

## *Thinking, Longing, and Nearness: In Memoriam Bernd Jager (1931–2015)*

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*To dwell on earth in a human way means to enter into a rhythm that alternates between work and celebration, between conquering obstacles and seeking to come into the revealing presence of what surrounds, undergirds, and overarches us. To enter into this rhythm means to move back and forth between, on one hand, the fields and orchards that demand our labor and, on the other, the contemplative center of the garden where we seek to come into a full and festive presence of our world. Neither the orchards nor... the garden can be dispensed with, nor can the one be substituted for the other. Only a rhythmic going back and forth between the labor-demanding periphery and the contemplative center can change chaos into cosmos and transform wilderness into a fully human world.*

—Bernd Jager (2007, p. 420)

Phenomenological psychologist Bernd Jager died in Montreal on March 30, 2015, at the age of 83.<sup>1</sup> For many readers of *Phenomenology & Practice*, Jager was a greatly admired scholar who regularly attended and presented at the annual International Human Science Research conferences. His home institution, the Department of Psychology at the University of Quebec at Montreal, hosted the 2012 conference in which Jager played an instrumental role in organizing and hosting that event.

Born in the Netherlands in 1931, Jager studied agronomy at the Royal Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Deventer and became an agricultural assistant in West Africa to the renowned physician and philosopher, Albert Schweitzer, whose kindness and intellectual acumen inspired Jager to study psychology, in which he earned a doctorate from Pittsburgh's Duquesne University in 1967. At the time, Duquesne was a world center of phenomenological research, and one could study with such eminent phenomenological and hermeneutic thinkers as Amedeo Giorgi, J. H. van den Berg, and Adrian van Kaam, who was Jager's doctoral advisor (Jager, 1967; Giorgi, Barton and Maes 1983, p. 323).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an obituary, see B. Mook (2015), A memorial dedication to Prof. Bernd Jager, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 46, 227–28.

<sup>2</sup> Van Kaam and Giorgi were both tenured Duquesne faculty members, and van den Berg was a visiting Duquesne professor in 1967, 1970, 1973, and 1978. I thank Max van Manen for locating van den Berg's years at Duquesne; these dates are provided in Dreyer Kruger's (1985) edited collection, *The Changing Reality of Modern Man: Essays in Honor of J.H. van den Berg* Johannesburg: JUTA. I also thank Christian Thiboutot, one of Jager's colleagues at the University of Quebec at Montreal, for reading a draft of this essay and making factual corrections.

Beginning in the 1950s, van Kaam was an important figure in founding humanistic psychology and eventually developed “a comprehensive, empirical-experiential theory of human and spiritual unfolding” (Muto and Martin, 2009, p. 356; van Kaam 1987). Van Kaam joined Duquesne’s Department of Psychology in 1954 and played a central role in developing “a psychology of the human person faithful to lived human experience and behavior, a psychology liberated from nonhuman categories and distorting philosophical assumptions, either rationalistic or positivistic” (Smith, 1983, p. 261). In Jager’s efforts to understand and renew the symbolic, spiritual, and mythical dimensions of human being-in-the-world in ways appropriate for our current time, one recognizes the considerable impact that van Kaam had on Jager’s thinking (e.g., Jager, 1998, 2007).

Jager was also influenced by the ideas of Dutch psychiatrist J. H. van den Berg, who founded the discipline of *metabletics*, the systematic study of how, over historical time, human experience, understanding, and being-in-the world shift and take on different lived expressions that, in turn, provoke different, often conflicting, human worlds (Jager, 2011; Mook, 2009). In editing and co-translating van den Berg’s provocative metabletic study of the two laws of thermodynamics (van den Berg, 2004), Jager wrote in his introduction that the radically new scientific and technological world partly founded by these laws “could not be fully analyzed in terms of material causes and their effects but must be understood in terms of a fundamental shift in the relationship between human beings and their world” (Jager, 2004, p. 41). This theme of lived relationships and their constructive intensification was a signal theme for both van den Berg and Jager. In a commentary on van den Berg’s life work, Jager (2011, p. 35) quoted his contention that “All thinking and longing seeks to bring the other person or the other thing nearer” (van den Berg, 1983, p. 202; also see Giorgi, 2015). This concern with lived connectedness was central to Jager’s efforts to understand how people and their worlds might be drawn together more closely. “All exploration,” he wrote, “becomes at the same time also self exploration; all revelation concerning the world also becomes self-manifestation. The ‘what is this’ has as its correlate a ‘who am I?’” (Jager, 1971, p. 214).

By the 1960s, Duquesne’s philosophy and psychology departments had become a major international hub for phenomenological research, particularly after a doctoral program in psychology was established in 1961 and Amedeo Giorgi joined the psychology faculty in 1962. Bringing to the program “a strength and emphasis for rigorous empirical research following a phenomenological approach” (Smith, 1983, p. 269), Giorgi was a co-editor of the four remarkable volumes of phenomenological and hermeneutic research that he and his Duquesne colleagues assembled from 1971 to 1983 (Giorgi, Fischer, and Von Eckartsberg, 1971; Giorgi, Fischer, and Murray, 1975; Giorgi, Knowles, and Smith, 1979; Giorgi, Barton, and Maes, 1983; also see Cloonan and Thiboutot, 2010). At the time, these collections were unique in their existential-phenomenological emphasis, and Jager contributed chapters to all four.

Though Giorgi’s research was grounded in an exacting scientific, phenomenological method, he recognized the importance of other stylistic and methodological approaches to phenomenological work, including Jager’s creative hermeneutic perspective. Stunning in their topical and methodological range, these four Duquesne volumes all included sections incorporating interpretive studies, with volumes 2–4 giving this work its own topical headings: Thus, in volume 2, we find “Explorations within the Phenomenological Attitude;” volume 3 offers a focus on “Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Psychology;” and in volume 4, “Hermeneutics and Phenomenological Psychology” is featured. The research focus of all four volumes is well described in volume 1 when the editors phrase the common theme as a question: “How can we

approach and describe the phenomena of human life such that man the human being is revealed as such?” (Giorgi, Fischer, and Von Eckartsberg, 1971, p. 87). As I suggest below, seeking an answer to this question was the main task that Jager set himself throughout his scholarly career.<sup>3</sup>

### Discovering Jager’s Writings

I began this tribute to Jager with his Duquesne connection because it was via the first and second volumes of the Duquesne series that I first learned of his work. In the early 1970s, I was a doctoral student in the School of Geography at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. At the time, the two largest graduate programs at Clark—geography and psychology—were establishing an interdisciplinary doctorate in “environment-behavior research,” which was to be grounded in the standard quantitative, natural-science model that then dominated the social sciences. In both disciplines, however, a humanistic alternative had begun to appear, and one professor keen on this possibility was Clark psychologist Joseph de Rivera, who sponsored what he called “Thursday phenomenology lunches.”

Partly through these weekly discussions, I discovered the possibilities of phenomenological research. I vividly remember one momentous Thursday when a psychology master’s student from Worcester’s Assumption College came to his first lunch gathering. He had studied with Assumption psychology professor Frank Buckley (who would join the Duquesne psychology faculty in 1971) and brought to our gathering the just-published first volume of the Duquesne Series, edited by Giorgi, William Fischer, and Rolf Von Eckartsberg (Giorgi, Fischer, and Von Eckartsberg, 1971). I eagerly asked to peruse the book and was astonished to discover a group of researchers actually conducting “empirical” phenomenological work. At that point in my academic career, I had chosen phenomenology as my future research direction but was stymied by the question of how, in terms of real-world phenomena relevant to social science, phenomenological research might be conducted. Here, suddenly, was a clear answer, and one immediately important directive was Jager’s chapter, “Horizontal and Verticality: A Phenomenological Exploration into Lived Space” (Jager, 1971).

This chapter was crucial for my thinking because it indicated how geographical and spatial phenomena like verticality and horizontality could be examined phenomenologically, using lived dialectics as a conceptual structure. In addition, the chapter illustrated a mode of methodological openness whereby research could become “a confident outward and inward movement, a mobile exploration of the world [that] cannot be grasped as a sum total can be grasped but... must be infinitely approached. Exploration stands in the service of *presence* to the world rather than in that of conquest” (Jager, 1971, pp. 212–213).

Beginning with this chapter, Jager’s use of “lived binaries” like verticality and horizontality became a major theme in many of his writings, particularly his attention to geographical and temporal motifs like dwelling and journey, body and city, city and cosmos, and work and festivity (e.g., Jager, 1975, 1976, 1983, 1985, 1997, 1998, 2010). One insightful example was Jager’s

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions of Jager’s oeuvre and tributes to his memory, see the special “memorial issue” of the *Journal of Metablitica* 5(10; summer/autumn), 2015. For a collection of essays honoring Jager and a bibliography of his writings, see C. Thiboutot, (Ed.), *Essais de psychologie phénoménologique-existentielle: Réunis en hommage au professeur Bernd Jager*. (Montreal: *Cercle interdisciplinaire de recherches phénoméologiques*, 2007); one particularly illuminating essay in this collection is by Rojcewicz.

elucidation of theoretical effort, which he depicted as an intellectual journey encompassing several “spatial” movements: *away from* the taken-for-granted; *out toward* the unknown but discoverable; *finding* the discoverable; and *returning homeward*. Making reference to ancient Greece, Jager explains:

Theorizing made its first appearance as *an arduous journey to a place of divine manifestation in the service of community*. It required first of all a leaving behind of the familiar and comforting sounds and sights of habitual life and the acceptance of the discipline imposed by the requirements of a strenuous voyage. Once the theorist had achieved the object of his journey... he faced *the task of finding and following the path that would lead him from the festive heights back to the plane of everyday existence*, which he shared with his fellow citizens. *Only such a return would complete the task* of the theorist... and link up the festive events of a faraway place to the everyday concerns nearby. (Jager, 1983, p. 157)

### **A Dissertation Epiphany**

Realizing that much of human experience could be understood phenomenologically via lived structures conceived dialectically was a point of view also highlighted in the writings of phenomenologist of religion Mircea Eliade (1957) and humanistic geographers Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), Anne Buttner (1976, 1980), and Edward Relph (1976). But Jager’s portrayal of lived opposites was more thorough in that, for each binary, he located and described a multivalence of lived meanings—for example, his applying the dwelling-journey dialectic to a continuum of human experiences ranging from daily getting-around routines to the experience of travelling to intellectual and spiritual exploration (as in the passage quoted above). This interpretive multivalence would come to have important personal significance as I began to write my dissertation.

In 1975, Giorgi, Constance Fischer, and Edward Murray published the second volume of the Duquesne series, which included Jager’s superb chapter, “Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling” (Jager, 1975). In his very first sentence, Jager emphasized the multi-dimensional resonance between the geographical and existential, between the experiential and the symbolic: “There appears to exist a persistent and deep inter-relationship between the themes of intellectual, theoretical or spiritual effort and those of traveling, exploration and sightseeing. The very language of intellectual effort constantly refers us to the road” (Jager, 1975, p. 235). Jager’s exhaustive explication of the dwelling-journey relationship in this chapter became important for the thematic structure of my dissertation, which was a phenomenological explication of a phenomenon I called “everyday environmental experience”—“the sum total of a person’s firsthand involvements with the geographical world in which he or she typically lives” (Seamon, 1977, p. 6; Seamon, 1979/2015, pp. 15-16). Through a phenomenological explication of some 1,500 first-person observations provided by committed members of three “environmental experience groups,” I eventually arrived at three overarching themes—*movement*, *rest*, and *encounter*—that delineated a common lived core of everyday environmental experience. The dissertation’s first section on movement examined the habitual nature of everyday environmental behaviors and actions, and the second section on rest considered people’s attachment to place, giving particular attention to at-homeness and sustaining affective relationships with places and environments. The book’s third

section on encounter explored the multifaceted ways in which people make or do not make attentive contact with their surroundings and identified such modes of awareness as obliviousness, noticing, watching, and heightened contact.

What my dissertation owed to Jager was its concluding section, which examined the lived relationships and interlinkages among movement, rest, and encounter. The writing problem I faced here was locating a conceptual structure that would allow for a dynamic interconnectedness among these three separate lived structures. One afternoon, stymied with no ideas at hand, I happened to remember Jager's chapter and reread it quickly. I recognized immediately that the key to my integration dilemma was the dialectical relationship between movement and rest and associated modes of potential encounter. Via Jager's encompassing portrayal of the dwelling-journey relationship, I saw that my findings reflected the same dialectic but mostly at the mundane, everyday lifeworld level. With this understanding in mind, I realized that movement and rest are not separate phenomena but integrally intertwined in a continuous lived dialect that leads to a series of resolutions. Just as Jager said, rest is associated with center, home, and at-homeness, whereas movement is related to horizon, reach, and unfamiliarity. The deepest experience of rest becomes dwelling, which involves a world of regularity and repetition grounded in care and concern. I quoted Jager's mindful depiction of dwelling as a "round world":

The round world of dwelling offers a cyclical time—that is, the recurring times of seasons, of the cycles of birth and death, of planting and harvesting, of meeting and meeting again, of doing and doing over again. It offers a succession of crops, of duties, generations, forever appearing and reappearing. It offers a place where fragile objects and creatures can be tended and cared for through constant, gentle recurring contacts. (Jager, 1975, p. 251)

In contrast, movement is associated with such active qualities as search, exploration, alertness, and exertion toward an aim. Through movement, human beings extend their knowledge of distance, place, and experience. They become aware of geographical and existential horizons obscure or undisclosed before. In this sense, movement is associated with journeying. Again, I quoted Jager, who described how the journey incorporates a lived sense of forward and back, past and future, and moves them outward along a path toward confrontation with places, experiences, ideas, or creative insights:

Journeying forces [the] round generative world of [dwelling] into the narrow world of the path. The path offers the progressive time of unique and unrepeatable events, of singular occurrences, of strange peoples and places to be seen once and possibly never again.... Journeying breaks open the circle of the sun and the seasons and forms it into a linear pattern of succession in which the end no longer seems to touch the beginning and in which the temporal world shrinks to a before and after, to backward and forward. Here the beginning is no longer felt to lie in the middle but instead appears placed behind one's back. The future makes its appearance straight ahead, making possible *confrontation* (Jager, 1975, p. 251).

I ended my discussion by highlighting Jager's claim that, because of their dialectical interconnectedness, movement and rest each incorporate aspects of the other. Through movement and journey, people leave the unself-conscious taken-for-grantedness of their place or situation and extend their horizons. Through rest and dwelling, people return to familiar places and collect

themselves in preparation for future ventures outward again. Both movement and rest each requires its opposite in order for itself to be so. In part because of this continual lived exchange of opposites at a wide range of environmental and situational scales, human beings gain both stability and serendipity in their ordinary and extra-ordinary lives (Seamon, 1979/2015, p. 134).

### **Dwelling, Place, and Environment**

In the early 1980s, I made contact with Jager directly because philosopher Robert Mugerauer and I had begun organizing special sessions on “environmental and architectural phenomenology” at the annual meetings of the Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS). In 1981, we invited Jager to participate in a session on “Phenomenologies of Place,” for the SPHS meeting held at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. His presentation was entitled “Dwelling: An Exploration in the Human Sciences,” and eventually became the chapter, “Body, House and City: The Intertwinings of Embodiment, Inhabitation and Civilization,” published in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, a 1985 compilation of revised SPHS presentations and additional articles edited by Mugerauer and me (Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985). Two years earlier, in the fourth volume of the Duquesne series, Jager had published a complementary chapter entitled “Theorizing and the Elaboration of Place,” which was said by the volume’s editors to illustrate “the creative tensions and efficacy of a hermeneutic emerging out of meditating thinking that recapitulates the originary and embodied mutual implication of theorizing and the mundane realm of human praxes” (Giorgi, Barton, and Maes, 1983, p. 151).

Because my central research interest is understanding more precisely how material, spatial, and environmental dimensions of lifeworlds contribute to human well being, these two chapters were revelatory because they located and described, in a particularly approachable way, the lived nature of inhabitation as grounded in an integrated, unspoken dialogue between lived bodies and worlds at hand. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of perception, body-subject, and embodied place (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968), Jager wrote:

The process of inhabitation cannot be instantaneously accomplished. We are seldom immediately at home in a new place.... “To inhabit” refers to a kind of having (*habere*) that permits us a radical access to material objects and allows us to treat these objects as extensions of our own body. To approach inhabitation in this way means to be able no longer to make such a radical distinction between flesh and matter, between bodies and mere things. Bodily existence floods over into things, appropriates them, infuses them with the breath of life, draws them into the sphere of daily projects and concerns. A fully inhabited world is at the same time also a fully embodied world. (Jager, 1985, p. 219)

What Jager provides here is a lucid phenomenological explication of the lived body’s integral role in facilitating inhabitation, at-homeness, and dwelling. First of all, the typical lifeworld is a habitual, taken-for-grant ordinariness sustaining and sustained by the everyday environments of which it is part. Everyday things, actions, events, and places support and depend on a lived extension of our bodily presence, allowing us to do what we need to do in a mostly automatic, unnecessary-to-plan manner. Who we are and what we do ground and are grounded via material, spatial, and built dimensions of human worlds. Jager makes this point most succinctly when he writes that place “is a giver of access to a world” (Jager, 1983, p. 169).

For me what remains even more exceptional about these two chapters is Jager's relating this lived-habituality-in-place to particular modes of human being as grounded environmentally and architecturally (Seamon, 2010). He wrote:

The home, the factory, the hospital, the laboratory, the city no longer appear in the first place as finished material things, as containers of people and their activities. Rather, these buildings themselves make their appearance as a certain embodied grasp on the world,... as particular manners of taking up the body and the world, as specific orientations disclosing certain aspects of a worldly horizon. The first architecture then appears to be that of taking up a particular bodily attitude. Architecture is then at first a certain manner of standing or sitting or lying down or walking....

To enter a building, to come under the sway of a certain choreography, means at the same time to become subject to a certain disclosure. Like a certain bodily attitude, a building opens a particular world of tasks, of outlooks, of sensibilities.... In this intimate alliance with the body, the building itself has become a particular access to the world. I no longer am contained within a thinglike construction, no longer remain within the building as one thing enclosed within another. Rather, I have drawn this building into the sphere of my body. I have appropriated it and have drawn it around me like a coat on a windy day to inspect a certain sight or to face a particular task. (Jager, 1983, pp. 154–156)

In this marvelous interpretation, Jager provides an extraordinary account of how the lived body outreaches to accommodate and appropriate its surrounding world, including its architectural and “palatial” parts. Via lived bodies, selves meld with worlds beyond. As claimed by Merleau-Ponty (1968), the environment is no longer just something only separate and visible but also “a source of vision and light according to which we see” (Jager, 1985, p. 218). In inhabiting place, we automatically find ourselves present and engaged in a particular way that could not be otherwise: “To enter and finally to come to inhabit a house or city means to come to assume a certain stance, to surrender to a certain style of acting upon and of experiencing the surrounding world.... (Jager, 1985, pp. 218–19).

In both *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) and *The Visible and Invisible* (1968), Merleau-Ponty pictured the lived relationship between people and world as a kinship and mutual intertwining. Jager's invaluable contribution is to describe this lived people-world intimacy in a clear, everyday way whereby the lived body neither envelops world nor world envelops lived body. Instead, there is a lived “co-envelopment” supporting or stymying an environmental and place wholeness and fluidity. Via this unique interpretive language, the dualism of people and world has been circumvented, and two analytically and instrumentally (human being separate from world) has become one existentially and experientially (human-being-immersed-in-world. Jager indicates that, on one hand, we must better understand how the sensory, perceptual, and motor dimensions of the lived body contribute to place making, inhabitation, and human well being. On the other hand, he suggests that we also must pay heed to the complementary role of architectural, environmental, spatial, and platial elements and qualities. It is this dynamic communion between the “flesh” of the body and the “flesh” of the world that is the fulcrum of possibilities for an environmental and architectural phenomenology.

## Thresholds and Human Habitation

Since its start in 1990, I have been co-editor and editor of the triannual journal, *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, which in 2009 marked its twentieth year of publication. To celebrate this benchmark, I assembled a special autumn issue of essays by several key figures in the field, including phenomenological geographer Edward Relph and phenomenological philosophers Karsten Harries and Jeff Malpas. Jager generously contributed an essay entitled “Thresholds and Inhabitation,” which highlighted a theme in which he was particularly interested throughout his scholarly career (Jager, 2009).<sup>4</sup> Jager envisioned thresholds as a distinguishing feature of human civilization because they both keep apart and join together human commonalities and human differences. “A threshold,” he wrote, “constitutes the ultimate foundation of a human world reflected in all building projects from the most primitive cave or hut to the most magnificent palace or city, all of which we might even consider as mere variations on the theme of the threshold, the essential function of which is to hold separate and distinct worlds together” (Jager, 2009, p. 8). On one hand, the threshold “guards an inhabited domain” and thereby helps sustain what Jager regularly called “the workaday world” of practicality, employment, and material subsistence. On the other hand, Jager related the threshold to “the festive world,” whereby we “come more fully into the presence of self, world, and others” (Jager, 2011, p. 43).

In a 2007 semi-autobiographical essay, Jager described a consequential childhood experience that kindled his lasting interest in thresholds (Jager, 2007, pp. 395-398). In the small Dutch village where he grew up, there lived an eccentric man unkindly called “John the Nose” because of his unusually shaped face and head. Most villagers saw this man as odd and dimwitted. Jager and the other village children regularly harassed and embarrassed him. One evening at dinner, having encountered the jeering children, Jager’s father explained that “there was no absolute way to measure the worth of a person and that we therefore could never be entirely sure who might be the real fools or sages of our village” (Jager, 2007, p. 396).

His father’s reprimand was eye-opening for the young Jager because he suddenly realized that situations different from his own may be significant sites for understanding and discovery: “I had entered an engrossing dialogue with an entirely new and different world that stood in sharp contrast to my own” (Jager, 2007, p. 396). He continued:

It seemed that the power for things to reveal themselves was intimately connected with our ability to take a distance from our certitudes and with our willingness to see the existing world as we understood it against the background of *another* world. For the first time in my life, I touched upon the mystery of the renewal of our world, which takes place when the guest begins to see his own world against the background of that of his host and vice versa.... Understanding our world is therefore not simply a question of our mind wholly absorbing and grasping a preexisting and unchanging natural reality. It rather is a question of countering the quotidian world of force and habit with a contrasting, festive world of myth and poetry. Such understanding perpetually crosses the bridge spanning the distance between two adjoining worlds. (Jager, 2007, p. 397)

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<sup>4</sup> This essay was originally part of Jager’s keynote talk, “Toward a psychology of homo habitans: A reflection on cosmos and universe,” presented at the annual International Human Science Conference held at Ramapo College, Mahwah, New Jersey, June 2008. A full version of this talk was published as Jager (2010).

For Jager, this bridging action incorporates thresholds, which divide and bind human beings just as they separate and join worlds of difference (Jager, 2009, p. 10). Though it shelters the thing, place, or situation as they are unto themselves, the threshold is also a “place of meeting whose beauty and order inspire hosts and guests to open their hearts and minds to one another” (Jager, 2010, pp. 242–243). Likewise, a threshold is present when one is writing an article or preparing a lecture. One begins with an incoherent set of partial, uncertain ideas that must be clarified and integrated to make a coherent whole. As Jager explained,

Beginning such a task always places us before a chaotic tangle of half-understood, confused and mutually incompatible images and ideas that must be disentangled and properly arrayed before we can find a place for them within the “cosmic” whole of a lucid essay or speech. This labor of tidying, ordering, and embellishing serves the purpose of text or speech the way our guests enter a properly ordered and welcoming home. Writing or speaking in an intelligible and orderly fashion can thus be understood as a creative, welcoming act that derives its ultimate inspiration from creation myths that tell of the “ordering” and the coming into being of the human world. (Jager, 2010, p. 243)

Like host and guest, an author and reader or a speaker and listener potentially meet via a threshold of understanding. Thresholds not only join commonality or difference together via physical closeness but also offer a potential site for discovery and deepening self-awareness. In this sense, Jager’s writings are thresholds themselves whereby the quotidian becomes surprising, and the everyday is understood in new, unexpected ways. As Jager discerningly explained: “We do not seek the dissolution of distance between self and the other but rather its miraculous transformation from an abyss that cannot be bridged into a place of encounter and mutual revelation” (Jager, 2011, p. 46).

Just as Jager first discovered the threshold’s transformative possibilities through an empathetic engagement with “John the Nose,” so we might unearth practical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual means to broach the other and thereby strengthen mindfulness and care. The task, he emphasized, is to

contribute to our understanding of all practices, whether ancient or recent, whether indigenous or foreign, that invoke the sacred distance of the threshold while evoking the appearance of the *other*. Such practices include, besides prayer, meditation, and the remembrance of the dead, the craft of writing and the hermeneutic task of meditative reading. They include the arts of painting, sculpting, and drawing, together with those of pantomime and theatre. They include singing and dancing and all forms of making music. Each of these practices places us before a door to which we have no key and that can be opened only from the other side and by an *other*. (Jager, 1998, p. 107)

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