritage; their attempts to nevertheless celebrate summer solstice in the vicinity of the monument were met with barbed wire and police, resulting in the infamous Battle of the Beanfield. The conflict was aggravated by the underlying discontent of landowners and other stakeholders in the landscape around Stonehenge. Bender’s work at Stonehenge, in particular, stressed the different and competing views of the site and its landscape (Bender 1993, 1998). Bender (2001) went on to explore subjective views as they related to both past and political present at the site of Emain Macha (Navan) in Northern Ireland and across the world (Bender & Winer 2001). (Over 20 years later, it is important to note that despite continuing tensions, there has been a more positive and constructive accommodation between different stakeholders at Stonehenge.)

These three background influences fostered a climate in which interest in human subjectivity in the landscape, and in phenomenological approaches in particular, could flourish, and in which the turn to phenomenological thinking became plausible and appropriate.

DEFINITIONS AND PRACTICES

Phenomenology can be defined as the study of the structures of human experience and consciousness. Its origins are in philosophy, and specifically in issues arising from debates

within the nineteenth-century German Romantic tradition. It proposes a philosophical enquiry into the nature of human experience, on the premises that the nature of human experience of the world is not a simple or commonsensical affair. It is associated with Continental European philosophers, notably Gadamer, Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Benjamin, and others (Benjamin 1999; Gadamer 1975; Heidegger 1962, 1971; Husserl 2006; Zahavi 2003; and Mooney & Moran 2002 are a few places to start in a vast literature).

If Romantic literature and philosophy foregrounded a reaction to landscape and environment based on feeling and sensation, then the later Romantic philosophers set themselves the task of giving the concepts of feeling and sensation a rigorous philosophical basis. They interrogated the nature and understanding of bodily experience and developed the conceptual program behind phrases such as “being in the world,” “dwelling,” and “lived experience” (see Heidegger 1971). The end result is an understanding of human experience that makes the claim to be material rather than textual, mediated through the body rather than through language, and which claims also to have moved beyond dualisms of mind and body with its emphasis on the senses and on everyday activity.

Much of this philosophical writing is densely expressed and difficult to read. An appropriate response is that this difficulty is not willful, but rather a necessary consequence of phenomenology’s engagement with quite fundamental and complex questions, questions that more shallow writings prefer to gloss over. Whether justified or not, the nature of much phenomenological writing has the practical consequence of requiring a substantial investment of time and effort in order to come to an understanding of it. Consequently, the detractors of phenomenology often make accusations of willful obscurity and intellectual exclusion, whereas its supporters often feel that others have not bothered to invest the time and mental effort needed to make an informed response. Here lies some of the source of the anger over phenomenology on both sides.

The important point here is that archaeologists who have engaged with this literature should be understood as having made precisely such a substantial critical investment. The work of Thomas, for example, represents a detailed and deep engagement with Heidegger and others, and an application of Heidegger’s ideas to the archaeological record of the British Neolithic (Thomas 1999a,b). The critical apparatus derived from this reading gave Thomas a deep sense of how the intellectual project of archaeology was and is implicated in the project of modernity as a whole (Thomas 2004a). As we shall see, other archaeologists have chosen to engage with human experience by making different kinds of theoretical investments.

Phenomenological thought leads, then, to a stress on several related themes not just in archaeology but in anthropological and interdisciplinary scholarship as a whole. First and most obvious is an interest in the body and in problematizing the body. If phenomenology is an interrogation of lived experience, and if the world is experienced through the body, it follows that the body, and bodily experience, is a legitimate and indeed important area of study (Hamilakis et al. 2002). The work of the anthropologist Tim Ingold has been particularly influential here. Ingold has explored different aspects of bodily experience, in part to show that experiencing the world is much more complex than simply getting up and looking around. Ingold has explored the nature of human interaction with the world, for example, in thinking about building, dwelling, and walking and in considering how the elements (wind, rain) are experienced (Ingold 2000, 2005, 2007, 2010; Ingold & Vergunst 2008).

More broadly, phenomenology promotes an interest in the wider social practices that mediated experience of the landscape in the past. For example, the form, appearance, and location of prehistoric monuments have been interpreted in terms of memory practices (Jones 2007). Landscapes are understood in terms of issues of identity formation and negotiation, often with specific reference to the ancestors.

There is also a methodological stress on different ways of doing landscape archaeology. Traditional approaches to landscape stress the plan and aerial view. Following the critique derived from human geography noted above, phenomenologists see such views as fundamentally limited and point out that prehistoric people would not have experienced the landscape in this way. Instead, there is a stress on subjective experience and the description of that experience. Classic case studies in the phenomenology of landscape, most famously Tilley's (1994) description of the Dorset Cursus, describe, for example, the simple act of walking across a landscape using the route prescribed by the form of monuments and linear features and noting what is or is not seen at different points in terms of one set of impressions or experiences after another. In this way, sudden appearances and surprises can be noted, for example, the way the inner circle at Stonehenge seems to appear and disappear as the monument is approached from the prescribed northwest direction, the sudden rises and falls of the terrain as the Dorset Cursus runs up and down the landscape.

At the same time, phenomenologists embrace different means of engaging with and experiencing the past, especially the exploration of the subjectivity of the archaeologist in the present (Shanks 1992). Bender's (1998) work, for example, brings together archaeological, poetic, New Age, and other understandings in a celebration of past-as-tradition rather than as origins. Texts are often written in deliberately poetic and allusive ways, with minimal referencing (Chadwick 2004, Edmonds 2004). There are strong links with explorations of landscape in other media, for example, performance both inside and outside the theater (Pearson 2006, Pearson & Shanks 2001) or poetry (Bender 1999). There is a willingness to engage with other ways of knowing the past. Bender (1998, p. 7) writes:

...unlike many other contemporary people (Australian Aborigines, Native American Indians) who have their myths of origin, and know their pasts without needing to dig and

probe (indeed, who feel that to do so is to dishonour their ancestors) we still want to work back and forward between our interpretations, our imaginings, and the material remains. It was not so long ago that archaeologists felt that they had to 'stay with the evidence'—if it could not be proven, it should not be discussed. Now, fortunately, we have come to recognize that we have to go beyond the evidence, that 'the evidence' does not of itself offer an understanding, and that it is open to any number of interpretations. So we still mix and match and get satisfaction from making physical contact with the past. This is our way. . .

If other views of the landscape hold validity and should be engaged with by archaeologists, then a stress on reflexivity follows. Strong critique of the traditional landscape archaeology was based not simply on its supposed empiricism but also on its politics (Bender 1993, 1998). A critique of the way that landscapes are represented through the heritage industry was combined with the exploration of alternative and competing views of landscapes noted above in Bender's work. Shanks and others have explored the subjective feelings of the archaeologist "experiencing the past" (Shanks 1992).

Reviewing the work discussed above, it should be noted that for all phenomenology's reputation as an obscure and mystical philosophy, one strength of much work is that it speaks to areas of the archaeological record that are, at least on the face of it, highly visible and accessible to archaeologists. Arguably, we will never be able to directly observe ranking versus stratification, adaptation to the environment, factional competition, or prestige (this is not to denigrate the hard and ongoing work of developing indirect means of evaluating such factors but rather to note the difficulty of doing so). On the other hand, on the face of it, archaeologists can readily explore sensory issues like the use of color and of minerals in the past (Boivin & Owoc 2004, Jones & MacGregor 2002), the way linear features constrain movement around a monument, touch, and sound as well as sight (Cummings 2002).

LANDSCAPE AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE

It should be noted that much of the intellectual terrain discussed above does not directly or only follow from an interest in specifically phenomenological manifestos. It is a perfectly tenable and popular position to have, as the author of this article does, a broader interest in human subjectivity, reflexivity, and human experience and a willingness for archaeologists to engage in dialogue with other ways of understanding the past, without formally deriving such a position from a reading of phenomenology.

Many writers on these topics would not describe themselves as phenomenologists. For example, Bradley's work represents a sustained exploration of human subjectivity in the British prehistoric landscape. Bradley has explored the referencing of the past through monuments, and the way monuments and landscapes were experienced. However, his work makes little or no reference to the phenomenological tradition (Bradley 2000, 2003). The work of Sturt (2006), writing on landscapes and seascapes, can be seen as being in tune with rather than formally derived from phenomenology. Forbes explores Greek landscapes while distancing himself from the phenomenological tradition (Forbes 2007).

Moving away from Britain, it is apparent that phenomenology is only one of a range of methodologies and theoretical tools used to engage with human subjectivity in the landscape; indeed, outside Scandinavia and Continental Europe (Criado Boado & Vazquez 2000, Gramsch 1996), examples of explicit archaeological applications of phenomenology are quite rare, though discussions of landscape ideology are common (Meier 2006). Exceptions prove the rule: Snead's (2008) work on ancestral landscapes in the American Southwest sprang in part from his close knowledge of those landscapes from his youth [J.E. Snead, personal communication; see also Fowles (2010), who argues for a distinctive and emergent Southwest School of landscape archaeology based on engagement with Native American intellectuals and an "intoxicating physical landscape"].

Contributors to the 2004 special issue on the archaeology of place in *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, using mostly New World case studies, make little reference to phenomenology as a philosophical tradition, though the works of Tilley and others are cited (see Bowser 2004). In a sense, phenomenology can be seen as one (particularly British?) species of the more generalized interest in practice and human experience that has developed in recent decades.

I attribute this different intellectual development in North America to a combination of the background factors discussed above. In North America, developments within processual traditions led first to an acknowledgment of weaknesses of systems models and the necessity of looking at gender, class, and faction as part of any full explanation of the archaeological record (Brumfiel 1992). At the same time, there was an increasing acknowledgment of multiple and competing views of the landscape, in part from the increasing profile of indigenous perspectives arising from the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and related issues.

Consequently, interest in landscapes as subjectively constituted, as meaningful, and as loci of power and authority is well developed; one important recent contribution explicitly posits this work as an alternative to British phenomenological approaches (Fowles 2010). However, this work is often linked to a broadly processual and comparative perspective on landscape (Hegmon 2003, Smith 2003). There is a sharp divide between indigenous and archaeological views of the landscape, and a discourse of ancestry is highly contested and problematic [as is also the case in Australia (Read 2000)].

In many ways, then, New World work ends up in a very similar conceptual position even if the latter body of work is not formally derived from a reading of phenomenological theory. Memory has been explored in terms that make little direct reference to any phenomenological background (Van Dyke & Alcock 2003). There is a large body of work looking at embodiment,

everyday life, practice, and memory that stands apart from and in some cases is highly critical of phenomenology, as is discussed in other chapters in this volume (see also Ashmore & Knapp 1999; Joyce 2005; Meskell 1996; Robin 2006, p. 421; Smith 2003; Van Dyke 2008). This work has chosen to make a critical theoretical investment outside the area of phenomenology, but this does not mean that it does not foreground human subjectivity. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes a largely semantic question whether a specific piece of work, for example, the Stonehenge Riverside Project (Parker-Pearson et al. 2006), is or is not an exercise in phenomenology.

CRITICISMS OF PHENOMENOLOGY

The phenomenology of landscape has been one of the most controversial and contested areas in archaeological theory in the last 10 years. The first basic issue is evidential. Andrew Fleming revisited many of the Welsh megalithic sites discussed by Tilley and others and asserts that many of the interpretations offered are simply not sustainable by the evidence. For example, Fleming examines the claims of both Tilley (1994) and Cummings & Whittle (2004) that particular megalithic sites either point to or otherwise reference rock outcrops, springs, the sea, and other features and are therefore indicators of Neolithic cosmological beliefs. Fleming revisits the sites in question and either disputes the basic observations or points out that where sites have panoramic views, they could be claimed to be referencing a whole array of different features. He points out that claims for ambiguity and multiple meanings in this context make claimed references almost impossible to disprove—in his view, the “anthropologically grounded taste for ambivalence” argued for by these texts “is essentially argument by mystification” (Fleming 2005, p. 925). Fleming has since broadened his critique to what he calls postprocessual landscape archaeology, rejecting the work of Cosgrove and others as misunderstanding the nature of field research. More

broadly, he restates an empiricist and objectivist view of landscape archaeology: “Archaeological fieldwork has been well served over the years by a combination of empiricism, logical positivism and critical scepticism, supported by careful recording” (Fleming 2005, p. 930).

The evidential critique is a strong one in that it raises clear questions about whether particular phenomenological interpretations are constrained by the evidence. The style of some contributions, thin on referencing and quickly dismissive of previous work, lends the critique additional strength. However, although strong as a criticism of particular interpretations, it is conceptually woolly as a general argument. To take the quote above, logical positivism has never to my knowledge been used in landscape archaeology, whereas empiricism presumably means an empirically informed approach rather than empiricist philosophy (as discussed in Johnson 2011). The terms postmodernism and postprocessualism are also used interchangeably with a phenomenological approach (see the title of Fleming 2006), though as we have seen, there is important work that explores the subjective constitution of landscape without formally subscribing to a phenomenological approach or, indeed, describing itself as postmodernist. Most egregiously, a single quote from Bender, “We have to go beyond the evidence,” is lifted out of context and repeated over and over again (Finch 2008, pp. 3, 4, 19; Fleming 2006, pp. 267–68, 279; Liddiard & Williamson 2008); this is one reason why I have given the fuller quote from Bender above, in which she is careful to define “our way” as specifically involving empirical enquiry.

Most fundamentally, a commonsense epistemological yardstick of evidential criteria is asserted, against which, it is claimed, phenomenological approaches are found wanting. This claim was decentered 60 years ago by early New Archaeology’s insistence that epistemological issues were not simply a matter of common sense (Binford 1982, Clarke 1972). My own work on traditional landscape archaeology (Johnson 2007) has argued that, far from being a reservoir of unproblematic

objective method and theory-free observation, such traditions are themselves thoroughly permeated with subjective considerations of class, gender, and nationalism. In my view, then, a demand for evidential rigor is entirely warranted, but the argument that phenomenology necessarily involves the rejection of any evidential criteria is overstated and rests on a lack of reflection as to what those criteria could or should be.

A second critique points to a lack of self-reflection in much of the practice of phenomenology. Jo Brück (2005) and others, including myself (Johnson 2006), have observed that although as a philosophy phenomenology starts by problematizing human subjectivity, in practice landscape archaeologists tend to assume just such an unproblematic subjectivity. Most obviously, this is done by assuming a unity to bodily experience (Tilley 2004, p. 221, emphasis added):

There can be no substitute for the human experience of place—of being there—and it is *only after this that the various technologies of representation come into play* . . . our attempts at thick descriptions of place contrast with the standard mode of thin technicist archaeological description which effectively dehumanises the past and makes it remote and sterile because such technical descriptions are based on abstracted Cartesian conceptions of space and time.

The bodily experiences of the modern archaeologist, walking up and down hills and monuments, crawling in and out of megaliths, are assumed to offer a way in to grasping past experiences. Such an assumption is highly debatable. Although phenomenology proposes a problematizing of human bodily experience, practitioners often tend toward a position of psychic human unity and away from an anthropological understanding of human experiences as being culturally different. This unity can also be seen as culturally and politically problematic, for example, on feminist grounds (as Robin 2006 and Meskell 1996 have argued; see also Blake 2006 for a more generalized critique). The sensory experience of the phenomenolo-

gist seems all too often to be that of the solitary able-bodied male. Accounts, following Heidegger's account of a Black Forest farmhouse, are often disembodied (Forbes 2007, p. 25): "The idea that one appropriates a landscape via the act of moving through it is the viewpoint of the exogenous disengaged tourist, not the native." The experiences of groups, of those with children to look after, of those with disabilities, run the risk of being silenced in such accounts. Shanks' account, for example, of his ramblings around the medieval castle of Dunstanburgh are silent on the first feature of the site to be noted by any parent: the precipitous cliffs and the need to keep children away from them (Shanks 1992, pp. 118–21).

I would gather together some of these points and restate them in a different form: I have argued that, as an intellectual tradition and set of field habits, British landscape archaeology is a product of an underlying discourse of cultural Romanticism (Johnson 2007). Phenomenology as a theory sets out to question Romantic assumptions, but as a practice, it tends to replicate them; the underlying discourse is so powerful that it subverts the theory. The solitary (male) protagonist, the disembodied nature of some accounts and their distance from everyday life, the underlying empiricism where direct bodily experience confers a form of authority, the critique of modernity as somehow placeless and inauthentic, the poetic and artistic resonances—these can all be argued to be artifacts of a Romantic and neo-Romantic tradition stretching back to William Wordsworth (see also Edmonds 2006), via a twentieth-century tradition of artistic and cultural neo-Romanticism that, as argued above, is distinctively British (Hauser 2009 discusses O.G.S. Crawford in these terms and outlines the close links between archaeology and neo-Romantic art). It is instructive to compare the phenomenologist of Wessex, wandering lonely as a cloud, with, for example, collaborative archaeologists working in the American Southwest who "walk about a site in the company of cultural others, recording their perceptions and the way the site is given to them" (Fowles 2010, p. 461).

A third area of debate is the relationship of phenomenology to other areas of archaeological discourse. Phenomenologists have sharply criticized traditional landscape archaeology, but we have seen above that in many respects the popularity of the approach can be understood within the context of just such an intellectual tradition and landscape setting. It can be claimed, then, that much of phenomenology is not that new, and its claims to replace a sterile method are overstated. Archaeologists have long considered how landscapes and monuments are experienced by people moving in and through them; even eighteenth-century antiquarians like William Stukeley can be argued to have engaged in this practice (Petersen 2003; Gillings 2011 argues against this position).

Traditional landscape archaeologists have been particularly irked by the accusation that their methods are thin, sterile, and Cartesian. They angrily deny that they have ever conspired in an exclusively top-down view of landscape (see the debate between Pollard & Gillings 1998 and Bowden 2000). It is certainly the case that traditional landscape archaeology spoke frequently and vehemently about the importance of seeing the humans behind the landscape [e.g., Aston (1985) discussing medieval peasants drying their boots by the fire, or Hoskins hearing the men and women of the past talking and working (Hoskins 1967, p. 184)]. It is also certainly the case that behind the often rather dry and impersonal top-down maps and plans produced by traditional landscape archaeology, there lies a practice of field craft that is engaged, empathetic, emotive, and based on lively dissent and discussion (a tradition in which the author of this article was raised in the 1980s). However, it is equally true that prior to the reflections on field practice of the last decade or so, this lively practice rarely emerged onto the printed page.

Fourth, as we have seen, phenomenological studies tend to be practiced in a wider context of engagement with emotive, artistic, performative, and other “subjective” approaches to landscape. Much of this work can be argued to be provocative and inspiring and to play an

important role in community engagement, as well as offering the potential for a productive dialog with indigenous approaches to landscape (see Blain & Wallis 2007). However, if not done well, such engagement can come across as self-indulgent, solipsistic, and lacking in depth or rigor. It also adds additional fuel to the evidential criticisms discussed above [see Gero’s (1995) criticisms of Shanks (1992)].

A final criticism is not one that has, to my knowledge, been fully articulated: that of incompleteness. Developing accounts of how landscapes were experienced in the past is, in this view, an arguably valid aim, but in some contexts, particularly in Britain, it has come to dominate approaches to landscape to the exclusion of most others. I would propose that such models nevertheless remain parasitic upon a broader, processual, and even evolutionary account of social structure and change. Why is it that phenomenological accounts convince? They do so, in part, because they refer to cosmological ideas (such as the relationship between sky and earth) and to concepts of social structure (such as close links between territorial rights and reference to the ancestors, or to social inequality based on differential access to ideological resources) that are already plausible and familiar to the reader—from comparative ethnography and from sociocultural evolutionary theory. Phenomenology has often sharply critiqued just such cross-cultural evolutionary accounts of human development, but it could be argued that the strength and substance of their broader argument rests very directly on assumptions made about the nature of these prehistoric societies derived implicitly from such accounts. Such a criticism is hinted at in Whitley’s (2002) critique of such accounts of over-relying on assumptions about the importance of the ancestors without supporting evidence.

There is nothing necessarily wrong or inconsistent about placing accounts of human experience within a broader structural model of cultural change; indeed, this is the position taken by much other work on human subjectivity in the landscape. It does, however, behoove

scholars to acknowledge this interdependence with models that are presently less fashionable and have been overtly rejected in highly polemical terms in the past.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

My own view of phenomenology is that the critiques outlined above, including some advanced by myself, are powerful ones that present practitioners of phenomenology have only partly addressed. However, critics can miss an important point that can be provocatively stated: We are all phenomenologists. Few archaeologists would now deny that it is necessary to consider issues of meaning and subjectivity to achieve a full understanding of archaeological landscapes, and further that they would accept the starting point of the phenomenological tradition, namely, that understanding human experience is necessary but is not a commonsense undertaking. Several scholars come close to such a position of denial but stop short of it. Shennan (2002) views the strengths of archaeology as lying in other areas such as long-term change; he does not go so far as to see the exploration of subjectivity as a basically doomed project, preferring the more modest claim that it does not play to archaeology's strengths. More broadly, outside traditional culture history, it is arguably only some strands of the continuing tradition of Darwinian archaeology that would now make the claim that meaning and subjectivity are basically inadmissible. Barrett & Ko (2009) agree that issues with the evidential basis of phenomenology constitute a crisis, but their preferred solution is to revisit the philosophical roots of phenomenology via Heidegger and to recast the project in that light rather than to stand outside the whole approach.

We return to the nature of phenomenological approaches as part of an interest in human subjectivity in the landscape. If, as a philosophy, phenomenology is about questioning the basis of human subjectivity, its basic project is quite undeniable, unless one wishes to propose that human beings have experienced landscapes in the same way in all times and in all places.

When one reads critiques of phenomenological approaches, one answer to posit is, What alternative do you have in mind? Various alternatives are possible to an uncritical acceptance of phenomenology as a tradition, but it behooves critics to clearly articulate these if debate is to move forward.

One area for future work is to develop understandings of experience in contexts drawn from societies that were more complex than the Neolithic where a range of contextual information can be brought to bear on the question of how humans experienced the landscape around them. In these contexts, reliance on questionable assumptions about bodily experience can be qualified, deepened, or made more rigorous. For example, Woolgar's (2006) exploration of medieval conceptions of the senses can inform discussions of contemporary landscapes. There is an extensive literature on the sensory perceptions of the later medieval church (Hindle & Kumin 2009, Jones 2010), and a phenomenology of the landscape setting of the medieval church of Glastonbury Tor has been attempted, as has a phenomenology of place names (Corcos 2001, Postles 2007). An extreme case is MacDonald's (2006) analysis of Nazi Nuremberg.

Phenomenology often deals with ritual, special contexts rather than everyday life: It is striking that Hamilton et al. (2006) develop what they claim is a more rigorous methodology for phenomenology in practice in tandem with a claim to examine everyday life more seriously. Again, Criado Boado & Vazquez (2000) develop an archaeology of perception through analysis of visibility and intervisibility in an attempt to avoid unrestrained subjectivity. It is striking that all these examples come from archaeologists working outside the British Isles or in other contexts, such as water as well as land (Morphy & Morphy 2006).

The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and other technologies can supply the evidential base and critical rigor discussed above (Llobera 2001). Winterbottom & Long (2006) use a combination of GIS and view shed analysis and virtual reality reconstructions to

examine the environments of rock art sites and a stone circle at Kilmartin Glen in Scotland. The new digital technologies are being used critically and reflectively, as has been done at Çatal Höyük, in the Visualisation in Archaeology project (<http://www.viarch.org.uk>), and in recent literature on virtual reality (Earl & Wheatley 2002). New digital technologies provide opportunities to explore new ways of presenting and experiencing landscapes, including peripatetic video (Witmore 2008).

A third proposal is to build bridges between the literature on the environment and that on experience of the environment, bringing together “hard” scientific with “soft” interpretive work (Ingold 2010). For Chapman & Gearey (2000), “the two approaches remain polarized,” but this situation has changed in the last decade (see also Chapman 2000). John Evans’ (2003) *Environmental Archaeology and the Social Order* is a fascinating book—it represents a landmark attempt by a distinguished “traditional” environmental archaeologist to think through the new agenda. In 2006, Sturt brought together

Lefebvre’s (2004) concept of rhythmanalysis with an account of the environment of the Mesolithic and early Neolithic Fenlands, concluding that “current tensions within archaeology between Cartesian and phenomenological approaches to the past will be shown to be unconstructive.”

I conclude, therefore, that understanding human experiences of landscapes will continue to be a vibrant and important part of archaeological discourse. Present debates and critiques will help to refine and strengthen methods, particularly in the areas of evidence, rigor, and method but also in future articulation of accounts of human experience with wider structural and processual models of cultural change and with more traditional work in environmental archaeology. Whether such work ends up being regarded as part of phenomenology or is conceived of as a wider project of understanding human experience and subjectivity in the landscape is a largely semantic question that, 20 years from now, will probably be seen as being of historical rather than substantive interest.

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