

Research Article

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Disassembling Descola: Phenomenological Intersections in Onto-Typological Anthropology

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2022-0268>

received June 23, 2023; accepted September 8, 2023

Abstract: One of the effects of the so-called ontological turn has been to take the other so seriously that radical difference has been conceptualized ontologically. This stance has given rise, in some authors, as Descola, to a typological classification. However, we would suggest the possibility of a non-onto-typological anthropology based on Marion's phenomenology of givenness. With the phenomenology of givenness, from which phenomena are given to a gifted – and therefore secondary – subject, this new understanding of subject allows us to think of phenomena as significations much more than as representations and to replace the discontinuity of ontological categories with the continuity of hermeneutics.

Keywords: Philippe Descola, Jean-Luc Marion, phenomenology of givenness, representation, ontological typology

1 Introduction

In *Thinking through Things* (2007), Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell have questioned the transcendental character of the origin of anthropological concepts. For them, cultural differences would not be epistemic distinctions, i.e., different representations of the same world, but ontological ones: it would mean talking about different worlds.¹ This is the sense in which the so-called ontological turn in contemporary anthropology has transferred the meaning of ontology from its philosophical roots (as a discourse of Being) to the anthropological realm in order to identify radical alterity at a not merely epistemological level. In this movement, Holbraad and Pedersen point out that “the meaning and purchase of ‘ontology’ would need to differ from its conventional essentialist and absolutist (philosophical, metaphysical) connotations.”² However, it is not clear that the question of alterity can be resolved by the mere use of a word, which has led many scholars to question the (often excessive) application of the jargonistic ontological turn. Ontological anthropology encompasses a wide range of different approaches ranging from incommensurable auto-ethnographies to clearly epistemologically inspired methodologies. Years ago, it became a kind of buzzword,³ and according to Kelly,

¹ When it comes to the point about people not making different statements about the same world, but actually speaking about different worlds, was probably first used by Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* when speaking about the before/after moments of a revolution.

² Holbraad and Pedersen, *The Ontological Turn*, 110.

³ Pedersen, “A Reader's Guide.”

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“we don’t know what [the ontological turn] means yet.”⁴ Criticisms extended in various directions. For some authors, the ontological turn said nothing new⁵ or was even an expression of mere academic vanity.⁶ For others, such as Pedersen, it was merely a methodological proposal since “[The ontological turn] is the methodological injunction to keep this horizon perpetually open, including the question of what an object of ethnographic investigation might be [...]”⁷ Even Martin Holbraad changed significantly from a strong version of *Thinking through Things* (2007) to a methodologically oriented one in *The Ontological Turn* (2017). In this article, we will discuss the strong version of the ontological turn, making our own criticisms of some authors for whom ontological distinctions are not sufficiently supported by ethnographic data.⁸ For Killick, “philosophical ideas become an end in themselves, not linked to raising further ethnographic questions or elucidating other social and cultural phenomenon but rather held up as precious jewels to be admired in isolation.”⁹ In this sense, ontology could be a “reified concept of culture”¹⁰ entailing the risk of classifying the relations of social and cultural life in a game of attaching essential labels¹¹ “through the composition, imposition and disavowal of ideal typologies.”¹² In this article, we focus on Philippe Descola’s theoretical proposal as an example of onto-typological anthropology.¹³ Descola¹⁴ has taken to a deep level the systems of differences through which humans inhabit the world, and although he rejects the label ontological turn, his proposal unfolds into a model of deep ontologies, as Holbraad and Pedersen note.¹⁵ This model is not inferred from ethnographic phenomena, established deductively from a sort of transcendental deduction. Hence, whereas Descola is aware of Eurocentric categorization, he fails to detach himself from its philosophical assumptions and therefore extends the divisions and classifications of these assumptions throughout his anthropological elaboration. Indeed, he notes:

[I]t is precisely our attempt to do away with those Eurocentric categories [class, race, gender] and with the colonial project of sucking into our own cosmology peoples who, having lost their lands, their dignity, and their work-force, face the added ignominy of having to translate their ways of life into our own way of life and of being grateful to us for providing them the tools to do so.¹⁶

Descola explicitly claims that he transcends Aristotelian ontology, to replace it with a new one. The essential aim of *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013) [2005] is, in fact, to go beyond the categorical opposition between nature and culture, whose Aristotelian roots he continually demonstrates. Nevertheless, as is manifested in his attempt to categorize and classify within a stable typology, in this anti-Aristotelian struggle, he retains not only Aristotle’s vocabulary but also, and more importantly, his very project. The problems of the significance of classifications and the internal difference of ontologies,¹⁷ as well as “late structuralism’s” obsession with abstract type-concepts,¹⁸ are evident in Descola. In an exercise of intellectual honesty, Descola himself has asked whether the anthropologist is not, in fact, a “masked moderniser who, under cover of pluralism, in fact, restores anthropological science’s guiding function and therefore reinforces the Western in its intellectual

4 Kelly, “The Ontological Turn,” 264.

5 Graeber, “Radical Alterity.”

6 Ingold, “One World Anthropology,” 167.

7 Pedersen, “Strathern and Ontology,” 229–30.

8 See Gose, “The Semi-Social Mountain;” or Cepek, “There Might be Blood.”

9 Killick, “Whose Truth Is It Anyway?”

10 Vigh and Sausdal, “From Essence Back to Existence,” 66.

11 This is the statement made by Scott in “The Anthropology of Ontology;” or Ramos in “The Politics of Perspectivism.”

12 Bessire and Bond, “Deferral of Critique,” 449.

13 We use “onto-typological” to distinguish it from the physically typological anthropology in vogue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which established racial categorizations among human beings on the basis of observable physical appearances. In this text, whenever we refer to typology, we do so from an ontological approach.

14 Descola, *Beyond*.

15 Holbraad and Pedersen, *The Ontological Turn*, 62.

16 Descola, “Composing Worlds,” 436.

17 Scott, “The Anthropology of Ontology.”

18 Turner, “Late Structuralism,” 16.

imperialism.”¹⁹ We answer in the affirmative and show that, indeed, Descola’s typology fails to abandon the representative character of modern philosophy. Without changing the philosophical orientation, this classificatory tendency could be replicated in any anthropological exercise.

Descola is trapped in certain philosophical assumptions, which do not stand up to phenomenological analysis, since phenomenology “destabilize[s] those unexamined assumptions that organize our pre-reflective engagements with reality,”²⁰ making it possible to overcome what Jackson considered to be “ideological trappings”²¹ in anthropology. Holbraad and Pedersen recognize that the ontological turn represented “an odd but exciting displacement of the phenomenological project, a sort of parallel theoretical universe that *also* allowed us to study ‘things as they are’, but in a subtly different and somehow more radical way,”²² for it overcomes “a blind spot shared by postmodernists and phenomenologists alike: namely, their tendency to caricature the significance of concepts and their relations to the world anthropologists are charged with understanding.”²³ But what if the ontologists themselves had not overcome this blind spot? What if the ontological concepts and categorizations are prior to the encounter with ethnography? This seems to be the case with Descola. Hence, we turn to phenomenology, not only because it has shown its fecundity in the anthropological field²⁴ but also because phenomenology allows us to place in brackets the natural attitude which, as we can see in Descola, is nothing but the sum of philosophical prejudices. In this sense, Descola exemplifies Duranti’s assertion that the “natural attitude” is nothing more than the “cultural attitude.”²⁵

The history of anthropology has demonstrated convincingly that every epistemological or methodological change has both its beneficial and detrimental aspects. Several twentieth-century philosophies have already pointed out the shortcomings of phenomenological approaches, especially concerning questions oscillating around the notions of truth and realities. Being aware of these limitations, we believe that the adoption of Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology of givenness may be beneficial in this case. Jean-Luc Marion’s philosophy goes beyond the borders of metaphysics and is therefore on the same horizon as the representatives of the ontological turn in contemporary anthropology. For Marion, metaphysics has been incapable of understanding that our experience of the other exceeds its conceptualization. The other is irreducible to a concept and that Marion explains this in phenomenological terms. That is, Marion analyzes how our phenomena of experience are constituted. To do so, he criticizes Kantian categories (for trying to establish a series of typologies out of which nothing else is given). Moreover, Marion is a specialist in the philosophy of Descartes, the father of the naturalistic dualism that Descola criticizes in *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Marion’s phenomenology considers Cartesian limitations and thus tries to overcome the very dualism that Descola criticizes. With these antecedents, Marion’s phenomenology stands as a privileged interlocutor to revise the ontological turn, in our case in Descola’s strong version. In this sense, his phenomenology of givenness opens the way to overcoming Descola’s cultural viewpoint in two ways: first, because what Marion calls the “banality of saturation”²⁶ offers the possibility to experience the world without typological boundaries and, second, because the phenomenology of givenness stems from a model of signification and not of representation (which Aristotle and Descola share, as we shall indicate).

In arguing our case, first, we highlight the internal contradiction of Descola’s thought when he continues to embrace Aristotelian categorization even while trying to criticize it. Second, we point out that the basic problem lies in Descola’s transcendental stance, since he does not abandon the representational exercise. Accordingly, we suggest that it is not evident that the Amazonian context (Descola’s field of study) offers a representative model but, rather, that it is possible to recognize one based on signification. Finally, we suggest,

¹⁹ Descola, *La Composition des Mondes*, 116.

²⁰ Desjarlais and Throop, “Phenomenological Approaches,” 88.

²¹ Jackson, “Introduction,” 2.

²² Holbraad and Pedersen, *The Ontological Turn*, 284.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Csordas, *The Sacred Self*; Desjarlais, *Sensory Biographies*; Ram and Houston, *Phenomenology in Anthropology*; Leistle, *Anthropology and Alterity*.

²⁵ Duranti, “Husserl,” 18.

²⁶ Marion, *Visible*, 126.

therefore, that abandonment of the transcendental stance is possible, as the phenomenological tradition had perceived and as the convergence of Ingold's theory of correspondence and Marion's phenomenology of givenness highlights. In this regard, we agree with the argument that phenomenology is necessary for social research.²⁷

2 Aristotelian *Phantomachy*

Descola's criticism of Aristotle unfolds in many areas of his thought and with many concepts. The paradigm of the substantial distinction between nature and culture is striking, but so too is the categorical difference between the domestic and the wild, or between the garden and the forest. Every time a categorical distinction aims to stabilize the world, he *ultimately* attributes it to Aristotle in order to criticize it. We find, for example, in *Beyond Nature and Culture*, an analysis of the category of *aramu*, which allows Descola to show that in non-Western human groups – in this case the Achuar – the domesticated character of certain plants is not so much to be found within them – as an occult quality – as in the relationships we have with them: “So the epithet *aramu* does not denote ‘domesticated plants’. Rather, it refers to the particular relationship that links humans and plants in the gardens, whatever the origin of those plants.”²⁸ Hence, it is no longer the plants that are, strictly speaking, domestic but some kind of relationship that we have with them. We find this same deconstruction of the essence of the “domestic” with the category of the “wild.” Again, there is no plant that is essentially wild, with any substantial property that would make it a “wild” plant. It is always in a relationship that the “wild” of certain plants is found: “Nor is the adjective *ikiamia* equivalent to ‘wild’, in the first place because, depending on the context in which it is found, a plant may lose that quality but also and above all because, in truth, the plants ‘of the forest’ are likewise cultivated.”²⁹ In both cases, it is therefore not an essence (*ousia*) internal to the plants that marks the boundaries between the domestic and the wild, but a relationship that is external to them, a practice that operates on a category of “plant,” which remains ontologically homogeneous: “The terminological pair *aramu* and *ikiamia* thus in no way covers an opposition between the domesticated and the wild. Rather, it applies to the contrast between plants that are cultivated by humans and those that are cultivated by spirits.”³⁰ This same rejection of essential categorization is found in the domain of animality: “So what differentiates forest animals from the animals that the Indians become attached to, as companions, is not at all an opposition between wildness and domestication but the fact that some animals are raised by spirits while others are temporarily tended by humans.”³¹ As a result, he questions the essential distinction between hunting and breeding since, in a sense, all animals are bred.³²

The examples we have used so far stem from a fundamental distinction that underlies them all, that between nature and culture, which lurks in the shadows behind the difference between natural and social spaces, or wild and domesticated plants or animals. In every domain, the substantial distinction between nature and culture dictates the laws of boundaries and categories in the Western world. Furthermore, it determines the boundaries of humanity itself since, in Aristotle's *Politics*, the political and thus cultural character of the human animal (*zoon politikon*) distinguishes it from other animals (*theria*):³³ “From these things therefore it is clear that the city-state is a natural growth, and that man is by nature a political animal, and a man that is by nature and not merely by fortune citiless is either low in the scale of humanity or above it [...].”³⁴

²⁷ Houston, “Why Social Scientists?”

²⁸ Descola, *Beyond*, 39.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 40.

³² Ibid., 50–1.

³³ Lefebvre, “Aristotle.”

³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 2, 1253a1, 9.

In fact, Descola is not wrong for, since its Greek origins, Western philosophy has been characterized by a desire to categorize, to find objective boundaries between beings. Even before Aristotle, Plato, in the *Phaedrus*, was likening the philosopher to a butcher whose role is to cut up reality according to its natural articulations, and therefore according to stable ontological categories that must be found and never created: “That of dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any part, after the manner of a bad carver.”³⁵ However, the consequence of this desire for taxonomy and typology is a fixity of essences which, since they are classified according to an ontological order, always tends not only to their immeasurable difference but also to their hierarchy.³⁶

Certainly, the autonomization of nature and its setting apart as a category and separate field were completed by modernity, mainly by Descartes’ mechanism and his grey ontology³⁷ but also through its Kantian extension. Moreover, even when Descola denounces modernity, he always goes back to Aristotle to bring out the fact that this is where the categorization of nature is to be found: “As we know, it fell to Aristotle to systematize this emerging object of inquiry, to establish its limits, define its properties, and set out the principles by which it functioned. ... in the realm here below, the things of nature are now endowed with an undeniable otherness.”³⁸ Thus, Aristotle is Descola’s privileged adversary, the one whose categorical ontology prevents us from thinking anything that is not given according to the modality of ontological ruptures. For others, outside western cosmologies, the idea of these ontological boundaries, inscribed in being itself,³⁹ is quite exceptional:

Seen from the point of view of a hypothetical Jivaro or Chinese historian of science, Aristotle, Descartes, and Newton would not appear so much as the revealers of the distinctive objectivity of nonhumans and the laws that govern them; rather, they would seem the architects of a naturalistic cosmology altogether exotic in comparison with the choices made by the rest of humanity in order to classify the entities of this world and establish hierarchies and discontinuities among them.⁴⁰

To build a non-onto-typological anthropology, it would therefore be necessary to break with Aristotelian ontology in order to dispense with the substantial categorical ruptures between beings, and phenomenology is perhaps the best way to achieve this. As Jackson points out, “phenomenology is the scientific study of experience. It is an attempt to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy, before it is subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual systematization.”⁴¹

However, Descola’s relationship to Aristotle is more complex than it appears. Certainly, in the first instance, he seeks to challenge ontological ruptures in order to replace them with continuities or gradual evolutions. He always prefers transformation to transubstantiation. But in many aspects, Descola’s anthropology remains Aristotelian and trapped in the Western ontology.⁴² This is clear in three points that impede a phenomenological solution.

First, Descola remains fascinated by taxonomy, by the desire to classify according to strict typologies. Indeed, he states, in the Preface to *Beyond Nature and Culture*, that one of the major objectives of the book: “[...] is to specify the nature of those schemas, elucidate the rules that govern their composition, and work out a typology of their organization.”⁴³ Although the word “typology” does not appear in the General Index of the

³⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 265e, 535.

³⁶ Descola, *Beyond*, 202–3: “To this cosmos saturated a priori with all conceivable beings, Aristotle adds the rigorous hierarchies of his natural history: the genera are fixed, the species are indivisible, and living creatures are arranged in accordance with the degree of their perfection, each in its place in a scala naturae that also takes account of the differences in the functions of the types of souls with which each organism is endowed.”

³⁷ Marion, *Descartes’s Grey Ontology*.

³⁸ Descola, *Beyond*, 54–65.

³⁹ Descola does not distinguish between Aristotelian categories, which are categories of beingness, and Kant’s categories, which are categories of understanding, what Marion does do in *Questions Cartésiennes II*, 300.

⁴⁰ Descola, *Beyond*, 63.

⁴¹ Jackson, “Introduction,” 2.

⁴² Scott, “Cosmochemistry.”

⁴³ Descola, *Beyond*, xviii.

book, Descola uses it when he speaks of the relationships he will reveal.⁴⁴ Similarly, when he distinguishes between animistic, totemistic, naturalistic, and analogical ontologies, they are still presented in terms of the vocabulary of types: “These principles of identification define four major types of ontology [...]”⁴⁵ Certainly, the typology is no longer an ontological typology of things put in relation (human and non-human animals, or natural and social things) but of the relationships themselves. Nevertheless, Descola always seeks to establish a typology:

Whatever the domain organized by those relations—be it kinship, economic exchanges, ritual activities, or attempts to understand the ordering of the cosmos—their range is, logically, far more limited than the infinitely diverse elements that they link together; and that limitation opens up the possibility of a reasoned and systematic analysis of the diversity of relations between existing things. The aim of this would, in the first instance, be to set up a typology of possible relationships to the world and others, be they human or nonhuman, and to examine their compatibilities and incompatibilities.⁴⁶

One might ask whether these relationships have an autonomous existence or whether they are imposed by the observer as a hermeneutical tool.⁴⁷ In any case, they fall under different *types* of relationships: “[...] each of the ontological, cosmological, and sociological formulae that the identification makes possible can itself underpin several types of relationship [...]”⁴⁸

Second, these *types* of relationships are finite in number, just as the logical relationships in Aristotle’s⁴⁹ philosophy or the categories of understanding in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are finite. Certainly, the relationships in question are not strictly the formal logical relationships one finds in Aristotle’s texts. They are extrinsic rather than intrinsic relationships. Yet, they are still and always thought of from the Aristotelian perspective.⁵⁰ Moreover, this typology determines a correlation between modes of identification and modes of relationship, and these modes of relationship, albeit through different paths and mechanisms, fundamentally classify.⁵¹

Third, throughout his text, Descola constantly thinks in terms of representation. Whether it is a representation of otherness, of the world, or of relationships, it is always a representation that emerges. When it comes to determining what helps to create classes or types, representation comes to the fore: “Following the work of Eleanor Rosch, it is now recognized that many classificatory concepts are formed by reference to ‘prototypes’ that condense groups of particular cases that display ‘a family resemblance’ into a network of associated representations.”⁵² However, it is far from certain that these processes must submit to the entirely metaphysical logic of representation, which has been opened up and consolidated by Western modernity to the extent that Heidegger has shown.⁵³ In his representational conclusion, Descola even goes so far as to speak of the representation of a face⁵⁴ which, from a phenomenological viewpoint, should be questioned and even more so in the Amazonian context. The mere fact of thinking in terms of representations frames anthropology within the metaphysics of Western presence.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 94–7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 112–3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 98: “The present book is founded upon a hunch that it is possible to reveal elementary schemas of practices and to sketch a summary cartography of their distribution and their ways of operating. But such an undertaking is only justifiable provided one specifies the mechanisms by which structures are reputed to organize systems and mores without, however, rejecting the hypothesis that it may be possible to analyse human relations with the world and with others in terms of finite combinations.”

⁵⁰ Ibid., 113–4.

⁵¹ Ibid., 240–4.

⁵² Ibid., 98–9.

⁵³ Heidegger, “The Age,” 129–30: “What is a world picture? Obviously, a picture of the world. But what does “world” mean here? What does picture mean? ... With the word “picture” we think first of all of a copy of something. Accordingly, the world picture would be a painting, so to speak, of what is as a whole. But “world picture” means more than this. ... Hence world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth. Wherever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety. The Being of whatever is, is sought and found in the representedness of the latter.”

⁵⁴ Descola, *Beyond*, 340: “[...] the unique representation of a face [...]”

The links between Descola and Aristotle are therefore constant but complex. In his desire to transcend the philosopher, the anthropologist nevertheless retains all the latter's conceptual reflexes: typology, taxonomy, qualitative discontinuities between types of ontology and types of relationship, representation of the world, and the rest. Everything remains attached to Aristotle's categorical philosophy. However, it could have been different if Descola had embarked on the path of phenomenology, and more precisely phenomenology in its hermeneutical sense. In choosing phenomenology, we did not seek to establish a comparison between two systems, much less to highlight the superiority of one over the other. By insisting on its hermeneutic character, that is, on the rejection of classifications and essentialist ordering of experience, phenomenology distances itself from any systemic pretension. Precisely because phenomenology asks radical questions, that is, questions referring to the conditions of experience, we can find a way to address the assumptions not addressed by any discipline. This is its critical and non-systematic character. And in this sense, we appreciate that phenomenology has addressed some questions that Descola has left unattended.

3 Beyond Representation: The Amazonian “Other”

Descola is right when he says that in any attempt to understand the relationships between the different phenomena that inhabit the Amazonian rainforest, it is necessary to go beyond Aristotelian ontology, which entrenches them in ontological categories. However, against Descola, we would argue that phenomenology is the way to achieve this. In order to demonstrate the importance of the crossover between phenomenology and anthropology, we propose to focus on the question of otherness, first, because Descola himself places it at the center of his text: “[...] the project of understanding the relations that human beings establish between one another and with nonhumans cannot be based upon a cosmology and an ontology that are as closely bound as ours are to one particular context.”⁵⁵ Second, and more importantly, the problem of otherness lies at the heart of the ontological turn in anthropology.⁵⁶ Wagner has insisted on the continuity between humans and non-humans in Melanesia.⁵⁷ Howell has shown that the term *beri* (people) in Malaysia applies to humans and non-humans alike.⁵⁸ And Kohn recalls that the term *runa* (person) plays with the boundaries of the human and the non-human.⁵⁹ Even Bruno Latour has taken the category of “non-human” and broken the bounds of a single conceptual framework in which only humans act.⁶⁰ From all standpoints, then, and for several reasons, the question of otherness requires anthropologists to break away from the essentialist conception of the subject and its other because, if the difference between humans and non-humans does not belong to any human *being*, we are obliged to renounce categorical ontology. Indeed, as early as 1947, Leenhart proposed that the New Caledonian term *kamo* should be translated as “character” rather than “person,” to remove its substantial connotation.⁶¹ On this point, at least, the break with Aristotle is necessary.

However, the problem of knowing whether the other is a type of phenomenon or if, on the contrary, should be determined by means of a specific, fixed category, forms part of French phenomenology, at least since Levinas posed the precedence of ethics over ontology,⁶² because love, in Sartre, is a relation between

⁵⁵ Ibid., xviii. Wishing to distance himself from Western thought, Descola nevertheless wants to explain things by “making sense” of them. However, as we see with Marion, thinking about otherness does not involve giving back (which confuses the donation with the system of giving), and neither does it involve reason.

⁵⁶ Vilaça, “Devenir Autre;” Viveiros de Castro, “Who is Afraid?;” Leistle, *Anthropology and Alterity*.

⁵⁷ Wagner, *Anthropology of the Subject*.

⁵⁸ Howell, “Nature in Culture.”

⁵⁹ Kohn, “How Dogs Dream.”

⁶⁰ Latour, “Perspectivism.”

⁶¹ Leenhart, *Do Kamo*.

⁶² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 42–3: “To theory as comprehension of beings the general title ontology is appropriate. ... But theory understood as a respect for exteriority delineates another structure essential for metaphysics. ... We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics.”

subject and object, without two subjects ever really being able to meet,⁶³ and more recently, for example, Derrida felt a certain embarrassment when naked and faced with a cat's gaze.⁶⁴ Reinhard Waldenfels's responsive phenomenology,⁶⁵ introduced to the anthropological audience by Bernhard Leistle,⁶⁶ provides too a meaningful contribution to discussions on the other's gaze and the object–subject trap of epistemology.

In all these phenomenologies, the problem of the gaze plays a key role, but this is particularly the case in Marion's phenomenology, which crystallizes the problem of otherness in the phenomenality of the icon. Certainly, some authors like Taylor have pointed out a certain iconophobia in Amazonian cultures,⁶⁷ but this would only seem to be the case from the standpoint of a typological conception of the icon, with all the religious weight involved, which is considerable. However, if we understand by icon everything that points toward an invisible without it ever penetrating the field of the visible,⁶⁸ all Amazonian art becomes iconic. As Els Lagrou notes: “[...] it is not fortuitous that Amazonian Amerindian art has specialised more in the art of suggestion than in the art of showing and representing.”⁶⁹ Or as Carlo Severi writes, it is “[...] a collection of abstract visual indices in which what is to be seen necessarily calls for an interpretation of what is implicit.”⁷⁰ Marion's phenomenology saves us from yielding to this difficulty of the process of presentification of any representation.⁷¹ Marion succumbs to a typological temptation that pushes him, at first, to classify phenomena according to different types.⁷² In an original text published in French in 1992, he proposed three types: “Phenomena can be classified, according to their increasing intuitive content, in three fundamental domains. (a) Phenomena that are deprived of intuition or that are poor in intuition (b) Common-law phenomena, (c) There remain, finally, saturated phenomena [...]”⁷³ in which there are then two saturated phenomena: “For convenience, one can distinguish two types. (i) First, pure historical events (ii) Such is not always the case for the second type: the phenomena of revelation.”⁷⁴ Later, in the first (French) edition of *Being Given* (1997), he distinguished four types of phenomena, but this typology was subsequently reduced to the binary opposition between objects and events in *Negative Certainties*, in 2010: “So that phenomena manifest themselves according to their distinction as objects (of a phenomenality restricted to the conditions of possibility of our experience) and as events (of a phenomenality without any restriction other than that of the mode of showing *itself* by itself).”⁷⁵ In this desire for typology, Marion would be making the same mistake as Descola who, wishing to distance himself from classical metaphysics and its substantial categories, would nonetheless fall back into them at another level, through qualitative typological boundaries. This phenomenology would therefore not allow anthropology to withdraw from Western ontology.

Nevertheless, Marion's typology leaves room in his phenomenology for a much more original and interesting idea: the banality of saturation. As his work evolves, Marion moves towards the idea that saturation is not a type of phenomena, but a possible interpretation of all phenomena, which allows him to move from typology to hermeneutics.⁷⁶ Hence, the phenomenon does not manifest itself according to its typology but to the way in which the subject to whom it is given considers it:

63 Sartre, *L'être*; Vinolo, “El sujeto amoroso en Sartre.”

64 Derrida, *The Animal*, 3–4.

65 Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other; Phenomenology of the Alien*.

66 Leistle, “The Emergence,” *Anthropology and Alterity*.

67 Taylor, “Voir Comme un Autre.”

68 Marion says in *God without Being*, 17: “The icon, on the contrary, attempts to render visible the invisible as such, hence to allow that the visible not cease to refer to another than itself, without, however, that other ever being reproduced in the visible.”

69 Lagrou, “Perspectivismo,” 97.

70 Severi, *Chimera*, 67.

71 In this sense, we also highlight Derrida's, “Violence and Metaphysics” as a critique of the ways in which otherness has been so theorized that it has almost been reduced to a category.

72 Marion, *Being Given*, 221: “It now seems possible to lay out, if only in outline, a topic for the different types of phenomena.”

73 Marion, *Visible*, 47.

74 Ibid.

75 Marion, *Certitudes*, 276.

76 Vinolo, “El sujeto amoroso en Sartre.”

The banality of the saturated phenomenon suggests that the majority of phenomena, if not all can undergo saturation by the excess of intuition over the concept or signification in them. In other words, the majority of phenomena ... could be described ... as phenomena that intuition saturates Before the majority of phenomena, even the most simple ... opens the possibility of a doubled interpretation, which depends upon the demands of my ever-changing relation to them.⁷⁷

In this text, typology and hermeneutics coexist since the banality applies only to “most of the phenomena.” But in *La Rigueur des choses, entretiens avec Dan Arbib* (2012), this typological limit leaves room for a generalized hermeneutics in which all phenomena are exposed to a double reading, objective or saturated: “The simplest phenomena can already appear as saturated!”⁷⁸ Now, phenomenality is fully subject to hermeneutics, which should have opened up the possibility of continuity between human and non-human gazes: “Everything can then become a saturated phenomenon as long as the manner in which it is given is not closed down into univocal objectivity, as the everyday routine of the world of technology requires it.”⁷⁹ In Marion’s phenomenology, we find a possibility of surpassing ontological typologies and replacing them with gradual boundaries, which are only a possible reading of all phenomena. In doing so, we understand that, in the Amazonian world, an animal, a tree, or a river can become, in the eyes of a human being, an alter ego, since in every emergence of a phenomenon, we can read the counter-intentionality of an icon that compels us. Thanks to Marion’s phenomenology and his idea of the banality of saturation, we can withdraw from ontological categories and the typology they impose on us.

Moreover, it also enables us to avoid the difficulties of representation. As Foucault has abundantly shown,⁸⁰ the representation, until it is a re-*presentation*, necessarily moves in the field of presence, of *parousia*, and thus in the area of the metaphysics of presence and its onto-theological correlate.⁸¹ However, this fantasy of *parousia* deprives us of the manifestation of all that is given in the mode of negativity, namely, of absence or lack. As a result, what becomes unthinkable is continuity between humans and non-humans. It is enough to be convinced of the phenomenality beyond representation, to see the extent to which otherness can be manifested. The phenomenality of the face has two particularities. First, it has a counter-intentionality. Before being what we see, the face is what sees us. In Marion’s words, “The face ... is not seen as much as it [*lui-même*] sees.”⁸² He thus reverses the constitutive situation of the transcendental subject to make him or her a simple witness of what is given.⁸³ It is about not he or she who, by seeing, categorizes the world but, rather, about those of us who feel that we are inscribed in a counterview that obliges us to take a position in relation to it. And this is the situation of the aforementioned Amazonian visibility, which is beyond transcendental and representative.

Yet the phenomenology of the icon allows us, above all, to replace visibility according to representation with visibility according to meaning. Indeed, what do we look at when we look at a face? As Marion notes: “Thus, in the face of the other person we see precisely the point at which all visible spectacle happens to be impossible, where there is nothing to see, where intuition can give nothing [of the] visible.”⁸⁴ In a face, we look particularly at the eyes, and even more at the pupils, which is to say exactly where, in these two black spots, there is nothing to see. Yet, through this invisibility, the face manifests itself, not as a representation (how could it be, since there is nothing to see?), but as a meaning, as a call for the face to manifest itself, but it is only in the response (positive or negative) that we give to it that the call appears as such.⁸⁵ Thinking of phenomenality as meaning and no longer as representation allows access to the whole world of the invisible and of

⁷⁷ Marion, *Visible*, 126.

⁷⁸ Marion, *Rigor of Things*, 91.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Foucault, *Les Mots et Les Choses*.

⁸¹ Derrida, *Grammatologie*.

⁸² Marion, *In Excess*, 114.

⁸³ Ibid., 116: “If there must be intentionality here – which can be discussed, since there is no constitution – it will not be a question, in all cases, of mine on that of the other, but of his or hers, on me.”

⁸⁴ Ibid., 115.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 116: “The face (that cannot be looked at) of the look of the other person only appears when I admit – submitting myself to him or her – that I must not kill. Certainly, I can kill the other person, but then he or she will disappear as a face, will be congealed

absence, which is so important in Amazonian cosmologies.⁸⁶ Here, we find a solution to the paradox that Viveiros de Castro poses when he speaks of non-representational images.⁸⁷ It is sufficient to think of what can be seen as meaning, which is a matter of hermeneutic phenomenology, rather than metaphysical representation.

Marion's phenomenology of givenness offers, therefore, a response to the two challenges posed by Descola in proposing an anthropology that is not trapped in Western conceptions. On the one hand, through the banality of saturation, it enables breaking down of typological boundaries to replace them with phenomenological continuities; on the other hand, through the paradoxical visibility of the icon, it overturns the representational model and replaces it with the model of signification, which gives access to the entire field of absence and hence to spirits and the dead. Phenomenology of givenness thus becomes a fertile tool for thinking without typologies. And, as we shall explain, it is a phenomenological orientation with roots in the non-representational inspiration of the phenomenological tradition, while also being aligned with anthropologies like Ingold's, which affirm the secondary nature of the subject.

4 Toward a Non-Onto-Typological Anthropology

Phenomenological orientation in anthropology implies a return to "things as they are," as Jackson's *Things as They Are* (1996) suggestive title showed. What is at stake is reflection on our relation to life since "the lifeworld is never reducible simply to theoretical efforts of fixation and typification."⁸⁸ This is the orientation of Tim Ingold, for whom anthropology is a philosophy taken outside the walls of the library, one in which we listen to human and non-human voices. "To do this kind of philosophy is, in effect, to make a conversation of life itself," he says.⁸⁹ We shall now focus on Ingold for two reasons. First, because this kind of anthropology, the conversation with life, is rooted in the non-representational phenomenological tradition, as reflected in Husserl's interest in the *Lebenswelt* toward the end of his life, and second, this is the standpoint from which Ingold has criticized Descola's typological elaboration.

Tim Ingold radically rejects the imposition of typologies in anthropology and understands them as a fundamental impediment to understanding, in Western thought, of worlds that do not submit to its concepts: "But in Western anthropological and psychological discourse such involvement continues to be apprehended within the terms of the orthodox dualisms of subject and object, persons and things."⁹⁰ In order to reveal our relationship with life in all its purity, Ingold attempts to free himself from any categorical apparatus which, by freezing life within the boundaries of categories, would negate it. Thus, while protecting this relationship from any categorical device, he constructs a conceptual correspondence that makes it possible to think of inhabiting the world according to three elements: "[...] in my triad, intention is replaced by attention, the subject by the verb, and human agency by the doing-in-undergoing of humanifying. Together, these three components add up to what I call correspondence."⁹¹ With this new tool, and without imposing Western categories on a world that escapes them, Ingold allows us to think about relationships with the world in a non-dualistic way.

into a simple object, precisely because the phenomenality of the face forbids its being possessed, produced, and thus constituted as an intentional object."

⁸⁶ Mitchell equates the visual with the verbal, ignoring the unique capacity of the discursive to access negativities. In *Picture Theory*, 160: "[...] from a semantic point of view, from the standpoint of referring, expressing intentions and producing effects in a viewer/listener, there is no essential difference between texts and images and thus no gap between the media to be overcome by any special ekphrastic strategies."

⁸⁷ Viveiros de Castro, "Crystal Forest," 20: "All told, this empirical non-iconicity and non-visibility seems to me to point to an important dimension of the spirits: they are non-representational images, 'representatives' that are not representations."

⁸⁸ Desjarlais and Throop, "Phenomenological Approaches," 92.

⁸⁹ Ingold, "One World Anthropology," 158.

⁹⁰ Ingold, *Environment*, 47.

⁹¹ Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 152.

However, if this correspondence is to be effective, the hylomorphic scheme must be abandoned. Take, for example, Ingold on the example of agentivity. Granting agentivity to a world of living things implies that we assume that there is some capacity for action in a whole set of inert objects and that we reanimate all the things we are facing. This is a problem that was created in the context of Aristotelian hylomorphism: “to rewrite the life of things as the agency of objects is to effect a double reduction, of things to objects, and of life to agency. And the source of this reductive logic lies in the hylomorphic model.”⁹² Deeply embedded in Western thought, this hylomorphism presents, according to Ingold, an original imbalance that leads to a certain obsession with classification: “Form came to be seen as imposed by an agent with a particular design in mind, while matter, thus rendered passive and inert, became that which was imposed upon.”⁹³ As a result, agentivity would be a quality that we assign to certain objects, but the fact of speaking of objects inexorably leads to the hylomorphic reductionism that Ingold constantly denounces.

In *The Perception of Environment* (2000), Ingold devotes an entire chapter to phenomenology and particularly to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. He commends the former for his critique of subject-object dualism and the latter for his emphasis on the primacy of the body in the way we inhabit the world. Thanks to Heidegger, he finds that there is no need to assert the primacy of a subject that would be able to make the world intelligible through categories: “Heidegger ... reverses this order of priority. For a being whose primary condition of existence is that of dwelling in the world, things are initially encountered in their availableness, as already integrated into a set of practices for “coping” or getting by.”⁹⁴ Merleau-Ponty is cited when it comes to thinking of existential cognitive attention, even before the presence of the dualism we have mentioned: “For Merleau-Ponty our knowledge of the body as a physical thing – as a mere conduit or target of the mind’s attention – is grounded in a more fundamental awareness, pre-objective and pre-conscious, which is given by the existential condition of our total bodily immersion, from the start, in an environment.”⁹⁵

This recourse to phenomenology has not gone unnoticed by Viveiros de Castro who recognizes the interest of these theses, although he criticizes Ingold’s work as a whole because it “owes a great deal to phenomenology.”⁹⁶ However, the problem with perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro’s remarkable proposal) is precisely that it is the example used by Ingold to denounce Descola’s theoretical presuppositions and his typological and classificatory imprisonment. Viveiros de Castro defines perspectivism as an “ethno-epistemological corollary of animism,”⁹⁷ a statement with which Descola, according to Ingold,⁹⁸ would agree. That would entail, he says, the assumption that the human is still the measure of all possible knowledge: “This idea, that the human is the species form of the subject point of view, is the defining feature of what has come to be known, following Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, as perspectivism.”⁹⁹ For Ingold, this means that Descola, following in the footsteps of Lévi-Strauss, conceives our relationship to the environment according to certain nativism. The classificatory schemas are in fact assimilated to mental structures, which inevitably leads Descola down the path of hylomorphic typology. As Desjarlais and Throop point out, “using terms that invoke clear and rigid differences ... runs the risk of suggesting that these elements are quite distinct in life, when in fact they are words we use to categorize situations that are terrifically complicated, fluid, and manifold in their features.”¹⁰⁰ In Ingold’s view, phenomenology enables us to free ourselves from these schemes. This view would seem all the more valid when phenomenology, from its Husserlian roots, has been in constant dialogue with a hermeneutic openness to human experience.

⁹² Ingold, “Textility,” 97.

⁹³ Ibid., 92.

⁹⁴ Ingold, *Environment*, 169.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Viveiros de Castro, *Canibal*, 46.

⁹⁷ Viveiros de Castro, “Deixis,” 143.

⁹⁸ Ingold, “Museum of Ontology,” 13.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Desjarlais and Throop, “Phenomenological Approaches,” 93.

In 1929, Lévy-Bruhl sent Husserl a copy of *The Primitive Mentality*. It is likely that he attended Husserl's inaugural lecture at the Sorbonne on 23 February 1929 and that they met immediately afterward.¹⁰¹ Lévy-Bruhl was wondering if there was a universal mentality common to all human beings and whether it unfolded according to various evolutionary moments. He recognized then a certain continuity between a prelogical and mystical mentality, which strongly influenced Husserl's understanding of what belongs to the "natural, primordial attitude."¹⁰² This absence of conditioning in relations to the world (or the primordial attitude) would push Husserl to conceive of anthropology as a true "phenomenological reduction."¹⁰³ In this regard, Husserl points out that all anthropology rests on the presupposition of acceptance of the world. Initially, however, this led him to a certain rejection of anthropology that seemed to forget this fundamental presupposition and succumb to a kind of "naïveté."¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, this first allegation (the existence of a first world) was to become an opportunity with Husserl's interpretation of Lévy-Bruhl's *The Primitive Mentality*, as expressed in a letter he sent to Lévy-Bruhl in March 1935. Here, Husserl envisages the possibility that anthropology could become a method aiming to achieve transcendental reduction by treating human beings as "conscious subjects"¹⁰⁵ of their relation to the world. Signaling the distance between our representations of the world and the world of life, Husserl points out in the Vienna lecture in 1935 that "our environing world is a spiritual structure in us and in our historical life"¹⁰⁶ and that cultural forms are merely reorientations of our natural attitude. In his letter to Lévy-Bruhl, Husserl explores the possibilities that anthropology offers to achieve a point that precedes the construction of world representations, which is to say a pre-representational moment: "Naturally, we have known for a long time that every human has his 'world-representation,' that every nation, that every supranational cultural grouping lives, so to speak, in a distinct world as its own environing world, and so again every historical time in its 'world'."¹⁰⁷ These are precisely the representations that can be set aside through anthropological research, to open the way to a pure relation to the world. Husserl thereby anticipates, through phenomenology, the problem pointed out by Ingold, namely that the important thing is not so much to think in terms of an ontological approximation to our relation to the world but as an ontogenetic approximation to it.

The problem, then, is to know whether our experience of the world is given according to an innate typological scheme or, on the contrary, it must be linked to a certain hermeneutic plasticity. In favor of the first option, we find the work of Lévi-Strauss, whose innatism has been criticized by Ingold.¹⁰⁸ Lévi-Strauss's structuralism does not presuppose that we find, in the primitive peoples, the lack of history that Husserl made the occasion for transcendental reduction. From Lévi-Strauss's point of view, structure is the leitmotif of the social sciences, even more than processes. Anthropology, in this case, does not focus so much on flows as on the explanation of innate structures. The problem, for Lévi-Strauss, is to account for the fact that different cultures face the same quests that give rise to the same modes of expression. Lévi-Strauss would have rejected phenomenological openness to concentrate on the differentiating binarity of the unconscious of all human beings. This is the very heart of structuralism:

For structuralism, this opposition does not exist; structuralism does not treat one as abstract and the other as concrete. Form and content are of the same nature, amenable to the same type of analysis. Content receives its reality from its structure, and what is called form is a way of organizing the local structures that make up this content.¹⁰⁹

Accordingly, the anthropologist's task is to uncover these structures through the study of different cultures, so the entire research will be guided by the two poles of the differentiating binarity. Hermeneutics is therefore

¹⁰¹ Moran and Steinacher, "Husserl's Letter."

¹⁰² Ibid., 7.

¹⁰³ Sato, "Reduction," 3.

¹⁰⁴ Husserl, "Phenomenology and Anthropology," 499.

¹⁰⁵ Husserl, "Letter," 2.

¹⁰⁶ Husserl, "Vienna Lecture," 317/272.

¹⁰⁷ Husserl, "Letter," 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ingold, "Museum of Ontology."

¹⁰⁹ Lévi-Strauss, "Structure and Form," 126.

denied upon initiation of a thought of forms. Descola, whose PhD Dissertation was supervised by Lévi-Strauss, tried to explain these structures across a typology, which could be described as a kind of bricolage: “In societies where, as among the Achuar, one does not have a canonical and coherent system of interpretation of the world, one must then tinker with the structures of representation of practices from a body of disparate evidence: a custom of avoidance, a magic song, or how bushmeat is used.”¹¹⁰ However, this classification retains the nativism of its master, since interpretive patterns exist before we interact with the world. Scott therefore points out, in relation to Descola that, “his turn to cognitivism is an effort to revise Lévi-Strauss’s Kantian notion of a ‘conceptual scheme’ and arrive at a scientifically grounded model of what mediates between structure and action.”¹¹¹ But to admit this schematism is to submit to dualism. Descola, following the path traced by Lévi-Strauss, closes the door to the hermeneutic path and reproduces the orthodox dualist device that Ingold criticizes. If Lévi-Strauss’s standpoint can be described as that of a *Cosmotheoros*,¹¹² Descola’s typological path leads to a desire to construct a definitive anthropology, which contradicts the epistemological status of anthropology itself. As Sato notes, Lévi-Strauss “returns to the objective prejudice,”¹¹³ and according to Ingold,¹¹⁴ Descola’s animism is a kind of objectification of nature projecting panhuman categories onto the animal world.

Descola is aware of these criticisms by Ingold. The underlying problem is that he is not prepared to waive the “[...] elementary categories of social practice to think through the links of humans with natural beings.”¹¹⁵ And what is more, in an explicit effort to correct Ingold, for whom no form is ever permanent,¹¹⁶ he speaks of “fixed forms”¹¹⁷ that do not affect the individuals but species.

It would seem that typological orientation has become, in Descola, an authentic representation of the world. In this sense, it corresponds to what Duranti calls “cultural attitude.”¹¹⁸ In other words, what for Husserl was destined to be put in brackets, the natural attitude, is in fact a culturally constructed attitude. As Ingold concludes in a discussion with Descola in Grenoble in 2013, the latter’s typological orientation is nothing but “naturalist ontology.”

One might say that he observes the world from a sort of ontological paradise from which we are all excluded, we who are imprisoned by our respective philosophies of being [F]rom his position of transcendental observer, he could thus affirm that there are different manners of composing a unique world. But this transcendental posture is in fact one of the bases of what he calls naturalist ontology [W]hatever he might say, he adopts as a neutral position a certain ontology: naturalism.¹¹⁹

The claim for typology made by Descola distances us from anthropology, if by anthropology we mean, with Ingold, a “philosophy with the people in”¹²⁰ since it imposes fixities on them that they do not share. However, because of its limitations, it imposes on us another path, which is perhaps the one Husserl referred to when he spoke of the formation of the spiritual structure of the world, from a non-typological perspective. One answer might be suggested in Husserl’s letter to Lévy-Bruhl: “[...] and to understand this humanity as having, in and through its socially unified life, the world, which for it is not a ‘world-representation’ but rather the world that actually exists for it.”¹²¹ We find, therefore, at the very origin of phenomenology, the possibility of a world without representation.

¹¹⁰ Descola, *La Nature*, 11.

¹¹¹ Scott, “Cosmochemistry,” 4.

¹¹² Merleau-Ponty, *Passivité*.

¹¹³ Sato, “Reduction,” 15.

¹¹⁴ Ingold, *Environment*, 106.

¹¹⁵ Descola, *Beyond*, 123.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 416, note 18.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹¹⁸ Duranti, “Husserl,” 18.

¹¹⁹ Ingold in Descola and Ingold, *Être au Monde*, 54.

¹²⁰ Ingold, “Editorial,” 696.

¹²¹ Husserl, “Letter,” 3.

This is the path taken by Ingold, in his commitment to empiricism and hermeneutic phenomenology, a path that leads him to think of what we could call a non-representational phenomenological anthropology. Indeed, spiritual structure is the cornerstone of Ingold's anthropology, which is why he often quotes Roy Wagner, who had already analyzed the possibility of non-imposed symbolic meanings in relation to life: "[...] the life of a person is the sum of his tracks, the total inscription of his movements, something that can be traced out along the ground."¹²² In this sense, it is possible to understand Ingold's non-representational character of the spiritual structure. Although he uses the triad *attention*, verb, and the doing-in-undergoing of humanifying, and even if this gives the impression of a categorical typology, it is a question of attitudes of recognition more than of formal patterns.

Finally, we have Marion, who places at the heart of his phenomenology of givenness, the gifted, who phenomenizes the gift by recognizing it as such. Hence, the gifted subject receives himself as a subject in recognition of his position as a receiver or witness. By contrast with the primacy of the Cartesian transcendental subject, the subject in Marion's phenomenology, is always secondary.¹²³ Similarly, in Ingold, although this is not exactly thematized with the vocabulary of phenomenology, it is through a correspondence with life that human beings become humanized. In both authors, the imposition of categories has disappeared in favor of recognition of gift and correspondence. As we have already shown, Amerindian graphic design in the Amazon recognizes the gift through an iconic poverty that aims to limit representational possibilities.¹²⁴ Ingold adopts the same process when speaking of the simplicity of lines to restore the meanings (and not representations) of the world that arise in their tracings, in the interweaving of fabrics, or in paths created by the repeated walking of human or non-human beings.¹²⁵ These examples show how necessary it is to surpass representation through meaning, as Husserl proposed, and to offer an anthropology that takes as its model phenomenology in its hermeneutic approach or, in other words, a non-onto-typological anthropology.

5 Conclusion

Throughout this text, we have considered phenomenology as a critical and non-systematic path. In this sense, we consider that it could not be included in Descola's classification of the four ways of ordering experience (animist, totemist, naturalist, and analogist) but rather, as a prior instance that questions any categorization of experience. Therefore, if Descola suggests that the naturalist perspective does have something to add to anthropology, but only if considered as one of a number of ways of ordering the world,¹²⁶ the phenomenological approach would find its own contribution to anthropology in the opening of the hermeneutic path, that is to say, in the questioning of the construction of typologies. When onto-typological anthropology insists on affirming the differences between regimes of representation it often tries to point out the incommensurability between them¹²⁷ or even a "war of worlds."¹²⁸ At a time when the notion of ontological turn is increasingly prominent in academic discussion, it is more necessary than ever to propose non-onto-typological anthropology from the phenomenological perspective, not only because this ontological turn may be just a trendy coinage that reflects a certain "academic vacuity"¹²⁹ but, also and above all, because it divides and segments human experience as if it were possible to speak of an ontological confrontation. Ingold offers a glimpse of a path, the essence of which remains to be traced, that would steer anthropology away from the typology model, from classification and, in short, representation and take it along the paths of meaning and

¹²² Wagner, *Symbols*, 21.

¹²³ Vinolo, *Subjetivaciones contemporáneas* – Alain Badiou y Jean-Luc Marion.

¹²⁴ García & Vinolo, *El resplandor de la selva invisible*.

¹²⁵ Ingold, *Lines; Life of Lines*.

¹²⁶ Descola, *Beyond*, 80–8.

¹²⁷ Povinelli, "Radical Worlds."

¹²⁸ Viveiros de Castro, "Who is Afraid?," 9.

¹²⁹ Ingold, "One World Anthropology," 167.

hermeneutics, which are much more conducive to the absence of categorical boundaries that we find in Amazonian cultures, and to the processes of *anamorphosis* that secondarize the subject to whom the phenomena appear.

If we are to think about our life in the way Ingold saw it, the structures of ontology – even when in the form of an inverted anthropology – must be abandoned and preference given to phenomenological thinking and particularly to that of a hermeneutic phenomenology which replaces ontological categorical ruptures with interpretative gradations. Moreover, Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness is especially suited to playing this role and should therefore be given its proper place in anthropology, not only because it breaks with the primacy of the transcendental subject to replace it with a gifted subject, witness, and donee of what is given, but also because, through the banality of saturation, it breaks with qualitative ruptures to leave to the subject, in a process of generalized *anamorphosis*, the task of finding the viewpoint from which he or she will be able to receive the totality of what is given. In doing so, far from constructing phenomena according to different ontological rules, he or she submits to the law of the phenomenon to reveal its manifestation. The phenomenology of givenness, by not posing an opposition to this or that ontology, but with the same gesture of ontology, therefore opens up a particularly fruitful field to anthropology. If, as Viveiros de Castro notes, anthropology is nothing more than a “[...] discursive anamorphosis of the ethnoanthropologies of the collectives studied,”¹³⁰ Marion's phenomenology, which has gone as far as possible, at the heart of phenomenology, in tackling the problem of the discursive anamorphic against the presentification of the image,¹³¹ should serve as a compass.

Funding information: Authors state no funding involved.

Conflict of interest: Authors state no conflict of interest.

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¹³⁰ Viveiros de Castro, *Canibal*, 42.

¹³¹ Vinolo, Jean-Luc Marion.

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