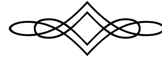
Introduction

Embodied Epistemologies of Healing

Emily Pierini, Alberto Groisman, and Diana Espírito Santo



THE "REALLY" REAL

Concepts such as "spirits," "possession," and "personhood" have very particular historical trajectories.[1] In our view, the anthropology of religion may have been misinterpreting them all along. There has been a tendency to understand spirit possession in terms of a "theater" of sorts (whether conscious or not)—a result of a "belief" in "supernatural" powers, which are then somehow embodied in rites of possession trance or shamanism. The concept of "dissociation" in spirit possession studies, a psychiatric notion that posits a self (or consciousness) that can somehow step aside for spirit entry, is indicative of a stance that has spirits, gods, or other invisible entities framed in terms of figure-ground. "Culture" is the context, the ultimate ground from which spirits emerge, sometimes causally. Societal change, political destabilization, resistance, as well as modernity itself are seen to *cause* spirits to appear (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1996; Ong 1987; cf. Pedersen 2014 for a counterexample). This is informed by a particular intellectual history, which then needs to *replace* their existence with other, more "real" facts. This intellectualization may be evident even in a consideration of shamanic practices, where the soul of the shaman is believed to "leave" the body so that it can take flight or seek other healing spirit beings. Traditional formulations of shamanism equally leave out complex nuances of the experience, which could and should shape analysis. It has not escaped unnoticed (for example, in Asad 1993) that anthropology has itself

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inherited not simply from a division between meanings and things but also between spiritual, religious domains, and economic, technical, and bodily ones. According to Fennella Cannell (2006), anthropology reproduces these uneasy and ethnographically untenable divides by implicitly positing religious phenomena as the epiphenomena of real, underlying, and clearly materialistic causes. These divisions go to the heart of modernity itself, the Enlightenment, personhood, even notions of material possession (property, for example).

Paul C. Johnson traces the genealogy of the term "possession" and the idea that it implies a "dramatic displacement of everyday consciousness" (2014, 3). Spirit possession in plantation societies, which were in full force in the Americas mostly from the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries, indexed the ultimate "absence of control, the body without will" (2014, 5). This is of course apt for societies for whom slaves were not persons, or only partially persons, and thus did not qualify for ownership of private property. From the Christian demonic scripts that circulated in the 1600 and 1700s in which some forms of possession were legitimate, not simply subjective, spirit possession again became a "stable cluster concept" (Johnson 2011, 398) when transposed to colonial slave societies, replete with object-like denizens: "Via the labor of the negative, 'spirit possession' defined the rational, autonomous, self-possessed individual imagined as the foundation of the modern state, in canonical texts from Hobbes, Jean Brodin, Locke, Charles de Brosse, Hume, Kant, and many others, as those texts constructed the free individual and citizen against a backdrop of colonial horizons and slavery" (Johnson 2011, 398).

Spirit possession thus became one of the markers of a savage stage in society, according to E. B. Tylor and others. It was a savagery that contrasted with, and in so doing, justified European enlightenment. Most importantly, it indicated the *absence* of consciousness, morality, and personhood (and thus material possessions), in opposition to rationality, science, the modern citizen who possessed "things," and property. In a similar vein, working on his history of "Atlantic modernity" from the point of view of Cuba, Stephan Palmié argues that "far from designating even only typological opposites, the meanings associated with the terms *Western Modernity* and *Afro-Cuban tradition* represent mere facets or perspectival refractions of a single encompassing historical formation of transcontinental scope" (2002, 15). Palmié maintains that the distinction between Western rationality and African religion is not a primary given, but rather stabilized through the effects of "physical and conceptual violence" (2002, 19), including human corpses. This speaks exactly to the kinds of misinterpretations and misrecognitions that we mention at the very beginning of this chapter with relation to certain categories such as personhood and possession.

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We can explore and briefly deconstruct two misleading ideas here, in order to open up to our alternative proposal of "embodied epistemologies" later on. The first is the notion of "substitution" of the self—or dissociation, implying an emptying of the body—so prevalent, even implicitly, among scholars of possession, as mentioned above. The second is the idea that spirits are in some sort of "transcendent" characteristic of Christian and, in a more recent sense, Protestant frames (Taylor 2007; Weber 2002). As already mentioned, these assumptions apply to spirit possession studies in their historical dimension. But we should consider how these could apply to studies of shamanism, where there is a "flight" of the shaman's soul, and a conceivable world of spirits beyond it (where there is a "native" transcendent, so to speak). Both of these assumptions rely on ideas of a particular sort of self, one that Taylor describes as interior, buffered, no longer permeable or porous as it once was in the pre-Enlightenment. It is a self that, analogously to notions of culture and mind as content to container, seen, for instance, in the enduring idea of the "psychic unity of mankind" (Cole 1996), enacts a separation between the spiritual and the material. This is not a reality of "incipient being" (Ingold 2006, 12), autopoetic and flowing, emergent, animate or sentient, in which we could possibly conceive of the soul in alliance or in communion with its exterior and interior, or as becoming. It is instead a reality in which it is "belief" that holds together a particular cosmos, lest it collapse, because it is not an intra-connected cosmos (Handelman 2004) but one based on separations, including of self/spirit from bodies, divine from mundane, transcendent from immanent. If we were to simplify drastically, this would be the core of our intellectual baggage as anthropologists of religious and other phenomena. In relation to shamanism, this is also subject to critique. Many scholars have posited shape-shifting entities, passages, and thresholds between levels of reality that do not conform to standard analytical categorizations of immanent or transcendent, let alone a simple "substitution" of self (Swancutt 2022).

The assumption of the "vacated" self in what we call spirit possession is a paradigmatic example of how not to proceed. There is, in a general sense, no "passive" victim to the acting, possessing agent. It is a collaboration (Ochoa 2007), a contiguity (Wafer 1991), a co-presence (Beliso-De Jesús 2015), particularly in some of the Afro-Latin worlds we describe in this book. But we could even turn to ancient philosophy to explore this. In a chapter on divine possession in the Greco-Roman world, Crystal Addey fleshes out the views of philosopher Iamblichus on the nature of divine possession. She says he dissolves the dichotomy that some authors, such as Mircea Eliade (1964), have claimed characterize shamanism and possession, with the former being "men rising to the gods while possession sees the gods descend-

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ing to man" (2010, 172–73). It is not the case, according to Iamblichus, that the recipient of divine possession has no consciousness: "the central point is that the inspired individual is not conscious of anything else except the gods" (2010, 174). Inspiration is not the transport of the mind, but rather the mind is replaced by a kind of super-consciousness (2010, 175). This has as much to do with Iamblichus's concept of the soul as it does with his concept of the divine. For Iamblichus, "the soul bears an imprint or reflection of divinity" (2010, 175); it is linked necessarily with a divine intelligence or truth. Thus, the possessed, while in the act, can see through the eyes of the divine, but this is "only possible because the soul contains a reflection of the divine" (2010, 177). Consider a point of comparison, suggested by one of this manuscript´s reviewers: that among the Mongolian Buryats, for instance, shamans/spirits "see" through eyes embroidered on their shamanic skullcaps, but the rest of the shaman's body is used to smell, touch, and taste in ways not related to sight. Katherine Swancutt, for instance, has argued (2012) that for the Buryats the soul also contains a piece of the divine.

Transcendence merits inspection here, for it is *also* immanent: "For neither is it the case that the gods are confined to certain parts of the cosmos, nor is the earthly realm devoid of them. On the contrary, it is true of the superior beings in it that, even as they are not contained by anything, so they contain everything within themselves" (Iamblichus, *Mysteries*, 1.8, 28.11-29.1, in Addey 2010, 179). For Iamblichus, it is more that "we exercise our activity in common with him" (the god) than that he possesses us proper (*Mysteries*, 3.5, 111.7-11). Divine possession for Iamblichus, says Addey, is not a question of an alien agency taking over a supposed victim. In many of the ethnographic contexts explored in this book, spirit possession and the embodied experience of healing is better described as communion, incorporation, fluidity, and other tropes that denote continuity rather than a rupture of divine and mundane. There is no one ontology of spirit possession, mediation, or healing as such: no formula to presuppose that the spirit or soul leaves the body, nor one that dictates what soul and body actually are. For instance, Katherine Swancutt and Meirelle Mazard argue that, "beyond the singular or transcendent soul, animistic ontologies offer alternative imaginings and configurations of agency and personhood and even of what it means to be human" (2018, 2). In their edited volume on animism, the contributors employ various ethnographic concepts that underlie the notion that animism is essentially plural, not homogeneous: "soul-spider," "soul attributes," and "forerunner," among other terms used by their interlocutors, with corresponding theoretical implications (2018, 3).

The question is to what extent an anthropology that deals with spirit possession, shamanism, and healing must rely on concepts, or on concepts

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alone. Or whether we, as scholars of these phenomena, do not have any other forms of description, perhaps those based on direct experience, which could then feed into a conceptual rendering of a social phenomenon. But in asking this, are we implying that our own cultural baggage is somehow set aside? Is this even possible?

One of the corollaries of an Occidental understanding of mind and matter is a particular theory of mind. Contra cognitive psychological views of the classical "theory of mind"—which supposes an empathic stance that begins more or less at the age of three—Tanya Luhrmann (2011) writes that in many societies the fact that mind is not separate from world leads to a more culturally particular cognitive development. According to Luhrmann, the theory of mind inferred by cognitive psychologists and some anthropologists has both a universal and culturally particular aspect. With colleagues, Luhrmann has found evidence for at least six complex causal models of mind that she describes as "theories" within their communities.

The first one is the Euro-American modern secular theory of mind—where people treat the mind as if there is a clear boundary between things in the mind and things in the world (2011, 6–7). This is the most dominant theory of mind in the Western world, and also one that is consonant with the premises of science. One speaks of "imagination" to refer to images in the mind; these are quite different to proper, material "things" out there in the world. Entities, supernatural or otherwise, do not enter the mind, and thoughts do not act in the world. At the same time, however, thoughts and emotions are powerful and causally important. They can even make someone ill. The second is the Euro-American modern supernaturalist theory of mind (2011, 6–7). Luhrmann says this theory can be found supporting charismatic Christianity, contemporary Chinese healing, paganism, New Age practices and cosmology, and new forms of spirituality. Here, people treat the mind very much like the first modern secular theory, except in some senses. The mind-world barrier becomes permeable to certain entities, such as God, or the spirit of a dead person, or for energies of sorts—these are treated as if they have causal power to effect changes in the world. The person learns to identify these energies and discipline themselves, implicitly or explicitly. Luhrmann says the training is important because the secular model of mind is the default model with which these individuals learn (2011, 7). Other models of mind include the opacity of mind theory, found in the South Pacific and Melanesia whose main characteristic is the insistent refusal to infer what other people are thinking unless verbalized; the transparency of language theory, best seen in Central America, where language is seen to align with the world, not express it, and fiction is frowned on; the mind control theory, where there are different versions in Asia—when

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mind is controlled poorly, emotions and intentions can become powerful and enter other poorly controlled minds, as spirits or ghosts, and thoughts can affect other minds; and perspectivism, an Amerindian understanding of the world as it is seen by a particular perspective, such as a human's or an animal's (2011, 7).

These models, as Luhrmann herself concedes, cannot reduce the vast richness of the imaginative ways in which people understand their minds, selves, persons, or souls/spirits. Imagination is a hugely operative concept here, but itself cannot be confined to the mind. In Cuba, for example, spirit mediums' "selves" are extended outward into domestic materialities such as dolls and other objects of representation. This is not just a question of mirroring, or of making beliefs material, but of recursively *making* and *remaking* selves, minds, and spirits in the process (Espírito Santo 2015). What Luhrmann essentially argues is that there is no one way of understanding "minds" or for that matter souls as such. Some minds are porous, others more bounded; some thoughts and emotions traverse these boundaries, wander in the world, and create effects. In some circumstances, much importance is given to the senses as sources of information. In the West, the sense of sight is imperative, the sense of smell much less so. For many Evangelical Christians whom Luhrmann has studied, the senses themselves can be evidence of God and His intervention in their life (Luhrmann, Nusbaum, and Thisted 2010). The same goes for nineteenth- and twentieth-century spiritualism, which cultivates a particular cosmology of spirits through people's attentiveness to their signs—not just on the "outside"—such as through raps and taps on tables—but also through the images salient in the body and in the mind and its imaginings. Perhaps in an effort to sidestep our own "theories of mind" as scholars, phenomenology seems to provide answers, at least for the first steps. This is of vital importance when the phenomena at stake are not simply ephemeral beings, and how to conceive of them, but healing processes of the body.

According to Byron Good: "Research that attends only to semiotic structures or social processes seems to miss the essence of what gives illness its mystery and human suffering its potency. Even more importantly, any truly anthropological account of illness cannot afford to attend only to objective disease and to cultural representation, with subjective experience bracketed as a kind of black box" (1994, 117–18). Relying on notions of belief, cultural scripts or models, or idioms for oppressive social relations is as clearly unhelpful for illness and healing as it is for the experience of spirits in one's body. Good investigates the phenomenological dimensions of illness experience through a focus on how narratives remake the sufferer's world and place him back into it as an authoring self. On his end, Thomas

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J. Csordas (1994) looks at how the experience of the sacred and of deliverance can be understood as a construction of a particular kind of self and its orientation in the world. And, as mentioned, Luhrmann, Nusbaum, and Thisted (2010) analyze how prayer alters and enhances a mental and bodily experience with the divine—thus the "absorption" hypothesis that she and colleagues develop to explain how believers begin to hear the voice of God through training.

However, as anthropologists, we have no direct access to either people's psychological or phenomenological states other than through the medium of language and our own flawed concepts. Could we argue that a phenomenological participative observation method—that is, undergoing spirit possession or healing oneself—could provide critical anthropological insight into the nature of the experience of spirit and healing? And what of the consequences of these experiences for our own concepts, theories, and insights? What becomes in this interface? This is the fundamental question we attempt to answer in this edited volume. But this also presupposes something else: that what we might call "extraordinary" experiences, be these of spontaneous healing, spirit mediumship, or alien visitations, are actually ordinary for many people. What we will deal with in this book is a particular trope in motion, in action: ordinary cosmologies in encounter with extraordinary anthropological assumptions embodied in researchers (see Goulet and Miller 2007). This means that we need to think and feel through alterity with embodied understandings or imagery or metaphors that open up, rather than close or resolve, inquiry. These methods resist a final answer, or a call for objectivity or totalizing conclusion. Instead, they embrace what we have named "embodied epistemology" in an effort to refuse the extrication of epistemology and ontology, and of experience from concept and theory. What is knowledge in this case? Is legitimacy up for discussion? On the one hand, the ethnographer's experience is seen to create earnest bridges, or spaces for dialogue, with that of our interlocutors. Epistemological embodiment thus signals that personal scholarly experience of the "unknown" shapes the concepts by which we craft out our analysis. In some cases, this could result in a forthright argument *for* the existence of spirits, on account of having seen or felt them (Turner 2010). On the other hand, this avoidance of reductionism may come with an embrace of anti-representationalism, and the idea that spirits, entities, gods, or invisibles do not *stand* for something else but must be grappled with directly in a conceptual frame that recognizes them as actants and subjects. Here we have concepts once more.

But embodiment here is not the same everywhere. We therefore need to also reconceptualize what we mean by "embodied experience," especially in contexts where both ethnographer and interlocutor have "different" bodies,

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biographies, and ontogeneses. Can we move beyond the notion of different worlds, proposed by the "ontological turn" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2018), and understand dialogue more productively by attending both to our own experiences and those of our interlocutors? What kind of interstitial, liminal, paradoxical spaces of exegesis are available or generated through this? How is this space both irreducible to concepts and at once conceptualizable? How are these interstitial knowledges "translatable" into anthropology proper? We could argue, with Mattijs Van de Port (2005), that there is always something, particularly in spirit-related cosmologies, that refuses signification, conceptualization, description. The "Real," he says, quoting Slavoj Žižek, is "something that persists only as failed, missed, in a shadow, and dissolves itself as soon as we try to grasp it in its positive nature (1989, 169, in Van de Port 2015, 155). The Real is paradoxical, and as anthropologists we would probably be arrogant if we insisted on "representing" it. But what we hope to do in this volume is provide a third way of entry, so to speak—entry not into the Real but into the ways our experience of it can have recursive effects for anthropology itself. How would this experience be thought of in ways *other* than psychology, as products of mind? How can we as scholars move beyond the idea of generic objectivity and understand ourselves as partners, or collaborators, or at the very least recipients, of cosmologies-in-motion? This would require a radical rethinking of the role of the anthropologist in cases of "extraordinary" experiences, events, and occurrences, including spirit possession and healing. But it would also require a rethinking of the idea of the extraordinary itself, perhaps into one that recognizes that scholars, too, are intrinsic to the incipient and temporal movement of all social forms (Handelman 2021), even as we study them ourselves. In the next two sections, we will detail this idea, providing, as we go, an analysis of the contributions of this book.

TRANSFORMATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

By examining healing practices around the world, this volume looks at the anthropologist's own transformative phenomenological engagement in the field through shared images, emotions, and affects that lead to building common grounds in both healing and the field. The book is organized into three parts: "Paradoxes and Dilemmas," "Transitions and Transformations," and "Engagements." These themes are somehow transversal throughout the chapters, yet each contributor engages with them in different intensities. Our authors reflect on how they have adopted different modalities of thinking and feeling *through alterity* as modes of knowing while approaching spiritual

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healing in their respective fields. We therefore ask what the consequences—theoretical, methodological, ethical, epistemological—are of beginning with this stance; and if the ethnographer can be pushed to think through experiences of alterity through his or her own encounters. But more than giving a definitive answer to these questions, and rather than prescribing or advocating phenomenological participation as a primary mode of grasping experiences of spirit possession and healing, we argue that exploring the anthropologist's bodily involvement with their particular field generates several analytical avenues that are essentially productive in their nonreductive value, that is, in taking an event, or entity, as an object of analysis in and of itself, without reducing it to other causal factors in the environment at large.

What is known as the "affective turn" in anthropology has moved further the examination of positionality proposed by the "reflexive turn" to delve into the affordances of the researcher's affect and emotions for our understandings in the field (Davies 2010). Addressing how social research has privileged cognitively driven procedures, James Davies notes that

> because "reality" tends to unfold in response to the particular set of methods by which it is studied, our formal understandings of the "real" are always somewhat bound by the limits of the methods we employ. The danger, of course, is that those aspects of reality which sit beyond the reach of a specific method, by being seen as methodologically inaccessible, are somewhat depreciated in their empirical existence. (2010, 13)

Drawing upon William James, Davies proposes a guiding framework of a "radical empiricism," which addresses the critical value of the "*spaces between*" the formal, self-contained methods of interviewing—when one temporally adopts specific postures of prescribed professional detachment—and between things in relationship that evoke emotions and sensations. Radical empiricism is therefore intended as being complementary to traditional empiricism, as they constitute two distinct modes of learning and moments of fieldwork (2010, 24). Thomas Stodulka, Nasima Selim, and Dominik Mattes understand affect not as a stand-alone intimate experience for the ethnographer in the field, but as contextualized and relational, arising from our encounters and relations with other human and nonhuman beings, as well as events, things, and places (2018, 523). "This means transmuting affects into purposeful analytical heuristics that make more relational and embodied ways of knowledge possible" (525). They argue for an "epistemic affect":

> The term works as a synecdoche clustering specific ideas about anthropological practice, as embodied products of researcher-researched interactions, affects may either motivate or discourage further mutual engagement. Moreover, the

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> affects we impart in our encounters with research interlocutors shape the ways in which stories are told and social realities are conveyed. And finally, making affects epistemologically productive requires the recognition of the humanity that ethnographers share with their interlocutors. (531)

Neither radical empiricism nor the analytical attention to epistemic affect suggest a conversion or initiation into a religious practice (although these affective approaches do not exclude it either); they involve a critical attention to the ethnographer's embodied modes of knowing in the field, which may include different gradients of participation ranging from transitions to deeper engagements. The idea is that radical participation, rather than detachment, generates reliable ethnographic knowledge (Goulet and Granville Miller 2007), simultaneously reconfiguring "detachment" in a sense that it is far from being associated to a lack of empathy: it is a skill of standing outside the experience, which may involve "*distantiation* whether in shamanism or in scholarship" from the immediacy of the experience or situation (Obeysekere 1990, 229). Likewise, according to Arnaud Halloy, distance is to be achieved more productively in the phase of analysis, privileging engagement and empathic resonance during fieldwork by multiplying the levels of reflexivity in the ethnographic process (Halloy 2016). Bettina E. Schmidt, in chapter 3, recognizes that "there are different forms of objectivity as well as different forms of subjectivity." Johannes Fabian maintains that "ethnographic objectivity" is grounded in knowing in the field, intended as "acting in company," and thus intersubjective rather than contemplative (Fabian 2001). As Emily Pierini, in chapter 8, notes, participation also comes with an acknowledgment that among participants in healing practices there is no homogeneous category of "native" because participants—as much as the ethnographer—may have different backgrounds informing their experiences; therefore, all experiences are subject to critical analysis. Furthermore, we add that ethnographic objectivity also involves modes of narration, in which what is narrated does not cease to be infused with feeling and thus becomes more tangible to the reader. Affective approaches stand alongside those somatic, sensory ethnographies and phenomenological approaches that rehabilitated the role of the body in ethnographic knowledge production (Csordas 1993; Strathern 1996; Desjarlais 1992; Stoller 1997; Pink 2009; Desjarlais and Throop 2011).

Affect emerges in these chapters as being central to the experience of healing. Therefore, we ask, what does affect move for ethnographers and participants in ritual healing? While affect fosters profound ethnographic insights for the ethnographer, it also transforms the ways he or she relates with subjectivities in the field, including their own ones. There is a recognition of the co-presences involved in fieldwork, and of the ethnographer's self

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as being porous and thus able to be affected by other human and nonhuman beings in the field. In acknowledging their own experiences of "being affected" (Favret-Saada 1980, 1990), our authors also shed light on the centrality of affect as experienced by their interlocutors in the process of healing, in which the belief in God, spirits, and deities becomes secondary to the experiences of emotions, feelings, and imagination that arise from those encounters and permeate the people's narratives of healing. Belief, alone, is deemed an insufficient category to assess healing; it rather perpetuates the mind-body divides. Subsequently, it reflects a distinction between cognitive and somatosensory approaches as though they would be mutually exclusive rather than constitutively intertwined. One may understand belief in spirits in terms of a "sense of revelation, of intimate certainty" arising from the confluence between "getting ideas about spiritual entities and being moved by them" (Vasconcelos 2009, 110). Though in some Spiritualist and Afro-Brazilian religions, belief in spirits is not even relevant to practitioners, as knowledge of the spirits is achieved by other means, such as feeling, experience, engagement, or faith (Pierini 2020; Mossière, and Capponi in this volume).

Andrea De Antoni, in chapter 4, approaches exorcism rituals in the Kenmi shrine in Japan as "affective technologies." Exorcism in these rituals involve the deliverance of spirits for the person's recovery from illness. Both the evidence of spirits and the efficacy of healing rely on feeling, and belief is therefore presented as a consequence. De Antoni argues that access to spirit ontologies is possible if the ethnographer attunes to and "feels" with the affective technologies and with others in the field, including spirits. Both De Antoni, in Japan, and Paula Bronson (chapter 5), among Nepali healers, engaged their bodies in healing rituals, shifting their attention to include somatic modes of knowing. They describe undergoing healing themselves, and particularly how their feelings changed from the first to the second experience of participation in healing rituals in which a priest in the Japanese shrine and a Bompo healer, respectively, pray over the ghosts. In both of their first experiences, a combination of factors—such as attention to the formal aspects of the ritual, listening and trying to understand the healer's words, observing gestures, as well as their own expectations—resulted in a feeling of detachment from the action. Whereas in a second experience De Antoni began "attuning" his "posture, orientation, and attention to what the others did," eliciting a set of bodily responses and feelings that resonated with what his interlocutors had mentioned to him. Bronson, by letting go of her expectations in her subsequent experiences with the Bompo healer, began feeling some inner sensations. A gradual acknowledgment of her vulnerability and fear over her physical symptoms of chronic pain during

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fieldwork enabled her understanding of healing. Hence, the ethnographer's vulnerability can be seen here as a connection between her experiences in the healing rituals and those of the patients. She notes that "the most significant initial shift in my understanding was when I realized that the villagers understood my illness to be from the spirit world. . . . This awareness garnered a sort of leveling of the playing field, so to speak, a commonality with my interlocutors, the community, and me." As Ruth Behar reminds us, the ethnographer's subjectivity has to go way beyond the mere exposure of the self in the text; they have to make their vulnerability essential to the argument (Behar 1996). Eventually, Bronson's experience illuminated how healing involves a long process of commitment to the world of spirits rather than a quick recovery (in this volume, see also Tamara Dee Turner on *dīwān* rituals and Bettina E. Schmidt on Spiritist healing).

Eugenia Roussou and Anastasios Panagiotopoulos, in chapter 6, compare their autoethnographies that involve the treatment of panic attacks during their respective fieldwork in Greece and in an Afro-Cuban religion in Spain. Roussou discusses her experience with a Greek spiritual healer using the Brazilian Kardecist Spiritist practice of *passe*—namely a transfer of spiritual fluid energies from the healer to cleanse the patient from low energies—in which healing is achieved through the encounters with a spiritual cosmos. Panagiotopoulos explores the points of convergence between the anthropologist's personal crises and the crisis of a woman encountering Afro-Cuban religiosity in Spain, and he does so by means of the materiality of two dolls simultaneously entering the scene: one prescribed by a psychiatrist as part of the process of healing panic attacks, and an Afro-Cuban doll consecrated for a Spanish woman undergoing emotional difficulties. He argues that in molding the bodies of the dolls "the affliction is deontologized from the self, and it gets ontologized—first as an external material 'representation,' and second, and more importantly, as the ontological transformation from an afflicted self into a healed one." Presenting spirits as both the cause of affliction and healing, Roussou and Panagiotopoulos propose to "play with the potentialities of them. . . of transformation".

These experiences of participation in healing practices are certainly interspersed with dilemmas, challenges, hesitations, resistances, and paradoxes. Giovanna Capponi, in chapter 1, rightly points out that full participation may also entail reframing one's position or even being subjected to hierarchical dynamics, power relations, and politics that may then limit the access to a particular kind of knowledge or to groups considered to be in a position of rivalry by, in her case, those of the Afro-Brazilian temples (*terreiros*) she worked with. The idea of playfulness here returns with a different intensity. She builds upon Droogers's (2008) approach of "methodological

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ludism," which escapes the epistemological dichotomy between methodological atheism and methodological theism, in that it proposes a playful attitude that relies on the ethnographer's ability to "play in and out of their role." This playfulness should not be confused with pretending; it is rather intended as cultivating openness to the affective intensities of the field, which does not come without transformative consequences for the ethnographer. In fact, Capponi's decision to enter the initiatory path of Candomblé was not the outcome of a methodological choice aimed at legitimizing a full access to the knowledge of initiates, nor was it a strategy of inclusion of the anthropologist by the leaders of the community for purposes of prestige or control over her work. Rather, her decision was led by bodily symptoms of "trance possession" during Candomblé rituals, such as "feeling dizziness, heat, increasing heartbeat, heavy eyelids, and light shaking." These symptoms—interpreted in Candomblé as an initiatory call from the saint—led her to undergo an initiation ritual at the end of her fieldwork, finding herself positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy. Eventually, she recognizes the ethnographer's body as "a fundamental place of renegotiation of one's power, status, and inclusion within a social group."

This book does not intend to pursue a univocal definition of healing, but it delves into the experiences of healing understood as a multifaceted process to explore what healing practices mobilize in those who experience it, including ethnographers. Transformations of the sense of self and body, biographical narratives, or sense of purpose are not exclusive of those with whom the ethnographer studies.

Profound transformative experiences may also occur to the ethnographer. While they may not necessarily lead to a belief, they may trigger a "flip" in the research process itself, bringing along unique insights or dilemmas that inform field relations and ethnographic knowledge. In this sense, "transformative" means "to form through a process" or "to give shape," but it may also be understood as "to learn through something." For this reason, putting these experiences under scrutiny, rather than bracketing them out, may illuminate the processual, pedagogical, and epistemological aspects of healing. The ethnographic field is therefore recognized for its transforming features; Roussou and Panagiotopoulos describe it as "a fluid space of embodied and sensory interactions where the identity boundaries between the researcher and his/her interlocutors are ever-shifting" or are even "transgressed," and where the "epistemological, ethnographic, and ontological self becomes transformed and ultimately 'transreligious.'"

Transformation is also key to the healing process. Joan Koss-Chioino and Philip Hefner stress that "spiritual transformation is an essential aspect of most healing systems, with the exception of systems such as biomedicine,

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which is based mostly on biophysical concepts and on experimental rather than experiential validity" (2006, 5)—though a person's trajectory through a biomedical system may equally be transformative at different levels, including the spiritual one. The effectiveness of healing involves the engagement of the senses, being moved experientially through sensation and imagination (Laderman and Roseman 1996). Healing rituals mobilize an "imaginal performance" that, according to Csordas, is less a metaphor or a representation than it is a feeling, intending imagery as "a bodily practice insofar as it engages multiple sensory modalities" (1996, 102). Csordas points to the fact that for Charismatics the efficacy of healing is "predicated . . . on an existential immediacy that constitutes healing as real. The immediacy of the imaginal world and of memory, of divine presence and causal efficacy, have their common ground in embodiment" (108).

Authors in this book have engaged in these imaginal revelations and moved further in exploring their affordances for an embodied ethnography of healing. Gustavo R. Chiesa, in chapter 9, presents the work of the International Association of Laboratory Research in Ectoplasm and Parasurgery (ECTOLAB) in Brazil—namely, a multidisciplinary research team of doctors, psychologists, engineers, biologists, and neuroscientists interested in measuring the effects of a substance called "ectoplasm" on health and well-being. According to Chiesa, the attention to subjective experience and its comparison with other participants' experiences emphasized by the team of researchers is part of "the construction of objective facts from the shared intersubjectivity." Chiesa describes how, when participating in the sessions, paying attention to his perceptions and sensations, he found himself in this sort of shared imagery as he visualized, on different occasions, scenes of a stomach surgery and a shipwreck. Both scenes were then reported as having been perceived by other people. He notes the striking frequency in which such similar reports occurred even with a different audience. He reckons that his full bodily involvement allowed him to be "captured" by the experience and to "be affected," and he "ended up falling into the web (or entanglement) of beings and energies that make up that environment," which prompted a different understanding of people's descriptions of their perceptions and experiences.

From the standpoint of a sensorially engaged medical anthropology (Nichter 2008), Helmar Kurz, in chapter 10, explores the sensory modalities of Spiritist healing practices in a Kardecist psychiatric hospital in Brazil as resources for mental health care. Mediumship is indeed understood in Spiritism as a therapeutic mechanism to negotiate pathological experiences. Paying attention to his perceptions in sessions of "disobsession"—based on conversations with spirits deemed responsible for the patients' affliction to

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help them to be released—he experienced "waves of heaviness and lightness streaming through [his] body" and mental images of colors and light, which he associated with "healing vibrations." He adds, "On some occasions, I 'felt' the afflicted and afflicting spirits before they came: sudden feelings of anger, sadness, or pain would indicate to me their presence, and right after, one or another medium would transmit messages that resembled my feelings." The similarity between his experience and those of other participants in mediumistic practice is seen by Kurz as a verification of the validity of his perceptions as ethnographic data as a result of "thick participation." However, he refrains from interpreting his experience as an embodiment of a cultural habitus given his lack of socialization within a Spiritist context, although he recognizes that these experiences offer a way to "learn about content beyond form" in healing practices.

Eugenia Roussou's experience of radical participation in the encounter with spirits is also transformative in that it leads her to perceive shared visions of spirits visiting her and other participants in healing sessions. Those shared visions shed light upon how "transreligiosity" transgresses boundaries between the "ordinary" and "extraordinary," "material and spiritual, belief and experience, scientific epistemology and empirical knowledge," and they especially convinced her of the fluidity between her "ethnographic, embodied, spiritual, perceptual, and social scientific self" in the field. The idea of fluidity of the ethnographic self, along with that of porosity, may be seen as a response to the modern Western idea of the self around which the scholarly ethnographic body was constituted.

Tamara Dee Turner, in chapter 7, assesses her participation in the Algerian "Dīwān of Sīdī Bilāl," a Sufi ritual that draws upon the musical cultivation of trance in order to engage with, express, and release one's disease, pain, and suffering. She reflects upon how she was perceived by her interlocutors as being "caught up" in dīwān ritual—that is, "owned by" it: "I was entangled with issues around transmission, on how embodied dīwān knowledge moves in and between and through people, teaching them things with or without their control, consent, or official association." Her interlocutors sensed that she was in trance and interacting with nonhuman agents (*jinn*) without realizing it. Trance in dīwān ritual, she notes, has multiple registers, "affective textures," and adjectives through which it is addressed, although there is only one recognized form through which jinn trance occurs. Despite her interlocutors' interpretations, she did not perceive herself as being in trance, as she felt she was too in control during rituals, unable to "silence the observing voice" in her head even when she was experimenting with movement and gestures, emotionally carried by the music. Concurrently, another reason for doubt consisted in her personal history, which did not

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reflect the association of dīwān trance with trauma and suffering. These clashing perceptions raised a question about the different notions of control at play in her relationship with her interlocutors, and a dilemma about whether her increasingly strong and often unpleasant bodily sensations were the outcome of suggestibility or of the need of her body to learn "to become a body in another place." Learning trance, how to move through embodied mimesis, how to feel through the body in motion and intercorporeality, has certainly provided a means to connect with her interlocutors and compare their experiences, highlighting differences, nuances, and the gradients of control involved in every trance experience. It also illuminated the ability of the body to grasp knowledge that is not accessible to the rest of the self. Géraldine Mossière, in chapter 2, makes a similar distinction between "communicable knowledge (informative)" and knowledge "learned through tacit experience (formative)." Indeed, being emotionally moved by a ritual, sharing intimacy and feeling as one with others, as well as engaging the body and senses in dances and hymns are all part of Mossière's experience in Congolese Pentecostal congregation rituals in Montreal, Canada. In her chapter, she adopts a phenomenological perspective to examine "how these co-experiences impact the definition and boundaries between the self and otherness as well as their healing potential."

Not only have these authors established their somatic modes of attention, but they have also experienced ethnography as learning joint attention and shared focus. In these instances of shared images, emotions, affect, and feeling, participation has triggered an intersubjective embodiment, shifting the ethnographic relations and subsequent knowledge at a different level, beyond the verbal. There is a transversal recognition of how the ethnographer is—and participants perceive him or her to be—immersed in, and potentially affected by, an ecology of people, materials, and tangible and intangible substances, including spiritual forces, irradiations, and energies, as Emily Pierini examines in chapter 8 discussing healing in the Brazilian Vale do Amanhecer (Valley of the Dawn). Knowledge in the Vale do Amanhecer is thereby addressed along with ethnographic knowledge as being the outcome of an "entanglement between insight, skill, and craft." She refers to a particular kind of knowledge that is suddenly emerging from experience—especially bodily experience—in terms of "epiphany" but that is also co-crafted processually. The process of knowing, she suggests, becomes relevant to the process of healing when it places the body at its center. She analyzes how her experience of bodily pains in the field led her to undergo a ritual of healing with spirit mediums in the temple of the Vale do Amanhecer followed by a medical assistance in a clinic "had mobilized different and interrelated concepts . . . such as: invisible entities and residues that

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move through, in and out of the body (may they be spirits or viruses); cleansing fluids; and ecologies of substances." She also explores how a new way of knowing through the body in her experience of rituals may be understood in terms of co-presence once these experiences are compared to those of mediums building a common ground.

Bettina E. Schmidt (chapter 3) discusses the complexity of her interlocutor's healing trajectory in Spiritist healing in Brazil, and how rituals of passe in Spiritism involving a spiritual cleansing from energies have an impact on health. She points at how the belief in spirits is not a condition for a physical impact of these practices, such as in her case, as she states: "My physical response during the passe in São Paulo shows, however, that my body challenged this reluctance to engage with a different reality." Her experience of her heartbeat slowing in a session of passe, which she felt as a reaction to the energy transmitted, thus has led her to reflect on the materiality of spiritual healing rather than considering the other worlds merely as symbolic. Likewise, Fiona Bowie, in her autoethnography (chapter 11) exploring different modes of knowledge arising from the engagement in a Metatronic healing apprenticeship in the United Kingdom, describes her bodily response to energies in the healing sessions. Through her method of "cognitive, empathetic engagement" she has shared her experiences of transformation with fellow participants on the Metatronic pathway, confronting the differences with people in her own country while maintaining a critical questioning, reflecting upon the conditioning and constraints of Western definitions.

Several works have reflected on the ethnographers' experiences in the field dealing in particular with spiritual phenomena (Young and Goulet 1994; Goulet and Granville Miller 2007; Davies and Spencer 2010; Pierini and Groisman 2016; Meintel, Béguet, and Goulet 2020). This book brings together both the ethnographers' and participants' experiences proposing a sensory ethnography of healing with a focus on ethnographic knowing as embedded in an embodied epistemology of healing. Furthermore, some works present people's spiritual experiences as "extraordinary" (Goulet and Granville Miller 2007; Meintel, Béguet, and Goulet 2020; Young and Goulet 1994). Jeffrey Kripal (2019) has explored how intellectuals, scientists, and medical professionals suddenly going through what he calls unexpected "extraordinary" experiences, went through a "flip"—that is, a "reversal of perspective" born out of life-changing experiences that resulted in significant scientific ideas and new technologies, what he addresses as "epiphanies of the mind." Our authors point to the ordinary character of these experiences in their interlocutors' lives. Therefore, the stance we adopt is to avoid creating hierarchies of knowledge and experiences in distinguishing between the supposedly "extraordinary" experience of the "other" and the "ordinary"

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one of the ethnographers, while still addressing the transformative potential of these experiences of crafting bodies in the exploration of other worlds—whether tangible or intangible—for our ethnographic epiphanies.

ANTHROPOLOGY IN TRANCE

With this volume, we seek to explore the relevance of the categories of reflection we have adopted—*embodied epistemologies* and *ethnographic incorporation*. The notions of epistemological embodiment and ethnographic incorporation are part of a contemporary transition movement in anthropology in which a classical principle is relativized. The principle that an ethnography is elaborated to show "collected data about the other" and to be then subjected to an ethnologizing comparativism. Contemporarily, an ethnographic contribution that we can call "clinical" becomes more and more relevant. The idea of a clinical ethnography is that in which the ethnographer takes the field experience in its fullness, considering all its implications, senses, and unfoldings, not only analytical but also personal, as a fundamental part of the knowledge s/he wants to share. So, the ideas of epistemological embodiment and ethnographic incorporation are not expected to be taken as the evocation of concepts or definitions, but rather to be tasks of an agency that stimulates the problematization of one's own conceptions of how knowledge is acquired. They are also tasks to promote a deconditioning of a scientific academic training and praxis, or one committed to accepting *ideologically* science as the only consistent system of knowledge. That training which in the hierarchy of knowledges ideologically places rationalist scientific thinking as superior—or more consistent—in relation to other knowledges about the lived world. In this way, we formulate a framework and point to how our own conceptual and epistemological understandings of the field are embedded within our own bodily experiences, arrangements, trajectories, serendipities—and vice versa.

In addition, we also seek to unfold what occurred since we began the dialogue that is now configured in this collection. We were concerned at the time, on the one hand, with the difficulty of effectively matching ethnographies with the field experiences lived by us, as ethnographers. And in the same sense, but on the other hand, we were concerned with the realization that a rationalist ethos/bias compromised and conditioned this correspondence. We could see this conditioning of our own experiences in events characterized as *academic*—those that take place in undergraduate and post-graduate courses in universities—or *scientific*, at conferences, congresses, and seminars. On these occasions, we felt that any empirical engagement

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that suggested a personal involvement or closeness that was communicated was treated as a kind of sin with science. Or that "being scientific" would require "distancing as a criterion for objectivity," as a valid element for the consideration of the consistency of the knowledge presented. We then evaluated that the required criteria of consistency and validity—detachment and objectivity—as embedded in a positivist approach would result in a distortion and impoverishment of the relationships with our interlocutors. They also result in a double distancing: one in the field, and another in the ethnographic text. Thus, from the point of view of evoking what we considered to be ethnographic relations, which made our ethnographies feasible, by omitting the nucleus of these very relations (which were, to our interlocutors, other than positivist), we would only be promoting very debatable kinds of relations instead. This stance, if we were to take it, has inevitably implied hierarchical, even meritocratic, forms of exclusion. Most importantly, it implies the reification and the omission from our analyses of how these ethnographic relations occur, how they affect us, and how they influence our own epistemological incorporations—namely, for "academic" convenience, or adherence to a rationalizing paradigm. Then, as a consequence of reification, it also affects how they condition our scholarly careers, either including or excluding our own voices among peers.

We have been asking ourselves how to live a field experience that evokes an empirical engagement unconditioned by double distancing, mistrust, and simplifying skepticism. And eventually in an overt or covert attempt to "demonstrate" empathy to the experiences, the metaphysics and ontologies, that motivated other research participants to organize their lives and elaborate the ideas they communicated to us, and even with whom we attempted a symmetrizing relationship. The impetus behind this was to occupy a place in the debate about the work of the ethnographer, and to be able to share our reflections in an effectively dialogical way—in the sense that the dialogue established also effectively includes our interlocutors. Ultimately, this fundamental contingency highlights the unfinished, procedural, axionomic, and even paradoxical nature of anthropology itself and its way of dealing with the knowledge, as well as with the unknown.

The concerns on what can be called epistemological effervescence were also triggered by the cogitation that, like the North American Alcoholics Anonymous with whom Gregory Bateson had done research in the 1960s and 1970s (Bateson 1972), an epistemological deconditioning would be of interest for the "health" of anthropology—or a disincorporation of the deleterious epistemological conditioning of rationalist science, one that would allow the exchanges of knowledge and the learnings from living in the field to find a dignified place in the ethnographic text.[2] This in turn requires

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an engagement, an *epistemological activism* that keeps the flame of scrutiny and critique of the aforementioned conventionalisms and conditioning, of self-critical and dialogical reflexivity, burning. As we see it, this can challenge and transform the idea that a science founded on providing stable answers—and thus promoting a maintenance of the status quo—is to stabilize the asymmetry with the other forms and methods of knowing and living in the world.

It is relevant to consider that one of the starting points of our reflections was the contribution of the field of studies that became known as medical anthropology. Starting from William H. R. Rivers (1924)—who was a physician, and perhaps the first to record non-Western medical practices—the field was then consolidated by Forrest E. Clements (1932) and Erwin H. Ackerknecht (1942), followed by the elaboration of the field of ethnomedicine to which Arthur Kleinman (1980), a psychiatrist, contributed decisively with the concept of "cultural systems of health." Along these developments a debate was triggered on how to take something "familiar" to Western biomedicine and understand it in "exotic" contexts. But from the point of view of "strangeness," the problem of ethnocentrism remained. This ethnocentrism unfolded in taking the biomedical model of disease-etiology-diagnosis-treatment as a parameter for the study of "localized" medicines, generally called "traditional." The critique of this approach, in turn, unfolded into another perspective that became known as the anthropology of health (Langdon 2001). The anthropology of health, as an epistemological turn, relativized the notion of illness and inscribed it less as a set of organic symptoms but as communicational ways of referring to the experience of discomfort, emphasizing its relational and cosmic implications. This relativization drew the researchers' attention to the relevance of personal and collective narratives as singular configurations, which formulated the knowledge and practices elaborated by experience itself. And as a counterpoint to the organic, biological idea of cure, it emphasized the idea of healing, in which the limits of the individualized body were no longer the parameter for understanding the transformative/educational praxis of illness, as communicated by many of our interlocutors.

Thus, in taking the contribution of medical and health anthropologies in their historical and epistemological repercussions, or even of the anthropology of healing, we are recognizing that ethnographic data on healing is not just health related. Here, we particularly point out the elevation of the status of narrative and knowledge—different from that of biomedicine—on the "experience" of health, and Bateson's empirical argument, that is, the idea of a therapeutic model based on an epistemological deconditioning. It

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can be multidimensional and also disciplinary in terms of an epistemological activism that may also include the deconditioning of the ethnographer's bodily dispositions and narrative referentiality. We thus consider that our contribution is also directed toward the health of anthropology itself—not in the sense of "cure," but of the engagements that transform an anthropology that could be said to be "in trance," or, as in the trance events we have approached, an anthropology subject to a transformation, which unfolds from a temporary suspension of the ordinary. *Other worlds, other bodies*: it is a world in transition, not simply for our interlocutors and for us, ethnographers, but also for anthropology itself. What are the signs of this transition? To where are we heading? Most importantly, we would say, toward a sort of epistemological healing/activism, or a movement that could be considered social to stimulate a deconditioning of dominant conventionalisms, standardizations, and epistemologies. Each author in this volume has expressed this in a different way. While multiplying the understandings of "healing," "other worlds," and "other bodies," this volume also seeks to address this process not simply for ethnographers and their interlocutors but also in the detection of the signs of this transition for the pandemic world itself: a state that may seem modified, transitory for the planet, and thus give the idea that "life will return to normal one day," but that perhaps it has to be seen as a modifier one, which in fact makes another world emerge.

An aim here is the will to make research relationships symmetrizing—therefore an epistemological incorporation that "natives" increasingly read what anthropologists write and speak; a consideration that respect for people in our research implies dialogue with interlocutors, including the critic; a consistent recognition of "native theories" not only as "elements of the culture of the other" but as central models for approaching events in the field, even with equivalent status to "non-native" theories; the recognition of an elementary philosophical principle: that when we become aware that the *other* recognizes some influential force in the world, invisible or inert to us, the only thing we can say is that our own conditioning does not allow us to recognize it ontologically.

Therefore, a challenge we seek to bring forth in the quest to establish a place for reflection and debate is that of confronting and relativizing the project of rationalism (at least that of a simplifying, mediocre kind of rationalism), which has as its conviction that science can rationally explain everything that occurs in the universe, even if only provisionally. This conviction suggests that a capacity for explanation unfolds into an ability to solve all analytical problems, for instance, on the basis of criteria such as distancing as a condition for objectivity. On the one hand, this idea of distancing

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when raised to the condition for objectivity seems influenced by the image of the ivory tower, and thus, even when elaborated in a sophisticated way, it seems in fact a side effect of a deleterious positivism, which gives only to the "systematizing thinker" the status of being closer to "the truth". In the same sense, this idea of objectivity conditioned by distancing obscures and avoids the possibility that one can approach objectivity less by its ability to totalize a set of variables than by exploring the potentialities of the text—or, in an alternative way, when the ethnographic text is able to address the conditioning and convivial implications of all kinds of knowledge (of sometimes diverse forms and natures) acquired in the field. But in fact, a claim to solve all problems also implies a distortion, or inconsistency, with the affective experiences in the life of the other. We mean "affective" here for experiences that effectively transform life, and thinking about life, such as those involving health and existence. Also in the sense that it is these experiences that sustain the other's engagement with a metaphysics and an epistemology that give meaning to his/her existence in the world.

One of the lived experiences of ethnographers is to encounter situations in which the people with whom we/they are doing research invite them—explicitly or even implicitly—to actually live what they experience. Particularly here we can mention the praxis of recognizing the existence, the influence, and the possibility of embodying invisible beings, forces, or energies. There is a play here with the notion of "beings." On the one hand, these are cosmic "events" to which one can attribute some personified substance, circumscribed in a spiritual identity. Thus, beings are the entities recognized in the so-called mediumistic religions. Or, on the other hand, the "beings," or *devirs*,[3] that emerge from the personal transformation brought about by one's own experience of recognizing oneself as a potential incorporator of these beings. This involves the challenges of conditioning—metaphysical, methodological, epistemological, and ontological—induced by the ideas that we incorporate, and from the moment we become aware that science exists, that scientific praxis is conditioned by a prescription of "distancing" and "rationality."

The incorporation of this prescription in our conduct, and in our ethnographic attitudes, implies also considering that our dispositions and availabilities are positional constraints on other "participants," also in the ethnographic text. That is, a disposition to treat "other" forms of knowledge with a symmetrizing intent as we do with academically conventional forms. In this sense, particularly as related with systematized authors and theories that inspire us, as the relation we establish with our interlocutors, their ways of thinking (often referred as "native theories"), of doing, of living, and of living *together*.

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In this sense, there is the willingness to, and the availability of, condition the "living" of the experiences that the *other* lives. (De)conditioning, disposition, and availability are then variables of an ethnographic equation that each author in this volume equates in a unique and creative way, and which become consistently evocative of the field. The ethnographic text, as well as the verbal narrative on the experience of field research, ultimately runs the risk of implicit conditioning in the trajectory of the author and reflects his or her dispositions and availabilities to live and coexist with, and in, the world of the other.

One may argue that this critical gaze upon our scholarly conventionalisms may somehow echo the proposal of the feminist and postmodern critiques. How can we then tackle the implications and unfolding of this self-critical gaze in the last forty years since these critiques were raised? How would this deconditioning work in practice and even differently in light of the current developments of the field? How can we avoid the risk of becoming asymmetrical in the opposite way? Indeed, another point those critiques of the approach of embodiment could raise is that we run the risk of falling into another type of reductionism by losing sight of the hierarchies, beliefs, and doctrines that condition our interlocutors' experiences, whether spiritual or therapeutic or both. The works gathered here unfold in formulations of what the authors think the ethnographic text is. In the same sense, the authors' positioning is articulated in a grammar that becomes substantive forms of treatment: "how and why they are, do, think, relate . . ."; "how and why I am, did, think, relate . . ."; "how and why we are, do, think, relate . . ." In the grammar we apply to the text, we communicate our relational position. And we may think of anthropology as an intercross between our own grammars that, in the text, are converted into new grammars, which in turn communicate relations and knowledge sharing. It is in the referentiality of the grammar of the text, when we choose to refer to "them," or to "us," whether these beings are incarnate or not, that we configure the embodied, incorporated epistemologies.

Taking Talal Asad's thought-provoking reading of Wittgenstein (Asad 2020) on the relevance of grammar and the "language games" embedded in forms of life, and which define the "limits of meaning," we can cogitate that the limits of meaning are conditioned by—and condition—time, scale, and plausibility, and ultimately by the willingness/availability to devote oneself to something. This willingness/availability unfolds perhaps first in the time-scale equation. The time to dedicate and the size of the task in turn condition the recognition of the consistency and pertinence of binding oneself to, or engaging with, someone or something. And it is even plausibility that directs attention and motivates engagement in incorporating—or becoming

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incorporated into—this something, when absorbed from experience, not rejecting or ignoring it.

The disposition and availability to an epistemological autoreflexivity and effective ethnographic incorporation may then, in our view, broaden and expand the possibilities and limits of meaning, thus allowing a relativization of the mechanisms of domination and hierarchy, even if occulted in the dynamic of academic backstages. But the horizons that may open up the willingness and availability of scholars are, after all, also subjected to and conditioned by the spaces we have to disseminate what we might call their "ethnographic-anthropological effects." And this seems to us to be the most relevant objective of this space of reflection that we are seeking to open with *Other Worlds, Other Bodies*. This space results from the discussions held at our EASA2020 Conference panel and the contribution of other authors willing to consolidate dialogue and reflection on field experiences, particularly those that challenge the conditioning and conventionality transmitted by a rationalist, evolutionist, and intransitive science/academia.

Although with a great influence of phenomenology, particularly the conception of embodiment in this field of studies, we want to broaden the horizons to potentiate the presence of narratives about all field experiences that become relevant to our work. For us, and for the grammar of "we" who have taken up this challenge, with the consideration of the events proper to the person of the ethnographer in the field, the reflections we gather in this volume should be stimulated toward the deconditioning of another grammar that distances the ethnographer and restricts her/him to taking the life in the field, and the "data" s/he collects, as evocative of how "they" live, think, and do—not as if were "us," that is, everyone who participates in this way of life configured in the equation that is field research and ethnography.

Just as it can be inconsistent and inglorious to want to "cure anthropology," so it may be a mistake to ignore dilemmas and dualisms, such as rational vs. mystical, or objectivity vs. subjectivity. What we attempt here is to set out some of the routes by which, as anthropologists/social scientists, we feel we can simultaneously recognize critically these dualisms and productively appropriate them in order to suggest a shift in analysis. The point here is not to go the route of classical anthropological treatments of similar ethnographic material—nor is it to "transcend" them, which would be an arrogant analytical move. It is to suggest that epistemological embodiment or ethnographic incorporation, or the role of the ethnographer's experience in creating categorical analysis—which has not been treated well enough, particularly in the field of healing—might provide clues to these avenues.

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One of the strengths of this volume lies in the fact that it does not distinguish between or hierarchize "extraordinary" and "ordinary" experiences. In our view, there are a number of ways in which this dislocation can be done: from a highly pragmatic, William James–inspired, phenomenologically descriptive approach, or conceptual analyses, such as those that understand the experience of spirits as playful, or even ludic, in a crosscutting sense. Or, still, extensively clinical/narrative of the researcher's own existential experience in the field, as well as its pertinent events, ethnographic relations, paradoxes, dilemmas, restlessness, and interrogations. In synthesis, in this collection the authors dedicate themselves to addressing various forms of anthropology, unfolding in a perspective not only of articulating medical anthropology and anthropology of health, but of converting lived ethnographic experiences into new horizons of reflection on the ethnography of healing and beyond.

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NOTES

1. This chapter was coauthored by the editors as follows: Diana Espírito Santo is the author of the section "The 'Really' Real"; Emily Pierini is the author of the section "Transformative Engagements"; and Alberto Groisman is the author of the section "Anthropology in Trance." Emily Pierini wishes to acknowledge funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 895395 for the project "THETRANCE—Transnational Healing: Therapeutic Trajectories in Spiritual Trance," undertaken between Sapienza University of Rome, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (PPGAS-UFSC), and the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford.
2. If a man achieves or suffers change in premises that are deeply embedded in his mind, he will surely find that the results of that change will ramify throughout his whole universe. Such changes we may well call "epistemological" (Bateson 1972, 336).
3. The notion of *devir*, originally elaborated by Heraclitus of Ephesus, roughly may evoke the idea that nothing in the world is permanent except change and transformation. It has also been referred by the word "becomings." Deleuze and Guattari (1995) return to the notion of devir, unfolding its contemporary implications. Changings in attitude, conduct, or behavior may express different devires.

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