Toward a Theory of Whiteness and Racial Habit

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To my mother, who gives me courage,
and who instilled in me the values of thinking well and being good to others

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CHAPTER ONE

Building a Critical Philosophy of Racial Habit

In many ways the problem of race is a problem of whiteness. This insight is nothing new. It has been the theme of over a century of writing by black and brown authors who, as is sometimes argued, can see the problem for what it really is because they can see whiteness for what it really is.[1] Only in recent decades has scholarly attention to whiteness grown into a multi-disciplinary and multi-racial enterprise concerned with the systematic critique of whiteness. Philosophers have joined critical race theorists and whiteness scholars to assemble tools to better understand the phenomenon of whiteness so that we may better understand and contend with a racial world order that systematically and predictably underserves non-white people.

Among folks thinking critically about whiteness today, there is a broad consensus—as there is in critical race theory more generally—that whiteness as it functions in places like the U.S. developed its most familiar forms during the consolidation of European modernity. Beyond this basic consensus there are a range of ways we might understand this development. Whiteness is, of course, a racial classification, and as such it faces all the same metaphysical challenges that confront the more general questions of defining 'race.' But it is much more than a classification. Though whiteness is one among many racial categories, it stands apart from the others in important ways. When a racial world order is created in the name of white supremacy, whiteness takes a very different shape than its non-white counterparts. It therefore warrants a distinct analysis.

Whiteness has been theorized in a variety of ways. It is often conceptualized as a political tool.[2] It has been characterized as a type of property that carries special entitlements and

[1] See, for example, Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* [1892], (New York: Dover 2016); W.E.B. Du Bois, "Souls of White Folk," in *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil,* (New York: Dover Publications, 1999), 17–29; James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* [1955], (Boston: Penguin Random House, 2012); Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* [1933] (New York: Vintage Classics, 1990); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); David R. Roediger, ed., *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White* (New York: Schocken Books, 1998).

[2] For three somewhat different ways of thinking about whiteness as a political tool, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1991); Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 2009)

protections.[3] Whiteness is also a personal identity that bears a social status and a set of privileges, as well as a willful ignorance about that status and those privileges.[4] Whiteness is frequently described as invisible, as normative, and as hegemonic. Most recently it has come to be understood as habitual, which is not wholly distinct from these other conceptualizations but is one that helps to explain and pull together the dimensions of whiteness being theorized in these other ways.

This dissertation advances a critique of whiteness as habit. Although some efforts have already been made to connect race and habit, those efforts include crucial oversights. I have therefore taken up the task of building a more comprehensive analysis of racial habit that will fill those gaps. I will return to the scholarly motivation below. Before I do, I want to note that the interest in this project is not purely academic.

My concern to explore and develop a working conception of habit for race theory derives from an unrelenting sense of urgency to call out the highly adaptive maneuvers of white supremacy. For instance, Florida governor Ron DeSantis recently signed a bill into law that prohibits public and private institutions from making white people feel "discomfort" when teaching about history or anti-discrimination practices. [5] A reactive manifestation of what Robin DiAngelo (2018) has aptly named 'white fragility,' the bill is part of a broader ongoing political backlash against Critical Race Theory. The issue is not with Critical Race Theory, properly so-called, which is a movement in legal scholarship that challenges the received wisdom of civil rights discourse through a critique of the professed ideals of law and their relationship to racial power. Rather, the moniker is being appropriated as a catch-all by many republican congresspeople and members of the media to refer to any curriculum that teaches about the history of anti-black racism, genocide, and colonial oppression.

Of course, the point of demonizing Critical Race Theory is in the service of protecting white supremacy. This much would, of course, never be admitted publicly by those engaged in this racial project. Indeed, they may not even recognize it as their true motivation. The alleged reason for excluding lessons on race, or even lessons invoking race, from school curriculum is that it

[3] Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, No. 8 (1993): 1707–1791.
[4] See, for example, Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1988); Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Charles Mills, "White Ignorance," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* ed. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), 13–38.
[5] "Governor Ron DiSantis Signs Legislation to Protect Floridians from Discrimination and Woke Indoctrination," April 22, 2022, https://www.flgov.com/2022/04/22/governor-ron-desantis-signs-legislation-to-protect-floridians-from-discrimination-and-woke-indoctrination/

unjustly demonizes white students and perpetuates myths about the inherent moral depravation of white people. The real reason this backlash is happening right now, as critical race theorists suggest, is that the elevated race consciousness of the last ten years—what some are calling a third reconstruction and which gained momentum with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement—is posing a real threat to the future of white supremacy.[6]

This piece of legislation, called the 'Individual Freedom' bill, is said to protect the "freedom from indoctrination" by prohibiting teaching about this country's racist past in a way that elicits "discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race." The race neutrality of that language should not mislead, as this bill is designed to protect white feelings, and to make it harder to teach and talk about the racial dynamics that have defined this country since its inception. Similar political initiatives abound throughout conservative-led regions of the country, including a call by Texas educators to have 'slavery' rebranded to 'involuntary relocation.'[7] I bring up these examples because one of the central implications of this dissertation is that white discomfort, far from being an unwarranted wrong, is crucial to moral racial transformation. I arrive at that conclusion through a critique of whiteness that foregrounds the role of habit in the creation, and potential transformation, of the racial order.

The purpose of the present chapter is to motivate the project and provide an overview of its main claims, philosophical methodologies, and theoretical commitments. Section one explains the need for a concept of habit in race theory, introduces my methodological orientations, and identifies the main issues and guiding questions that animate my work. Section two states the race-theoretic commitments that I bring to this dissertation, and section three offers a rough sketch of the concept of habit I will be working from. In section four I return to the issue that warrants my own intervention, this time locating it more squarely within the literature on race and habit. Section five outlines six advantages of a theory of racial habit, which also serves to further explicate the concept of habit I introduced briefly in section four. The sixth and final section gives an overview of the remaining chapters.

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[6] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "The Predictable Backlash to Critical Race Theory: A Q&A With Kimberlé Crenshaw," interviewed by Jon Wiener, *The Nation*, July 5, 2021, text, https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/critical-race-kimberle-crenshaw/

[7] This initiative was ultimately struck down. See Adela Suliman, "Texas Education Board Rejects Proposal to Call Slavery "Involuntary Relocation," *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/01/texas-board-education-slavery-involuntary-relocation/

1. Project Overview

A sufficiently worked-out concept of habit is valuable for race theory for many reasons. It helps to resolve some of the standard difficulties facing critical race theorists, including sorting out the complex relationship between racial ideation, embodiment, and social structures. It provides a bridge between structural accounts of race and racism and the lower-level forces that sustain them, accounting for the stubborn persistence of these structures despite the widespread public disavowal of racism. And habit is particularly well suited to explain features that have come to be associated uniquely with whiteness, including white invisibility and white privilege. A clearer sense for the role of habit in sustaining and contesting systems of racial meaning can also lend itself to more intelligent and effective strategies for combating racial injustice, for instance, by illuminating interventions that do the work rational argumentation and legal enactment have so far failed to do.

A proper understanding of race and racism must take into account the role that habit plays in the creation and contestation of racial meaning. More specifically, the turn to habit is an important hedge against certain risks of theoretical overreach and oversight. The dominant theoretical approach to race in the last 40 or so years has been structural. It understands racial groupings as political inventions and instruments of power, and it emphasizes racism as principally residing in institutional arrangements that differentially privilege and disadvantage the populations we call 'races.'

The structural approach is valuable for many reasons. It answers questions about how racial inequality can persist in an avowedly non-racist, liberal egalitarian society, and it gives us a language to talk about racial injustice without getting mired in debates about private intentions. By locating racism in the outcomes of our practices rather than the intentions of individual racist agents we can explain the persistence of racial inequality and begin the work of diagnosing and correcting the imbalances.

The power and insight of this form of critique notwithstanding, the structural approach has certain limitations. Structural understandings of racism focus on consequences and outcomes, pointing out the ways that institutions can generate unequal outcomes that track race without individual ill-will or conscious intentions. But emphasizing structural racism risks losing sight of individual agency, making it harder to address questions of accountability and responsibility. If we

stray too far from individuals and bodies we leave an explanatory gap with respect to the particular forces that sustain racial power.

This shift away from racism as individual moral failing and toward racism as embedded in social institutions and practices has been a productive one, but attending to racism as a structural phenomenon makes it easy to lose sight of vital lower-level dynamics and forces. We are liable to forget the way race is lived and the role that individual human agency plays in sustaining racial inequity, as well as the role individual agency plays in resisting and overcoming racial oppression. Linda Alcoff expresses the concern that accounts of structural racism "can be inattentive to the micro-interactions in which racialization operates, is reproduced, and is sometimes re-signified,"[8] and should be supplemented by subjectivist approaches to understanding race "that begin from the lived experience of racialization [to] reveal how race is constitutive of bodily experience, subjectivity, judgment, and epistemic relationships" (Alcoff 2006, 183). An adequate diagnosis and prescriptive program will need to include an analysis of the micro-level processes that sustain the structures—processes that can speak to individual and collective responsibility, and that address whiteness in its historical specificity.

Returning to individuality and experience—as a complement to the structural critique, not as an obscurantist replacement for it—foregrounds important questions that might otherwise go unaddressed. The lived experience of race and the exercise of individual human agency are irreducibly bound up with the operation of those racializing structures, as both sustaining and resistant forces. How bodies create meaning has implications for the constitution of race, and habit is fundamental to meaning-making activity. A responsible return to the individual therefore appeals not just to the conscious attitudes and behaviors that sustain oppressive power relations, it appeals also to the unconscious and preconscious habits that are notoriously difficult to catch sight of and correct.

To supplement the well-chronicled social, economic, and political marginalization of non-white people under conditions of white supremacy, the present work will elaborate on the less familiar affective, epistemic, and existential dimensions that come to the fore when we think about race through the lens of habit. But what conception of habit affords the most productive encounter

[8] Here Alcoff is actually describing objectivist approaches to understanding *race*, not structural approaches to understanding *racism*, though I take her point to apply across categories. Just as objectivist and subjectivist analyses of race are not mutually exclusive and can be interpreted as different levels of description (macro and micro), so too with structural racism and certain microprocesses of perception and cognition.

with this slippery subject? Philosophers working on race tend to draw from one of two prominent approaches to habit coming out of the 20th century. On the one hand we have an understanding of habit articulated by Merleau-Ponty in his investigation of embodied perception. On the other hand we have the understanding of habit developed by the American Pragmatist John Dewey that forms the basis of his transactional socio-ontology. These two accounts of habit are not radically different from one another, though they do have different emphases owing to the divergent goals of the philosophers who articulate them.

The work ahead will focus particularly on what might be called 'white habit' or 'white habituation,' using a mode of critical phenomenology rooted in Merleau-Ponty's notion of habit as orientation, a Deweyan-pragmatist ontology of transaction, and a broadly Du Boisian approach to critical race theory. Bringing these resources together will issue an understanding of habit that illuminates the underappreciated aspects of contemporary racial practices. The approach I'm advancing is not without its critics. Part of the burden of this dissertation will be to defend a phenomenologically-informed understanding of racial habit against methodological objections which hold that phenomenology isn't sufficiently critical to do the work of race theory.

The central point of contention that this dissertation will address comes from contemporary philosopher Shannon Sullivan. Sullivan develops an account of white privileged habit that attempts to answer questions social epistemologists and phenomenologists are also working on—questions about how whiteness is lived and transformed in the post-civil rights era, and how that bears on larger systems of racial meaning. Sullivan answers these questions by drawing on resources in pragmatism and psychoanalysis, to the exclusion of a more explicitly phenomenological perspective. I agree with Sullivan that a proper understanding of white supremacy requires attending to the habitual dimensions of racial practice, and I think her work contributes valuable insights as far as it goes. However, I think she leaves important theoretical terrain undeveloped.

In her 2006 book, *Revealing Whiteness,* Sullivan presents whiteness as a set of learned but unconsciously enacted habits that perpetuate systems of white domination. Her understanding of white habit is built in part from the theoretical infrastructure of her earlier work, *Living Across and Through Skins* (2001). It is there that Sullivan develops her pragmatist-feminist understanding of the subject-world relation, of which Deweyan transactional experience and habit are central fixtures. Although Sullivan acknowledges certain virtues of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, she ultimately rejects it as a candidate framework for thinking about embodiment and race because

of issues she sees with his operative concepts. Sullivan argues that Merleau-Ponty's reliance on the notions of projective intentionality and bodily anonymity presuppose an ethically solipsistic and ahistorical subject. She further argues that the inadequacy of these concepts renders the associated account of habit fundamentally suspect, leading her to exclude this more explicitly phenomenological perspective on habit from her view of whiteness. Sullivan writes:

> [The] notion of projective intentionality, combined with the assumption of the body as a neutral commonality shared by all people in the some way, prevents Merleau-Ponty from breaking completely free of a problematic understanding of bodies as atomistic, solipsistic, and domineering (Sullivan 2001, 65).

I argue that this objection rests on a partial misunderstanding of these concepts, which when properly conceived play an important role in understanding processes of racialization, and are in fact presupposed by some of Sullivan's own theoretical claims.

Similar defenses of Merleau-Ponty have been made in response to Sullivan's objection, though unsuccessfully, as I will demonstrate in chapter three.[9] What's more, despite promising to enrich our understanding of white privilege through a pragmatist concept of habit, Sullivan's critique of whiteness is more focused on defending a psychoanalytic account of the racist unconscious than it is on illuminating the operations of racial and racist habit. Given her true emphasis, Sullivan's exclusion of a phenomenology of habit seems somewhat inconsequential to her arguments. However, I believe Sullivan undersells the role of habit in constituting selves and worlds and so misses crucial insights. If we take seriously the primacy of habit, something Dewey and Merleau-Ponty both do, then we also must take seriously the extent to which 'ordinary' habit—habits that operate at the preconscious or subconscious level—structures our racial world and constitute whiteness. Sullivan makes promises about the advantages of white privilege in terms of habit but fixes most of her analysis on the unconscious, underdelivering on those promises. Although I find much to be admired in Sullivan's work and I don't wish to contest her general understanding of the racist unconscious, the cursory treatment of habit and the refusal of phenomenology renders her critique of whiteness incomplete.

There has been surprisingly little engagement with Sullivan's work on race apart from laudatory mentions, and her concern about phenomenology's critical import has yet to be

[9] See Gail Weiss, "The Anonymous Intentions of Transactional Bodies," Review of *Living Across and Through Skins*, by Shannon Sullivan, *Hypatia* 17, no. 4 (Autumn, 2002): 187–200.

sufficiently answered. Terrance MacMullan's book, *Habits of Whiteness* (2022), addresses itself to Sullivan, but his analysis remains strictly within a pragmatist framework and is more focused on supplementing her work with a genealogy of the concept of whiteness than on deepening her understanding of white habit. Helen Ngo, who writes on racism and habit from the phenomenological perspective, references Sullivan but makes no attempt to critically engage with her objection to Merleau-Ponty (Ngo 2017, 80–86). Linda Alcoff has also written extensively on phenomenology and race, though her critique of whiteness isn't directly focused on habit, and where she does attend to the habitual dimensions of race she does not address Sullivan's concerns (Alcoff 2006, 2015).

The general questions animating my inquiry are questions I share with many of these other scholars: What can a theory of habit tell us about the making of whiteness? What can it reveal about the distinctions between different modes of racialization? What are the moral, epistemic, and political implications of a theory of racial habit? Inquiring into these questions leads to metaphilosophical challenges that demand attention before they can be fully answered. In order to address these general questions adequately, it is important to take up the more specific questions that organize my project here. Starting from an understanding of racial habit rooted in Deweyan transactional socio-ontology, and taking Sullivan's worries about phenomenology seriously, I ask: What, if anything, can phenomenology contribute to a critique of whiteness as habit?

In pursuing answers to these questions, I advance a critical phenomenology of racial habit that reveals two insights regarding how we ought to understand race and racism. First, it establishes that habit is a mechanism of racialization in the sense that individual and collective habits (including perceptual, affective, cognitive, and motor habits) exist in a reflexively constitutive relationship with racial categories. We can thus identify the particular habits of whiteness that are causally and performatively bound up with privilege and supremacy, and envision methods for reconfiguring those habits for the better. Sullivan and others have begun this work already, though I will argue that the insights afforded by a study of racial habit have yet to be fully realized.

Second, my dissertation establishes that it is not only the types of habits embodied by differently racialized groups that make the meaning of those groups, it is also the ability to be habituated in and by social environments. This second conclusion historicizes habit at a deeper level than we find in the existing literature. It does this by showing that the enabling features of habituation are not equally available across racial lines, and that this is a constitutive feature of de

facto racial hierarchies. The differential ability to cultivate habits and to accrue the psychological, physiological, and affective benefits of habituation is a phenomenological asymmetry in our lived experience of race that constitutes a harm over and above the wrongs of individual racist habits. I give the name 'anti-social habit' (not to be confused with tendencies toward reclusion and isolation) to those individual and collective habits that eventuate in this phenomenological asymmetry.

My aim in this dissertation is to show how the benefits of habituation are unwittingly hoarded by people in dominant subject positions—with a special focus on whiteness—to the effect of further consolidating power and placing undue burdens on the already vulnerable. To account for the normative dimensions of anti-social habit, I will extend the Deweyan conception of habit to include a phenomenological reading that links habit with being at-ease and at-home in the world. With this fuller account in hand, and emphasizing the vital role of habit in human functioning and flourishing, I will consider accounts of non-white embodiment characterized in terms of bodily alienation, fragmentation, and dis-ease.

While I argue that habituation is vital to the stability of self and world, I also caution against regarding habituation as an unqualified good. Central to my argument is the observation that habit is both an enabling and inhibiting force in social life. It enables by economizing activity, shaping desire and will, forming the foundation of skillful action, and engendering a sense of familiarity and affordance. In these ways habit gives structure to organic social life and is an indispensable component of human flourishing. The crucial role of habit in human life testifies to the problem of white anti-social habit. However, in other respects habit can frustrate efforts at personal and social change for those who are habituated. This occurs when habits becomes too deeply sedimented. Habituation inhibits by locking a person into certain orientations and behavioral patterns that become resistant to critical reflection and reconfiguration. In this respect, white anti-social habit is not only a problem *of* whiteness, but a problem *for* white people. I thus see two problems with anti-social habit: 1) it involves "phenomenological resource hoarding," which occurs when a home for some comes at the cost of home for others, and 2) it results in a home that is a source of ignorance, self-deception, and world-closure for those who do belong.

Through my analysis of anti-social habit, I articulate and prescribe an attitude of ambivalence toward what phenomenologists call the condition of 'being at home in the world.' The ambivalence stems from the fact that, while being at home in the world affords a certain stability essential to the flourishing of social organisms, making the world a home depends on being

habituated to a degree that can also result in profound unfreedom. Not only does anti-social habit result in oppressive conditions for those who are alienated from hegemonic social space, this mode of habituation also has epistemic, moral, and existential disadvantages for those who are in its grip. I arrive at this conclusion by considering home not principally as a location or space, but as a relation. The home-relation is not an unqualified good, but must be contextualized in order to determine whether it is freedom-enhancing or freedom-inhibiting.

I will argue that the freedom-inhibiting aspects of a home issue not only from the particularities of the home, but from the degree of habituation that can sometimes attend the condition of being at home. For instance, white supremacist 'homes' are obviously freedom-inhibiting for those at the receiving end of racist oppression, but they are also freedom-inhibiting for those who are unable to recognize how their own habits contribute to an oppressive situation. I take this to be the principal concern of Shannon Sullivan and others who take the neo-Deweyan approach to white habit. From this perspective, one might be inclined to say that the problem of home, if there is one, is entirely bound up with the nature of the home itself (e.g. it's racist, sexist, etc.). According to this way of thinking, if the inhabited world were unproblematic, there would be no need to see or attend to the particular habits that contribute to the ease of being at home. But I want to make a stronger claim that this, and one that is supported by both the Deweyan and Merleau-Pontian conceptions of habit (though it is most clearly illuminated by Merleau-Ponty). I will argue that the problem of being at home can also stem from the degree of habituation. In other words, it is possible to be too 'at-ease' in the world, even if that world is otherwise unproblematic. In light of this ambivalence thesis, I end by considering the value of phenomenological disruption as an ongoing form of social praxis and recommend that critical racialists explore political strategies for disrupting and replacing white anti-social habit.

A critical phenomenology of racial habit gives depth to existing accounts of how particular habits sustain racial domination and privilege, and it goes beyond those accounts by attending to how racial domination and privilege affects white and non-white people in the habitual register. The harms of white habit extend not only to those on the receiving end of these abuses. Certain harms—though different in nature—can also be said to accrue to the perpetrator. I argue that we are worse, and therefore worse off, when in the grip of white habituation.

2. Critical Racialism[10]

One of the claims I will make in this dissertation is that the way white folks habitually perceive and interact with the social world is a constitutive feature of whiteness. This way of talking about whiteness may sound peculiar, and calls upon me to clarify my orientation toward some basic issues in race theory. My approach is rooted in the later work of W.E.B. Du Bois but involves widely shared commitments common among a variety of other theoretical sources.

First, I am a 'racialist.' I don't subscribe to the sense of this term that makes it nearly indistinguishable from racism or crudely essentialist race-thinking, but rather, to a sense that renounces those classical forms of racialism in favor of a critical form. As I use the expression, 'classical racialism' refers to "modes of race-thinking that sort and rank human populations in ways that mark them for differential treatment" and is "the approach that openly defined European modernity's orientation to social difference (and much else) from the late 1700s through the middle of the twentieth century, and that underwrote the scramble for Africa, the attempted genocide of America's native peoples, and the Holocaust" (Taylor and Madura 2023, 296). Critical racialism, by contrast, "accepts race-thinking while declining to employ it in the classical ways. Racialism becomes critical when, for example, it uses the concept of race to track the effects of structural racism or to organize resistance among the victims of racial oppression" (ibid.).

I adopt the classical-critical distinction in order to mark the distance between my own race-thinking and the problematic sort described above, while at the same time signaling that criticisms of race-thinking as such are premature and in need of qualification.[11] I accept that 'race' is a useful theoretical concept and that critical racialism can avoid the problems of invidious race-thinking. I am skeptical of claims that the ultimate aim of critical race theory is to abolish race, or that eliminating all references to race in public, political, or scholarly discourse is necessary to fighting racial oppression.[12] At a minimum, I endorse something like what Chike Jeffers calls 'political

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[10] This section is adapted from a framework first developed by Paul C. Taylor and Lisa Madura, "Racial Habit" in *The Routledge International Handbook of New Critical Race and Whiteness Studies*, ed. Rikke Andreassen, Catrin Lundström, Suvi Keskinen, and Shirley Ann Tate (New York: Routledge, 2023): 295–307.

[11] For an accessible account of the classical-critical distinction, see Paul C. Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction,* 3rd edition*,* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2022), chapter 2.

[12] The abolitionist strain of thinking can be seen, for instance, in Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, eds., *Race Traitor* (New York: Routledge, 1996). The most prominent advocates of eliminativism include Naomi Zack and K. Anthony Appiah. See, e.g., Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (New York: Routledge, 2002) and K. Anthony Appiah "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections" (The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 1994). Abolition and eliminativism might be the right strategies, but they are at a minimum not obviously right, and I can't debate this point here.

constructionism,' which uses critical race-thinking to track manifest patterns of social advantage and disadvantage.[13]

Second, I am a 'contextualist.' I understand race to be an historically malleable social formation that, wherever it appears, involves attaching meaning to bodies and bloodlines. However, I take the particular meanings and practices involved in racial formation to be context-dependent. Because racial practices vary across social contexts, this means that race theory must attend to the workings of race in particular settings. Sometimes the relevant settings are confined to particular regions or nation-states, as when we distinguish U.S. racial politics from its analogues in Brazil or the United Kingdom.[14] But often the relevant context is the broader sociocultural formation that includes the geographically dispersed, transnational and international world order that shaped and was shaped by European exploits, settler colonialism, and the transatlantic slave trade. This sociocultural formation continues to influence the North Atlantic societies that think of themselves as the 'developed world' or the West, and works through these societies to shape a contemporary world order that, in many ways, bears an uncanny resemblance to the world of colonial and imperial arrangements that it mostly claims to have repudiated (Taylor and Madura 2023, 296). This neo-imperial context, still importantly divided between the 'white world' and the 'darker nations' that Du Bois studied and engaged, provides the main setting of my dissertation.

One way to understand the critical racialist orientation that I have so far laid out is as a kind of dynamic historicism that is really a cluster of related commitments. Paul C. Taylor refers to this as the 'CAMPS consensus' in race theory to signal the widespread conviction that race-thinking is a resource for *critically* engaging the *artifacts* of human activities that became most influential during the *modern* period, with important *political* and *social* implications (Taylor 2013, 87–88). This is as opposed to views that, for example, "eschew critical engagement, depict races as deliverances of nature, see no difference between modern and pre-modern approaches to human difference, ignore racial politics, and reduce racial phenomena to individual choices and traits" (Taylor and Madura 2023, 297). I will signal this commitment with references to racialization and

[13] Chike Jeffers, "Cultural Constructionism," in *What is Race?: Four Philosophical Views,* ed. Josh Glasgow, Sally Haslanger, Chike Jeffers, and Quayshawn Spencer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 50.

[14] I don't mean to single these particular places out for any special reason. The point is that race doesn't translate seamlessly across contexts, but does appear, in some form, sometimes in overlapping forms, in each context. Think, for example, about the partly overlapping but importantly distinguishable meanings, weights, denotations, and uses of blackness, indigeneity, immigration, and Islamophobia in these three settings.

racial formation, while setting aside the live and important debates about the limits of these theoretical vocabularies.

Finally, I insist on intersectional analysis. I take seriously the fact that racialization does not swing free from other dimensions of social being, but is a modality through which they are lived. This means attending to race demands that one also attend to class, gender, sexuality, age, ability status, and any other feature of concrete human persons that work with and through racialization. A comprehensive analysis of how habit operates at these intersections would take me beyond the scope of this project, but I will attend to the variable influence of social positionality wherever it is called for. Declining to speak directly to it at any point is a concession to space, not a denial of the need to do so.

The commitments noted above define the mode of critical racialist analysis that informs this dissertation, and that unites theorists who disagree about much else. I hope in what follows to show that the notion of habit should also be a part of the shared toolkit for ecumenically minded critical race theorists.

3. What is Habit?

I will flesh out the details of a conception of habit in the chapters to follow. For now, I will offer just a sketch of some of habit's basic features to help orient the reader. As with race, there are many different ways of thinking about habit.[15]

As it is commonly used, the term 'habit' might conjure images of structured routines, such as waking up promptly at 6am, or of reading before bed. It is also often associated with imprudent behavior or failures of will, as in the 'bad' habit of repeatedly hitting snooze on the alarm, or of ending the day mindlessly watching television. What makes these activities 'habits' is their acquired automaticity. They are recurrent patterns of behavior that are learned, carried out unthinkingly, and seem to be done on cue.

Habit in this sense is epitomized by an experience we have likely all shared in some form or another. Consider the experience of driving home from work and mistakenly arriving at your

[15] For a particularly influential alternative to the approach I adopt here, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1977). Dewey's concept of habit bears significant similarities to Bourdieu's *habitus*. The decision to go with one over the other therefore warrants an explanation. There are subtle but important differences that make Deweyan habit a better candidate, and some features of Bourdieu's notion that are troubling. I'll address this issue in chapter two.

former residence. You don't know how you got there, and you certainly didn't 'decide' to go there. You were unconsciously provoked by a series of events — clock out of work, walk to your car, pull out of the parking lot and turn left, etc. — that serve as external stimuli prompting an engrained response sedimented through years of repetition. These phenomena are the sort of behavior that standard social scientific and neuroscientific accounts of habit aim to pick out.[16] The habit of concern for race theorists shares some core elements with these standard ways of thinking, but in many important ways it takes us beyond these everyday understandings.

In the sense in which I will be using the term, habits are the learned and unconsciously activated dispositions to transact with environments in patterned ways, and these dispositions provide one of the core organizing structures of organic social life. This characterization captures some elements that are common across various philosophical, social scientific, and neuroscientific approaches to habit. But it takes us beyond those standard definitions by highlighting features that become apparent upon closer socio-ontological and phenomenological analysis.

In particular, this definition calls attention to features of habit that reveal it to play a much more profound role in shaping selves and worlds than the habit-as-routine accounts described above allow for. Habits are acquired, relatively unconscious dispositions that are tied to histories and environments. But habits are more than this. They are also immediate, temporally extended, and embodied transactions between meaning-making organisms and their social worlds. This understanding of habit takes what are ordinarily thought of as isolated predispositions and allows us to recognize habit more broadly as transactive, historical, socio-cultural, and moral phenomena that are indispensable to human ways of life.

The significance of habit to social existence—and to raced existence—is made especially apparent when we attend to its phenomenological dimensions. The phenomenological dimensions of habit are the aspects that stand out when an "attunement to lived experience and its structuring conditions" organize the inquiry (Weiss, Murphy, and Salamon 2019, xiii). Phenomenological analysis aims "not to abstract from the complexity of ordinary experience but rather to lead back…from an uncritical absorption in the world toward a rigorous understanding of the conditions for the possibility of any world whatsoever" (Guenther 2019, 11). Habits are crucial to

[16] For a standard social science account of habit, see David T. Neal, "Habits," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, 2nd edition, ed. William A. Darity, Jr. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008): 402-404. For a standard neuroscientific account, see A. M. Graybiel, "Habits, Rituals and the Evaluative Brain," *Annual Revue of Neuroscience* 31, (2008): 359–387.

this basic structuring activity, and they enable the uncritical absorption that necessitates phenomenological analysis (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 84). And since "race works through the domain of the visible, the experience of race is predicated first and foremost on the perception of race, a perception whose specific mode is learned ability," that is, habit (Alcoff 2006, 187).

4. Habit and Race Theory

Habit is most often referenced in the contemporary race literature to explain racializing perception in connection with epistemologies of ignorance. Beyond these occasional references to habits of perception, only a few scholars have attempted to work out a more comprehensive understanding of racial phenomenon as habitual, and even fewer have done so with a focus on the constitutive habits of whiteness. Existing accounts of racial habit share a general theoretical orientation toward race, and they enjoy a great deal of overlap in their basic understanding of habit, but they are meta-philosophically divided on what they take to be the most productive encounter with the phenomenon.

One camp, represented by Shannon Sullivan and Terrance MacMullan, takes a pragmatist approach rooted in the work of John Dewey. The other camp, which includes Linda Alcoff, Sara Ahmed, and Helen Ngo, takes a phenomenological approach based in Maurice Merleau-Ponty. One way to make sense of the division is by chalking it up to an accident of disciplinary specialization. These scholars all share a concern to clarify the role of habit in creating and contesting systems of racial meaning, and they come at the problem equipped with the conceptual tools and frameworks they are trained in. This is a plausible enough explanation, and were it the only reason for the division one would simply need to choose their favorite approach. As it turns out, the division is not entirely incidental, nor is it inconsequential.

The methodological division is not incidental because Sullivan considers the merits of a phenomenological approach, but ultimately dismisses Merleau-Ponty's view as a candidate framework because of issues she sees with his operative concepts. The criticism of greatest consequence has to do with the role of "intentionality" and "anonymity" in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of habit—concepts that figure prominently in accounts of racial embodiment and habit coming out of the phenomenological tradition. Sullivan argues that these concepts presuppose an ethically solipsistic and ahistorical subjectivity, making them unfit for critical work.

This verdict renders much of the work done by Alcoff, Ahmed, Ngo, and others theoretically suspect.

The methodological division is not inconsequential because although the neo-Deweyan approach offers an incisive analysis that contributes greatly to a better understanding of whiteness, Dewey is insufficiently utilized by the scholars who do take him up. What's more, even when realized to its full theoretical potential, Dewey's concept of habit does not capture all there is to whiteness as it operates in the habitual register. By under-utilizing the resources offered by Dewey, and by refusing Merleau-Ponty's framework altogether, the pragmatist approach misses out on theoretical insights needed to fill out the picture of racial habit, and the constitution of whiteness in particular. To remedy this gap, I defend Merleau-Ponty against Sullivan's criticisms, clearing the way for his concepts to be mobilized for a critique of whiteness. My defense of Merleau-Ponty is not meant to claim that a strictly phenomenological approach is sufficient to build an account of white habit. Rather, my argument is that the phenomenological perspective is necessary to a complete account and works best as a supplement to the pragmatist view.

The account of habit that informs my understanding of whiteness therefore has its roots in both John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Though these are not the only two scholars to talk about habit, this pairing comes about because the distinct philosophical tasks of these thinkers—one a pragmatist, the other a phenomenologist—results in emphases in their studies of habit that are valuable for understanding race. Dewey is interested in how bodily being works to construct and maintain—and can be put to work to reconfigure—social and political life. This leads him to focus on habit in the context of human sociality and to consider the ontological and moral implications of habituation. Dewey characterizes habit as an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response that is a foundation for understanding human action, experience, and meaning (Dewey 2007, 42). By contrast, Merleau-Ponty is interested in providing an accurate account of the mechanisms operating in perception. The nature of that task leads him to focus primarily on individual subjective experience. Merleau-Ponty thus characterizes habit as the anticipatory structure of the lived body that constitutes one's orientation on the world, and that has the effect of transforming environments into familiar homes (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 143–148).

4.1 Six Advantages of a Theory of Racial Habit

Why think of race in terms of habit? Shannon Sullivan identifies a number of advantages of this approach (Sullivan 2006, 3–4). Before I turn to these advantages, some qualifying remarks are in order. The first remark has to do with the scope of inquiry, and with terminology. As Sullivan presents them, these advantages accrue specifically to our thinking about *white privileged habit*. This is because her target for habit analysis is somewhat narrow. She wishes to illuminate the unconscious and habitual dimensions of whiteness. However, a study of whiteness inevitably leads to a study of other modes of racialization (and vice versa). To capture the broader dynamics at work, I will instead refer more generally to the advantages of a *theory of racial habit,* of which white privileged habit is a key player.

The other qualifying remark has to do with the theoretical frameworks that generate these advantages. As I've already mentioned, Sullivan adopts a pragmatist-psychoanalytic perspective that thinks of habit primarily as an ontological operator, and that links white privileged habits to unconscious desires and investments. This approach is highly valuable, but approaching this study from the additional perspective of critical phenomenology can deepen and broaden these advantages. The advantages I outline below reflect not only Sullivan's findings, but the additional benefits of a critical phenomenology of racial habit that this dissertation will develop.

Avoids mind-body dualisms

The first advantage of analyzing race in terms of habit is that it explains how race and racism are a matter not only of thoughts or beliefs but also of bodily comportment. Because habits are in a certain sense dispositional—they are the tendency to respond to and engage with surroundings in patterned ways—habits of thought and habits of bodily comportment are only functionally distinct; each engages both soma and psyche simultaneously. [17] Reading race as habit adds to the familiar accounts of racist asymmetries in the distribution of social goods a complementary study of the often-unconscious ways that people live their bodies. A theory of racial habit can help explain how

[17] Dewey toggles between describing habits as 'dispositions' and as organized 'impulses,' which might suggest that habits are either merely latent potentialities or else are akin to instinctive reflex. This is not always the case. On the Deweyan view, habits can be routine and "blind" or they can be intelligently and purposefully cultivated. The language of 'disposition' is used to indicate that habits do exist in a subdued form, and the language of 'impulse' is used to indicate that habits are also active and energetic. To avoid the association with either mere latency or reflex, we might instead refer to habits as psychic and somatic 'effects,' but this problematically implies a doer behind the deed, and carries a sense of completion or finality that is not proper to habit. I opt for the former ambiguities over the latter.

appearance and ancestry locate people in social and political space (Taylor 2013, 89–90). It does this by showing how particular kinds of spaces produce, and are produced by, the meaning-laden ways that bodies move and interact within them.

Historicizes ontology

Second, a habit analysis helpfully undoes the dualism between nature and culture in a way that accounts for those social categories, such as race and gender, that are recalcitrant to orthodox ontology. The hard line that classical ontology draws between the natural and the cultural makes trouble for thinking about race. One reason for this is the nature/culture distinction derives from an entrenched dichotomy between what is essential, permanent, and real versus what is accidental, transient, and unreal. This forces racial phenomena into either the domain of the fixed and immutable fabric of the universe, or else race becomes nothing more than an epiphenomenon or a social figment. As Sullivan puts it, habit undoes this dualism by construing ontology as historical (Sullivan 2006, 3). When we understand racial categories as sustained through habit, they take on a metastable quality: they are a stable state of a dynamic system made up of social practices, and they are subject to change over time. Habit lends credence to the idea that races are real without being necessary or immutable.

This matters for white privilege because it allows us to acknowledge its enduring reality without locating it as a fixture attaching permanently and indiscriminately to all phenotypically white bodies. Habit is stable without being static, so understanding white privilege as habitual involves taking it seriously while also seeing it as capable of transformation. Habits of whiteness are currently an historical necessity—they are pervasive, deeply sedimented, and efficacious enough to constitute social reality. But an historical necessity is different from an absolute necessity. Habits, including racist ones, are available for reconfiguration.

Locates race in the individual and the world

The third advantage of analyzing race and white privilege in terms of habit is that habit helps to demonstrate how white domination is located in both the individual person and the world in which she lives. To locate white domination in "the world" is to say more than that individual white people dominate non-white people in objectively identifiable ways. It is to say that various forms of non-white oppression and domination are institutionalized in political, social, economic, and

cultural practices that can be understood as collective habit carried out more or less unconsciously. Many of the practices that perpetuate racial inequities are hard to pin down since their existence and persistence is not the simple product of the deliberate will or attitudes of any given individual or aggregate of individuals. A habit-ontology provides a bridge between structural accounts of racism and those lower-level forces that produce and sustain it.

If race is a feature of the individual and the world, then racial habit is not only about the habits that differently racialized individuals happen to have, but also about how the ontological partitioning of social space along racial lines constitutes individuals as racialized, training them to inhabit those spaces in certain ways, or not to inhabit them at all. Those habits then become how historical meanings get carried through to the present. The apparent conservatism of this habit-cycle presents a danger. If the racial practices that preserve white supremacy and non-white oppression are matters of habituation, and if habit is present experience structured by past experience, then what we have is a self-perpetuating cycle of racial hierarchy. This danger should not be read as a problem with the view, but a problem that the view helps to diagnose. The worry about the conservative structure of habit is somewhat mitigated by turning to the next, related advantage.

Links personal investments in race to conditions in the world

Habit explains how problematic practices become embedded in individuals and societies, and points to the unlikely solution that to change the "internal" configuration of a person one needs to attend to the "external" world (Sullivan 2006, 4). With respect to white privilege, habit explains both how individuals inherit a personal investment in racist structures, and how it can be overturned by changing one's relation to the environments she inhabits, and by inhabiting different environments.

To appreciate how this inheritance occurs, we have to consider that habits are not "inside" the individual. They are not something a person possesses, but emerge in encounters with one's surroundings. As transactional, habits always involve both the agent and the environment, and so they belong wholly to neither but to both in common. Individuals and environments are co-constituted in habit, breaking the hermetic seal that sets the one over against the other. We might say that our environments train us into certain modes of engagement. It follows that environments structured by white domination will produce individuals with habits of white privilege. These

individual habits will in turn reinforce the social, political, and economic advantages that white people have.

Being brought up white in a white dominated world means that a certain degree of privileged habit is inevitable. On Sullivan's estimation, "[b]ecause the self, whatever its race, is not an atomistic bubble sealed off from the world around it, in a raced and racist world human beings will be raced and racist" (Sullivan 2006, 3). This is an unsettling prospect if habits are understood to congeal into fixed and unified selves. But that is not how habituation works. There is a plasticity to the human organism such that who a person is continually changes, though perhaps not dramatically and all at once. The very thing that accounts for an individual's adoption and adaptation to racist environments is also the thing that makes it possible to change. Habits can be reconfigured in anti-racist ways, but to do so on a large scale requires that a critical mass of people become attuned to their racial circumstances. This points to the next advantage of thinking about race in terms of habit.

Explains white invisibility

The fifth advantage is that habit helps explain how whiteness often functions as if invisible. The going understanding of white invisibility is most often explained in epistemic terms. White privilege is said to be made invisible to the white subject because it involves a particularly recalcitrant form of ignorance that actively thwarts attempts to reveal its existence (Sullivan 2006, 3). Epistemologies of ignorance highlight the active dimensions of ignorance, pointing to psychological factors such as unconscious desires and interests to explain how a group of people can remain ignorant about even their own racial identity.[18] On this understanding, white ignorance is not a naïve lack of information that can be corrected through education. It is a motivated ignorance driven by white interests that works to benefit and support white hegemony. An account of habit aids the epistemic understanding of whiteness by supplying a richer picture of the naturalized knower, and a fuller picture of how white domination—and whiteness itself—is hidden from the white subject. The naturalized knower is a habitually constituted subject for whom belief-formation is not a simple rational function, but a function of salient and affectively charged experience forged from prior experience.

[18] See, for example, Charles Mills, "White Ignorance" (2007); José Medina, "Color-Blindness, Meta-Ignorance, and the Racial Imagination" (2013), and Kristie Dotson, "Inheriting Patricia Hill Collins's Black Feminist epistemology" (2015).

To explain, habits operate pre-consciously or even unconsciously, allowing them to fly beneath the radar of explicit awareness. What's more, habit impacts every dimension of our bodily being, including how and what we see, think, and feel. The fact that habit occurs "without thinking" is what makes it an enabling force in human life. Habit economizes our daily goings-on by making it possible to act without attending to every movement. But this enabling force is also what makes habit dangerous for the reason that it allows destructive habits, such as those that make up whiteness, to go undetected.

A person constituted by habits of white privilege is unlikely to see that privilege because it is the nature of habit to operate anonymously and without reflective attention. The significant take-away is that white ignorance sustained by habit can't be uprooted by the arguments of critical race theorists alone, however compelling they may be to those already invested in antiracist projects. A revolution in our racial practices must involve methods for interrupting white habit so as to make those habits—and the racial reality they work to cover up—visible to the habituated. Part of my work here is to explore what those disruptive methods might look like and what the effects of instituting them might be.

Historicizing habit

I have so far listed and elaborated on a set of advantages originally laid out by Sullivan. I have attempted to re-articulate these advantages in anticipation of the fuller theory of racial habit that this dissertation will defend. With that fuller theory comes an additional advantage absent from Sullivan's account. I mentioned earlier that habit historicizes ontology, but we need to additionally historicize habit itself. A sixth advantage of studying racial habit—and particularly from the critical phenomenological perspective—is that it reveals how our shared world differentially affords the enabling capacity of habituation. Put differently, it forces us to pay attention to who the public world is a home for. Not all bodies enjoy the benefit of being lived anonymously, and not all bodies are made effective by their environments.

The ability for whiteness to remain invisible to the white person has to do with the fact that the white person is at home in a world where their bodily intentions are routinely fulfilled. What's more, white bodily intentions often include racist and ontologically obtrusive habits. By contrast, Helen Ngo talks about the "existential stress" that comes with being a person of color living in a racist culture (Ngo 2017, 61). The racialized body is not the habitual body described by Merleau-

Ponty—the body that is at ease and can virtually disappear—but one that is destabilized by transactions that constitute it as an object and, in the words of Du Bois, a problem (Du Bois 1986, 383). Which bodies occupy what spaces, and the manner of bodily comportment, is going to influence the sense of that space. Likewise, the "sense" of a space will affect one's bodily comportment within it. This is what is meant by describing spaces as having characteristics, such as 'white spaces,' 'queer spaces,' or 'heteronormative spaces.' The shape that a space takes is a function of what habits it supports and what transactions it encourages, and in that way a space can be welcoming to some and hostile to others.

For all the advantages of a theory of racial habit, there are some potential worries I will need to address. I've mentioned one worry having to do with the conservative structure of habit, and I've indicated that it's an issue revealed by—not caused by—a study of habit. There is, however, an additional worry about individual responsibility. If we explain racial oppression by appeal to habit, doesn't that absolve the white privileged individual who is unaware—sometimes utterly and irremediably unconscious—of their own racialization practices? What measures can a person possibly take to reconfigure their habits if they don't know they have them? These worries can be read as a concern about the pessimism of a habit framework, which seems to leave little room for significant moral or social change.

It is my sense that this worry rests on too narrow a conception of personal responsibility, and an over-simplified understanding of habit. A sufficiently worked out concept of habit lends itself to a more robust sense of responsibility because our habits are not just what we do unthinkingly, they make up who we are. Far from exonerating white people, ignorance anchored in habit renders them collectively accountable. I will return to these concerns and address them more fully as they arise.

5. Outline of Chapters

Chapter two considers the neo-Deweyan approach to habit and race. I begin with an overview of John Dewey's transactional account of habit. I then turn to Sullivan's account of unconscious habits of white privilege, which weds Deweyan habit with a psychoanalytic concept of the socially-formed unconscious. I lay out Sullivan's theoretical commitments and core ideas, noting their strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, I call attention to certain underutilized features of the Deweyan account that, when foregrounded and problematized, point toward a fuller picture of

whiteness. These features include the primacy thesis, which can be summarized in the proposal that "[m]an is a creature of habit, not of reason nor yet of instinct" (Dewey 2007, 125), and which has normative implications for race that Sullivan fails to take up.

The normative implications that I am interested in take us beyond an analysis of individually problematic habits. The question of how white privilege manifests in habit is not only a question of what habits of white privilege look like and how they come about, it is also a question of who the world is a home for. This additional normative lens is partially captured by Dewey's distinction between intelligent and routine habits, which is another Deweyan resource that Sullivan doesn't make enough of. But I argue this distinction only gets us part of the way there. What we need is a phenomenological conception of habit as orientation, which opens onto the normative idea of anti-social habit.

The fuller account that I am proposing requires a holistic conception of habit as orientation, and a more precise analysis of the connection between race and perceptual habit. These advancements allow us to critique whiteness as more than a set of habits, but as a problematic mode of habituation that involves being too at-ease, or too "at home," while simultaneously depriving others of the benefits of home. I argue taking this theoretical step requires phenomenological resources that Sullivan gestures at, but that her own methodological commitments put out of reach.

Before I can speak to this normative dimension of habit, and before I can realize the additional benefits that a phenomenology of habit has to offer, I will need to respond to Sullivan's objection to Merleau-Ponty. Chapter three is organized around a question that gets to the heart of Sullivan's objection: can phenomenology be critical? Or, since a field of study that goes by this name suggests that it can be, perhaps the question is whether it can be critical *enough* to overcome Sullivan's concerns. I begin by considering phenomenology's contributions to race theory, most of which is rooted in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, either directly or, via Frantz Fanon, indirectly. I then articulate Sullivan's criticism of Merleau-Ponty in general terms, indicating the implicit determination that phenomenology is inadequate for the task of critical race theory.

To better understand what is at stake, I consider how critical phenomenologists understand the work they are doing. I then look more carefully at Sullivan's specific criticism of Merleau-Ponty, which targets two of his operative concepts: 'intentionality' and 'anonymity.' I find

Sullivan's objection is rooted in a misunderstanding of these concepts. By re-reading Merleau-Ponty, I show that critical phenomenology rooted in his work does not run afoul of its own professed goals. This clears the way for these resources to be mobilized in the service of a critique of whiteness. I end chapter three by explicating Merleau-Ponty's account of habit and introducing the terminological distinctions on which my argument rests. Namely, the distinction between the 'habitual' (habit as individual dispositions to transact) and 'habituation' (habit as orientation). And the further distinction between 'habituation' (habit as orientation) and 'homeliness' (the condition of being at home in the/a world).

Chapter four sets up my positive account, a Critical Phenomenology of Racial Habit. Having the tools of the phenomenological tradition at my disposal, I call attention to an asymmetrical access to the enabling benefits of habituation in white and non-white experience under conditions of white supremacy, or what I call 'white worlding.' Drawing on Helen Ngo's phenomenology of racialized embodiment, I examine this asymmetry in terms of being at home in the world, and consider its existential, epistemic, and moral implications. This examination contextualizes habit at a deeper level than we get from Sullivan, and allows me to identify an additional normative lens through which we can evaluate white habit.

With the phenomenological asymmetry of race in view, chapter five argues that the problem of whiteness is not just an issue of individually harmful habits, but a problem of asymmetric access to the benefits of habituation. Once I have defined the core issue, I further problematize the home by arguing the experience of bodily ease that defines white homeliness is not only harmful in its effects on others, but is an impoverished mode of being in itself. Considering the virtues of what María Lugones calls 'world-travelling,' I draw attention to the dual nature of habit as an enabling and inhibiting force. I recommend an attitude of ambivalence toward the condition of habituation characterized by being at home in the world, and I insist on a two-pronged approach to addressing the problem of whiteness. Whites in the grip of what I define as 'anti-social habit' are in need of productive disruptions to their whitely habits. By contrast, non-whites are in need of sanctuary spaces, importantly separate from the constitutive and destructive influence of whiteness, that foster habituation. These solutions aim at correcting the phenomenological asymmetry that I diagnose in chapter four. The creation of what we might call 'counter-hegemonic homes' affords non-white people greater access to the vital benefits of habituation and necessary reprieve from the oppressive force of whiteness. Disrupting white habituation serves to break up

the rigid habits that form whitely orientations and makes it possible to reconfigure them in ways that are anti-racist and freedom-enhancing.

I end by turning to the more concrete question of how to reconfigure whiteness. I consider two approaches to disrupting white habituation: Sullivan's "indirect" approach that involves changing habits by changing environments, and MacMullan's "direct" approach that involves changing habits by redirecting the impulses behind them. I argue that, despite MacMullan's beliefs to the contrary, these are not competing strategies but are better understood as two aspects of one and the same strategy. I further argue that a critical phenomenology of racial habit takes us beyond the domain of individual morality, to which Sullivan's self-help approach strictly adheres. Thinking past how individual white people can and should change their ways, I take this study of racial habit into the political domain. With the primacy of habit in view, I argue that the effects of anti-social habit are uniquely oppressive and qualify as a distinct site of racial injustice. I close the chapter by calling for political strategies of phenomenological disruption, examining what these disruptions might look like, and considering their potential dangers.

CHAPTER TWO

The Neo-Deweyan Approach to Whiteness and Habit

Any hope for success in the struggle for racial justice must contend with the habitual dimensions of racial practices. To adequately account for the role of habit in making a raced and racist world, I'll need to assemble a number of theoretical resources. Some of these resources come from the phenomenological tradition, but these are controversial in ways that we're not yet in a position to fully take up. Other resources come from scholars using Deweyan tools to build habit-based accounts of whiteness. One of these neo-Deweyan accounts in particular will occupy the present chapter. Namely, Shannon Sullivan's view of white privileged habit. The objective of the chapter is twofold: 1) to explicate the neo-Deweyan approach to habits of whiteness, and 2) to call attention to the gaps in this approach and suggest additional theoretical tools that can fill those gaps.

Shannon Sullivan is most concerned to show how whiteness "operates as unseen, invisible, and seemingly nonexistent" (Sullivan 2006, 1). She does so by identifying unconscious habit as among the "structures of human experience that contribute to white privilege" (ibid.). The bedrock of Sullivan's view is laid by John Dewey's transactional social ontology, according to which the primary unit of social analysis is the mutually co-constituting relationship between embodied subjects and worlds.[19]

Sullivan's view is principally concerned with naming and explaining the individual habits of whiteness that sustain racial domination. This is undeniably valuable work. But this approach misses an angle suggested by its own "thick" conception of habit. From the Deweyan perspective, habits are not just things we have, they make up who we are and are indispensable to ordinary human functioning. Dewey's insight about the primacy of habit should prompt us to look not only

[19] Terrance MacMullan also approaches whiteness from the perspective of Deweyan habit. On his view, racial whiteness involves two core elements: 1) an operative concept or idea, and 2) a set of habits (MacMullan 2022, 97). The set of habits that constitute whiteness are—often unknowingly—the embodied manifestation of the white supremacist idea. I find MacMullan's view is basically compatible with Sullivan's. MacMullan begs to differ, but that's not a disagreement I can adjudicate here, nor is it one that bears on the outcome of my own argument. The core criticism I have of Sullivan's view applies equally to MacMullan's. I will bring MacMullan in as he becomes useful, both for expository purposes and in later chapters for points of critique, but my critical engagement will center on Sullivan's version of the view.

at the kinds of habits in play, which the neo-Deweyan approach does, but at how the benefits of habituation as an orienting structure are distributed along racial lines. In other words, we need to consider who the world is a home for. This calls for a distinction within habit that Sullivan and others working within a Deweyan framework fail to make clear. We need to distinguish between the 'habitual,' those activities that are so embedded in our way of being that they become second nature, and 'habituation,' the condition of being oriented by one's environments to the point that those environments take on the quality of home.

This oversight can be attributed in part to Dewey's own tendency to run these two modes of habit together. His view is compatible with, and indeed implies, the idea that habit-acquisition leads to an ease in transacting with environments that could be characterized in terms of being at home in them. But he never explicitly says as much, nor does his analysis offer the phenomenological specificity necessary to fully appreciate what is at stake for race theory. But the issue here is not with Dewey. It is with Sullivan's appropriation of Dewey, and her reluctance to take up the resources of phenomenological philosophy—resources that allow us to talk not just about white habits, but about white habituation.

A nuanced analysis of this distinction and its implications can't be taken up just yet. That work will be done in later chapters. For now I just want to flag that these two senses of habit are functionally connected. The question of who the racial world is a home for, and how, can't be answered without reference to the particular habits that constitute whiteness. At times, Sullivan alludes to the broader sense of habit as an orientation, but the two senses of habit tend to come apart in her view. She focuses more on identifying and explaining habits of whiteness in the first sense (habits as particular dispositions), which leads her to undertheorize their connection to the second sense (habituation as being at-home). A critique of white habit would benefit from examining this relationship more carefully.

This chapter will work through the neo-Deweyan account of white habit and clarify the distance between this approach and the richer account that Sullivan might have developed. Section one explicates the features of Dewey's conception of habit that Sullivan appropriates for her study of racial whiteness. Sections two and three engage the neo-Deweyan account of racial formation, detailing how whiteness forms in and through habits, the nature of the particular habits that make up whiteness, and their connection to white supremacist ideals. Section four examines how habits of white privilege constitute other modes of racialization by analyzing their effects on space and

non-white embodiment. Section five lays out the limitations of the neo-Deweyan account and sets up the arguments for the remaining chapters.

1. Deweyan Habit

The habit of interest to race theorists is not equivalent to reflex or mere repetition. Nor is it reducible to what are colloquially thought of as "bad" habits, such as smoking cigarettes or hitting snooze on the alarm. Understood in Deweyan terms, "habit is an organism's subconscious predisposition to transact with its physical, social, political, and natural worlds in particular ways," and habits "constitute the self" (Sullivan 2006, 23).

In unpacking the Deweyan concept of habit, the first thing we might note is that habit refers principally to a social function, or more accurately to a set of functional relations between social organisms and their environments. Habits are acquired tendencies that give order and meaning to the impulses that make up an organism's natural endowment (Dewey 2007, 125; Sullivan 2001, 39). The meaningful ordering of impulses does not typically happen through direct and conscious intervention, but through a kind of enculturation that often goes unnoticed as it is taking place.

To better understand how this enculturation works we can turn to Dewey's transactional socio-ontology, which is a core element of Sullivan's approach to whiteness. For Dewey, all organic activity is fundamentally transactional, meaning that an organism never acts in isolation from its surroundings but in coordination with them, and the coordinated activity has a co-constitutive effect (Sullivan 2001, 13).

Sullivan memorably likens transaction to a stew, in which the ingredients intermingle and take on the characteristics of one another. Consider this in contrast with non-transactional models of social ontology, such as the atomistic "tossed salad" metaphor and the distinction-erasing "melting pot" metaphor (Sullivan 2001, 13–17). The strength of the stew metaphor is its ability to convey a "nonatomistic, nonreductive relationship of identity and difference" that better captures the reality of identity formation (Sullivan 2001, 17). The limitation of the stew metaphor, as Sullivan herself notes, is that it fails to capture the active nature of transaction. The vegetables in a stew are what they are because of the impact they have on one another, but in the case of vegetables this impact is entirely passive. By contrast, human organisms are what (or who) they are because of the active role they play in responding to and coordinating with their environment,

which importantly include other people. Transaction in the human context is fundamentally a kind of *activity*, and it characterizes all human activity, habitual or otherwise (Sullivan 2001, 17).[20]

To speak of coordinated activity is to call attention to the fact that organisms generally transact in patterned rather than random ways (Sullivan 2001, 30). That is to say, their activity is structured by habit. The bearer of the habit is not isolated but engaged with a world, which, for humans more than for other animals, involves reflecting and responding to complex social contexts (Sullivan 2001, 27). By acting within culturally saturated environments, we influence those environments while also taking in aspects of them. Neither term in the relation is left unaffected, even if the effects are insignificant or "monotonous," which often means more deeply entrenching already established grooves of activity (Sullivan 2001, 36).

Habits are not only unknowingly acquired, they are unconsciously enacted. One of the most notable features of habit is that it is what we do "without thinking." Habits work beneath or behind conscious awareness, without the mediation of conscious planning, reflection, or endorsed intention. This is the familiar idea of rapid cognition, or of the reflexive, non-reflective side of human cognition that animates our biases and heuristics. Sometimes habits can even run contrary to our explicit beliefs and conscious commitments. This feature of habit is behind the belief-discordant behavior that Tamar Gendler cleverly names "Alief," exemplified by the bodily trepidation of walking onto a glass skywalk over the Grand Canyon: "Although the venturesome souls wholeheartedly *believe* that the walkway is completely safe, they also *alieve* something very different. The alief has roughly the following content: 'Really high up, long long way down. Not a safe place to be! Get off!!'" (Gendler 2008, 635, emphasis in original).

On Gendler's account, Aliefs (as opposed to *Be*liefs) are states that are "developmentally and conceptually *a*ntecedent to other cognitive attitudes that the creature may go on to develop. And they are typically also *a*ffect-laden and *a*ction generating" (Gendler 2008, 641). As Gendler's example suggests, aliefs are not isolated mental states but are affectively charged psychosomatic responses to meaning-laden environments. If we were to think of habit as a mode of knowing, then habits express our aliefs about the world.

To get ahead of potential misunderstandings, I'll need to clarify the claim that habits are unthinking and automatic. First of all, to say habits operate without thinking can be misleading if

[20] Although I can't speak to this point just yet, I would add 'intentionality,' or the perspectival 'aboutness' of experience to the ways human transactions differ from vegetables in a stew. I define 'intentionality' and explain this point in chapter three.

it is taken to mean that habits are extra-mental, or do not engage thought in any way. Habits are the "*mental* and physical patterns of engagement with the world that operate without conscious attention or reflection (Sullivan 2006, 4, my emphasis). Unconsciously falling into a familiar gate during a walk is one kind of habit, but reflexively falling into a cycle of self-recrimination after a challenging social encounter is another. Take further note that the distinction between mental and physical habits is a purely functional one; it is meant to capture the predominant character of the particular habit, not to signal an ontologically substantive distinction. In either case, the physical and the mental are intertwined.

One way the mental and physical are intertwined has to do with the mutually reinforcing relationship between habits and concepts. Although physical habits are understood as involving movements of the body in space, they typically involve mental antecedents, such as conceptual schema that inform how we interact with objects and others based on the categories through which we understand them (and ourselves). This point is particularly important to a study of race, as the invention of racial concepts has played an enormous role in shaping our interactions with one another, consciously or otherwise. Calling attention to the habitual operations of race means calling attention to the way particular conceptions of, for instance, whiteness and blackness, direct our transactions without realizing it. This point signals the importance of visual perception in racializing processes; an aspect that Merleau-Ponty is better suited than Dewey to explain, and that gets insufficient attention in Sullivan's account of white habit.

Another way the mental and physical are intertwined in habit is captured by the recent paradigm in cognitive science that studies "embodied cognition."[21] Habits are anchored in the lived body, which is neither separate from nor subordinate to the mind, just as the organism is not separate from the world. Simply put, physical habits also involve mental payoffs like feelings of satisfaction or comfort, while mental habits have somatic accompaniments like altered neural structures, neurochemical spikes, and accelerated heartbeat. On a transactional model of body, mind, and society, habits are learned responses that involve biological capacities as well as culturally formed affective and cognitive predisposition.

[21] This paradigm is known as the "4E" approach to cognition (embodied, embedded, enactive, and extended). See *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition* (2018). For a concise scientific genealogy of the idea, see James Carney, "Thinking *avant la lettre*: A Review of 4E Cognition" (2020). For a philosophical analysis, see Lawrence Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition* (2011).

The reference to learning points to the next important feature of habit, which is already suggested by our earlier talk of transaction. Habits are inextricably tied to environments. Individuals have habits, to be sure, but we develop and deploy them as social beings embedded in worlds of meaning. "Habits are not 'in' the world like water is in a plastic cup. Because humans are habituated beings, the world inhabits us as much as we inhabit it" (Sullivan 2006, 2). This characterization gestures at the second sense of habit that I am interested in, and that doesn't get fleshed out by Dewey or neo-Deweyan race theorists. When one becomes sufficiently habituated to a particular environment, that is, when a person's habitual activities form a significant and stable unity with their surroundings, those surroundings take on the quality of a home. A philosophical analysis of home, which I take up in chapters four and five, reveals existential and moral dimensions of at-homeness (or the lack of home) that matter for how we think about race.

Understanding habit as something that occurs between organism and environment helps to account for the social heritability of individual ways of being. According to Dewey, whatever native stock of impulses exist in human organisms acquire their meaning and efficacy only once they have been shaped into habits. This shaping process happens in and through social configurations that precede the individual. Customs—or "widespread uniformities of habit" (Dewey 2007, 58)—develop in part because individuals face similar circumstances and respond in like manner. "But to a larger extent," Dewey explains, "customs persist because individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by prior customs" (Dewey 2007, 58). Habits tends to reproduce themselves because they are acquired within shared environments, often (but not always) unknowingly. We acquire habits from socially approved repertoires of behavior and manage them by reference to what society allows and refuses. This means that an individual's habits tend to take the shape of the cultural environment within which they are formed.

For those concerned with autonomy, this model might raise some worries. In particular, it raises worries about the degree of social influence on subject formation. This brings me to the next point of clarification. The automaticity of habit mimics reflexive instinct in certain ways—a feature captured by the familiar characterization of habit as "second nature." This makes it tempting to identify habit with repetition and to imagine it as forming a closed system that dooms the organism to rote activity. But habits are not to be understood as mere repetition or routine. Certain kinds of habit involve repetition, to be sure, but that does not account for the whole of habit. Dewey affirms that although habit is unavoidably mechanistic, it is not reductively so (Dewey 2007, 42).

To illustrate this point, Dewey compares habits to skillful artforms, the mastery of which enables extemporaneous and creative activity, not just the repetition of similar acts. The activity of a musician or a dancer, for instance, becomes productive once certain basic actions are sedimented and form the foundation for greater diversity and complexity of action. The same can be said of our everyday behaviors and practices. For Dewey, artistic competencies are an exemplar of intelligent habits, which "assimilate objective energies and eventuate in command of environment" (Dewey 2007, 15). Habits are therefore more accurately understood as "a style or manner of being that is reflected throughout one's being—throughout the way one goes about thinking as well as acting" (Sullivan 2001, 30–31). Here, again, we can see a distinction opening up within habit. I will only flag this for now and come back to it in later chapters. Habits are activities that become second-nature, and can to some extent be individuated. But individual habits (dispositions to transact in patterned ways) are part of a broader condition of being habituated. As we will see in chapter three, Merleau-Ponty describes this condition in terms of 'orientation,' or being oriented.

Returning to the determinist worry noted above, the rigid entrenchment of seemingly fixed patterns of behavior so often associated with habit is certainly possible. Indeed, it is part of why whiteness is so problematic, though it is not the sole essence of habit. The potential for entrenchment arises in part because habit operates in a mechanized way. Habit is "activity influenced by prior activity" (Dewey 2007, 40) and it is the nature of habit "to be assertive, insistent, self-perpetuating" (Dewey 2007, 58), which gives it a conservative structure. But the conservative structure of habit contributes to its function as both enabling as well as limiting. Mechanization, which necessarily involves a degree of unconscious operation, gives habit its primary enabling quality: "If each act has to be consciously searched for at the moment and intentionally performed, execution is painful and the product is clumsy and halting" (Dewey 2007, 71). The mechanization of habit affords a level of stability that is a precondition for its operation as a productive force.

The conservative structure of habit can lead to serious problems, as we'll see when we turn our attention more directly to race. But it is not a strictly problematic feature. Habits circumscribe our possibilities by limiting the available modes of engagement, but habit is also the primary means by which a person can be effective in the world: "Habit means a person is not a blank slate, nor is she radically free to transact with the world in any way that she might consciously will. A blank slate, if an organism could exist as one, would not be free, but rather powerless" (Sullivan 2006, 24).

Importantly for Dewey, as for Sullivan, "mechanization" connotes an open and complex system of coordinated activity, not a causally closed system of determinate relations. In contrast to philosophers like Aristotle and William James, and to many contemporary social-scientific and neuroscientific accounts of habit, Dewey does not see repetition as the essence of habit: "A tendency to repeat acts is an incident of many habits, but not all" (Dewey 2007, 42), and the habits that exhibit this tendency are the ones most likely to devolve into "bad" habits owing to their rigidity.[22] The influence exerted by past activity is not that of simple causation or direct repetition. Rather, habit takes shape as "an acquired predisposition to *ways* and modes of response" (Dewey 2007, 42, emphasis in original). A "way of response" is not necessarily a specific act. As mentioned above, it is a manner that pervades one's behavior and that manifests learned tendencies.

The final feature of Deweyan habit that we'll need to foreground for a study of whiteness is its constitutive role. Habits are not understood as simple addenda to ready-made selves. Habits constitute the self in a way that is deeper and more intimate than even our conscious beliefs and deliberate actions (Dewey 2007, 22). Habit constitutes the self in at least two senses. The first sense is that habits literally give structure to the organism. The mechanistic nature of habit works as a support system built into an organism's activity, much like the structure of a house. Sullivan remarks on this feature in her analysis of gender:

> [the structure] is not something the house submits to but is what allows it to effectively be what it is, [likewise] the cultural constructs that structures us *are* us…as is the case for all cultural constructs on Dewey's terms, gender is not some external, accidental characteristic overlaying the (allegedly) internal, essential, non-gendered core of ourselves. Rather, it is one of the ways in and through which we arrange (and are arranged as) the selves that we are (Sullivan 2001, 26).

The structuring effects of habit occur through a kind of embodied automation enabled by sufficiently complex material processes interacting with meaning-laden environments. With this structuring role in mind, Sullivan argues that race, like gender, is "an instance of habit" (Sullivan 2006, 25). I take her to be signaling a phenomenological point, and one that Merleau-Ponty will help to clarify. Namely, that race is not simply a phenomenon in the world to be studied empirically, but is a structure of perceptual experience that guides our habitual transactions.

[22] I will say more about how Dewey defines 'bad' habits later on in this section. I'll also consider this question again in a more critical spirit in chapter five.

With very few exceptions, the history of philosophy has treated habit as an obstacle to the will. This is in part because thinkers have understood the mechanization of habit in the way I've already warned against, leading them to assume something that Dewey and Sullivan categorically deny: that the will can be understood and operate apart from habit. Rather, the habits that constitute my self, and anchor me to my world, make will and effective agency possible. Dewey writes, "In any intelligible sense of the word will, [habits] *are* will. They form our effective desires and they furnish us with our working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity" (Dewey 2007, 22). Habits are not just something a person has that belong to or overlay the core self. Habits make up the self in the sense that everything I think, feel, and do is either carried out habitually or is reliant on some other habit. This is what it means to say that habit is the foundation of human agency. It also allows us to think about personal responsibility beyond conscious, deliberate action.

The most obvious way habit enacts will is through bodily capability. Even innocuous acts of will like getting ingredients to make a meal requires a whole host of established habits in order to be effective, including basic habits like locomotion and communication. But as the above passage suggests, habits are not just practical operators, they are also moral operators. Habits shape our affective dispositions and desires, which in turn structure our perception of salience and value, making certain ends seem worthwhile or possible, and not others (Levine 2015, 652). What we care about and how we live are fully imbricated with habit. "To acquire a new habit is a positive accomplishment—it is to grasp a new significance and to establish a new form in and through the body" (Sullivan 2001, 27).

To make the enablement of habit more apparent, Dewey distinguishes between intelligent and routine habits, which is also his primary way of sorting "good" habits from "bad." The latter are akin to the ruts we fall into when habits become too rigidly entrenched and close off possibilities for diversifying activity and incorporating new meanings. The former—intelligent habits—are what set Dewey apart from those thinkers who regard habit strictly as a limit rather than a power. Dewey writes:

> A flexible, sensitive habit grows more varied, more adaptable by practice and use…whether it concerns the cook, musician, carpenter, citizen, or statesman, the intelligent or artistic habit is the desirable thing, and the routine the undesirable thing: —or, at least, desirable and undesirable from every point of view except one…Those who wish a monopoly of social power find desirable the separation of habit and thought (Dewey 2007, 72).

When a habit becomes calcified and unyielding, it devolves into routine. By contrast, intelligent habits are characterized by openness and innovation. They involve being attuned to the unexpected within a familiar environment and being able to modify one's movements and recalibrate when confronted with change. Dewey takes skilled artforms as the paradigm of intelligent habit. A musician who is creatively habituated can approach a new configuration of the instrument and quickly find their way around.

This brings us to the second sense in which habits constitutes selves. They account for the unity-of-self that we call 'character,' which for Dewey is more a matter of pre-conscious tendencies than it is about intentional executive functions or reflective endorsements. To know someone is to know how they are disposed to act, and 'character' describes the continuity of an individuals' conduct in habit (Pratten 2015, 1039). These two constitutive roles of habit contribute to the primacy of habit in Dewey's socio-ontology. Habitual life is inescapable, and it is our primary means of making meaning in the world. This point is crucial for a normative analysis of racial habit. If habit is vital to basic human functioning and freedom, then when and where habituation is significantly and systematically impeded, so too are these capacities. This is a point Sullivan and MacMullan fail to appreciate, leading them to overlook the dimension of racial habit that points beyond individually problematic habits and toward a more general asymmetry in the lived experience of race.

Reflecting on these features, we can see that habit is a fundamentally temporal phenomenon. Dewey is particularly keen to stress habit's function as a bearer of history. But temporality goes beyond simple historical precedent by pointing to the forward-looking and backward-looking dimensions of experience. Habit anchors the agent in time by activating ways of being and doing that were formed in past circumstances and that counsel future adherence to those ways. The field of action that the historically formed habit maps out continues to guide the agent's forays into the future until circumstances and reflection force a change in course (Taylor and Madura 2023, 298). Habits simultaneously carry historical meanings into the present, organize present activity, and direct the future course of action.

Readers may have picked up on the similarities between Dewey's concept of habit as a socio-ontological operator and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus.' Moreso than Bourdieu, Dewey has attracted the attention of race theorists for his attentiveness to the moral tensions of habitual life and to prospects for social transformation. Unlike Bourdieu, who tends to characterize

habit in a one-directional way leading from society to the individual, [23] Dewey takes this relationship to form an open feedback loop. The primary unit of philosophical-social analysis is the mutually co-constituting interactions between organism and environment. It is the transactions that matter, and most importantly the patterns they form in habit. To adopt a Deweyan habit-ontology is to inherit his meliorism. Being a creature of habit does not mean being doomed to repeat the same actions over and over again. On Dewey's conception, habits are not just limits but are powers, and they leave ample opportunity for reconfiguration as long as they don't become rigid. Even when they do, they need not become permanent fixtures of ourselves. But the possibility of transforming habits rests in a person's openness to critical self-interrogation, an openness which can itself be cultivated as a habit—a consideration I will return to in chapter five.

One of the significant implications of Dewey's framework is that we should worry less about how moral life plays out at the level of conscious decisions, and more about the cultivation of socially intelligent habits. In particular, Dewey claims we should examine our bad habits, "those that continue to function in our behaviors but have somehow fallen out of harmony with their environment" (MacMullan 2022, 242). A habit's continued functioning is presumably due to its rigidity, without which a change in environment would have precipitated a change in habit. An intelligent habit, then, is one that is stable yet adaptable, allowing for organism and environment to grow together.

Owing to their unconscious and mechanized nature, habits persist and remain undetected until they are interrupted. This typically happens when a habit is confronted by a conflicting impulse or an unrealized aim. What makes humankind different from other organisms is the way reflection and deliberation enter into our activity. This affords us greater control over our inescapably habitual lives because we can create and revise our habits. Dewey thus wishes to "ally ethics with physics and biology" by way of "the intelligent acknowledgement of the continuity of nature, man and society" (Dewey 2007, 12–13). Here again we see Dewey's meliorism come through. The evolutionary development of consciousness and mind means having a greater say in

[23] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), 81–82. For a comparison of Bourdieu, Dewey, and Merleau-Ponty on habit, see Nick Crossley, "Habit and Habitus" (2013). Elsewhere, Crossley defends Bourdieu against the charge of determinism, but admits that Bourdieu leaves himself vulnerable to the criticism by undertheorizing the creative possibilities of habit. For the latter argument, see Crossley, "The Phenomenology of Habitus and its Construction" (2001), 96. For a defense of a Merleau-Pontian conception of habit over Bourdieu, see Helen Ngo, *Habits of Racism* (2017), 9–1.

how one's transactions change the world and oneself. It means having a greater say in who we are and how we get by.

I find Dewey's distinction between intelligent and routine habit useful insofar as it registers habit's dual potential as enabling and inhibiting, but it isn't sufficient to do the normative work required for a theory of racial habit. As I will explain later, whether a habit counts as "intelligent" depends on the scope of its environmental reference. A habit can be locally intelligent when indexed to a particular world and goal. For instance, habits that serve the goal of maintaining white supremacy are highly adaptable in the sense that they are able to survive more global environmental changes, such as the civil rights movement in the U.S., while keeping the white world and its whitely ways intact. White habits are therefore locally intelligent, but they are routine in the more global sense of being rigidly fastened to *that* world and *those* aims. I'll return to this critical point after I have laid out the neo-Deweyan account of whiteness as habit.

2. Constructing Whiteness

The value of a transactional social ontology such as we get from Dewey is evident: it makes room for contingent and evolving social categories. This enables us to talk about race in ontological terms without invoking troubling essentialisms typical of classical racialism. By deploying this framework, Sullivan accounts for races as ontologically real and argues that habits of white privilege are central to the process of making whiteness. Although they don't do this work all on their own, habits of white privilege are a force in holding modern racial categories in place. Racial formation occurs through the same sort of process that calls any social category into existence. Widespread uniformities of habit are key players in social formation processes, and the formation of modern racial populations co-occurs with the formation of certain kinds of habits that work to hold those formations in place.

Let's consider more carefully what it means to say that habits of white privilege constitute people as white. Recall what I said a moment ago about the constitutive role of habit. The habits I form *are* me in the strong sense that they structure my being in the world and form my character. If my habits are those of white privilege—and I will say what those are shortly—I am to that extent white privileged. This point will be important for answering questions of accountability and responsibility, but it only gets us part of the way in answering the ontological question. Or, rather, it gets ahead of itself by begging the question. We can't very well use the notion of 'white privileged

habit' to define whiteness, which is presupposed by characterizing the habits as *white* privileged. How can we make better sense of this relationship?

The foregoing attempt at an explanation can be productively complicated by two considerations. The first is that whiteness as a category doesn't precede the existence of white privileged habit, such that the latter gets its name because they are habits exhibited by people who are "white" in some ontologically prior sense. Stated more simply, race doesn't precede habit-formation but comes into existence in and through it. To say that white privileged habit constitutes whiteness is to say that the category of whiteness is made up, in part, of the kinds of habits that the people who have historically thought of themselves as white embody, including the habit of thinking of themselves in this way.

Terrance MacMullan makes this point particularly well. MacMullan observes that habits of whiteness are formed in concert with certain popular conceptions of whiteness, and he argues that we have to attend to whiteness as both a set of habits and as a concept. Races are, among other things, conceptual categories used to divide up human populations. Dewey's theory of inquiry holds that concepts emerge from an organism's interactions with its environment. On this model, categories are established through inquiry in response to felt need. We can therefore read whiteness and race generally as the product of ongoing inquiry:

> With this theory we can account for the reality of whiteness by looking at it as a concept that responded so well to so many various social, economic, and political needs that it became an operative habit that largely impacted how the colonists, and subsequent generations, understood the world (MacMullan 2022, 60)

The history of whiteness as a concept powerfully shaped our social habits and laws, and through those habits and laws continued to direct future action. The action-guiding force of white supremacy persisted in habitual form even once overt references to whiteness were removed from mainstream political discourse (MacMullan 2022, 72).

This situation is exacerbated by the particular way whiteness has been normatively instituted. MacMullan proposes that instead of asking, "what is whiteness?" we have to ask, "how do we interact with each other in terms of the idea of whiteness?" (MacMullan 2022, 67). One way people in the post-civil rights era interact in terms of the idea of whiteness is by presuming it doesn't refer, or refers to something innocuous. Race theorists talk about this phenomenon using the

metaphor of invisibility.[24] According to the neo-Deweyan account, 'invisibility' references the habitual dimensions of whiteness. 'White invisibility' picks out the way white privilege goes unnoticed by white people thanks to its residence in habit, which protects white people from having to confront their own privilege while allowing it to continue unabated.

A second productive complication comes from considering the particular sorts of habits that are definitive of white privilege. Not just any habits could constitute whiteness as we know it. There are particular kinds of habits that have been highly effective in creating a racially divided world in which certain people—those seen as "white"—are prioritized at the expense of others—those seen as "non-white."

Sullivan discusses three interrelated habits, or sets of habits, that define white privilege.[25] Chief among these habits are white tendencies of appropriation. Sullivan calls this "ontological expansiveness": the disposition "to act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish" (Sullivan 2006, 10). White proprietary entitlement played a central role in the making of the modern west, and in the invention of modern racialism. The ontologically expansive tendencies of European nations were one of the engines driving WWI, which Du Bois characterized as a struggle between white nations over who will be allowed to exploit darker nations (Du Bois 1999, 23). It was at work in the kidnapping and enslavement of peoples from Africa, and the assault on Indigenous populations in North America and other parts of the world. And it persists in the "consumer cannibalism" of contemporary white America, packaging blackness (and Latinxness and Nativeness) for white middle-class consumption (Sullivan 2006, 125–27). Sullivan points to urban gentrification, the New Age commodification of indigenous

[24] The invisibility metaphor is used in a number of different ways by race theorists. It is sometimes used to describe the de-personification of non-white people, which is importantly different from how it is used to describe whiteness. I will talk more about invisibility (and hyper-visibility) as a racializing effect of white habits in chapter four.

[25] In her later work, Sullivan (2017) refines the concept of white privilege by breaking it into two: white class privilege and white priority. She argues that the language of 'privilege' is misleading and unhelpful because it implies that all whites are economically privileged. To avoid the erasure of poor whites she recommends that we adopt the language of white 'priority' instead, which better captures the way white people are socially and psychologically advantaged without necessarily being economically prosperous. She retains the language of privilege to pick out the specifically economic dimensions of white advantage, but insists that the expression be amended for clarity to 'white *class* privilege.' I find this conceptual distinction compelling, but for the sake of exegetical simplicity I will stick with the more general 'white privilege.'

ceremonies, practices, and cultural objects, and the museumification of Native artifacts as some examples of this tendency.

Sullivan borrows an example from Patricia Williams to illustrate an everyday instance of white ontological expansiveness. Williams gives an account of an all-white crowd, except for herself, taking a walking tour of Harlem on Easter Sunday. The guide asks if the group wants to go inside some of the churches, since "Easter Sunday in Harlem is quite a show" (Williams 1991, 71, quoted in Sullivan 2006, 164). There was no discussion of whether making a spectacle of black worship was problematic, and nobody protested the suggestion. Despite being polite and well-intentioned, "no one [and, one might add, no space] existed for them who could not be governed by their intentions" (Williams 1991, 72, quoted in Sullivan 2006, 164).

Closely conspiring with ontological expansiveness are related habits of white solipsism. This term—borrowed from Adrienne Rich (Rich 1979, 306)—is a form of ethical, rather than metaphysical solipsism, understood as the disposition to perceive and act as if "the interests, projects, desires, and values of the one subject are the main ones or the only ones of any significance" (Sullivan 2006, 163). 'White' ethical solipsism, then, is a way of "living as if only white people existed or mattered" (Sullivan 2006, 10). White ethical solipsism was also at work in the tourists' behavior in the example above:

> They viewed themselves as the only beings who possessed needs and desires worthy of consideration. While white tourists could legitimately roam into a black church, it is hardly imaginable that a group of underdressed, camera-toting black strangers would be allowed to observe the worshiping practices of a white congregation in, for example, white and wealthy Howard Beach" (Sullivan 2006, 164).

Habits of ontological expansiveness and ethical solipsism do a great deal of work in reproducing cycles of racial disparity, though they don't work alone. These less obvious habits accompany—and often buttress— the more familiar modes of racism that involve perceiving and responding to others in terms of objectifying and dehumanizing tropes. The final set of habits, which we might simply call 'objectifying perception,'[26] captures the routine ways in which white

[26] The set of habits I'm referring to here remains in the background of Sullivan's account. This way of classifying them is my own way of organizing thought, and it requires some explanation. We could just as well refer to this set of habits as 'racializing perception' or 'racist perception,' as many philosophers do. I've gone with 'objectifying perception' to avoid possible confusion that these other terms might create in this context. Specifically, I think the term 'racializing perception' is too broad to capture what I'm trying to pick out. Racist and anti-racist perception are equally 'racializing' if they read meaning into bodies and bloodlines. Those meanings need not be fixed by the essentialist notions associated with classical racialism. I opt not to use 'racist perception' in this context for similar reasons. I approach the concept of racism in a pluralist spirit and accept that many different things are appropriately called

people perceive and interact with people of color according to stereotypes or "controlling images" (Collins 2002, 69–96). This set of habits manifest in the tendency to imagine, see, and respond to non-white people in white privileging and otherwise racist ways.

To illustrate, Sullivan recounts a bus ride she took in Birmingham, Alabama. A man named Charlie—the only other white person on the bus besides herself—sits next to her so she won't be "crowded in by someone [she doesn't] know" (Sullivan 2006, 115). Sullivan reads this move as an attempt to protect her white womanhood from the sexual and physical threat of black men. Behind Charlie's judgment is a racist perception of the situation rooted in an unconscious desire to secure a racial (and gendered) ontology by acting out his own role as whitely (and masculinely) supreme.

Another instructive example is borrowed from Patricia Williams' experience of being refused entry into a Benetton boutique. Sullivan explains the white clerk's refusal as involving a perceptual habit not unlike the one that lead Charlie to protect her white womanhood. In seeing Williams—a black woman—approach the door and ring the buzzer to be let into a space entirely populated by white shoppers, the clerk registered a threat and falsely signaled to Williams that the shop was closed. Sullivan notes that the "clerk's conscious—and, in all likelihood, sincere—belief that Williams's 'threatening' appearance legitimately barred her entry into Benetton" was rooted in an unconscious racist investment in white superiority, which also contributes to the clerk's inability to recognize their decision as racially motivated, preserving their own sense of moral goodness (Sullivan 2006, 145).

Sullivan comments that the white patrons didn't question the clerk's behavior, "since it is unseemly for a white middle-class person to make a disruptive scene in a public place" (Sullivan 2006, 146). Sullivan's reading of the situation calls attention to the way race and class conspire in forming certain habits, in this case the habit of minding one's own business. But it optimistically presupposes that the white patrons registered an issue with what was happening and simply didn't speak up. Though I don't doubt there were many forces at work in setting this scene, including southern middle-class habits of avoiding public confrontation, I read the white patrons' disregard as a function of the same perceptual habit motivating the clerk. In seeing a black woman refused

'racist.' Given their reliance on invidiously discriminatory racial distinctions and their effects on the distribution of social goods, ontological expansiveness and ethical solipsism would also qualify as forms of 'racist perception.' This means the term isn't specific enough to draw out the particular features of perception that are relevant to this third class of white privileged habits. Namely, the disposition to cast non-white people in terms of dehumanizing stereotypes, and to respond with violence or other forms of mistreatment.

entry, it didn't occur to the white patrons that anything was amiss. They perceived the event as legitimate, if they took note of it at all.

The Benetton incident underscores the fact that race works principally "through the domain of the visible" (Alcoff 2006, 187), but racial and racist categorizations operate perceptually by means other than the visual register as well. Drawing on an anecdote from her own experience, Sullivan tells of her reaction to the smell of cumin, which calls to her mind the (purported) uncleanliness of Mexican(American)/Chicano(a)s/Latin Americans (all of whom, she notes, were just "Mexicans" in the Texas town where she grew up). Even though Sullivan now consciously knows that the association is racist and sincerely does not want to make it, she isn't able to smell cumin without it occurring.

These are just a few examples of the many ways that objectifying perceptual habit embodies and reinforces white domination. Taken together with the appropriative and solipsistic habits discussed above, these ways of seeing, being, and doing are not a simple case of bad behavior. Habits of white privilege exist in a reciprocally co-constituting relationship with racial categories and bodies, making these habits ontologically productive. Put another way, habits of white privilege are central to the processes by which racial categories are created and maintained.

Sullivan argues that the main operative of racial inequality in the post-civil rights era is the white privilegist. The white privilegist interacts in terms of a concept of whiteness that still carries supremacist connotations, resulting in appropriative, solipsistic, and otherwise racist modes of being. But this is not the claim that all white people are doomed to white privilege. It will help here to draw on Marilyn Frye's distinction between 'white' and 'whitely' (Frye 1992, 145–169). Being 'white' refers to "physical traits such as pale skin color," whereas being 'whitely' refers to "a deeply engrained way of being in the world" that includes behaviors, habits, and dispositions" (Sullivan 2006, 160). Although a person cannot step outside of their skin and radically alter their phenotype, they can modify their behaviors, habits, and dispositions. The two characterizations come apart. One can be whitely and not be phenotypically white, and one can be phenotypically white but not be whitely.

Most often, however, whiteness and whiteliness are found together. Sullivan notes that "the relationship between being white and being whitely is transactional, which means that their relationship is never as simple as one of cultural whiteliness overlaying biological whiteness" (Sullivan 2006, 160). Being phenotypically white and brought up in a white privileged world means

being socially located in a way that will tend to instill and reinforce whiteliness. But historically speaking, the significance of phenotypic whiteness is not prior to whiteliness, it is a product of it. Physiological distinctions were made meaningful by the habits and ideological assumptions of white supremacy.

To say that racial whiteness follows from supremacist ideas and habits sounds dangerously close to the claim that race is nothing but racism. This is the idea behind racial eliminativism and white abolitionism, and it would strongly favor such recommendations were it the case that white supremacy is the only meaningful content that whiteness can take on. But a theory of racial habit resists these conclusions. It may be the case that white privileged habits constitute me as a white privileged self, and in the same process constitute the meaning of whiteness as such; they do the double work of creating selves and creating social categories. But this does not mean that the meaning of whiteness is doomed by its supremacist connotations. Racism may have brought modern racial categories into existence, but we need not draw the conclusion, as some do, that race is nothing but racism, or that whiteness is an irredeemable moral failure and so must be abolished. Sullivan and MacMullan rightly insist that whiteness can, and must, become something other than a force of domination. Reconstituting socio-ontological categories can only be accomplished through a reconstitution of the people who make them up. And this requires addressing our habits.

In addition to cautioning against reading the white/whitely distinction in either the eliminativist or abolitionist vein, Sullivan warns against thinking that because whiteliness resides in our behaviors and attitudes, it will be easy to modify:

> Especially when they are unconscious, habits of whiteliness can be extremely difficult to detect, let alone change. While acquired rather than innate, unconscious habits of white privilege can develop a relative fixity that makes them just as difficult to modify as one's physical features, if not more so (Sullivan 2006, 161).

The neo-Deweyan approach to whiteness establishes that "[a]s an instance of habit, race often functions subconsciously, as a predisposition for acting in the world that is not consciously chosen or planned" (Sullivan 2006, 25). But this is not all there is to the story, according to Sullivan. In fact, the "ordinary" sense of habit gets little attention beyond the first chapter of her book. As she explains, subconscious or pre-conscious experience operates just below the surface of awareness and is readily available to reflective interrogation and reconfiguration. Conceiving of white privilege as subconscious habit declaws it, making it seem less insidious and more manageable than

it in fact is. She argues that the concept of subconscious habit can only account for the naïve and accidental forms of white-privileging ignorance that can be eliminated if brought to the person's attention. The reproduction of white privileged habit is due to more than "the stubborn inertia of habit"; it is due to an unconscious, intense fear of giving up race and class privilege (Sullivan 2006, 117).

3. Unconscious Investments in White Supremacy

To better account for the ugly hostility of human habit and the vicious realities of white privilege, Sullivan develops the Deweyan model of habit in a Du Boisian spirit.[27] This means constructing an account of white habit rooted in a socially formed and resistant unconscious. On this view, the persistence of white domination can't be explained through the sheer unthinking inertia of habit alone. It involves deeply held racist commitments that are inaccessible to conscious awareness and that reinforce the white privileged habits discussed above. Sullivan's "pragmatized psychoanalysis" centers on the unconscious mode habits sometimes take.

Sullivan uses the term 'unconscious' to capture the obstructionist character that some habits have, but she resists the claim that all unconscious habits are in principle inaccessible to conscious reflection (Sullivan 2006, 7). Setting aside, for now, the question of accessibility and reconfiguration, we should take care to understand the processes involved in the making of the racist unconscious.

In contrast with traditional psychoanalysis that imagines the unconscious to be an isolated chamber of the individual psyche, Sullivan posits a transactional unconscious: one initially formed and continually reformed "in and through a dynamic, reciprocal relationship with its bodily, social, political, and other environments" (Sullivan 2006, 61). This means the unconscious emerges and takes shape through the individual's contact with wider socio-cultural environments. It also means unconscious operations can be attributed to the body as well as the mind (Sullivan 2006, 8). With these modifications in view, Sullivan proposes that 'unconscious' is better understood as an adjective than a noun. It is not a "thing or force inside one's head" but is found in "the predispositions for transacting with the world that actively thwart their conscious examination and

[27] It is worth clarifying that the "Du Boisian spirit" of this move refers to the latter's awakening to the reality of invidious white ignorance, as illustrated in his later works, particularly *The Souls of White Folk* and *Darkwater.* I am not referring here to Du Bois's much debated idea of the "racial gift," which Lou Outlaw and Terrance MacMullan endorse, and Shannon Sullivan rejects. See Sullivan (2001), 163–170.

possible transformation" (Sullivan 2006, 62). This, according to Sullivan, is the primary operator of white privilege in the post-civil rights era and accounts for the "good white person" phenomenon, an embodied dissonance between anti-racist avowals and racist habits: "White liberalism generally doesn't aim to end white domination. Quite the opposite: it aims to render it more tolerable, both to its beneficiaries and its victims, and so to perpetuate itself indefinitely—an aim it shares with its 'enemy' white supremacy" (Sullivan 2014, 4).

Reading Jean Laplanche together with Frantz Fanon, Sullivan argues that the racist unconscious forms through the trans-generational communication of enigmatic messages about whiteness and non-whiteness that installs a white supremacist ontology and ethic into the collective unconscious and individual psyches of a people. The subliminal transmission of racist messaging, and the manifestation of those messages in habit, accounts for how white supremacy can live on even after it has been wiped from the official ledger. The constellation of habits that define white privilege now exist in a feedback loop with an unconscious investment in white advantage.

The making of a racist unconscious involves three basic elements: the transmission of enigmatic messages, the installation of a white supremacist or white privilegist leading idea, and the repression of that leading idea. Sullivan's view is influenced far more by Laplanche than Freud, though it does inherit some modified Freudian ideas. In particular, Sullivan makes use of Freud's notion of the 'ego ideal.' The ego ideal is the aspect of the psyche that breaks from the ego and behaves like "a parent whose role is to establish high standards for the ego, demand that it live up to them, and punish it when it does not do so" (Sullivan 2006, 48). This occurs through mechanisms of "self-observation, moral conscience, dream censorship, and repression" (ibid.).

On Freud's view, social group formation occurs when the ego ideal is replaced by a 'leading idea' that can take the form of an external object, such as a group leader, or it can take the form of an abstract idea, such as white supremacy, which then "binds a mere assortment of people into a consciously raced group of white people who share a consciously held, deprecating belief about non-white people" (Sullivan 2006, 49). Sullivan proposes that white supremacy and white privilege function as leading ideas that replace the ego ideals of white people (and sometimes non-white people, as exemplified in Fanon's discussion of French occupied Martinique).

The notion of a leading idea is supposed to explain individual investment in white domination, which on Sullivan's view can be either conscious (white supremacy) or unconscious (white privilege), and which accounts in part for the formation of the racial group (Sullivan 2006,

49).[28] In contrast to white supremacy, which Sullivan understands to be predominantly conscious, "white privilege is an idea to which many white people are emotionally tied in ways of which they are usually not consciously aware" (Sullivan 2006, 51). In the case of white privilegists, "white privilege has come to replace the ego ideal, but the replacement is not consciously noticed" (Sullivan 2006, 52). The emotional attachments felt toward the leading idea are repressed because considered morally or socially inappropriate. When this happens, another emotion sometimes takes its place, such as the emotion of respect for all people regardless of race. This allows the individual to (mis)understand, e.g., her felt comfort around white people as a general social comfortability that has nothing to do with race. The conscious beliefs and emotions are reaction formations that develop in response to the repressed ones.

Sullivan's psychoanalytic reading explains that unconscious racial hatred is so widespread thanks to the repression of once openly expressed racist attitudes (Sullivan 2006, 50). This does not mean that every individual who currently harbors unconscious habits of white privilege were at one point in their lives openly and consciously racist. It means that white domination is a "multiply trans-generational project" that passes repression along via unconscious habit. She explains this process by reading Fanon's experiences through Laplanchian seduction theory.

Sullivan turns to Jean Laplanche's theory of seduction to explain how unconscious habits of white privilege are formed and inter-generationally maintained. Sullivan understands seduction as "a process of unconscious habit formation" that shows "how habits are developed as co-constitutively psychical and somatic in their unconscious operations" (Sullivan 2006, 64). The "event of seduction" is the initial formation of the unconscious and involves the transference of "enigmatic messages" from adult to child. The enigmatic messages come by way of bodily gestures and vocalizations that form the child's unconscious. The child can't comprehend the meaning of

[28] Sullivan uses these terms (supremacy vs. privilege) somewhat unconventionally to track the shift from de jure racism (the "old way" of conscious and codified white supremacy) to de facto racism (the "new way" of unconscious covert white privilege). On her view, the overarching system is 'white domination,' with "conscious, deliberate forms of white domination, such as those found in the law but also in informal social mores" being identified as 'white supremacy' (Sullivan 2006, 5). As she understand it, white supremacy is gradually being replaced by a more covert mode of domination via habits of white privilege. I'm not sure I would subscribe to this way of carving things up. It is more common to find 'white supremacy' being used interchangeably with 'white domination,' both of which refer to the overarching system that sustains white racial advantage, but that undergoes changes over time. The main transformation being from de jure to de facto white supremacy. 'White privilege,' by contrast, refers to the "differential illicit white advantage" that obtains in various forms across the systemic changes (Mills 2007, 222). I find the orthodox division spelled out by Charles Mills to be more useful, especially considering that (as will become evident later on) conscious white supremacy is still in some regards a function of unconscious habits and habitual orientations.

the messages in their totality, and what is not understood gets repressed. The repression of these untranslated remainders form the unconscious and manifest in bodily and psychic habits.[29]

Sullivan adapts Laplanche's view to the subject of race and racism and modifies it to reflect the active and productive aspects of transactional habit. As an illustrative example, Sullivan turns to Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye,* in which a young black girl internalizes enigmatic messages that tell her white is good, beautiful, and pure, while black is bad, ugly, and contaminated. This messaging is crystalized when she dismembers a white doll that she receives as a gift (Morrison 1972, 20–21). The response from the adults—anger, sadness, dismay—reinforces a message she's already been receiving but doesn't fully or consciously understand: that whiteness is an ideal to which she should aspire.

There are a few things to note about Sullivan's appropriation of Laplanchian seduction theory. First of all, Laplanche imagines that seduction occurs in the first year of a child's life and ceases around the time the child acquires spoken language, at which point the unconscious is fully developed and will remain basically the same for the remainder of the child's life. By contrast, Sullivan sees no reason to assume seduction ends after infancy or that it has anything to do with the presence or absence of spoken language. Language itself can and often is a vehicle for enigmatic messages. What's more, to naturalize the unconscious, as Laplanche wishes to do, we must posit a psychical life grounded in the materiality and sociality of human experience (Sullivan 2006, 76–77). Given the openness of the human organism to its environments and the interminable nature of human dependence, it stands to reason that seduction would continue to be at play in the ongoing development of the self.

The next thing to note is that unconscious habits formed through enigmatic messaging are not to be understood as strictly psychical, but as engaging psyche and soma. Sullivan's professed association of the smell of cumin with "dirty Mexicans" is a bodily habit that, even once brought

[29] On Sullivan's view, repression seems to play an important role in the formation of the racist unconscious, but there's an apparent conflict in her account of this process. She describes the unconscious as composed of "untranslated remnants" of enigmatic messages — the bits of information that the recipient can't make sense of. But she also claims that repression happens because the message is inappropriate or painful. It seems that one would need to understand the meaning of the message at some level in order to flag it for repression. So either the messages are in some sense understood, or repression is not essential to the formation of the unconscious. Sullivan's claim about racist messaging being transmitted to infants commits her more to the latter, since it would be hard to make the case that an infant has any sense for racial meanings, let alone can experience—in the broad sense including unconscious processes—shame in response to them. I'm skeptical of Sullivan's claim that racist messaging can have transactional effects on young infants, but I can't take that up here. I also lean toward the view that repression—understood as the submergence of painful or uncomfortable experiences—is not necessary to the formation of the unconscious.

to her awareness, cannot be willfully undone. "It is as if behind or alongside my conscious knowledge, a much stronger olfactory un(conscious)knowledge exists, undermining my attempts to smell cumin as just plain cumin" (Sullivan 2006, 68). Sullivan argues that we need a way to explain the *active* investment in maintaining the association, which she thinks neither a Deweyan nor a Merleau-Pontian account of habit can provide. The olfactory habit is best understood as "an active, productive partner of my unconscious psyche, both of which seek to protect my white privileged sense of self" (Sullivan 2006, 68).

A theory of seduction accounts for the process of unconscious habit formation by which "concrete others come to constitute the individual psychosomatic self" (Sullivan 2006, 94). Sullivan does not restrict the transferal of enigmatic messages from parent to child, but understands unconscious habit as forming out of engagement with a range of concrete others, including people, media, and impersonal institutions. What's more, the formation of psychosomatic unconscious habits is a "multiply transgenerational project" that secures racist inheritance across time. Sullivan gives the example of the "distasteful hiss" of her grandmother's voice as she pronounces the word "Mexican." She attributes to that experience her current tendency to hear the word "Mexican" as a racial slur—an auditory habit she can't seem to undo no matter how conscious she now is of the racist implicature (Sullivan 2006, 69).

Processes of habit formation do not only produce what we might think of as individual or personal habits, they also generate habits at the level of culture or society. Sullivan explains cultural habit through the concept of the collective unconscious. "Enigmatic messages can be unintentionally (as well as intentionally) sent to a culture, society, nation or other trans-individual group that it cannot fully or adequately understand. The undigested remnants of those messages contribute to a culture's unconscious habits" (Sullivan 2006, 95).

Sullivan describes racist "ethical slippage" as "peacefully violent" and "uneventful" (Sullivan 2006, 110). That is, it typically occurs apart from any particular event, or continues to be communicated long after the event has taken place. In those cases, the collective unconscious is composed of "remnants" of events that no currently living person underwent, but by which they are nonetheless constituted. Sullivan explains that no one ever sat her down and gave her a lesson in white superiority. Instead, "a white privileged collective unconscious has slipped, undetected, into my individual habits. Because of this slippage, I unconsciously 'know' that white people are

superior to all others, and I manifest that knowledge in my psychosomatic engagement with the world" (Sullivan 2006, 95).

The strength of seduction theory on Sullivan's estimation is that it naturalizes the unconscious and puts it in contact with the wider socio-political environment, making it transactional. The importance of understanding the unconscious as transactional is that it reveals both how the world impacts unconscious habit, and how unconscious habit impacts the world. In this way, unconscious habits are productive, not representational. Sullivan describes unconscious habit as a psychosomatic machine: "human beings historically have lived and currently live in a raced and racist world in significant part because of unconscious investments in and productions of that world" (Sullivan 2006, 89). This suggests the need to take responsibility for the products of white privileged habit and calls for collective white accountability.

Sullivan's account of the white privilegist unconscious has a number of important implications. It means that the racist constitution of white people doesn't begin when they form their first conscious belief about white superiority and non-white inferiority. It begins much earlier, in infancy or early childhood, when one receives their first racist enigmatic message. And a whitely unconscious rarely ever culminates into a full blown racist consciousness. It also means that the unconscious is susceptible to the internalization of racist messaging throughout one's life. What's more, because this slippage occurs unconsciously, it could (and often does) coincide with explicit antiracist commitments. It also could (and often does) penetrate the psyches of non-white people whose unconscious becomes structured by habits of white domination.

I want to pause here to more carefully consider what is at issue with these three sets of white privileged habits (ontological expansiveness, ethical solipsism, objectifying perception). I am arguing that Sullivan overlooks an important part of a theory of racial habit, and that this oversight stems from certain limitations to her conception of habit, and to her normative frame. The problem Sullivan is drawing attention to in her psychoanalytic turn is that white privileged habits have their roots in nefarious commitments. Namely, a commitment to white domination. So they are problematic because they embody and create a hierarchically divided world, and they protect the white privilegists' sense of racial innocence by submerging the true ideals in which these habits have taken root. We can break this argument down into two claims. Habits of white privilege are problematic because 1) they enact a white supremacist logic that perpetuates racial hierarchy, and 2) they are rooted in an unconscious that actively thwarts efforts to expose them.

The first point amounts to the claim that these habits run afoul of our reflectively endorsed ends. They are problematic because they violate the ideals by which those who are in their grip claim to live. It is tempting to read the second point in line with Dewey's concern about the rigidity of habit, but I don't think it actually tracks. Sullivan isn't saying that these habits have become too deeply sedimented or too rigid (even if that turns out to be true), but that they have been marshalled as psycho-somatic operatives for the whitely unconscious. In other words, habits of white privilege serve to keep white domination in place while simultaneously protecting white people from the shameful reality that they harbor personal investments in a racist system. The normative analysis here resides entirely in an instrumental logic. If we introduce Dewey's intelligent/routine distinction into our analysis of whiteness we can extend the critique. White habits are problematic not only because of the kinds of habits they are (racist, arrogant, solipsistic, entitled) but because of the form they have taken. Namely, they have become routine. I take this to be a point of concern worth attending to in its own right, which I do in chapter five. By doing so we bump up against the limits of the normative schema that the neo-Deweyans (and Dewey himself) offer, and come to discover an additional normative lens suggested by Dewey's primacy thesis, and clarified by a phenomenological reading of habit.

I don't wish to contest Sullivan's psychoanalytic framework, despite being unconvinced by some of its more theoretically speculative moments. I'm perfectly willing to grant that something like this process takes place. It's undeniable that associations between whiteness and superiority are unconsciously at work in all of us, and that those of us who regard ourselves as white have a greater stake in protecting those associations.[30] I tend, however, to think of pre-conscious and unconscious habit as a difference of degree, not kind. Sullivan's own way of talking about it often suggests this, too, though she doesn't explicitly say as much. This point will become important when I address the prescriptive question in chapter five. For now, rather than parsing psychoanalytic explanations, I'm interested in excavating the territory of white habit that Sullivan either glosses over or side-steps entirely. In particular, I want to attend more carefully to the phenomenological dimensions of whiteness that have so far only been alluded to. These dimensions start to surface in Sullivan's examination of how white habit helps forge other racial categories.

[30] Terrance MacMullan (2022) also maintains a connection between white habits and white supremacist ideals, though he explains this connection by appealing to "ordinary" pre-conscious habit. MacMullan defends Dewey against Sullivan, who doesn't think pre-conscious habit can explain this aspect of white privilege. I can't settle this disagreement here, but nothing that I am going to say turns on it.

4. White Habit and Non-White Embodiment *or* The Part Sullivan Almost Gets Right

We have so far been exploring what it means to say that white privileged habit constitutes whiteness. But a theory of racial habit is not just about the making of whiteness, it is also about the making of other modes of racialization. And since the problem of whiteness lies principally in its harmful effects on others, we need to attend to what exactly these effects are.

I've mentioned that habits have an enabling quality for the possessor —a point I will return to in later chapters. I mention this here in order to flag that the virtue of this enablement isn't a given. Sullivan rightly states that "the power provided by white habits in particular often is oppressive to others" (Sullivan 2006, 25). The oppressive relations entrenched in habit helped forge contemporary racial categories and they live on in the unconscious dispositions of otherwise well-meaning white people. We need to look more carefully at what makes white privileged habit oppressive.

With this in mind, Sullivan argues that white privileged habits are not only constitutive of white selves, they are "constitutive of the self, whatever race a particular self may be" (Sullivan 2006, 2). This latter claim is in need of some explanation. To say white privileged habit constitutes selves regardless of their race does not mean phenotypically non-white people enjoy white privilege, though this is in principle possible.[31] It means white privileged habits have constitutive effects that extend beyond the possessor of the habit. That is, beyond whiteness.

We can see more clearly how this works by looking at Sullivan's discussion of the relationship between race and space. Sullivan defends the Foucauldian claim that "space is fundamental to any exercise of power" and pushes back on the idea that space is a "neutral, empty arena in which people of various races are located" (Sullivan 2006, 158). She argues instead that 1) space is racially constituted by the people inhabiting it, 2) people are racially constituted by the space they are permitted to (or prohibited from) inhabiting, and 3) white and black people inhabit space differently due to the different ways they are positioned within a racist society.

To explain these processes, Sullivan dips into some phenomenological resources that I'm not sure she's entitled to use given her criticisms of Merleau-Ponty (more on this shortly). At the same time, her aversion to phenomenological philosophy prevents her from seeing the problem of

[31] The exceptions I have in mind include instances of white passing, as well as cases of internalized white supremacy such as those experienced by colonial subjects that forges the "zebra striping" effect Fanon (2008) theorizes.

whiteness in its fullness. I'll be in a better position to explain these methodological oversteps and theoretical oversights once her account is on the table.

Let's return for a moment to the Benetton example. This scenario does more than illustrate the unconscious racist reaction of the store clerk. Sullivan uses it to root out the way space both constitutes and is constituted by white privilege (Sullivan 2006, 143). On Sullivan's reading, the spaces of "inside" and "outside" Benetton were "racially magnetized," which she explains by drawing on the phenomenological concept of a "bodily horizon." She writes:

> Because bodies are part of the horizon against which objects and situations stand forth, the spaces of 'inside Benetton' and 'outside on the sidewalk' were not neutral, uniform spaces. They were magnetized with meaning. In this case, they racially and racistly demarcated an 'inside' from an 'outside' and an 'us' from a 'them' (Sullivan 2006, 145).

The background that gives the event its meaning includes the makeup of the bodies and the history that has imbued those bodies with social significance. But phenomenologically speaking, the 'background' is a structure of perception, and it warrants more extensive explication than Sullivan provides. We can't talk about the racial constitution of space and bodies without talking about how that space, and the bodies that occupy it, are variously perceived, and what informs those perceptual interpretations.

Sullivan gets us some of the way there. She notes that before Williams approached, the spaces inside and outside Benetton appeared racially neutral. This apparent neutrality gave the illusion of being an "empty, unconstituted void" when only white people were present. "The horizons of black and white bodies made relatively visible and invisible, respectively, the coloring and separation of spaces" (Sullivan 2006, 145). Sullivan explains this illusion with reference to the way whiteness operates as a race-less norm for white people and appears invisible—invisibility being a function of its habitual operations.[32] The white clerk may not have made a conscious decision to refuse Williams entry on explicitly racial grounds, but the racist motivation was at work in the clerk's sincere perception of Williams as a threat. I would add that it was also at work in the white patron's failure to register anything suspect about the clerk's judgment.

[32] MacMullan, too, equates invisibility with the "habitual dimensions of whiteness" or "the aspects of the concept of whiteness that have become so embedded in our thoughts, behaviors, and perceptions that they are no longer apparent, even as they continue to impact behavior" (MacMullan 2022, 18). He doesn't do much to explain white invisibility, letting his Deweyan account of habit serve as a stand-in. But invisibility is a phenomenological aspect of whiteness that requires approaching habit from a slightly different angle. Absent a phenomenology of habit—one that spells out the connection between invisibility and normativity—it remains an open question why racial whiteness in particular takes on this characteristic.

Here, Sullivan uses white invisibility to explain the racial demarcation of space, and she uses the notion of a bodily horizon to explain white invisibility. But she moves too swiftly past this moment of analysis. Her objective is to examine the "unseen, invisible, and even seemingly nonexistent" operations of white privilege (Sullivan 2006, 1), yet her treatment of white invisibility leaves much unsaid. What needs further explanation is the white ability to miss the racial workings of a situation even while they serve as hermeneutic guides and directives for action. In other words, we need to look more closely at how race structures perception. This issue is not distinct from, but bound up with, the limitations of the neo-Deweyan conception of habit.

The phenomenon of invisibility is importantly connected to white normativity, and they are both functions of a certain way of inhabiting social space. Deweyan habit can tell us why particular habits go unnoticed, but it strains to explain how an entire racial category can become invisible to some of its own constituents. Hence Sullivan's turn to phenomenology in these moments. The failure to recognize the role that race plays in our perceptions, judgments, and actions is a function of the fact that race is a structure of contemporary perception, and it is structured in ways that allow whiteness to recede into the background.

Picking back up with Sullivan's reading of the Benetton incident, prior to Williams' arrival the spatial demarcation of "inside" and "outside" is a formality and mostly ignorable. The nature of those spaces changes upon Williams' approach, at which point "some of the illusion of non-raced space in this situation was dispelled…[but] not enough to bring to full consciousness all the operations of raced space in this situation" (Sullivan 2006, 145). I would specify that the racializing of space was not brought to full conscious awareness for the *white* clerk and patrons. Williams was indeed well aware—or at least more aware—of the racial demarcation of space that occurred in that moment. Why this is so becomes apparent when we consider the asymmetrical impact that racializing processes have on the lived body. This point is relevant to the question of habit as orientation noted above and will be considered more fully in a moment.

Turning now to Sullivan's second claim regarding race and space: not only did the event racialize space, but the pattern of admittance (whites permitted, blacks not) constituted the bodies inhabiting those spaces as raced. "Race exists by means of a transactional relationship between bodies and world in which neither can be considered wholly primary or foundational" (Sullivan 2006, 146). It is through transactions such as these that people are constituted and reconstituted in racially significant ways. In a non-trivial sense, the people who gained admittance into Benetton

were made white and the people refused admittance became black (Sullivan 2006, 147).[33] I want to emphasize again that while the pattern of admittance is important, we must bear in mind that it is an embodied manifestation of a perceptual habit—a way of articulating the world according to race; a way of interpreting its meanings and demands, and re-inscribing those meanings through our embodied responses.

In addition to illustrating the making of racial ontology through the constitution of spaces and bodies as raced, this example invites us to consider the way white and black people tend to live their spatiality differently. This is the last of Sullivan's three claims regarding race and space, and it is where Sullivan begins to talk about habituation in the sense I want to explore: "systems of white domination respectively tend to allow and constrain white and non-white people to live their spatiality in different ways" (Sullivan 2006, 143). As we've already discussed, Sullivan argues that white existence is lived as "ontologically expansive," referring to the habit of white privilege "in which white people consider all spaces as rightfully available for their inhabitation" (Sullivan 2006, 144). By contrast, "black people are generally not allowed to direct their transactions with the world in significant ways. Instead, they often are compelled merely to accept the form of transaction forced upon them" (Sullivan 2006, 146).

What about Williams' experience involved her transactions being forced rather than willfully directed? In its most obvious sense, Williams' inability to enter a space that white people were allowed to enter forced her transaction by preventing her from completing the activity she set out to do: shopping. But the claim that black and white people inhabit space differently is more than the observation that they are not equally permitted to enter all the same spaces and engage in all the same activities. It points to a difference in how black and white people are made to inhabit their bodies. Sullivan writes:

> Williams was made painfully aware of her active, bodily assumption of space through the interference of it occasioned by the clerk. Williams's bodily horizons were shattered, transforming her body from a subconscious and unconscious background to her shopping activities into a thing-like object of conscious awareness and manipulation. A historico-racial schema forced a racial epidermal schema upon Williams (Sullivan 2006, 146).

The reference to the shattering of Williams' bodily horizon once again makes use of a concept developed by Merleau-Ponty. Sullivan gets there through Fanon, who builds on Merleau-Ponty's

[33] The dynamic and contextual nature of raciality is perhaps most evident in cases of 'passing,' where someone of mixed or ambiguous race is read as white or non-white depending on the situation they find themselves in.

notion of the 'body schema' to capture the experience of colonial subjects. The body schema is "the lived body by and through which one takes up the world" (Sullivan 2006, 101). This is best understood in contrast to the body as an object that is consciously reflected on and that occupies a place in objective space. "As lived, a person's body is not consciously guided through its various activities and movements. Bodily life is instead the unthought means by which a person is an active agent in the world" (Sullivan 2006, 101).[34] Fanon argues that behind the body schema lurks an "historico-racial schema"—a fund of racial myths that influence one's bodily comportment and self-understanding.

When a person is brought up in a raced and racist world, their body schema is propped up by an historico-racial schema that associates whiteness as good and blackness as bad, then tethers these values to bodily features (Sullivan 2006, 102). Sullivan notes that Fanon tends to present the historico-racial schema as something that only black, or other non-white people have to confront. This asymmetrical attribution is due to the fact that the historico-racial schema privileges whiteness, which means white bodily existence can operate unabated, making it seem as if there is no historico-racial schema at play in the constitution of her body (Sullivan 2006, 103).

On Sullivan's reading, however, white and black bodies are structured by the same historico-racial schema. Though because they occupy different positions within the schema, their bodily comportment is affected differently. Sullivan describes the historico-racial schema as the "somatic embodiment of the raced collective unconscious" which "simultaneously supports the unconscious psyche's investments in white privilege and serves as a site for racism's unconscious operations" (Sullivan 2006, 103). The impact of the historico-racial schema often remains invisible to the white person but not the black person, who is "called on for more" by this "racial epidermalization" that imposes a race upon her while the white person can exist as if raceless (Sullivan 2006, 103). In the case of the black person, in moments of racist interpellation, the

[34] Some remarks are in order regarding the theoretical framework Sullivan uses to examine this issue. Sullivan shifts to a phenomenological perspective, which is unavoidable given the subject matter. But in doing this she oversteps the methodological boundaries that she herself set. To talk about the body schema is to invest the body with intentionality, a phenomenological model that Sullivan explicitly rejects. Sullivan doesn't reject phenomenological analysis outright, she rejects a certain approach to phenomenological philosophy popularized by Edmund Husserl and developed by Merleau-Ponty, and grounded in an intentional model of experience. In lieu of intentionality, which she finds problematic for reasons we'll explore in the next chapter, Sullivan proposes to advance a transactional phenomenology. What she doesn't realize is that her own analysis presupposes something like intentionality. I will argue that intentionality is transactional, and that it captures a dimension of experience that the concept of transaction on its own doesn't get at. These issues will be taken up more fully in chapter three.

"normal" bodily schema crumbles and is replaced by a racial epidermal schema that positions her outside of herself, forcing her to be aware of her body as an object.[35]

These events begin to make more sense when we think about race as "the [perceptual] field, rather than that which stands out" (Alcoff 2006, 188). What amounts to the same thing, racializing perception is a function of habituation. But who, exactly, is habituated by this historico-racial schema? In one sense of the word 'habituation,' the answer is: everyone living in a raced and racist world. White and non-white people alike are shaped by racial meanings unconsciously circulating in the social imaginary, though the shaping is different depending on how you are positioned within the schema. This is the point Sullivan is driving at in her analysis of race and space. But according to a different sense of the word 'habituation,' it is only white people who are habituated by contemporary racial structures. This other sense captures a certain outcome and quality of lived experience, that of finding oneself at home in the world. The historico-racial schema may structure all of our racialized experiences, but only some of us get to comfortably inhabit that world, as we comfortably inhabit our bodies.

We therefore need to consider whiteness not only in terms of the particular habits that make it problematic, as Sullivan helpfully does, but in broader terms of 'white habituation,' which is more attuned to the role of perceptual habit in creating a raced and racist world, and which calls attention to an aspect of lived experience undertheorized in the neo-Deweyan account. From a phenomenological perspective, the term 'habituation' picks out a way of being oriented and calls attention to the at-homeness or 'homeliness'[36] of habitual embodiment. This more holistic understanding shows that what is at stake in the problem of whiteness is not just the effects of individually problematic habits, but the capacity of being oriented in and by social space.

Returning to the point this section set out to explore: what are the harms of white privileged habit, and specifically at the level of lived experience? As Sullivan presents it, the differences in how white and black people inhabit their bodies is a troubling effect of white privileged habit.

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[35] This makes it sound like people of color switch back and forth between two body schema, the "normal" and the "historico-racial." I don't think that's what Sullivan means to imply, and it's certainly not the most promising interpretation of Fanon's concept. Rather, the idea of an 'historico-racial schema' picks out the way all bodies in a raced and racist world are racially constituted, though some (whites) are able to pretend as if they aren't, whereas others (non-whites) are routinely reminded of their own raciality via racist events that induce "racial epidermalization."

[36] I admit that the word 'homeliness' is not a perfect term for what I'm trying to talk about. In its more familiar connotation, it means something like 'ugly' or 'unattractive,' which could put the reader in mind of something very different from what I mean to convey. I've adapted this term from Helen Ngo's use of its opposite, 'unhomeliness,' which she uses to describe the fragmentation and dis-ease of non-white embodiment (Ngo 2017, 124). I find 'homeliness' less cumbersome and easier to use than the alternatives, 'at-home-ness' or 'being-at-home.'

When white people's actions are directed by assumptions of proprietary entitlement, ethical solipsism, and racist objectification, non-white people are harmed in their very ability to live in and through their bodies. If we follow this thought through we see something the neo-Deweyan account misses, or else doesn't make enough of. The disruption to the lived body illustrated in the Benetton example, and many others like it, is a disruption to one's ability to properly *inhabit* their bodies and the spaces with which that body transacts. In other words, a world built-to-suit whiteness is one that impacts non-white people in their very capacity for habituation. This oversight is due in part to Sullivan's occupation with identifying and defining individual habits of white privilege, instead of thinking of whiteness (and race generally) in the broader sense that I am proposing.

At this point I need to clarify my charge against the neo-Deweyan account. When I say that Sullivan is narrowly focused on individual habits, I don't mean 'individual' in the sense of an isolated (i.e., non-transactional) possession. The charge is not that Sullivan's way of talking about habits of white privilege violates her own transactional model. A habit can be individuated and still be transactional. For instance, I can talk about my habit of driving my car and my habit of typing, and I can recognize each of these as different habits without claiming either of them is an isolated feature of myself or a private possession. They are 'individual' in the sense that they are distinguishable from one another, and from other habits.[37] Sullivan is describing the *kinds* of habits that are typical of white people. But because individual habits are part and parcel of a person's general orientation—they make up a distinctive "style or manner of being that is reflected throughout one's being" (Sullivan 2001, 30-31)—we can hardly begin talking about individual habits before we find ourselves talking about habit in a slightly different register.

Consider the point I made earlier, that not just any habits could make whiteness as we know it—there is something about *these* particular habits. Sullivan argues that they are especially effective in protecting white people's unconscious commitment to white superiority without invoking overt reference to race. This allows racism to go underground, so to speak. This may be true, but there's more going on here. I propose that when we speak of 'white privileged habits,' we are speaking about aspects of a broader phenomenon I will call 'white habituation.' This broader

[37] I'm tempted instead to refer to them as 'discrete' habits, but this is also misleading insofar as it suggests habits that are mutually indifferent or unrelated. Sullivan takes care to explain that habits form an integrated system within the organism as much as they do between the organism and its environments, and her treatment of white privileged habits honors that idea. But her analysis tends to operate at the level of conceptually distinguishable (if functionally intertwined and transactional) habits. I'm proposing we step back and look at how those habits fit within a broader white orientation.

phenomenon shows up in Sullivan's analysis, but only in trace form. It is intimately bound up with the habits of white privilege that Sullivan illuminates, but it also speaks to the enabling qualities of being at home in social space, and it foregrounds an asymmetry in lived experience that tracks race.

Although Sullivan touches on the problem of phenomenological asymmetry, she doesn't make enough of this point. If we take seriously the primacy of habit—its constitutive role in making the social world, and its indispensability to individual and social functioning—then we need to pay attention when a person's capacity for habituation is routinely and systematically disabled. The harms of white privileged habit include the impact it has on non-white habituation. The dispositions to transact in ontologically expansive, ethically solipsistic, and otherwise racist ways are better understood as embedded within a whitely orientation. And the racial-perceptual schema that furnish whiteness with its distinctive orientation has simultaneously disorienting, alienating effects for non-white people that strike at the level of habit.

Sullivan's flirtation with phenomenological philosophy testifies to its importance for getting the story right. But given her charges against Merleau-Ponty, it is not clear that she is entitled to make some of these claims. She helps herself to ideas (body schema, bodily horizon), the meaning of which is bound up with philosophical frameworks and concepts she outright rejects (intentionality, anonymity). Sullivan rightly says that to acquire a new habit is to grasp a new significance, and to have one's bodily horizons shattered is to have one's ability to make meaning in the world severely damaged. But what she doesn't say is that bodily shattering is an interruption of a person's habitual body that involves the failed realization of her bodily intentionality. In the case of race, not only are the racialized person's intentions unrealized, but they are met with a contradictory set of meanings that distort one's sense of self and place. A theory of racial habit needs to attend more carefully to the inter-workings and varieties of bodily shattering, or what I will call 'phenomenological disruption.' As I have already suggested, doing so will have implications for how we understand the problem of whiteness, and how we might address it.

5. Beyond Deweyan Habit

This has been a study of the particular habits that make whiteness problematic, their connection to white supremacist ideals, and their role in shaping individuals and environments. Sullivan lays much of this groundwork and contributes valuable knowledge to a theory of racial habit, but her

view suffers from certain limitations. In particular, and as I have been signaling throughout this chapter, Sullivan's account of "ordinary" habit is underdeveloped. She overlooks a distinction within habit that makes a difference, and thus leaves gaps in her account of the problem of whiteness.

To more clearly see where the trouble lies with the neo-Deweyans, let's take the example that Sullivan places at the center of her study. Recall that, for Sullivan, 'whiteness' is defined by a certain appropriative tendency that she calls 'ontological expansiveness,' and that she identifies as the habit at the heart of white privilege (Sullivan 2006, 144). Ontological expansiveness names the sense of proprietary entitlement to all spaces, positions, and goods that is typical of white people but that is withheld from, or not recognized as appropriately belonging to, non-whites. I propose to extend Sullivan's account of white privileged habit by observing that when this entitlement is widely enacted and continues over the course of generations, what results is a whitely constructed world that is orienting for white bodies, and a phenomenological asymmetry between those who can comfortably and effectively inhabit that world, and those who cannot.

It follows that what is at stake in a study of racial habit is not just a growing awareness of how individual habits work to sustain racial inequity, but a sense for the fact that habituation itself—the ability to be oriented in and by social space—is among the factors that demarcates racial boundaries and hierarchies. The differential ability to cultivate habits and to accrue the psychological, physiological, and affective benefits of habituation is a phenomenological asymmetry in our lived experience of race that constitutes a wrong over and above the harms of individual racist habits. To fully appreciate the normatively imposing nature of white habit and its implications for racial justice, we need to think in terms of white habituation.

In talking about the problem from the slightly different angle of habituation, we stumble onto another question that I flagged earlier and that we are now in a position to take up more directly. It has been emphasized that habits are a good—even an essential—part of embodied functioning, and that part of the problem of whiteness is that it impedes others' ability to reap the benefits of habituation. We need to further problematize habit by asking whether habituation is always and everywhere a good thing. Doing so will help us to more clearly map the nuanced relationship between habit and normativity for a critique of white habituation.

I propose that although we can readily identify the functional virtues of white privileged habits (i.e. *for* sustaining white supremacy, were that the goal), and their obvious viciousness for

others (i.e. the myriad harms to non-white people perpetrated by the white world), white habituation is ultimately vicious for the white person as well. In being a force to protect the white privileged psyche, white habits lock people into perspectives that foreclose individual and collective growth. In this way, white habituation as I conceive it troubles Dewey's distinction between routine and intelligent habits. White habituation is intelligent in a localized sense, but routine in a global sense. At the same time that white habituation enables racial domination by adapting to changing political tides, it stunts the people in its grip. It is an entrenched orientation that precludes the individual's ability to incorporate new (anti-racist) meanings and modes of being. This raises the important but difficult question of what it means to cultivate globally intelligent habits. I'll come back to this question in chapter five.

The primacy of habit points beyond the neo-Deweyan accounts of white habit in a couple of ways. The first, noted above, is that it calls for a more detailed examination of the orienting effects of habituation and the disorienting effects of having one's habit-body routinely disrupted. This is work that phenomenologists of race do well. Turning to some resources in that field will help us get a fuller picture of how whiteness operates in the habitual register, and how those operations constitute a mode of racial oppression.

A second way the primacy of habit points beyond existing accounts is by suggesting an additional normative vantage point from which to evaluate habit. Sullivan and MacMullan focus on white habits as dispositions that are problematic because they run contrary to reflectively endorsed beliefs and ideals. This normative framing sees habit as an instrument that can either advance or undermine some external goal or value. Habits are thus deemed 'good' or 'bad' to the extent that they promote or undermine the goal. But habit's unique role in human life demands a closer analysis of its normative dimensions. I will argue that there is a normativity internal to habit that gets overshadowed in Sullivan's account. Emphasizing the internal normativity of habit and its vital role in human functioning opens onto considerations of who gets to benefit from habituation. Foregrounding these normative connections will help explain the hegemonic force of whiteness and will allow us to locate the problem of white habituation in its freedom-inhibiting effects on white selves, and on non-white "others."

To make good on these promises I will need to develop some ideas introduced in section four, which means turning to Merleau-Ponty's work on the phenomenology of perception. This is

a move Sullivan resists, and for reasons I believe are mistaken. The next chapter will address her concerns and clear the way for a critical phenomenology of racial habit.

CHAPTER THREE

Phenomenology and Race

In chapter two I examined Shannon Sullivan's neo-Deweyan approach to whiteness and habit. Although I am mostly sympathetic to her view, I found it wanting in two main respects. First, her view doesn't do enough to explain the connection between habit, visual perception, and race. By making these connections explicit, whiteness reveals itself as more than a set of habits that operationalize a problematic ideal. Whiteness is constituted by an orientation that tends toward world-closure. Second, her view focuses on identifying and explaining individual habits of white privilege and their problematic effects, and doesn't consider how habituation as a vital force is unequally available to differently racialized groups.

These oversights stem from a mishandling of resources. In particular, Sullivan doesn't make enough of Dewey's insight regarding the primacy of habit. The primacy thesis signals a need to examine how habituation—the orienting power of habit that makes our environments a home—is impacted by whiteness. That work requires our analysis take a more explicitly phenomenological turn, one that involves more carefully attending to the way race structures perception. This is a turn Sullivan resists, and for reasons that don't hold up to scrutiny. This chapter will initiate that phenomenological turn by answering Sullivan's objections, and by freeing up resources that I will put to work in later chapters.

In what follows, I will argue that phenomenology, especially Merleau-Ponty's version, can be put to critical use with regard to understanding white habituation. Of particular importance is Merleau-Ponty's understanding of habituation as orientation, which allows us to distinguish between the orienting power of habit that allows us to transact with the world, and the orienting power of habit that makes our environments a home. Dewey's transactional theory of habit and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological one, contrary to Sullivan's suggestion, can be taken as complimentary and can provide us with a critical theory of habit useful for understanding whiteness. Filling these gaps allows us to interrogate whiteness not only as a set of habits that enact a flawed idea, as Sullivan and MacMullan both do, but as a shared orientation arising from particular processes of racial habituation, and generating an asymmetry in how bodies are lived and spaces are inhabited.

Part of the burden of this chapter involves meta-philosophical ground-clearing. Before we can move forward with a phenomenologically informed critique of white habit, we need to return to a question that scholars working in the field believe to have settled: can phenomenology be critical? The first section of this chapter sets up the problem by considering how critical phenomenologists understand the work they are doing. Section two introduces Sullivan's standing objections to Merleau-Pontian phenomenology and addresses them by offering alternative readings of two core concepts: 'intentionality' and 'bodily anonymity.' Having defended phenomenology's critical potential and freed up some of its resources for use in a critique of whiteness, section three reconstructs Merleau-Ponty's account of habit. Section four looks at how this account has been used to theorize white embodiment and raises two further questions that a theory of racial habit needs to address. The first is regarding the proper way to explain the phenomenon of white invisibility. The second is regarding the dissonance between Merleau-Ponty's account of normal bodily motility and descriptions of non-white embodiment. These are questions I only touch on here, and that will be answered more fully in later chapters. I end this chapter in section five by arriving at the terminological distinction on which my own argument rests, and which we will then be in a better position to make sense (and use) of.

1. Phenomenology and Race: Preliminary Remarks

Merleau-Ponty's conception of habit is strikingly similar to Dewey's. This is in part because they share a broadly phenomenological orientation toward habit, which is just to say they take habit to play a structuring role in experience and are attentive to the ways habit works to create and reproduce meaning. Their analyses have other points of overlap as well. For instance, Like Dewey, Merleau-Ponty is committed to a view of situated subjectivity. 'Situatedness' refers to the condition of being both embodied and embedded in worlds of meaning. Merleau-Ponty is interested in spelling out how human subjects come to experience their worlds as meaningful, and to do this he embarks on an investigation into the basic structures of perceptual experience, which opens onto a phenomenology of habit. Their respective emphases on embedded or 'worldly' subjectivity come from a shared rejection of orthodox dualisms that pit mind (and morality) over against materiality. And their conceptions of habit share mostly all of the same general features. Habit is, on both accounts, an acquired and unconsciously activated disposition to relate and engage with one's environments in stable and predictable ways. Both regard habit as a temporally extended mode of

engagement that at once bears a history, organizes present activity, and guides future interactions. And both conceive of habit as an enabling power while also registering the dangers of routinized habit.

Despite these significant points of overlap, the trajectories of their thought extend in somewhat different directions. As we have seen, Dewey's treatment of habit is guided by social theoretic and moral objectives. Habit is his answer to the question of how individuals and societies relate, how customs become entrenched, and how they might be transformed for the better. For Merleau-Ponty, habit furnishes the orienting effects that make embodied activity possible and meaningful. The thoroughgoing phenomenological analysis that we get from Merleau-Ponty brings the mechanisms of habitual embodiment into clearer relief and affords some useful distinctions that are insufficiently spelled out in Dewey. Merleau-Ponty most clearly highlights the role of habit in perception and orientation. More specifically, Merleau-Ponty's focus on the way perception is structured by habit illuminates important features of racial practice. And his characterization of habit as orientation highlights a dimension of racial oppression that has been undertheorized and that will mark the main contribution of this dissertation.

Part of the argument of this dissertation involves defending a particular kind of phenomenological approach to racial habit. I will therefore need to provide some background on this methodology. Phenomenology began in earnest with Edmund Husserl's effort to reconceptualize subjectivity. Against orthodox philosophical methodologies that hold subjective experience to be irrelevant to, if not obstructive of, the pursuit of truth, phenomenology takes subjective experience to be the proper starting point of philosophical investigation. This methodology begins from the observation that conscious life is essentially intentional, meaning that consciousness is always directed toward and bound up with a world, and the world it perceives—*as* it is perceived—is constituted in part by the perceptual act itself (Husserl 1998, 87–88, 200, 217). In other words, as a conscious experiencer I don't simply mirror a ready-made world, I endow the world with a particular sense that is pre-reflectively drawn from a reservoir of meanings —or a "horizon"—that is assembled throughout my life and that forms the frame or backdrop of my current experience (Husserl 1999, 91; 1998, 94–95). The upshot of the theory of intentionality is that philosophical inquiry—and any inquiry that seeks to establish truth—must begin by engaging in a series of "reductions" that involve bracketing and sorting through the contributions of consciousness in order to distill the essence of the object or event in question (Husserl 1998, 220).

We suspend our naïve assumptions about the world, exiting the "natural attitude" and entering the "phenomenological attitude" which, according to Husserl, is the proper starting point of philosophy (Husserl 1999, 92).[38]

This thesis is best understood as a rejection of representational theories of mind and the epistemological skepticisms that flow from them, and of the mind-body and subject-object dualisms that pervade philosophical and popular thought. In essence, phenomenology is an attempt to reconceptualize the basic relation of self to world—and the proper methods of philosophical inquiry—in a way that adequately accounts for their mutual imbrication. It is a question of some philosophical importance whether and to what degree various phenomenologists succeed in their professed goal of overcoming these problematic philosophical paradigms. It is my contention that where Husserl is believed by some to fail,[39] Merleau-Ponty succeeds, and in a way that has generated a lot of valuable work identifying and examining systems of oppression.

Though Merleau-Ponty doesn't show the same concern as Dewey to marry philosophy with the natural and social sciences, nor is his phenomenology conducted with an eye to moral life or social melioration, Merleau-Ponty does engage in a philosophical move that makes his work compatible with, and valuable for, emancipatory philosophical projects. Namely, Merleau-Ponty attempts to move away from the mentalistic tendencies of his phenomenological colleagues by taking embodiment seriously. His attention to embodiment sets him apart from other phenomenologists of the classical and existential currents, most notably Edmund Husserl and Jean-Paul Sartre, leading him to an enriched picture of situated subjectivity that makes habit central, and that thereby brings out the distinctive social and historical character of human existence.

[38] To explain this idea in a bit more detail, Husserl distinguishes between the 'natural attitude' and the 'phenomenological attitude.' The natural attitude is the mode that most people occupy most of the time. It is a pre-reflective attitude of acceptance toward the world as given to us, whereby one takes objects to exist alongside consciousness just as they appear. The phenomenological attitude is attained when one willfully directs their attention toward the processes of consciousness themselves. In attending to these processes, one is able to sort through what is the contribution of consciousness and what is not. In the natural attitude we forget or overlook the active role consciousness plays in constituting the world. We lose sight of the process by which our world comes to us as meaningful. The phenomenological attitude, on the other hand, involves a shift in focus away from the given object and toward the appearance of the object, that is, the meaning we give it. It is a reflective attitude of recognition toward the world as constituted, in part, by subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty remarks that "[t]he most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, xxviii), which means that disinterestedness and objectivity can only ever be a regulative ideal.

[39] Husserl's place in critical phenomenology is a point of contention. There seems to be agreement on the continued relevance of the phenomenological reduction (or a version thereof) for a critical methodology, however, the field of critical phenomenology is often defined in terms of what it overcomes in Husserl. Namely, as a rejection of the latter's prioritization of subjectivity over intersubjectivity (Guenther 2021, 11). For an interpretation of Husserl that pushes back on this reading, see Johanna Oksala (2021).

There is much more that can be said about how Merleau-Ponty fits within the phenomenological tradition, though those details are beyond the scope of the present work. The purpose of this chapter is simply to present and defend the core elements of a phenomenology of habit that I will avail myself of in working out an understanding of white habituation.

There is at this point a well-established and growing body of work that takes a phenomenological approach to thinking about race, and for good reason. The phenomenological framework begins from the recognition that subject and world condition each other, and it investigates the structures and processes at work in this mutually constituting relation. The work of Merleau-Ponty in particular has found a prominent home in race theory owing to his prioritizing of the subject as embodied. His insistence on the interpenetration of the somatic and the psychic, and of the material and the symbolic locates his inquiry at the precise site of racial construction.

Despite being poised to aid in understanding race, Merleau-Ponty suffers a limitation that forces us to push beyond his work in certain ways. As noted above, phenomenological analyses aim to examine the basic structures of experience, "mindful that these structures are both natural – dependent on the organic capacities of organisms – and cultural – dependent on what social life does with and to our organic capacities" (Taylor and Madura 2023, 299). Until recently, though, phenomenological scholarship paid too little attention to the way "contingent historical and social structures also shape our experience….Structures like patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity…" (Guenther 2019, 12). Taking seriously the ways these contingent structures systematically interact with the more traditionally recognized basic structures, like intentionality and habit, opens on to what Weiss, Guenther and others refer to as 'critical' phenomenology, which "draws attention to the ways in which power moves through our bodies and our lives" (Guenther 2019, 12).[40]

Where classical phenomenology suspends naïve metaphysical assumptions and fixes its attention on the transcendental structures that make any experience whatsoever possible, critical phenomenology carries out "historically-grounded inquiries into particular lifeworlds, as well as particular ways of being situated in these lifeworlds" and interrogates the "quasi-transcendental" structures that make up the conditions of lived experience within these contexts (Guenther 2021, 10). These structures are contingent "in the sense that they have emerged through historical

[40] See also Lisa Guenther, "Six Senses of Critique for Critical Phenomenology," *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 4.2 (2021): 5–23.

struggles, the outcome of which could have been—and could still become—otherwise" (Guenther 2021, 6). They function as quasi-transcendental "insofar as they generate and consolidate meaning by normalizing some habits of perception, cognition, and comportment while pathologizing others. In other words, they are not just phenomena in the world, but also (inter)subjective ways of seeing, hearing, moving, relating, and sense-making" (ibid.).

The field of critical phenomenology draws liberally on Merleau-Ponty to talk about racial embodiment and racializing perception. Philosophers like George Yancy (2014), Linda Alcoff (2006), Emily Lee (2014), and Sarah Ahmed (2007) among many others have put phenomenology to work in this critical spirit with the goal of clarifying processes of racialization, the nature and scope of racism, and the effects of white domination on self and world formation. Helen Ngo offers a book-length account of racist habits that appeals predominantly to Merleau-Ponty's work to form the foundation of her view. And Merleau-Ponty's value for critical philosophy doesn't end with race. His insights have been taken up to explore other domains of critical social analysis such as gender and queer studies (Ahmed 2006), disability studies (Toombs 1995, Carel 2013, Salamon 2012), and carceral studies (Doyle 2001, Guenther 2013).

Phenomenology's explicit attention to issues of race is often traced to Frantz Fanon, who is regarded as having inaugurated the methodology's critical turn. And as much as Fanon has influenced contemporary understandings of non-white subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty has influenced understandings of the white subject. Merleau-Ponty's account of intercorporeality and perceptual habit have a great deal of explanatory power when applied to whiteness. It must be noted, however, that the respective influence of Fanon and Merleau-Ponty have come by way of very different channels.

Fanon directly addressed problems of colonialism and racial oppression, and did so by unapologetically drawing on his own (and others') experiences as a multiplicitous subject of colonial rule. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty was silent about issues of race and racism, and nowhere in his body of work will one find a reference to whiteness, much less a critical analysis of white privilege or supremacy. One could argue that this is because Merleau-Ponty was also drawing on his own subjective experiences. The difference is that Merleau-Ponty's orientation as a white, heterosexual, bourgeois male positioned him to take his own experience as authoritative and universal, a point that is best appreciated, ironically enough, through Merleau-Ponty's own philosophy of perception.

The fact that Merleau-Ponty does not incorporate an analysis of race (or gender, sex, class, or ability) into his account of worldly subjectivity understandably raises suspicions about his value for the critical work of race theory.[41] Falling in line with other prominent feminist critiques of Merleau-Ponty,[42] Shannon Sullivan argues that his account of human experience, with its emphasis on projective intentionality and the anonymous body, "tends to construe a person's being-in-the-world as a solipsistic activity of imposing her intentions, values, and meanings onto objects and others in the world" (Sullivan 2001, 65). But certain key insights of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology are taken by others to offer an indispensable starting point for thinking about racial embodiment (Guenther 2019, 13).

Despite the widespread use made of Merleau-Ponty's work in what are regarded as 'critical' inquiries, Sullivan's concerns have yet to be adequately addressed. These concerns echo other critics of phenomenology. For instance, Frankfurt School critical theorists argue that the phenomenological method is inadequate for capturing the fundamental relation of self-to-world, despite having this as its explicit goal.[43] The worry is that beginning from first personal experience can't do the critical and transformative work philosophy is meant to do, because beginning from subjective experience will get us no further than solipsism. A basic theory of subjectivity is necessary for thinking through contemporary political struggles (Hall 2020). But if phenomenology gets the "who" wrong, then it won't have much to offer in the way of emancipatory philosophy. In order to realize the benefits of a critical phenomenology of racial habit, then, it needs to be established that critical inquiry and phenomenology and compossible.

2. Sullivan's Critique of Merleau-Ponty

Phenomenology begins from the recognition that knowledge inquiries are embodied activities, and embodiment is necessarily perspectival. The situatedness of our bodily orientations means that any perspective is always partial because it is shaped by a horizon of meanings built from our individual and collective histories. In Lisa Guenther's words, phenomenology "lights up the transcendental

[41] There is a passing reference to class in Part Two of *Phenomenology of Perception*, though it hardly amounts to a critical analysis: "…nation and class are neither fatalities that subjugate the individual from the outside, nor for that matter values that he posits from within. They are, rather, modes of coexistence that solicit him" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 380). One might also argue that Merleau-Ponty's appeal to pathological conditions, as in the famous case of Schneider, qualifies him as taking ability into consideration. But as disability scholars have pointed out, his treatment of disability as pathological is problematic at best and so wouldn't qualify as a critical interrogation of disability.

[42] Sullivan specifically cites Jeffner Allen (1982), Judith Butler (1989), and Iris Marion Young (1990).

[43] *See*, for example, Adorno (1970/2013)

[and quasi-transcendental] structures that we rely upon to make sense of things but which we routinely fail to acknowledge" (Guenther 2019, 12). The transcendental structures that make experience possible—structures like intentionality and habit—shape perception while remaining hidden from view to the effect that what appears seems natural, inevitable, and obvious. Phenomenology attempts to rupture our familiarity with the world, to transform the obvious into the strange, or to "refigure the ordinary" (Weiss 2008). This must be done with the awareness that no methodology can achieve a view from nowhere. As Merleau-Ponty famously notes, the most important lesson of the phenomenological reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction (Merleau-Ponty 2012, xxvii). In this sense, even classical phenomenology points us in a critical direction.[44]

Nevertheless, some scholars still worry that the theoretical tools widely relied on by critical phenomenologists presuppose a picture of subjectivity at odds with their own explicit commitments. Lisa Guenther defines it as a method "rooted in first-person accounts of experience but also critical of classical phenomenology's claim that the first-person singular is absolutely prior to intersubjectivity and the complex textures of social life" (Guenther 2013, xiii). However, Shannon Sullivan argues that the model of intersubjectivity offered by Merleau-Ponty, and heavily relied upon by critical phenomenologists, re-inscribes the priority of the first-person singular.

In *Revealing Whiteness* (2006), Sullivan credits Merleau-Ponty for his effort to foreground the body but finds the virtues of his philosophy to be undone by its problematic commitments. Her reasons for setting Merleau-Ponty aside have to do with certain operative concepts on which his philosophy of perception relies. Sullivan argues that Merleau-Ponty's conception of existence as projective intentionality "tends to suggest that it is desirable that all people live in as ontologically expansive a manner as possible" (Sullivan 2006, 163). The full scope of Sullivan's concern with phenomenology appears in her earlier work, *Living Across and Through Skins* (2001), in which she first develops the Deweyan transactional ontology that underwrites her account of white privileged habit. In addition to sounding the alarm about intentional phenomenology, Sullivan also raises worries about Merleau-Ponty's insistence on bodily anonymity, which figures prominently in his account of perception. Despite making use of certain phenomenological concepts in her own work,

[44] I don't take methodological reflexivity to be enough to qualify as 'critical' inquiry, but neither is my goal in this chapter to define the field of critical phenomenology. My point here is just that the phenomenological insight regarding structured perception calls upon us to regularly bracket and problematize our common sense assumptions, which is one way to understand its critical import.

such as 'bodily horizon' and 'body schema,' Sullivan sidelines Merleau-Ponty in favor of a Deweyan understanding of habit. Given her narrower goal of exploring the specifically unconscious dimensions of white domination, the exclusion of Merleau-Ponty doesn't much harm to her arguments. However, given her broader goal of diagnosing the modes through which white domination operates in the post-civil rights era, her refusal of phenomenology renders her account partial and inadequate.

My defense of Merleau-Ponty will involve three main claims. First, I will argue that there is a way to read intentionality and anonymity in Merleau-Ponty that does not endorse ethical solipsism or ontological expansiveness. Second, in the course of re-reading Merleau-Ponty I will further argue that—when correctly interpreted—these ideas are presupposed by Sullivan's own analysis of white habit and non-white subjectivity. Finally, I will argue that reading whiteness through an intentional phenomenology gives a fuller understanding of the particular habits that concern Sullivan, and it does this by thinking of these particular habits in connection with the broader orienting effects of habituation.

2.1 (Projective) Intentionality

Sullivan rejects Merleau-Ponty's account of subjectivity for its reliance on "projective intentionality," which misconstrues the primary relation of self and world as non-transactional and unidirectional. According to her reading, perceptual experience in Merleau-Ponty is "a solipsistic activity of imposing [one's] intentions, values, and meanings onto objects and others in the world" (Sullivan 2001, 65). Such a view entails a "problematic understanding of bodies as atomistic, solipsistic, and domineering" (Sullivan 2001, 65). The meaning of 'solipsism' here is ethical, rather than metaphysical, and refers to "the assumption that the beliefs, values, desires, and intentions of only one self are of any importance (Sullivan 2001, 66). The problem with this view becomes even more apparent from the anti-racist and feminist perspective, since it "tends to suggest that it is desirable that all people should live in as ontologically an expansive manner as possible" and so "licenses white people to live their space in racist ways" (Sullivan 2006, 163). Sullivan proposes that we instead think of the relation between self and world as a dynamic, co-constituting relationship that is best characterized not in terms of intentionality, but in terms of transaction (Sullivan 2001, 87).

I think Sullivan is partially right here. However, the problem she's calling attention to is not a problem with Merleau-Ponty's account of perception, it is a danger that attends the very structure of perception, and that his account makes visible. I'll come back to that idea in time, but first I need to address two other issues I see with Sullivan's critique. First, a careful reading of intentionality in Merleau-Ponty shows that—contrary to what Sullivan claims—it *is* a dynamic and co-constituting relationship.[45] Second, an intentional model can't be replaced with a transactional one because these concepts aren't doing the same work. I think we can and should read intentionality as transactional, but 'intentionality' captures something more that is crucial for understanding racial habit.

Merleau-Ponty describes perception as involving a pre-reflective articulation of the world that informs conscious experience and that gives rise to experience in general. The ocularcentrism of so much of the history of western thought inevitably suggests the visual register anytime the word 'perception' arises. While the visual register is part of perception, and will be an important emphasis in a theory of racial habit, it is by no means all that Merleau-Ponty intends by this term. Perception is not reducible to representation, nor is it only accomplished through sensory modalities like sight, hearing, and touch. Anticipating contemporary trends in cognitive science, Merleau-Ponty insists that perception is a learned ability involving the "rigorous unification" of the sensorimotor, affective, and cognitive faculties mediated by socially acquired meanings (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 174). [46] An investigation into the transcendental structures that make experience possible must attend to subjectivity holistically. This holism, moreover, extends beyond the boundaries of the individual body. Merleau-Ponty's refusal of the ontological difference between 'mind' and 'body' is also a refusal of the rigid distinction between 'subject' and 'world.' Like Dewey, Merleau-Ponty understands situatedness to mean that subjectivity is not lived—nor can it be thought—apart from the meaningful environments within which it dwells and grows.

[45] See, e.g., Taylor Carmen's reading of the chiasmatic structure of embodiment in Merleau-Ponty (Carmen 2020, 117, 122–23).

[46] This rigorous unification has important implications when thinking about social praxis and oppositional politics. One of the central concerns of critical theory is figuring out how to expose ideological formations that sustain oppressive systems and enact emancipatory social transformation. A debate within this field asks whether the starting place of emancipatory politics needs to be in individual beliefs and attitudes, or in institutional structures and practices. In other words, does emancipation come about by first changing minds and hearts, or by first changing our practical ways of life? Phenomenology can help answer this dilemma while at the same time providing a theoretical grounding to specific practical methods that can be implemented to enact the kind of social change critical theorists are after.

For Merleau-Ponty, the subject isn't "in" the world the way water is in a glass. The world is something she inhabits; she finds herself "at home" in a world through the sedimentation of ways of being and doing that render physical and symbolic environments continuous with her self-understanding. The habituated person is the person who feels 'at home' and who experiences a near perfect adequation between what she intends and what turns up. Habituation is an ability that enables one to move through the world seamlessly, to "sink in" to one's environment, as Sara Ahmed describes it, as if it were one's very own skin (Ahmed 2007, 157).

Merleau-Ponty expresses the idea of situatedness best through an analogy that sits well with a Deweyan transactional ontology: "One's own body is in the world just as the heart is in the organism: it continuously breathes life into the visible spectacle, animates it and nourishes it from within, and forms a system with it" (MP 2012, 209). Recall Merleau-Ponty's remark about the impossibility of performing a complete phenomenological reduction. The spectacle that is my world is not something I can stand back from as an outside observer. I am part of the spectacle and my activity contributes to making the spectacle what it is. But it is also not the case that meaning is created wholly at will and with reflection. Worlds are something we inherit and with this inheritance comes a set of meanings, norms, and proclivities. My situatedness involves adoption and adaptation to a world set up in advance.

Revising Husserl's notion of intentionality, Merleau-Ponty adds the dimension of 'intercorporeality,' or operative intentionality. Introducing this concept illuminates the fact that, as a situated subject, I do not just relate to my environment through thought-intentions. My body itself is intentional and plays a role in how the world shows up for me. Merleau-Ponty describes embodied intentionality as a tending towards objects. As a body in the world, "I" am the site of articulation of this world. My body is the medium through which the world is made manifest and through which objects become clarified. "Being in the world," according to Merleau-Ponty, is the "junction of the 'psychical' and the 'physiological'" (MP 2012, 82). If we take the notion of "understanding" to refer to more than an act of subsuming a sensory given under an idea or category, then we will be able to make sense of how habit gives us our intentional bearings. We "understand" in our body. Motricity—sometimes also referred to as "bodily comportment"— is "original intentionality" and "consciousness is originarily not an "I think that," but rather an "I can." (MP 2012, 139). Operative intentionality—the bodily directedness and meaning-laden

nature of conscious life—creates the space within which habit operates. In other words, habits are bearers of intentional meaning.

To speak of perceptual experience as 'intentional' is therefore to say that conscious life is an ecstatic event. Consciousness, or better yet, embodied subjectivity, is directed toward a world that is always already meaningful. The expression "always already," favored by phenomenologists, is meant to convey a non-atomistic understanding of subjectivity. We are thrown into a world set up in advance, and our personal experience of that world is constituted by shared meanings we acquire in the course of living. The intentional model of perception was introduced by phenomenologists as a rejection of models that regard subjective experience as a neutral ordering of brute sense data that faithfully mirrors external reality. It is also intended to disrupt the aforementioned metaphysical dualism between self and world, and between interiority and exteriority, that pervades Western philosophy.

Most significant for a study of racial habit is the idea that what and how the world shows up, and what fails to show up, is in part a function of one's own contributions. A critical phenomenology insists that those contributions are not sui generis, but are themselves constituted by contingent, historical, supra-individual structures. This allows us to speak not only of motor habits, but of perceptual ones. It also allows us to speak not only of idiosyncratic habits, but collective habits and shared orientations. As I will argue later, to be white is to have certain perceptual tendencies. It is, in part, to *see* the world and your place in it from a particular vantage point. And what's more, the contributions that make up one's vantage are not made explicitly. An important feature of intentionality is that during the act of perception, the meanings—or we might say the 'intentional threads' that make the experience meaningful—are hidden from view. This is a function of the horizonal structure of perception, and it gives visual perception its habitual quality.

If the body is the medium of intentional life, then habit is a sort of prescience of the body. It is the way the body sketches out in advance what is to come. What Merleau-Ponty calls "motricity," or "habit body" is the most familiar way to understand how habit works, but this should not be misunderstood to mean that habit is distinct from thinking or perceiving. Speaking more generally, habit is the power of "dilating our being in the world" (MP 2012, 145). Motor habits, then, can be understood as a form of perceptual habit, under which we would also include habits of seeing and hearing, habits of communication, habits of feeling, and habits of thought and

judgment. To anticipate my later argument, these habits coalesce to form and express a person's "style or manner of being," a point that Sullivan registers, but doesn't elaborate on (Sullivan 2001, 30–31). Habituation in this more holistic sense is equivalent to an orientation that forms and re-forms through patterns of repeated physical, sensible, communicative and intellectual activity.

We can now see that intentionality captures the way habit works through perception and makes meaningful experience possible. Do we need this concept, or can we use a concept of transaction to do this work, as Sullivan supposes? We might say that, like other bodily habits, perceptual habits are sediments of history, acquired through prior experience that get enacted in the present. And we might also say that all bodily habits are rooted in perceptual habits. They are embodied responses to stimuli—visual or otherwise. On Merleau-Ponty's account, as well as in Dewey's, the sediments that forge habits are not merely additive, but constitutive. They make up who I am. My world shapes me as much as I shape it, and all of this happens "behind my back," so to speak. We can therefore grant that Merleau-Ponty has a conception of transaction, and we can extend 'transaction' to capture what is going on in visual experience, but I find this concept is still limited. Although 'transaction' gets us the idea that vision is a co-constituting relation, we aren't yet able to explain how the constituting work gets done. This explanation is particularly important in the case of racializing perception. A subject-world model that says nothing about intentionality deprives us of important language (e.g., 'interpretive horizon,' and as we'll see shortly, 'body schema') for talking about the transactions of organisms endowed with consciousness.

As I see it, the intentional model can't be supplanted by a transactional one, but must be understood as a mode of transacting characteristic of subjectivity. And while phenomenological investigations may begin from first personal experience, the investigation points back to a world that pre-exists and conditions that experience. Characterizing intentionality as "projective" is Sullivan's own reading, and although Merleau-Ponty does occasionally use the language of projection, he much more often characterizes intentionality in terms that more closely resonate with the notion of a transactional relation than a projective one. What's more, the priority of the first-person singular is not an ontological priority, but a methodological priority which invariably leads to an understanding of subject and world as dynamically co-constituting and ontologically inextricable. It is for this reason that Guenther insists on hybrid methodologies. Critical phenomenology doesn't leave the first-person behind, but "engages with third-person accounts and second-person encounters, both to broaden its understanding of the situation and to deepen its

sense of the quasi-transcendental structures at work in its own first-person experience (Guenther 2021, 11). Merleau-Ponty's innovation on the concept of intentionality, in addition to making it bodily rather than purely mentalistic, is precisely to introduce this reciprocity which was missing from Husserl's early understanding (Husserl 1900/2001), and which demands that we introduce other methodological tools.

Despite explicit claims to the contrary, Sullivan's analysis testifies to the importance of Merleau-Ponty's work for race theory by presupposing intentional phenomenology. In particular, Sullivan makes use of the notion of 'bodily horizon' in explaining the effects of white privilege on non-white embodiment. Recall in her discussion of race and space, Sullivan says that "bodies are part of the horizon against which objects and situations stand forth" (Sullivan 2006, 145). She is correct to say this, but it runs afoul of her own methodological commitments. As I explained above, the concept of 'horizon' calls attention to a phenomenological structure of perceptual experience, and is part and parcel of the intentional model that Sullivan rejects. Experience in the ordinary sense of what is consciously focused upon is made meaningful in part by what is not focused upon, or what gets backgrounded. The term 'background' has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to the physical space within the perceptual field that is not the direct object of attention, but that acts as a backdrop or frame for what is the object of attention, and contributes it its situational meaning. More importantly, the background refers to the personal and collective history that funds present experience and directs how it unfolds. The background in this sense provides the perceiver with a frame; it allows what is experienced to show up for a person in the particular way that it does, with the significance that it does.

When Sullivan says bodies are part of the horizon, this ought to be taken in both senses described above. In the Benetton example, the physical presence (or absence) of black and white bodies contributed to the meaning of the situation. The clerk and white patrons may not have been focusing on Williams' black body (or their own whiteness), but the presence of those bodies and the perceptual habits of the clerk and patrons influenced how the scene played out. These perceptual habits are central to racialization processes. What I contribute is drawn from a reservoir of meaning filled out by my history of experiences and exposures. Prior experiences supply a host of meanings, some of which congeal into contingent structures like race and gender that frame and direct a society's perceptual and cognitive processes. These meanings and structures form a horizon that makes up my particular orientation on the world.

That last point brings me back to the comment about Sullivan's concerns being in some sense correct, but misplaced. Sullivan's reading of intentionality as projective and ethically solipsistic captures something true of experience *as* experienced. I mentioned in section two that intentional perception has a naturalizing effect. This is because the intentional threads that form one's orientation within the world, which include the historical sediments that foster habitual engagement, are hidden from view (MP 2012, 108). Those 'intentional threads' refer to the fund of meanings and dispositions that shape experience, but that operate pre-reflectively and so tend to go unnoticed and uninterrogated. We might think of these as perceptual dispositions, or habits. The way the world appears to me strikes me as natural, definite, obvious when in fact it is contingent, indefinite, ambiguous and open to interpretation. The uncritical absorption of everyday experience does involve a kind of projection, but the projected meanings are inherited and shared, so they are never solely *mine.* What's more, the processes of perception in the act of perceiving are hidden, so I tend to experience those meanings as neither *mine* nor *ours* but as inhering in the things themselves.

This points to a danger inherent to perception that the intentional model helps us to see. The danger is that perception, because it operates habitually, can lend itself to ideological distortions. Because our own socially-formed contributions are hidden from view—and sometimes utterly inaccessible, as Sullivan's study of the transactional unconscious suggests—embodied subjects are disposed to take the world they experience as a matter of objective fact. Unless one is vigilantly attending to their own habits and keeping the contingent structures in view, they will inevitably remain out of sight and out of mind even while they are working on us.

By locating intentionality in the body, and the body in (and of) the world, Merleau-Ponty suggests that perception is essentially transactional, not solipsistic or atomistic. What's more, when read correctly, it is clear that intentionality implies historicity. Culture, society, and language "constitute the horizons of our sensory life" which is to say "they operate as dimensions through which sensory life actualizes itself, through which it becomes meaning. These dimensions are not reflective impositions on experience but structure perception from within. Perception is hence a culturally and historically specified process" (Al-Saji 2008, 62). Merleau-Ponty's early work is mostly silent on the question of genesis—of how a subject comes to acquire the meanings through which they encounter the world—but this does not mean that his philosophical starting points

leave no room for this kind of analysis. In fact, they demand it. This is precisely where critical phenomenology gets off the ground.

My re-reading of 'intentionality' means we can't just replace an intentional phenomenology with a transactional one. These terms aren't doing the same work. A transactional ontology means that all bodies stand to some degree in mutually co-constituting relations with their surroundings. A transactional socio-ontology introduces the elements of consciousness and agency, which adds a dimension not entirely captured by the concept of transaction alone. I mentioned previously that Sullivan finds the stew metaphor wanting because it doesn't account for the active role that people play in the co-constitution process. Transactions among social beings are not purely passive, as with vegetables (or other simple organisms), but involve a certain degree of reflection, deliberation, and willful assertion. Sullivan clarifies that in the human context, 'transaction' picks out an active relation. This model is fine as far as it goes, but in emphasizing agency we must also emphasize conscious receptivity. The co-constituting activity of humankind is made possible by the fact that we are conscious perceivers of the world around us. As perceivers we are directed toward a world that we anticipate and interpret pre-reflectively, or 'anonymously,' giving mediated experience the quality of immediacy. Perception is transactional, but it is also intentional.

What does intentional phenomenology contribute to a theory of racial habit? Intentionality captures the way perception, including but not limited to vision, operates habitually. An intentional model of perception allows Linda Alcoff to talk about race as "a structure of contemporary perception," rather than just a natural or even social artifact. As a structure of perception, race "helps constitute the necessary background from which I know myself" and "makes up a part of what appears to me as the natural setting of my thoughts. It is the field, rather than that which stands out" (Alcoff 2006, 188). Racial schema have become embedded as perceptual schema, which means race is not a simple phenomenon to be studied empirically, it is part of the structure of experience. And because that schema positions whiteness as the norm, white people tend to be oriented by the world. To be white is to be situated in and toward the world in a particular way. As I will explain in chapter four, racial groupings (and any social group) are distinguished in part by how the world shows up for them—i.e. by shared orientations. For white people, this involves not only having a particular worldview, but *being oriented*, which results when whiteness is fostered and reflected in the social and culture milieu.

2.2 Bodily Anonymity

A second objection to Merleau-Ponty's framework has to do with his reference to pre-personal, or anonymous, subjectivity. According to Sullivan, Merleau-Ponty's notion of anonymity implies a non-gendered body, producing an account of corporeal existence that is professed to be neutral but that is in fact androcentric (Sullivan 2001, 65). The alleged appeal to a non-gendered (and non-racialized, and generally pre-discursive) body comes up in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of intersubjectivity and communication. The way Merleau-Ponty explains how we come to know and communicate with others seems to suggest a neutral, a-historical, universal bodily core. Sullivan takes these appeals to anonymity and pre-personal experience to imply the belief that at their foundation, individual bodies have a universally shared commonality that is then overlaid by the differences that their particularities give them (Sullivan 2001, 73).

Gail Wiess offers a response to Sullivan, but one that I find inadequate. Wiess argues that Merleau-Ponty's invocation of anonymity and pre-personal experience does not necessarily indicate a false universalization of one's own experience (Weiss 2002, 195). To counter Sullivan's reading, Weiss follows Alfred Schutz (1972) and Maurice Natanson (1986) in reading 'anonymity' in terms of typification. Weiss argues anonymity is a constitutive feature of social interactions, offering the example of everyday exchanges such as one might have with a clerk at the drug store. To say these exchanges are 'anonymous' or 'pre-personal' is just to say they are carried out according to scripts that render the person in the role interchangeable. To call these experiences 'anonymous' does not erase the particularity of the individuals involved, but highlights the way these kinds of social relationships are predicated on their impersonal dynamics. The successful negotiation of our social worlds requires these anonymous transactions.

Weiss reads anonymity in contrast to personalized encounters. But understanding anonymity in terms of typification misses both Sullivan's and Merleau-Ponty's point. Weiss is right that anonymity-as-typification characterizes a great deal of social existence, and I don't think Sullivan would disagree. But that does not seem to be the meaning of the term that Merleau-Ponty intends or that Sullivan contests. Sullivan's issue is that Merleau-Ponty posits the anonymous and pre-personal body as the common starting point that makes communication possible. Sullivan's reading of Merleau-Ponty has it that I understand your intentions because your behavior mimics mine in some fundamental and invariable way. Typification, by contrast, comes about through

already shared and culturally produced meanings. I understand the bodily intentions of the drugstore clerk as she waits for my payment because I've been here before. I have background knowledge and experience of the world of commerce, including the various roles and tasks that go along with it. In this sense, anonymity does imply a kind of interchangeability, but it also implies historical beings who have acquired shared meanings that make anonymous interactions of this kind possible. So while Weiss's re-reading of anonymity does capture an important element of social experience, what Merleau-Ponty wishes to emphasize by pointing out the anonymous quality of embodiment is slightly different. As I'll explain below, he is referring to the lived experience of being anonymous *to ourselves* that attends habituation.

I'll say more about how I think we should be reading anonymity in Merleau-Ponty shortly. First, I need to more fully address how I think Weiss's response misses Sullivan's main concern. Sullivan's criticism has to do with Merleau-Ponty's appeal to bodily anonymity as the guarantor of successful communication. She raises this objection in the context of thinking about how meaning gets created communally, and how individuals come to understand one another. Sullivan's concern is this: Merleau-Ponty answers the question of how communication is possible by supposing the body to be a foundational "given" of shared intentions that secures mutual understanding. This view construes communication as nothing more than a prolongation one's own intentions (Sullivan 2001, 71).

Sullivan is right that Merleau-Ponty regards bodily being as shared in some elemental way, but what is shared is much thinner than what Sullivan supposes. If anonymity as it operates in Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity indicates something that is primordially shared, then the thing we share is simply the structure. Human bodily being is marked by a structure that makes the particularity of phenomenal inheritance possible, and that Merleau-Ponty calls the 'body schema.' I made reference to this idea in chapter two, but couldn't speak to it in any detail. Now we can unpack it more fully.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body schema gives form to the lived body by serving as a spatial and temporal anchor. It accounts for the bodily ability to negotiate and anticipate what's to-come in experience by implicitly drawing on a past. "The body schema is not a perception, a belief, or an attitude. Rather, it is a system of motor and postural functions that operate below the level of self-referential intentionality, although such functions can enter into and support intentional activity" (Gallagher and Cole 1995, 372). If the body image is the body as object of

intentional consciousness, then the body schema is the bearer of intentionality, which is historically formed and variable (MP 2012, 102). No bodily schema is ever "empty," it is always filled out by various meanings and dispositions, or habits, that are picked up in the course of living. These form one's bodily intentions, or one's "habit-body," the precise content of which cannot be known by others *a priori*.

Merleau-Ponty writes that I see in the other "a miraculous extension of [my] own intentions, a familiar manner of handling the world" (MP 2012, 369). His language here is admittedly misleading, but the second clause helps to illuminate the first. I don't see in the other an extension of my own intentions as a matter of duplicate content (i.e., an analog of my own intentions), but I see that they, too, interact with the world intentionally. That is to say, I see a shared way of being that involves subjectivity and agency. And to the extent that I do read my own meaning (i.e., intentional content) onto the other's behavior, I do so out of habit, which can be reconfigured in moments of disruption initiated by failed intentions. Put simply, I am capable of learning from others.

This does not mean the intentions themselves are primordially shared, only that I am disposed to assimilate your behaviors into my own interpretive horizon. What we are to take away from this is that I know you *as* another subject because I can see in your behavior a basic schematic inherent to embodied subjectivity, the content of which is always particularized to the specific body and so understanding one another on that level must be an accomplishment, not a starting point. I can recognize the other's humanity without claiming to know them in their particularity. The extent of the understanding of others conveyed by our shared bodily structure is an understanding of others *as* existing, not others *in* their unique existence, which is a level of understanding only afforded by communication that is opened up by the first instance.[47]

If we aren't to understand it as bodily sameness, how else might we think about Merleau-Ponty's characterization of the body as anonymous and pre-personal? Sullivan focuses on the parts

[47] There is one passage that seems to go against my reading and support Sullivan's, though it's not one that Sullivan points to, nor is it one that I think amounts to much. Merleau-Ponty asserts in passing that intra-uterine life is not perceptual. He refers to it is a "natural self" in "natural time"; an "anonymous life" that marks the limit of temporal dispersion and a "formless existence" that precedes my history (MP 2012, 362). These remarks do seem to suggest that what Merleau-Ponty has in mind is a pre-discursive body. But it doesn't mean the body remains untouched by culture once it comes in contact with the world. We can challenge Merleau-Ponty on empirical grounds by arguing that transactions are already taking place in-utero, the world in this case is simply limited to the internal environment of the mother's womb and its immediate surroundings. But that doesn't undermine his analysis of how the subject-world relation, including intersubjectivity, functions. It just says the relation is formed earlier than he thought.

of the text where these terms are used to explain knowledge of and communication with others, but these terms first appear much earlier in the text, in Merleau-Ponty's analysis of habit. Reading them in that context gives them a different valence, and suggests a very different reading of Merleau-Ponty's view of intersubjectivity.

If we turn to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of habit, we find the anonymous body does not refer to an ontological core, as Sullivan interprets it, but to a phenomenological aspect of embodiment. In this context Merleau-Ponty talks about anonymity as the part of the self that "lags behind" experience. This lag is what I referred to earlier as the pre-conscious (or unconscious) fund of meanings, conceptual schema, and dispositions that shape experience. The anonymous self is not separate from perceptual subjectivity, and so to term it a "self" can be misleading. My anonymous self is an aspect of my being that is pre-reflective and that underwrites reflective experience.

On the intentional model of perception, I do not give meaning to something by surveying its properties and placing it under a category. The act of categorizing presupposes that the thing we categorize already has a sense for us. Sense "inhabits" the world, it is not an external link of association. The perception that "sees" an object *as* what it is, functions prior to explicit inference or judgment. Or, we might say, the judgment is carried by the perceptual act itself. The world is always already there in an "inalienable presence" (MP 2012, xx) that I take up but that I also help constitute. And so there is an interpretation already taking place in perception prior to explicit thematization. Merleau-Ponty explains that to accomplish an isolated thought-intention, consciousness must rely upon a previously constructed "'world of thought,' [and so] there is always a depersonalization at the heart of consciousness" (MP 2012, 138–9). The phenomena of depersonalization forms what Merleau-Ponty calls an 'intentional arc,' which underpins conscious life and functions as the background against which objects come into existence for a subject. The idea of the intentional arc is similar to what some philosophers refer to as the 'social imaginary.' It is meant to capture the pre-reflective meanings that are always at work behind the scenes of experience and that make my encounters intelligible. Anonymous subjectivity directs this intentional arc that makes possible the "I" that perceives.

To conceive of subjectivity as embedded and embodied, i.e. 'situated,' is to endorse the idea that meanings are sedimented and activated behind the back of consciousness, or, in other words, anonymously. The reflective self, or the self of perceptual subjectivity, is actualized through

pre-reflective moments of sensing that sediment one's way of being in the world. But I am unable to catch sight of these sediments *in medias res*, which is why they are described as "anonymous." I can only experience them as manifest in the already meaningful deliverances of my habitual orientation. Megan Burke lends clarity to this notion of the anonymous subject by using it to theorize gender: "Gender emerges from anonymous temporality insofar as it originates in a past that I cannot recall; it is something that "I" already do, that "I" already am" (Burke 2013, 150). The reflective subject inherits ways of being in the world, behaviors, gestures, attitudes, values, etc. from pre-personal subjectivity. These "ways" are acquired through repetition and affirmation, eventually forming habits: "In perception we do not think the object and we do not think the thinking, we are directed toward the object and we merge with this body that knows more than we do about the world, about motives, and about the means available for accomplishing the synthesis" (MP 2012, 248). Because perception sketches what's to-come in experience, it is always also interpretation, though it has the felt experience of immediate, self-evident fact. The horizon affords the enabling advantage of automation that gives rise to effective agency. Habits are my means of action and they are necessarily made invisible when in-action.

Contrary to Sullivan's reading, the anonymous, pre-personal body is bound up with its particularity, not prior to it. So why does Merleau-Ponty use this language which seems to confuse more than it clarifies? Because he is describing *my* relation to *myself*—the part of myself by which I carry my history into the present—as anonymous to me at the time of the experience. Anonymity is not interchangeability in the sense of a pre-discursive body (Sullivan) or in the sense of typification (Weiss), but is invisibility and occlusion. This makes anonymity a crucial concept for explaining whiteness, which is widely regarded by race theorists to be invisible to itself.

This sense of anonymity is made clearer if we think about it as a constitutive feature of habit. Merleau-Ponty, like Dewey, operates with a "thick" conception of habit. Habit is not a matter of simple routine, but is central to the functioning of social organisms. Dewey illuminates habit's function as a socio-ontological operator, whereas Merleau-Ponty emphasizes its function as a phenomenological ground. From the phenomenological perspective, habit is the principle orienting mechanism of bodily life. When I am engaged with the world habitually, my body as my means of having a world recedes into the background and I am directed toward the environment I inhabit. Habituation relieves me of the task of calculative attention. But I am only relieved of this task because of the knowledge carried by my body. To be habituated is to be calibrated to one's

environments in such a way that one's body almost disappears, and one's environment takes on the quality of a home (MP 2012, 247–248). Recall that for Merleau-Ponty, embodied existence is not principally characterized as an "I think" but an "I can," and that power is made possible not by a neutral core, but by a body that has accumulated a lifetime of transactions and carries those lessons unconsciously, anonymously, pre-reflectively into the present (MP 2012, 139). The anonymous aspect of bodily comportment makes it a source of power and efficacy.

3. The Habituated Body in Merleau-Ponty

Where does this leave our understanding of habit, and of racial whiteness? Properly understood, intentionality is a transcendental structure of experience that accounts for the influence of pre-reflective bodily inheritance on perception and behavior.[48] Anonymity picks out a certain quality of experience that accompanies the sedimentation of inherited modes of being. The pre-personal (i.e., pre-reflective, anonymous) perceiver sketches the field of action in advance and has the ability to anticipate and negotiate its surroundings prior to the reflective application of concepts, calculations, and explicit judgments. It is to this perceptual schematizing that Merleau-Ponty applies the term 'habit.' It is important to remember that the body schema is not an empty shell or a pure bodily core. It is forged transactionally out of prior experience and accounts for our historical being.

Bringing intentionality and bodily anonymity together, what we get is a picture of embodied subjectivity animated by habit. The lived experience of habituation is the experience of being at home in one's environments. What is most important in the phenomenological picture is the stabilizing and orienting force of habit, and the way perception (especially, but not exclusively, visual) can be understood as habitual. It is these features of Merleau-Ponty's view that get the attention of race scholars. Before we consider the race-theoretic implications of this view, I'll need to say more about the orienting force of habit.

It is too simple to say that habits are things we *have,* even if we are sometimes forced to speak in those terms. Instead, habit figures as a basic structure of lived experience. Habits are not only integral to how we get on in the world, habit is our means of having a world (MP 2012, 154). Examining habit from the phenomenological perspective means considering how embodied

[48] As Merleau-Ponty uses the term, "perception" is not limited to ordinary sensory modalities, but refers to the rigorous unification of cognitive, affective, and sensorimotor capacities (MP 2012, 145).

subjects are oriented in and by their surroundings. Environments take on the character of worldliness—they are made intelligible, familiar, and meaningful places—through processes of habituation. What accounts for this homely quality? The intentional structure of perception. When I am perceiving, the perceptual act fully occupies me and I cannot see myself perceiving. Such is the lived body. I am not directed toward my body, but I am directed toward my worldly activities *through* my body.

As a process, habituation is the bodily accumulation of meanings which, when they achieve sufficient depth, produce dispositions that precipitate into ongoing experience. To acquire a new habit is to form a "new knot of signification" which results in enrichment and reorganization of the body schema (MP 2012, 155). The process of habituation is the means by which we inherit, create, and revise the contexts of significance that make up worlds. The habituated body "is a totality of lived meanings that moves toward its equilibrium" (ibid.). This means our bodies are "constantly, though unconsciously and involuntarily, adjusting themselves to secure and integrate our experience and maintain our grip on the environment" (Carman 2020, 103).[49] The totality of significations pre-consciously or unconsciously governing a person's transactions constitutes the habitual mode of being.

For Merleau-Ponty, more so than for other theorists of habit, the habitual mode of being is marked by ease, familiarity, and bodily confidence. I sip from my glass, walk through a doorway, or pass in front of another car in traffic without giving it any thought. I am able to do these things because I have become accustomed to the activities and situations of drinking, walking, and driving. The condition of being accustomed is not a matter of theoretical or propositional knowledge. It is a "knowledge in [the] hands" (MP 2012, 145) by which Merleau-Ponty means to convey that "[m]otor intentionality is not a neurological datum…It is instead the normal unity and integration of our bodily movement and our intuitive awareness of a given, stable environment" (Carman 2020, 109). Merleau-Ponty illustrates this point with the example of a typist: "The subject knows where the letters are on the typewriter as we know where one of our limbs is, through knowledge bred of familiarity which does not give us a position in objective space" (MP 1962, 144).

[49] The metaphor of 'grip' is controversial in the Merleau-Ponty literature. Hubert Dreyfus (2002) reads Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodiment to involve a drive toward optimizing one's command over the environment, which he calls 'maximal grip.' Gail Salamon objects to the maximal grip reading, arguing that "grip in [Merleau-Ponty's] texts functions instead as a compensatory effort to stave off uncertainty, lack of mastery, and ambiguity" (Salamon 2012, 243). I can't arbitrate this debate here, but I don't think Carman's use of the word implies a commitment to the maximal grip reading, nor does my argument require that I take a stand on this issue.

For Merleau-Ponty, 'inhabiting' is the paradigm expression of the lived body. The typist and typewriter become extensions of one another in such a way that both disappear and all focus is directed toward the task at hand. We can thus say that the keys inhabit the typist just as the typist inhabits the typewriter, and the world of writing. A reciprocity emerges between the elements that forms a significant unity.

Understanding habit as the dynamic adapting and reworking of the body schema highlights its temporality. The calibrating force of habit refers to its role in organizing present experience, and it does so through an accumulated past that orients us toward our future. Merleau-Ponty uses the motif of sedimentation to capture the backward-facing dimension of habit. Our bodily movement is always grounded in a history. Every action draws on a repertoire of readily available bodily movements that have crystallized into our particular manner of being.

While sedimentation conveys the body's historical weight, it should not be mistaken as indicating a static formation (MP 2012, 131). The past is immanent in the present, but always as part of a dynamic and open-ended interplay between embodied subject and world. The previously gathered bodily dispositions merge with new movements and meanings as we undergo novel encounters, with the effect of either more deeply sedimenting already existing grooves, or of disrupting and displacing those grooves with newly forming habits. Sedimentation and spontaneity thus come paired as two essential moments in "world-structure" (MP 2012, 132). The spontaneity of ordinary perception—the immediate readability and availability of an environment—is made possible by existing bodily sediments: "Only thus can we take in new contents of experience without being dumbfounded by them. Only thus too can we develop those patterns of behavior that identify us as continuous persons over time and make meaning possible in our lives" (Casey 2013, 214).

The element of spontaneity points to the forward-facing dimension of habit, which is already captured by the language of 'body schema.' A schema is not a static image but a dynamic map or outline of possibilities. The habitual body anticipates what's to-come in experience thanks to its horizonal structure. My bodily horizon forms the backdrop of what I experience, influencing what shows up and how, or what fails to show up. As Ngo describes it, habituation involves "spatial posturing, a bodily arrangement in which the body is held—but also, poised to act—in a certain way" (Ngo 2017, 5). The weight of the past counsels future adherence to those ways, and the body inhabits space as a field of possibility.

In a more general sense, the anticipatory power of habit means my present bodily configuration acts as a springboard that orients me toward the spaces, relations, and projects that populate my life. The habits I currently embody do not only tell the story of where I have been, they circumscribe where I am inclined and able to go. In other words, the possibilities open to me are dictated by my habit-body as it is presently configured. Helen Ngo describes this feature with reference to the example of dance: "the bodily habits and motor capabilities I have thus far settled into my body schema do not just ground the habits of dance I have acquired, they also influence which new habits of dance I *can* acquire—and which for now, remain too ambitious" (Ngo 2017, 4). The acquisition of habits is thus a "reworking and renewal of the body schema" (MP 2012, 143) that constitutes one's unique orientation within the world, and grounds one's ability to act within it.[50] Habit is the pre-reflective familiarity with ourselves and our environments that operates below the threshold of self-conscious intention and attunes one to meaningful fields of possibility.

The phenomenological framing of habit-as-orientation is helpfully illuminated by a distinction within habit. In his work on habit memory, Ed Casey distinguishes between the narrow sense of 'habitual' as routine, and the broader sense of 'habituation' that is the focus of Merleau-Ponty's work. 'Habitual' in the narrow sense refers to "routinized actions undertaken wholly without premeditation" (Casey 2013, 212). These are unconscious in the sense of being "on tap," or "of being ready to activate without need for being deliberately engaged" (Casey 2013, 213).[51] Habitual action occurs through the repetitive re-enactment of past performances, such that the action become routinized. Habitual activities can be skilled, such as when a proficient driver operates a clutch, or a trained fighter approached unexpectedly from behind throws a strike. They can also be unskilled: slouching, pen clicking, nervous hair twirling. Routine habits are part of what it means to be a "creature of habit" in the sense relevant to the present study, but they are only part of the story. In a broader sense, to be habituated "refers specifically to situations of being oriented in a general situation by having become familiar with its particular structure. Both skilled and unskilled actions, as well as routinized and non-routinized ones, contribute to habituation as knowing-your-way-around somewhere" (Casey 2013, 213). Habituation comes about through the

[50] Individual orientations are unique insofar as no two people share identical biological aptitudes and bodily schema, but uniqueness is never absolute. As I will later argue, group identity is defined in part by shared orientations.

[51] This way of talking about unconsciousness with respect to habitual activity is closer to what Freud would have called "preconscious" – sitting on the margins of awareness. But as Sullivan persuasively argues, some of our habitual activities are unconscious in a stronger sense of thwarting reflective awareness.

sedimentation of socially inherited ways or modes of being that give direction to the bodily schema.[52]

The habitual/habituation distinction cuts across the one we get from Dewey, who carves habit into the opposing categories of 'intelligent' and 'routine.' By 'routine,' Dewey means any habit that has become rigid and repetitive—qualities that mark it off as undesirable. By contrast, 'intelligent' habits are adaptable forces of creative production (Dewey 2007, 72). He regards skilled musicianship to be a paradigm case of this sort of habit. It is a disposition to transact in meaningful ways that exhibit skill, creative improvisation, and most importantly, form the foundations for new aptitudes and therefore new sources of meaning. But Dewey's distinction doesn't seem to exhaust the ways we can differentiate, and ultimately evaluate, habits. It picks out qualities that certain habits have that make them desirable or undesirable in light of the pragmatist imperative to remain open and adaptable. This imperative finds additional reinforcement from phenomenology—a point to which I'll return later. For now, it's enough to note that while we can distinguish routine from intelligent habits, the more pressing distinction for our purposes is between habit as an activity (habitual) and habit as an orientation (habituation).

I will grant that the sense of habituation singled out by Merleau-Ponty is present in Dewey's and Sullivan's work, but only in traces. For instance, Sullivan's reference to habit as a "style or manner of being" taps into this sense, as does her use of "whiteliness," understood as "a deeply engrained way of being in the world" (Sullivan 2006, 160). These suggestive moments notwithstanding, Sullivan's account of white habit fails to see them through. I take this to be, at least in part, the product of her allegiance to a pragmatist-psychoanalytic framework. Merleau-Ponty gives us resources to examine this mode of habit with greater depth and precision.

A phenomenology of habit gives depth to the foregoing Deweyan account by approaching it from what Nicole Miglio and Samuele Sartori refer to as the "endosomatic" point of view, as opposed to the largely "exosomatic" point of view characteristic of Dewey (Miglio and Sartori 2021, 33). These points of view don't represent competing conceptions, but complimentary angles

[52] This distinction is present in Dewey, though never made explicit. One might be tempted to map it onto Dewey's routine vs. intelligent habit distinction, but this would be a mistake. Dewey's distinction involves an evaluation of the terms. What makes a habit routine is not just that it is a repetition of the same activity, but that it has become problematically rigid and closed off to adaptation. And what makes a habit intelligent is its creative power and adaptability. 'Habitual' in Ed Casey's sense is not necessarily or entirely problematic. In fact, routine activities that have achieved a high degree of stability and reliability contribute to one's ability to be habituated in the broader sense. 'Habituation' in the broader sense of orientation therefore involves routine as well as intelligent habits, and how exactly we appraise these habits requires further investigation of their normative possibilities.

on one and the same transactional phenomenon. I mentioned earlier that Dewey's examination of habit is informed by a concern for how bodily dispositions work to hold customs in place, and how they may be leveraged in the service of transformation. To the extent that race theorists are also concerned with those things—and they should be—the idea of intelligent habits will prove useful. But before we can put that idea to work, we need to map the habit landscape a bit more precisely.

Merleau-Ponty's endosomatic approach involves examining the bodily processes involved in habit and world-creation, which includes intentionality and bodily schematizing discussed above, and which makes up one's bodily orientation. To speak of a bodily orientation is therefore to talk about the way "[a] 'corporeal or postural schema' gives us at every moment a global, practical, and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, of our hold on them" (MP 1964, 5, quoted in Miglio & Sartori 2021, 36). For conscious, social creatures, the habituated body "is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions" (ibid.). The condition of habituation characteristic of the lived body is one's unique way of articulating a world through bodily dispositions. The body is the locus of meaning-creation and acquisition, so to be habituated is to form a significant unity with one's environment. The process of forming this unity occurs through a dialectic of sedimentation and spontaneity that plays out in ongoing transactions, where new experiences are assimilated with old in the ongoing configuration of the habit-body.

Merleau-Ponty describes the habituated body as the body at home in the world. It is the general experience of seamlessness that comes from being habituated. In Sara Ahmed's words, "the body is habitual insofar as it 'trails behind' in the performing of an action, insofar as it does not pose 'a problem' or an obstacle to the action, or is not 'stressed' by 'what' the action encounters. For Merleau-Ponty, the habitual body does not get in the way of an action: it is *behind the action"* (Ahmed 2007, 156). My body recedes into the background as I live through it. I am not directed toward my body but am directed toward my projects. Taking this thought a step further, for those who are "at home," the world brings comfort and familiarity because their transactions tend to go through, and things "make sense." The world appears as an organized totality that operates in near perfect synchronicity with one's own tendencies. In such a condition, I inhabit space as a field for creative activity. The feeling of being at home occurs when the world unfolds as we anticipate and when our intentions are regularly fulfilled. To feel at home is also to be physically enabled by one's environment. Our environments take on a readiness-to-hand that solicits unreflective

engagement. The world that is a home is flush with affordances that make every day routines come easily and that enable one to move through spaces with little effort.

4. A Phenomenology of Whiteness

With this framework in place, two features of racial whiteness immediately come to view. The first is that whiteness involves privileged access to the experience of dwelling or being at home. The second is that this aspect of whiteness remains largely hidden from those who benefit most from it. As part of a broader phenomenon that in chapter four I call 'white worlding,' white people live through their bodies and are oriented toward a world that is within reach and "makes sense."[53]

Phenomenology teaches us that what is in reach is not only a matter of distributional access, it is a matter of orientation. To say that whiteness is an orientation means this racial designation has as much to do with how the world shows up for a person as it does with a person's behavior and proximity to power, if for no other reason than these two dimensions—the perceptual and the agential—can't be cleanly pulled apart. Ahmed describes orientations as starting points, "[they] are about how we begin, how we proceed from 'here'…the point from which the world unfolds" (Ahmed 2007, 150-51). The world unfolds for the white person as a space for action, and the actions undertaken by the white habit-body tend to proceed without interruption. This is because

[53] This claim is not meant to say that white embodiment is wholly determined by the single factor of race. Lived experience is affected by a number of factors, and in different ways. Some of these are similarly structural, such as gender, class, sexual orientation, and disability. Others are circumstantial, as when illness, injury, or changes to our immediate environment force us to pay greater attention to how and where our bodies move. However, whiteness as a macro-operator with respect to economic, political, and cultural structures is inseparable from whiteness as a micro-operator in shaping embodied subjectivity (see Omi and Winant 1986, 105–136). As a consequence, apart from the fact that white bodies are not a problem, *qua* race, white embodiment is insulated from other, seemingly race-neutral modes of bodily disruption to a greater extent than non-white people. This is, of course, not an absolute claim, but rather, a comment about likelihoods. I should also note that whiteness has garnered critical attention in public discourse in recent decades, resulting in the more frequent experience of white people being made aware of themselves as white. This shift marks a turning tide in white comfort, however slight, and has resulted in a mixed-bag of white response. On the one hand, there are a growing number of white people receptive to the idea that whiteness is a problem, and who are open to being part of the solution. Though, as Sullivan argues, these "good white people" are often in the grip of unconscious investments in white supremacy. Racial lucidity takes time to achieve, and it's never a simple matter of correcting doxastic error. As the present work aims to show, it requires a profound reconfiguration of the self. But good-will whites are not the only representatives of the white world, nor are the unconsciously supremacist ones the greatest danger to anti-racist projects, as Sullivan claims. The other response, which is more reactionary than responsive, is to double-down on whiteness. With growing attention to whiteness has come a proliferation of hate groups, some explicitly white supremacist, some covertly so. There has also been a concerted effort on the part of right-wing political leadership and media outlets to spin critical racialism as a form of anti-white racism, and to take political measures to protect white comfort. I will return to these issues in chapter four and develop them more fully within the present framework.

they take place within a world that reflects, enables, and conforms to white bodily expressions. Such a condition is marked by comfort and fluidity.

Understood as an orientation, white habituation is importantly tied to practices of visibility. The idea of white invisibility has been central to recent studies of whiteness in ways that warrant independent discussion. I will say more about white invisibility in chapter four, but for now, it picks out the way whiteness and its constitutive privileges can go unnoticed by white people. Scholars have tended to explain this using epistemic terms. From the epistemic perspective, white privilege remains invisible to the white subject because it involves a particularly recalcitrant form of manufactured ignorance that actively thwarts attempts to reveal its existence (Sullivan 2006, 3). This is what Charles Mills calls "white ignorance"—an idea that has spawned an interesting and valuable body of literature.[54] A habit framework aids the epistemic account by giving a fuller picture of the naturalized knower. Habit informs our sense of salience and value, it places some things in reach and not others, or obfuscates them altogether. For the white person, part of what gets obfuscated is their own raciality.

How exactly does this happen? One way to answer this question is by pointing to the fact that habits operate by not needing explicit attention. Insofar as whiteness is constituted by certain habits, it too will escape attention. This is the explanation we get from the neo-Deweyan perspective, but it leaves white invisibility underexplained. We can certainly say that where white invisibility occurs, it is a function of habituation. The condition of white habituation means being "so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting the surfaces of bodies disappears from view" (Ahmed 2007, 158). The disappearing act is something Merleau-Ponty ascribes to all lived bodies insofar as their intentions go uninterrupted. The lived body is the anonymous habit-body. We are all to some degree "invisible" to ourselves as we carry on this business of living. So what makes this unique to whiteness?

Although the anonymity of the habit-body is importantly related to white invisibility, we need to distinguish ordinary anonymity characteristic of all embodied consciousness from the problematic sort associated with whiteness. An answer emerges only when we think of racial habit in the broader sense that we get from Merleau-Ponty, as an orientation. White invisibility is a function of two related features of the racial world: 1) a conceptual/perceptual structure (i.e.

[54] See, e.g., Sullivan and Tuana (2007)

habitual orientation) that positions whiteness as the norm, and 2) a resulting world in which white bodies are experienced as unproblematic. I will make this argument more fully in chapter four. Before I do, there is one final issue that comes up when we consider whiteness from the perspective of phenomenology. This issue brings us back to the question of Merleau-Ponty's fitness for race theory.

Merleau-Ponty's description of the lived body as a seamless engagement with one's environments is useful for thinking through white embodiment, but it sits jarringly with many accounts of racialized or otherwise non-normative embodiment (Ngo 2017, 62). If we look to accounts of the lived experience of people of color we'll find bodies that are disrupted, objectified, and alienated. These bodies are not "at the margins of perception," which Merleau-Ponty describes as part of the fundamental relation of *being* one's body (MP 2012, 93). They do not "trail behind" as the anonymous enabler of experience that is co-extensive with itself. Non-white bodies, especially in moments of racist disruption, are often experienced as "an object among other objects" (Fanon 2008, 89), as "fragmented" (Du Bois 1986, 364; Ngo 2017, 66), "corporeally constrained" (Yancy 2017, 32), "bewildered" and "liminal" (Ortega 2016, 26). Descriptions of bodily dispossession appear also in accounts of the trauma of sexual violence (Brison 2002), disability (Salamon 2012), and gendered socialization (Young 1980). Read against these descriptions, it is said that phenomenology exhibits a tendency to idealize the smoothness of transactions and the fluidity of sensori-motor activity.

If we contextualize Merleau-Ponty's analysis, what we indeed appear to have is a phenomenology of privileged embodiment. This is widely regarded as an indication of something Merleau-Ponty got wrong. He professes to give an account of normal bodily comportment, so the affinity between his account of experience and the phenomenon of whiteness justifiably raises alarm bells. Merleau-Ponty seems to be positioning privileged embodiment as normative. This observation lends support to Sullivan's claim that Merleau-Ponty implicitly endorses ontological expansiveness. However, I find that this criticism is misplaced, or at least overstated. Merleau-Ponty may not have developed (or even seen the need to develop) a phenomenology of marginalized embodiment, but his work leaves space for those critical enterprises. And his insights help make apparent the phenomenological asymmetries that track race.

One way to make sense of the disparity is to say Merleau-Ponty's view reflects an ideal embodiment, even if many people's actual experience falls short of the ideal. The work ahead is

therefore to supplement his analysis with its counterpart—non-ideal racialized (gendered, sexed, etc.) embodiment—and then consider how to correct the imbalance by looking to its cause. But I don't think that approach will do, in part because I'm not convinced Merleau-Ponty means to endorse unencumbered embodiment.[55] The interpretive question aside, there is good phenomenological reason not to.

While I do think Merleau-Ponty's focus on privileged embodiment should prompt us to trouble his view, I don't take it as grounds to reject his intentional framework. Two things follow from the dissonance between Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment and the experience of non-white (and otherwise non-normative) embodiment. First, it calls for a phenomenology of non-normative embodiment(s). This is something that is well underway, and it doesn't require advancing an entirely new phenomenological framework. We can—as Sullivan and others do—talk about this from within a Merleau-Pontian framework of habit. Second, it calls for an examination of whether there is an ideal mode of bodily comportment, and what it might be. This means taking a closer look at the relationship between habit and normativity, which begins by more precisely defining our philosophical vocabulary.

5. Refining Our Terms: Habit-as-Orientation vs. Habit-as-Homeliness

To clear up some of these issues we need to further refine our understanding of what it means to be habituated. I have been equating habituation in the Merleau-Pontian sense with a kind of orientation. Habituation is equivalent to an orientation in two senses. One sense is described above. The body schema is always a habit-body, and the habit-body orients a person within physical and social space. Dewey's characterization of habit dovetails nicely with this sense of orientation, which extends rather than supplants his view. To be a creature of habit is to be disposed to transact in patterned, rather than random ways. When considered from the angle of lived experience, these

[55] For instance, Merleau-Ponty characterizes the project of phenomenology as an effort to "rupture our familiarity" with the world in order to glimpse its structures (MP 2012, xxvii). The natural attitude—which is functionally equivalent to habituation in Merleau-Ponty—must be ruptured from time to time if we are to see ourselves more clearly. We find further evidence for this in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of freedom, which carries an implicit acknowledgement of the "dual nature" of habit as an enabling and limiting force. This acknowledgment is indicative of the need to keep habituation in check. In presenting an image of unencumbered embodiment, Merleau-Ponty hasn't necessarily staged an ideal we ought to strive for.

dispositions amount to an orientation, or perspective on the world. [56] One's habit-orientation is how one is given to interpret and transact with the world owing to their particular bodily schematic.

Coming now to the second sense of habituation in Merleau-Ponty. To be habituated is not only to have developed a particular set of habits and a unique orientation, it is to be *oriented by* one's environment in an enabling way. Habituation in this sense is the condition of being at home in the world. In such a condition, one's body sinks into the background and one is directed toward the environment rather than back at oneself. The world takes on the character of a home when one's bodily intentions are routinely fulfilled. This is the achievement of synchronicity between organism and environment, or what amounts to the same thing, it is when subject and world form a reliable union. One might point out that subject and world are always already unified. To be a subject just is to be embedded in contexts of significance. So what does it mean to carve things up in this way? It means that while all subjects are inextricably worldly, not all subjects are enabled by the contexts of their worlds, and in those cases the relation is that of disorientation and alienation, rather than habituation. We are all habituated in the first sense. Our habit-bodies orient us within social space. But we are not all habituated in the second sense. Which is to say, we are not all at home in the world.

The characterization of habit as homeliness gets to the heart of what is at stake in a critical phenomenology of racial habit. The body is our "anchorage in a world" (MP 2012, 146) and it gets its grip through habituation. This makes habituation indispensable to basic human functioning, not just in the sense of economizing activity, but in the sense of forming a unified and stable self. The reason habit-as-orientation doesn't get specified apart from habit-as-homeliness is because Merleau-Ponty tends to run them together. He describes the lived body as the habituated body, and the habituated body as the body that is at home in the world. By equivocating between the habit-body and the habituated body (in the second sense of being oriented or at home), Merleau-Ponty inadvertently sets up privileged embodiment as the norm or ideal and fails to account for the lived experience of those in non-dominant positions. This is the reason he draws so much criticism from race theorists, even as they put his ideas to work. As I see it, the criticism

[56] I prefer the term 'orientation' to 'perspective' because the latter carries connotations I want to avoid, most importantly that perception is a paradigmatically visual operation, and that it looks on the world rather than engaging with it. But more than that, the term 'orientation' contains a useful ambiguity that is particularly well suited to capture the internal complexity of habituation. The ambiguity will become clear when I turn to the second sense of the word.

misses a crucial opportunity to leverage this realization in the service of a fuller understanding of habit, and of racial domination.

The neo-Deweyan approach establishes that whiteness is an operative concept or idea, as well as a set of habits. A critical phenomenological approach complicates this picture by drawing attention to the way the aforementioned habits can be understood as tendencies belonging to a more general orientation, which we might call 'white habituation.' White habituation is not just one orientation among many, but is one characterized by a problematic manifestation of homeliness. I will argue that being at home in the world, the condition I'm calling 'homeliness,' is in some cases an ideal to strive for, but white homeliness is not representative of the ideal. Instead, white homeliness is what I will define in chapter five as a form of 'anti-social habit.' This means the problem of racial habit is not as simple as reconfiguring the social landscape so that non-white people can be equally "homely." To account for these normative differences, I need to examine their contexts in greater detail. The next chapter will do this contextualizing work. I will show that white homeliness is one side of a phenomenological asymmetry predicated on non-white alienation. The prescription, which will be worked out in chapter five, is that white homes needs to be disrupted at the same time as non-white embodiment needs to be afforded a greater share of orienting space.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Critical Phenomenology of Racial Habit

In the previous chapter I established the critical import of phenomenology. I also argued that phenomenology allows us to distinguish between habits and habituation, thereby highlighting a constitutive aspect of white identity that would otherwise go unnoticed. It allows us, specifically, to attend with greater precision to the way whiteness is constituted by the ability to be oriented in and by public spaces. Turning to that work, this chapter will argue that the problem of whiteness is a problem regarding how the benefits of habituation are distributed across racial lines. Phenomenology's characterization of habituation as being oriented, or being at home in the world, compels us to ask: who is the world a home for? This question contextualizes habit at a deeper level than we get from the neo-Deweyan accounts of whiteness, and it shines a light on a phenomenological asymmetry in the lived experience of race that is a harm over and above (though importantly rooted in) the harms of individually problematic habits.

I attribute this phenomenological asymmetry to what I will call 'white worlding.' The historical priority given to white people in colonial and post-colonial contexts has resulted in a world built-to-suit whiteness. Social space reflects white concerns, values, and ways of life, as white people enjoy privileged access to spaces, goods, and influence. In such a world, white bodies experience a continuity and facility with their surroundings similar to what one gets from inhabiting a home. The racial contexts of the modern world have put objects, in the broadest sense of that word, in reach for white people, more so than for differently racialized people.

These claims are not meant to be taken as absolute. The extent to which a person is at home in social space is also affected by other aspects of their identity. My point is that being white in a whitely constructed world means not having to answer for your body, *qua* race. As Helen Ngo says, "there is much about the bodily experience of whiteness that is unremarkable because it is not consciously experienced or problematized" (Ngo 2017, 77). To live an unproblematic bodily existence is to be habituated in the sense that I, following Ngo, have been calling 'homeliness.' Habituation renders the body objectively unremarkable because subjectively attuned. Or, in the case of whiteness, it renders the body subjectively attuned because objectively unremarkable.

This chapter will proceed in two parts. The first part will focus on the constitutive features of whiteness, with an emphasis on the way these features culminate in a condition of homeliness. The second part will establish the phenomenological asymmetry of race by turning to accounts of non-white experience. I will draw on Helen Ngo's account of bodily fragmentation to show that white habituation is predicated on non-white bodily and worldly alienation.

1. White Worlding[57]

A critical phenomenology of racial habit (hereafter CPRH) holds that the way the world manifests for white people is a problematic part of whiteness, itself. Four elements of this 'white worlding' are worth foregrounding. The first is "a mode of othering perception that sees and responds to non-white people in terms of the objectification of racial tropes. Racializing perception is pregnant with notions (e.g. lazy, dirty, sexually depraved, parasitic, criminal, and threat) that appear to white people as naturally and necessarily non-white" (Taylor and Madura 2023, 302). The second element of white worlding is a "manufactured failure of perception that conceals white domination from 'whitely' consciousness, effectively rendering whiteness invisible to itself" (ibid.). The third element is a "mode of self-perception and self-directed worldly orientation that encourages dominant racial subjects to take their own being as normative" (ibid.). This white normativity manifests primarily in the two white privileged habits that are the focus of Sullivan's work: ontological expansiveness and ethical solipsism. Finally, the fourth element is a "form of phenomenological ease in the world—call this 'dwelling' or 'being at home'—that is more accessible to white subjects than to people who are differently racialized" (ibid.).

1.1 Racializing Perception, Invisibility, and Normativity

Racialization involves perceptual habits of the sort phenomenology makes its object of analysis. Central to these processes are modes of seeing that assign deeper meaning to superficial traits such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, and accented speech. These particular physiognomic traits are what distinguishes race from other axes of social differentiation, such as ethnicity and caste (Taylor 2022, 66–76). The continued relevance of these bodily features is in part explained

[57] The argument of this section closely follows the argument developed in Paul C. Taylor and Lisa Madura, "Racial Habit" in *The Routledge International Handbook of New Critical Race and Whiteness Studies*, ed. Rikke Andreassen, Catrin Lundström, Suvi Keskinen, and Shirley Ann Tate (New York: Routledge, 2023): 295–307.

with reference to deeply engrained perceptual habits that continue to read meanings onto the raced body. This points, once again, to the importance of the visual. If, as Linda Alcoff argues, race is not principally the object of perceptual awareness, but a mode through which we take up and engage with the world, then critically interrogating our racial world means we need to "make visible the practices of visibility itself" (Alcoff 2006, 194).

Racializing perception works by binding moral signification to visible markers on the body. This binding does not occur through explicit inference, but through habitual perception, which "is so attenuated as to skip the stage of conscious interpretation and intent" (Alcoff 2006, 188). Habitual perception makes it so that "[a] fear of African Americans or a condescension toward Latinos is seen as simple perception of the real, justified by the nature of things in themselves without need of an interpretive intermediary of historico-cultural schemas of meaning" (Alcoff 2006, 188). The error here is an instance of mistaking felt rightness for evidence of truth. The felt rightness of the perceptual occurrence is the product of "sedimented contextual knowledges," or interpretive schema, that form our orientation (Alcoff 2006, 184). These schema are of course always at work, but they make up the hermeneutic background—the "uninterrogated common sense"—of perceptual life. Short of a deliberate effort to understand them, they remain out of view (Alcoff 2006, 186). This is what I referred to previously as the naturalizing tendency of perception, and it is perhaps most forcefully present in the case of race: "Because race works through the domain of the visible, the experience of race is predicated first and foremost on the perception of race, a perception whose specific mode is learned ability" (Alcoff 2006, 187).

The semiotic registry of racializing perception is context-dependent, but since the early modern period it has followed a lighter-is-better logic. This logic positions whiteness as the moral, cognitive, and aesthetic ideal, and other modes of raciality as so many deviations from this ideal. These deviations take more or less specific forms, affiliating a range of tropes with specific racial groups (allowing for intersectional variation). Superficial traits will then mark a person off as belonging to that race group, and as instantiating the trope. But all of this happens, quite literally, in the blink of an eye. And racializing perception easily generalizes to other sensory pathways. Accented speech, unusual sounding names, and the flavors and aromas of food in a domestic setting can all be markers of racial difference. A CPRH reading highlights that not only are these meanings a function of habit, they aid the work of racialization by giving these perceived meanings the feeling of unmediated access to truth.

One need not look far to see evidence of racist perceptual habit.[58] Perceptual habit is arguably at work in the over-representation of African Americans in U.S. prisons,[59] and the now well-documented epidemic of police violence against black men and women that passes—tragically though by no means accidentally—with virtual impunity. It should also be noted that habitually motivated racial violence is not just a problem with police and authorities; it is a problem of ordinary citizens taking violent measure to defend themselves against perceived assailants or intruders (Ngo 2017, 36–37).

Although physical violence is all too often the outcome of racializing perception, it is not the only way these habits make a mark on the world. Racist perceptual habit also manifests in subtle forms of bodily posturing that—at least to those experienced in reading racism in the room—betray the whitely orientation behind them. George Yancy examines bodily and gestural modes of racism through his well-known "elevator scenario," describing what it's like for a black man to find himself alone in an elevator with a white woman, who exhibits telltale signs of racialized fear (Yancy 2017, 20–21). Reading this scenario through the lens of habit, Ngo comments:

> The flinches, the tensing, the moving away, the calling toward, the panic—these are examples of habits insofar as they represent a kind of response that is unthinking and nearby; they are responses that reside within the body schema, such that they become called upon readily and effortlessly in navigating encounters with the racialized 'other.' They represent a certain bodily *habituation.* The white woman's body is oriented such that responses of fear, suspicion, self-concern, and self-preservation have settled into her bodily repertoire, and are made immediately available to her upon the unanticipated interaction with a Black man; her bodily habits are racist (Ngo 2017, 23).

[58] It may be disputed whether these experiences constitute evidence of white racist perception. For an argument that they do, see George Yancy, "The Elevator Effect" in *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 22–30. For further support for that argument, see Helen Ngo, "Racist Habits" in *The Habits of Racism,* 18–22.

[59] As of 2023 in the United States, Blacks represent only 12.1% of the general population but 35% of the incarcerated population, and 41% of inmates on death row. See https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/04/30/shrinking-gap-between-number-of-blacks-and-whites-in-prison/

These subtler forms of racist antagonism—what are sometimes called "microaggressions"[60] stemming from "implicit bias"[61]—may seem inconsequential compared to overt racism and racial violence, but I would argue otherwise. The affective toll of habitual racist transactions is, on its own, enough to warrant taking them seriously. What's more, instances such as these are particularly important to a study of whiteness as they draw out the "bodily orientation that undergirds and unites other forms of racism" (Ngo 2017, 16).

Another feature of white habituation, as I've previously mentioned, is its unique ability to remain invisible to itself. Standard accounts of white invisibility tie this phenomenon to unearned and unrecognized privilege. For instance, in her seminal 1988 essay, Peggy McIntosh compares whiteness to "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code-books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (McIntosh 1997, 278). She goes on to list a variety of privileges that come with whiteness. Some of these privileges involve the advantages of positive racial self-conception and representation:

> When I am told about our national heritage or about 'civilization,' I am shown that people of my color made it what it is…I can turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented…I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

Some are advantages of opportunity:

> I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area in which I can afford and in which I would want to live…I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.

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[60] It has become common to refer to the more subtle modes of racist response—a remark, a tone, a gesture—as "microaggressions," which the psychological literature defines as the "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders" (Pierce et al. 1977, 65; quoted in Ngo 2017, 24). To call these acts *micro*aggressions draws attention to the way racist messages get subtly coded into everyday transactions, and thus suggests affinity with the habit framework. The difference between this approach and my own is one of emphasis and of depth. These studies are important for drawing attention to how microaggressions are experienced by those on the receiving end, testifying to the fact that their manifest subtlety does not mean they are of little consequence. In this way, they lend support to my own argument regarding the existence and harms of a race-based phenomenological asymmetry. However, the microaggression literature doesn't have much to say about how these transactions are experienced by those who perpetrate them, nor do these studies achieve the explanatory depth that we get from a phenomenology of racialized embodiment (Ngo 2017, 24). A critical phenomenology of racial habit considers how these transactions play out from the point of the view of the *aggressor* as well as the target, and is better able to handle questions regarding complicity, responsibility, and strategic resistance.

[61] Implicit bias is an alternative account of what I refer to as 'objectifying perception.' The implicit bias account, rooted primarily in psychology and neuroscience, "examines those mental processes that operate without conscious awareness or conscious control but nevertheless influence fundamental evaluations of individuals and groups" (Kang & Banaji 2006, 1064, quoted in Kahn 2018, 21). This approach has certain advantages, but it also has significant problems that I think a habit framework better handles. For critical examinations of the implicit bias framework, see Jonathan Kahn *Race on the Brain: What Implicit Bias Gets Wrong About the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). See also, Helen Ngo, *Habits of Racism,* 23–24.

Some point to the privilege of being treated like an individual:

> I can swear, dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race… I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial… I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

And still others indicate ways whiteness affords protection from certain unpleasant or insulting experiences (e.g., "I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed"), or the way it affords greater control over one's social environments (e.g., "I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time"), or the way it allows a certain sort of ignorance (e.g., "I can remain oblivious to the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion").

The privileges attaching to whiteness may change with time and context, and different scholars may cash them out in different terms, or dispute their egregiousness, but in one way or another all of them point to ways in which race is either not a liability for white people (as it is for non-white people), or else is a positive asset (as it is not for non-white people). And moreover, that this unearned racial advantage somehow goes unnoticed by whites.

While the civil rights movement may have wiped references to whiteness from the public sphere, it seems clear that it continues to influence how we think, feel, and relate to one another. As I touched on briefly in the previous chapter, the persistence of white domination and the invisibility of white privilege has often been explained through the epistemology of ignorance. The idea of "white ignorance" was popularized by Charles Mills, who argues that white people relate to issues of race through "an inverted epistemology," which refers to "a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made" (Mills 1997, 18). Mobilizing the familiar theoretical device of the social contract, Mills argues that the global world order operates under a racial contract, where "[w]hite misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race" constitute the terms of the racial contract, "which requires a certain schedule of structured blindness and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity (Mills 1997, 19). On this view, the benefits of whiteness are unseen because white people, at some level, refuse to see them.

While the epistemic approach casts the issue as one having to do with cognitive and epistemic dysfunctions, diversions, and obfuscations, it leads with the awareness that knowledge is material, meaning it is not neutral, disembodied, or ahistorical but is produced through and embedded within highly politicized contexts. If whiteness is invisible because whites are in the grip of myths and elisions that allow them to remain ignorant of their racial reality, then we need a story about how those myths and elisions maintain their grip. While there is an undeniable epistemic component to this phenomenon, white ignorance works in concert with bodily and affective dispositions, which can include perceptual habits and deeply held and unconsciously maintained commitments to the "wages of whiteness."[62] White invisibility is not a simple effect of white ignorance, but is also an enabler of it.

An account of white invisibility will need to supplement the epistemic account with an account of racial habit. The neo-Deweyan approach that I examined in chapter two gives us one way to connect invisibility and habit. This approach explains white invisibility by pointing to the immediacy and automaticity of habit. Habit economizes our daily goings-on by making it possible to act without attending to every movement. This enabling force also allows destructive habits to go undetected. According to Terrance MacMullan, whiteness maintains itself by convincing white folks that it isn't there, and it does the convincing by operating through our habits:

> The civil rights movement ended conscious and legalized support for white supremacist racism, and further changed many white folk's conscious dispositions regarding race, but it did not eliminate the deeper habits that determined how white people thought of themselves and others. Therefore, when these contemporary theorists indicate how white people reject white supremacism but still behave and think in ways that betray unconscious white supremacist attitudes, they are pointing to habits regarding whiteness that are conservative and pre-reflexive. These habits of thought and behavior have affected how white Americans relate to each other and to people of other races so that they will continue to function "below the radar," as it were, until we engage in a careful inquiry into how these habits work and how to reconstruct them" (MacMullan 2022, 145).

From this perspective, white invisibility is a phenomenon rooted in the continued influence of habits that originated in the era of colonialism, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. Sullivan adds that the continued influence of these habits is not a matter of simple inertia. White ignorance involves

[62] This expression captures the idea that membership in the white race affords psychological as well as economic advantages. See Roediger (2007).

a resistant unconscious formed out of customs and attitudes acquired through transactions with racist environments (Sullivan 2006, 21–23).

Turning to habit in this way effectively naturalizes the knower as more than a knower: the epistemic agent becomes a socially constituted habit body for whom belief formation is not a simple rational function, but a function of affectively charged experience forged from prior experience. Persons constituted by habits of white privilege are unlikely to see their privilege, not only because society shields them from salient evidence and encourages them to take deliberative short-cuts, but also because their pre-reflective, deeply felt sense of self and the world are bound up with these shields and short-cuts (Taylor and Madura 2023, 303).

What these accounts share is the idea that invisibility enables and exacerbates white privilege, the result of which is the white polity can continue to dominate in alleged absentia. Although invisibility certainly operates as an enabler of privilege, less attention is paid to the way invisibility is itself a form of privilege. The privilege of invisibility becomes most evident when we consider that it is not only the advantages that go unnoticed, but whiteness as a racial category becomes invisible to white people, while non-whiteness stands out as "hyper-visible."

How does being unable or unwilling to see one's privilege invisibilize an entire race? An answer emerges only when we think of racial habit in the broader sense that we get from Merleau-Ponty, as an orientation. Our perceptual orientations are constructed out of meanings that are pre-reflective, and that in some cases are inaccessible to conscious awareness. Relaying Alcoff's insight, Helen Ngo notes that race is not just an object of perception, but is "operative at the level of our perceptual framework or horizon, and is that *through and against which* we perceive" (Ngo 2017, 26, emphasis in original). The interplay between ground and figure in perception makes it possible for race to structure perception in such a way that certain bodies recede into the background while others stand out.

Our previous discussion of racializing perception can help here. Just as white habituation involves a tendency to see the other as deviant, these deviations are always defined in relation to whiteness. In his discussion of the elevator effect, George Yancy writes:

> …the meaning of my Blackness is constituted and configured (*relationally*) within a semiotic field of axiological difference, one that is structured vis-à-vis the construction of whiteness as the transcendental norm. To say that whiteness is deemed the transcendental norm is to say that whiteness takes itself to be that which remains the *same* across a field of difference. Indeed, it determines what is deemed different without itself being defined by that system of difference. Whiteness is that according to which what is nonwhite is rendered other,

> marginal, ersatz, strange, native, inferior, uncivilized, and ugly (Yancy 2017, 19–20, emphasis in original).

Understanding white invisibility therefore requires more than to say whiteness is carried by individual habits of privilege. We have to consider the specific shape that the collective racial horizon has taken, and how that affects the way bodies are lived. For this reason, we must pay attention to the relationship between invisibility and normativity.

The last chapter raised the need to distinguish ordinary anonymity characteristic of all embodied consciousness from the problematic sort associated with white invisibility. Simply put, whiteness can be invisible to itself because white bodies enjoy a greater degree of anonymity in lived experience. And white anonymity is sustained through the mutually re-enforcing relation in which it stands to white normativity. White people aren't made to confront their race in the same way people of color are, and as a consequence, they tend to stop thinking of themselves as raced.

While white invisibility aids and abets white privilege, it also constitutes a privilege all its own. To account for the privilege of invisibility, we need to consider, once again, the primacy of habit. Recall that bodily anonymity is part of what makes habit enabling. In a practical sense, habit relieves us of the task of interpretation and planning. In a phenomenological sense, habit is enabling because it involves the experience of synchronicity between what we intend and what turns up. Invisibility is an effect of habituation. White people are only able to remain invisible to themselves because their corporeal schema are affirmed by their cultural and political contexts. Invisibility is thus a function of habituation in the second sense I identified at the end of chapter three. It picks out the way whiteness trails behind the white person, allowing her body to be a means, rather than an object. Whiteness is invisible because white people are at home in the world.[63]

White invisibility points to a broader normative orientation that also defines whitely ways of being in the world. Whiteness is often invisible to itself because privilege can easily position itself as normal. "What makes motor 'intentionality' worthy of the name is precisely its normativity, the

[63] This is not to say that whiteness has always been invisible. White invisibility is a phenomenon that emerged in the post-civil rights era, before which whiteness was openly and eagerly embraced by those who could claim it, with few exceptions. This is also not to say whiteness is everywhere and always invisible today. The increased public attention to race issues has created situations in which white people might feel that their presence requires justification. This is because what has become visible isn't whiteness *simpliciter*—a nonsensical notion—but white domination (Alcoff 2014, 261). The white response to becoming visible (once again), oftentimes involve exhibitions of volatility, hostility, or denial. These reactions testify to the privilege of invisibility. They are reactions to a perceived loss of what is rightly theirs, and a discomfort in being called to account.

felt rightness and wrongness of the various bodily attitudes we unthinkingly assume and maintain throughout our waking (and sleeping) lives" (Carman 2020, 103–104). Whiteness has been historically positioned, and therefore habitually experienced, as a neutral standard, rather than as a particular mode of racialization. The normal then passes, often enough, beneath notice and without comment, for good phenomenological reason: "only deviations from the norm upset the habits that take root in routines of normalcy; thus, only deviations provoke reflection and require conscious attention. It is a short step from here to reading deviations as deviant and reading the normal as normative" (Taylor and Madura 2023, 303–304). When whiteness assumes the position of the normal, it acquires a sense of neutrality, of representing unmarked, universal humanity, and disappears into the background.

The normative power of white habituation can account for its cultural hegemony. The habit-body functions to stabilize and automate daily activities by embedding practical ends and social meanings in a way that allows those ends and meanings to be backgrounded. Acting habitually upon those ends and meanings works to consolidate and perpetuate systems of value, norms, and practices that make up cultures and forms of life. Hence, Dewey and Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on habit's vital role in self and world formation. The result of white habituation is a world that prioritizes whiteness by fostering white (particularly Anglo-Saxon) moral, political, and aesthetic dispositions. In such a world, whiteness becomes the default signifier of all that is good, pure, and worthy of moral regard.

White normativity is enjoined by a range of perceptual and cognitive distortions regarding one's own importance, entitlements, and innocence, and manifests in the two predominant modes of habituation discussed in chapter three: ethical solipsism and ontological expansiveness. Recall that white ethical solipsism is an orientation to the world through which "only white values, interests, and needs are considered important and worthy of attention" (Sullivan 2006, 17). We saw white solipsism at work in Patricia Williams' example of the walking tour in Harlem on Easter Sunday (chapter 2, Section 3). We also see white solipsism at work in political agenda-setting. Consider, for example, United States drug policy:

> The legalization of marijuana was a non-starter in United States politics until white people decided to make money from it. Similarly, it might be argued that the only difference between the current crisis of opioid addiction, which is a public health issue, and the crisis of addiction that inspired a multi-decade war on drugs, is that the former is perceived as a problem for white people and the latter was perceived as a threat for dark, problem people. In these and other cases, whiteness has used its reflexive frames of reference to define

> actionable criminality and blameworthy viciousness and to distinguish these from regrettable suffering and remediable pain (Taylor and Madura 2023, 304).

In these and other cases, white concerns and interests direct the show. They dictate what is salient and pressing, and can advance a white agenda while at the same time denying that the agenda has anything to do with race.

White solipsism also encourages a self-conception of moral uprightness and racial innocence. The failure to see how race structures the perception of value, combined with the habitual felt rightness of those directives, leads the whitely person to think that in all matters they "knew right from wrong and had the responsibility to see to it that right was done," are "not prejudiced, not bigoted, not spiteful," and generally regard themself as an authority "in matters practical, moral and intellectual" (Frye 1992, 153–156). What has come to be referred to pejoratively as 'white feminism' presents an example of this. Marilyn Frye's concept of whiteliness is born out of observations—drawn largely from the testimony of Black feminist scholars—that white women consider their own anti-sexist efforts to be universal and pure while systematically disregarding the needs, experiences, and demands of women of color. bell hooks's *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*—a titular ode to Sojourner Truth's famous 1851 speech on interlocking racist and sexist oppressions—offers a trenchant examination of white solipsism in first and second wave feminist movements. hooks observes that "[i]n most [white feminist] writing, the white American woman's experience is made synonymous with *the* American woman's experience" (hooks 2015, 144).

The whitely sense of self-importance and virtuosity colludes with another habit born of white normativity. If, as Du Bois claims, "whiteness is ownership of the earth" (Du Bois 1986, 924), then ontological expansiveness is that modus operandi instantiated in habit. More precisely, it refers to a sense of proprietary entitlement to all spaces, positions, and goods (Sullivan 2006, 144). Such entitlement is typical of white people but withheld from—or not recognized as appropriately belonging to—non-whites. This sense of expansiveness leads white people "to act and think as if all spaces – whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily or otherwise—are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish" (Sullivan 2006, 10). In the grip of this habitual orientation, "the self assumes that it can and should have total mastery over its environment" (ibid.). The benefits reaped by white ownership are not only economic and political, though those are significant motivating factors and constitutive features of white privilege.

In addition to material gains, Sullivan argues that white appropriation of non-white lands, goods, cultural practices, and bodies is a matter of securing white ontological status and satisfying unconscious desires (Sullivan 2006, 122). I further argue that whatever ontological security is afforded by habits of access and appropriation, they are grounded also in the phenomenological condition of white comfort and mastery.

The earliest and most obvious manifestations of white ontological expansiveness are the seizure of goods, lands, and people during colonialism and chattel slavery, and Jim Crow era segregation. Its contemporary manifestations are more subtle, but no less pervasive. One place we can look to see ontological expansiveness at work is in issues of gentrification and residential segregation. A CPRH reading of these phenomena helps to make sense of the peculiar affective gap that separates the policy from the politics. Standard liberal political philosophy has plenty of resources to explore resource hoarding and asymmetric access to social goods such as space and home mortgages. But this analysis leaves an affective remainder, involving, for example, the dismay that comes from feeling a sense of entitlement seep into gentrifying neighborhoods, or perceiving the ease of the new residents, facilitated by their sense of entitlement (Taylor and Madura 2023, 304).

Ontological expansiveness can also be seen in the commodification of non-whiteness, of which urban gentrification is in some ways an example (Sullivan 2006, 126). While whites help themselves to non-white spaces and goods, they regard it as a transgression when people of color cross those boundaries. They also exhibit "the confidence to act in legally (and morally) questionable ways without fear or expectation of adverse consequences" (Ngo 2017, 80).

These are some of the more extreme cases of unencumbered whiteness in action, but the problem of ontological expansiveness is not relegated to extreme cases. It shows up in the ordinary events of daily life. It dictates where we're allowed to go, and when. White teenagers hanging out on a school campus after dark is regular childhood mischief, black or brown teenagers doing the same are suspects. It dictates how we're allowed to behave and express ourselves. A group of boisterous white women is a good time, a group of boisterous black women is a disturbance (Ngo 2017, 82). Every time a person of color is hailed for behaving in ways that a white person is permitted to behave, white entitlement is reinforced and the racial habits of bodily inhibition and expansiveness more deeply sediment.

While many aspects of ontological expansiveness echo Peggy McIntosh's work, A CPRH approach insists that there is more at stake here than a set of privileges attaching to identity markers. This particular mode of white habit "speaks to the very *manner* of one's movement in and through public space and place; it describes a mode of one's embodied being and the expansive constitution of one's world" (Ngo 2017, 82). What Sullivan is referring to, then, is properly understood as "an orientation…in which one feels entitled to move fluidly and confidently throughout a variety of spaces and places, uninhibited and unobstructed by one's own body" (Ngo 2017, 80). If we are to regard it as a privilege, as Sullivan does, then it is the privilege of expanding one's lived space, of bodily openness, of building and inhabiting worlds.

I argue that the habits of white normativity, and the bodily confidence they carry, testify to the at-homeness of white experience. I will further argue that white backlash is a reaction to having that at-homeness threatened, and demonstrates the white sense of entitlement to bodily confidence and comfort.

1.2 White Homeliness

According to Sullivan, one of the benefits of thinking about race in terms of habit is that habit historicizes ontology, lending stability without fixity to our social categories (Sullivan 2006, 3). This is no doubt the case, but we need to additionally historicize habit itself by paying attention to how our shared world differentially affords the enabling capacity of habituation. I propose that whiteness involves privileged access to the experience of dwelling or being at home. "White voices have been amplified, white bodies have been protected, and white interests have been prioritized; all other things being equal, this has made the world a more welcoming place for white people—a place they can unthinkingly approach as a resource rather than an obstacle, in ways that others cannot" (Taylor and Madura 2023, 302). This asymmetric access to dwelling is not just one among many privileges, but is constitutive of whiteness and intimately bound up with a structure of racialized habits that enables this orientation.

In the previous chapter I drew a connection between habituation as Merleau-Ponty conceives it, and being at home in the world. In order to make the point about whiteness as privileged access to dwelling, I will need to elaborate on that connection. For this I turn to Helen Ngo. Ngo is most concerned to examine the effects of racist habits on their targets, and so her interest in the home question is ultimately for the sake of developing an account of the racialized

person's experience of not-being-at-home.[64] Those insights are relevant to my own argument, and so I'll take them up a bit later. In order to get there, though, Ngo first considers what it means to be "at-home," and in particular how the lived body can be understood as a kind of home. Drawing on other scholars working on the home question, Ngo gathers three characterizations of home that correspond with Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body. Home is 1) a starting place, 2) a place of embodied habit, 3) a place where we stay or dwell.

For the first characterization, home as starting place, Ngo turns to architectural historian Joseph Rykwert:

> Home is where one starts from. That much is obvious…Does a home need to be anything built at all, any fabric? I think not. Home could just be a hearth, a fire on the bare ground by any human lair. That may well be the one thing that nobody can quite do without: a fireplace, some focus. After all, if a home had no focus, you could not start from it (Rykwert 1991, 51, quoted in Ngo 2017, 97).

Read together with the phenomenological idea that bodily orientation is the point from which the world unfolds, we can say that the body is a home to the extent that it is our primordial starting place. Home as starting place correlates with the permanent presence of the body, which "imposes the first (and lasting) perspective on our access to the world" (Ngo 2017, 102). The home-body does not only frame this engagement—furnishing a person's unique orientation—but makes our engagement with the world possible.

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[64] Ngo uses the expression 'racialized person' or 'racialized subject' to designate non-white people. I will sometimes resort to this convention for expository purposes, but I generally disagree with this way of using the expression. I don't take her to be doing this unthinkingly, and although she doesn't explicitly state her reasons, one could imagine this decision to be based in strategic considerations. Namely, the recognition that whiteness and non-whiteness are asymmetrically constituted, where those designated as non-white have less of a say in what their raciality means. In light of those considerations, the language of 'racialization' captures something of the idea of being constituted from without. A similar logic is at work in critical race scholarship that explicitly refers to black and brown 'bodies' instead of people or subjects, calling attention to the ways in which bodies matter, and have been made to matter, in racializing processes, and in some contexts further highlighting the erasure of non-white subjectivity by racializing perception. I am sympathetic to the strategic reference to bodies in critical race discourse, though I am less convinced by the strategic use of racialized subjects to refer exclusively to non-white people. My reason is this: although there is an undeniable asymmetry in how races are constituted—a point that this dissertation aims to advance and clarify—my purpose (and the purpose of critical whiteness studies in general) is also to show that whiteness, too, is the product of historical and cultural processes. To position whiteness against 'racialized subjects' in some ways re-inscribes white normativity by making non-whiteness out to be the built racial category, while white people just *are*. Any hope of reconstructing whiteness must first recognize it as a construction – a product of human agency. There are, of course, risks on the other side of this naming convention. Referring to white folks as 'racialized' might enable misguided claims about white oppression and reverse racism, claims that are cropping up more and more in the United States. Although this is certainly a danger, I think it can be mitigated by choosing our words carefully. While I don't reserve the language of 'racialized subjects' exclusively for instances of non-white racialization, I find it more apt—if cumbersome—to specify *non-white* or some equivalent when referring to the racialization of black, brown, and other people of color.

If home is a starting place, it also gives us our start by forging a self that is able to meaningfully and effectively act in the world. In this sense, the home is characterized by its reflection and affordance of bodily habit. Iris Marion Young elaborates this second characterization of home by contrasting it with a hotel: "Why, then, does one not feel at home in a hotel room? Because there is nothing of one's self, one's life habits and history, that one sees displayed around the room. The arrangement is anonymous and neutral, for anyone and…no one in particular" (Young 2005, 139, quoted in Ngo 2017, 97). If habits form a significant unity between people and their environments, then the accumulation of habits engenders a feeling of being at home. This requires not just repetition, but also, as Casey teaches, a familiarity with the structure of physical and social space.

This characteristic is particularly important for thinking about whiteness. A home is a paradigmatic place of habituation; it is a space within which one is oriented and knows their way around, and that fosters bodily motility. Homes reflect, support, and actively allow bodily habits. Consequently, homes have a stabilizing effect on one's sense of self. This is what I referred to in the previous chapter as 'homeliness.' The world is a home for whiteness, and white people are *at home* in it, which is to say, they find the world orienting.

The orienting effects for whiteness also stem from the way shared spaces (material and discursive) tend to reflect white tastes and histories. Commenting on Young's hotel example, Ngo writes: "…it is not only that [hotels] do not display anything of one's self or habits, it is that they are impervious to them; personalized histories and arrangements are wiped clean with each new check-in, with each new morning's housekeeping round" (Ngo 2017, 98). The fundamental difference between hotels and homes—stemming primarily from differences in purpose and duration of occupancy—resides in the relation between the occupant and the space. Unlike hotels, homes carry "the ability to track and foster bodily histories and habit. Homeliness is thus not a separate thing we bring to a house…but rather it is achieved in the very manner of our continued and ongoing interaction with such spaces" (Ngo 2017, 98). Homes are the relations that form when our bodily being establishes a continuity with its environment. We can thus say we are at home when our being-with (object, people, and practices) reflects and fosters bodily motility and gives stability to an otherwise fluid self.

We can also speak of being at home *in* our bodies through habituation. For Dewey and Merleau-Ponty alike, the lived body stands in a privileged relation to habit. The body allows for

and is animated through dispositions to transact in patterned ways. But Merleau-Ponty makes this point even more strongly when he says the lived body is the "primordial habit" (MP 2012, 93). We certainly *have* or *enact* habits, but what does it mean to say the body *is* habit in some elemental way? Ed Casey helpfully explains the privileged relationship in which habit stands to bodily experience by pointing to the temporality and expressivity of habit. He argues that habit is secondary to the body insofar as it is a "particularization of the body's generalizing and sedimenting powers," but habit is primary to the body in that it is "the most pervasive and subtle way in which we are in touch with the past that we bear and that bears us" (Casey 1984, 289–290). Habit can also be understood as primary for being inextricably bound up with bodily expression. For example, "style, living speech, and sexuality, far from being simply coeval with habit, all presuppose it and employ it actively" (Casey 1984, 290). In these ways "habit takes the lead over the very body which it requires for its own realization" (ibid.).

Dewey's reflections on structure can help us think about how habit makes the body a home. He argues that the structure of a house keeps the house erect and permits it to undergo changes, but is not something external to it. So, too, do habits structure embodiment, but are not something apart from the body:

> A house has a structure; in comparison with the disintegration and collapse that would occur without its presence, this structure is fixed. Yet it is not something external to which the changes involved in building and using the house have to submit. It is rather an arrangement of changing events such that properties which change slowly, limit and direct a series of quick changes and give them an order which they do not otherwise possess…Structure is what makes construction possible and cannot be discovered or defined except in some realized construction (Dewey 1958, 72).

Dewey is not using the house metaphor in order to claim that the body is a home. The connection between house and home is purely accidental; any building would do to make his point. But if we understand structure in this way, and if we take habit to structure embodiment, then it helps both to see how habits make embodied living possible, and how habituation renders the body at-home with itself. Ngo expresses this Deweyan idea in phenomenological terms when she says habit "animates bodies as 'lived' bodies, and, in turn, the permanence of one's own body is what allows for developments in habit" (Ngo 2017, 102).

All of this goes to show that the lived body is home-like. It "is not experienced from some objective or distanced standpoint, but…rather is directly *inhabited*" (MP 2012, 102). However, we are most able to inhabit our bodies when we are at home in spaces, for reasons a phenomenological

reading of habit makes clear. The lived body is not separate from but engaged with an environment, and habits are modes of being that occur between subjects and those environments. The habituated body is calibrated with its surroundings, generating the experience of anonymity that comes from living *through* one's body. The anonymous body is the body at home with itself, because it is at home in its environments. Connecting this back up with our analysis of whiteness, white homeliness points to the way white people are at home in their (white) bodies, i.e., are able to live *through* them, precisely because they are at home in the (white) world, i.e., permitted unfettered access to spaces, where those spaces reflect and support their bodily being and self-understanding.[65]

The third characterization of home is in some ways implied by the second, but gets its fullest expression in Ngo's uptake of Martin Heidegger. Home is where we stay or *dwell*: "For Heidegger, there is a critical distinction between being physically housed somewhere and dwelling there, and this distinction trades on the special character of dwelling" (Ngo 2017, 98). Most simply, dwelling is regarded as "the possession of accommodation and housing," but more than this, it signifies a place that we settle into (Heidegger 1996, 20, quoted in Ngo 2017, 99). Dwelling is characterized by being at-ease, which comes from duration—the extended and repeated transaction with a particular environment, and an effort to "make it one's own," as we do when we arrange furniture, practical effects, and expressive objects in ways that reflect our practices, needs, and aesthetic preferences. We are typically at-ease in places that we know well, and that we've had a hand in constructing.

Notions of dwelling as staying aren't unique to Heidegger. As Ngo points out, Rykwert and Young both make reference to some version of this idea in their discussions of home, as a place of rest, and as a place to keep, preserve, and use meaningful objects. One account that challenges the connection between home and duration comes from Ed Casey's reflections on visiting the Arcade: "there the passerby is encouraged to wander off the street into a world of film and images and fashion. One may *dwalde* [tarry, linger] in that kind of world, drift with it, follow its lead…Dwelling is accomplished not by residing but by wandering" (Casey 2009, 114, quoted in Ngo 2017, 99). On this understanding, reminiscent of Levinasian hospitality, the places we dwell do not contain

[65] These claims are meant to indicate advantages that come with racial privilege, and should be read in a highly qualified way. A person can be marginalized and alienated from public space in other ways. Whiteness alone doesn't buy a person unfettered access to all spaces or guarantee feeling at home in all worlds, but it greatly increase one's access to both.

us but solicit us, they draw us in rather than turn us away; they are welcoming.[66] Rather than a challenge to the Heideggerian notion of dwelling as staying, I read Casey's suggestion to pick out a feature of dwelling that belongs equally to the places we stay, and to the places into which we wander: solicitation and hospitality. This amendment also allows for a conception of home that is not geographically fixed, avoiding the problematic imposition of habits of settlement that Sullivan argues are characteristic of white ontological expansiveness (Sullivan 2006, 153).

Importantly, as a place where we dwell, the home affords rest, and a release "from the necessity of disorientation and adaptions that accompanies constant change, and the effort these demand" (Ngo 2017, 100). The home is thus associated with stability and well-being. Ngo remarks that by resting (dwelling) in the same place, we are *afforded rest.* "The home, as a place where we stay…is substantially (though not exclusively) a place of rest. And while Casey's dwelling can be achieved in wandering, it is also the case that, together, Rykwert's home-as-starting-place and Casey's home-as-return bookend the work, exhaustion, even exhilaration, of worldly travel" (Ngo 2017, 100). On this understanding of being at home as dwelling, home can be a kind of retreat, a disengagement from the world around us that is cognitively, affectively, and physically restorative: "In the habitual body, as in the home, we are afforded certain measure of rest. Given such convergences, we can say not only that the body is a kind of home, but that it is a *home* in an original sense, and that we are at-home in it" (Ngo 2017, 102–03).

Homes function as sites of retreat in part because the development of habit made possible by staying/abiding renders the phenomenal body at-ease. "Spaces get turned into places upon our sustained and meaningful engagement with them, and in doing so they become habitual to us" (Ngo 2017, 101). The relationship between habit and rest is codependent and cogenerative (Ngo 2017, 101). On the one hand, home is a place of habituation, and habit affords rest: "Indeed bodily habits themselves, whether in relation to the home, other places, or situations, allow us to engage in ways that don't call upon or demand our explicit attention, and so afford resting insofar as we are not therefore required to process sensory information anew or navigate bodily spaces and movements with the effort exerted for the unfamiliar" (Ngo 2017, 101). On the other hand, home is place where habits can be generated: "it is also the case that we *can* cultivate bodily habits in the home precisely *because* it is a place for rest… In contrast to the hotel where we do not stay, the

[66] See Immanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (1969), esp. 44–46.

durational resting at the home allows for ongoing engagement with its space, which is in turn what allows us to make meaning and develop signification" (Ngo 2017, 101).

Kirsten Jacobson similarly argues for an affinity between home and body, which are both "a place of initial stability and a foundation for the self" (Jacobson 2009, 361, quoted in Ngo 2017, 103). For Jacobson, the home is framed largely in terms of enclosure and refuge, whereas Ngo argues that home and the body are more constitutively porous. Ngo's view on the porosity of the home/body is equivalent to the mutually co-constituting relation that I, following Sullivan and Dewey, call 'transaction.' And while there is a meaningful way in which the body is, or can be, a home, it is important not to overstate the parallels between home and body. As Ngo points out, they are alike, but they are not the same:

> In particular, it is worth remembering that while the body certainly resembles the home, so too does it *relate to* it. That is, as a place, the home is that which the body inhabits, and in which the body moves and unfolds. In this way then the home also serves as something like a world for the body; the home is worldlike" (Ngo 2017, 104–105, emphasis in original).

Although home is most often associated with living spaces used for shelter, it is not coextensive with any physical structure, such as a house. I propose the home is better understood as a relation; a context of significance where one knows the ropes, and something one actively maintains. But home is also not coextensive with the lived body, since some bodies are experienced as unhomely, precisely because they are not at home in their environments. This examination of home reveals, first, that although homes are often places, the characterization of "home" is defined primarily by a relation, not a physical space or enclosure. And second, that habit is fundamental to this relation.

Bringing these insights back to the subject of race, the priority given to white bodies in a racist world means the white subject is afforded a greater share of homeliness. The adequation of white selves and their surroundings leads to phenomenological invisibility or anonymity, which is characteristic of being at home in one's body, and in one's environments: "One fits," Ahmed writes, "and by fitting the surface of one's body disappears" (Ahmed 2007, 158). It is easiest to see how the above characterizations describe the lived experience of whiteness if we consider how they fail to describe the lived experience of people of color. The white person is not confronted by whiteness in the same way that Du Bois, Fanon, and others describe being confronted by blackness. Fanon famously made this point in the following passage:

> In the white world, the [person] of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating. It's an image in the third person […] I was unable to discover the feverish coordinates of the world. I existed in triple" (Fanon 2008, 90–92).

Similarly, while a Latina in an Anglo environment may experience the world incongruously, with a persistent, haunting awareness of how others are reading her *as* 'other,' a white person can occupy and move seamlessly through environments that reflect white needs, experiences, and interests. Dwelling, rather than alienation and estrangement, is the default mode of white experience (Taylor and Madura 2023, 303). To account for the unhomeliness of racialized embodiment, we'll need to consider in greater detail the relevant experiences of living in a racially hostile world. In other words, what racism and white hegemony does to the racialized body and self.

2. Non-White Embodiment and The Phenomenological Asymmetry of Race

If we want to embark on an analysis of how racism effects its targets at the bodily level, we might begin by considering the physical toll, manifest in certain racial "gaps" with respect to health and mortality. It has been consistently shown that blacks in the United States live shorter and less healthy lives than their white counterparts, and these long-term health effects are due not only to structural factors, but are linked to the stress of interpersonal interaction.[67] Research in sociology and public health supports the claim that even the anticipation of a racist encounter has immediate adverse physiological effects.[68] But increased heart rate, biochemical imbalances, and

[67] See Quincy Thomas Stuart, Ryon J. Cobb, and Verna M. Keith, "The Color of Death: Race, Observed Skin Tone, and All-Cause Mortality in the United States," *Ethnicity and Health* 25, no. 7 (2020): 1018–1040

[68] In making a similar point, Helen Ngo cites the following studies: Pamela J. Sawyer et al., "Discrimination and the Stress Response: Psychological and Physiological Consequences of Anticipating Prejudice in Interethnic Interactions," *American Journal of Public Health* 102 (2012): 1024. See also, Kathryn Freeman Anderson, "Diagnosing Discrimination: Stress from Perceived Racism and the Mental and Physical Health Effects," *Sociological Inquiry* 83 (2013): 55–81. Another popular rendering of these sorts of studies can be found in Besser van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score* (2015), which gives an account of the physical effects of trauma on the brain and body, and how those effects impede a person's capacities for pleasure, interpersonal connection, and trust. Shannon Sullivan has also turned focus to the physiological aspects of racism, interpreting these within her previously established transactional pragmatist-feminist psychoanalysis, and drawing connections between physiological functions and habit. There she argues that emphases on lived experience, and particularly the "I can" of Merleau-Ponty's habitual body, downplay or omit the role of physiology. This is in part why she stays within the Deweyan paradigm of habit, which does more than phenomenology to credit the way our social environments work on our biological and physiological aptitudes to forge (or inhibit) habits. But she also sees a need to take that connection further than Dewey does, with interesting and valuable results. See Sullivan *The physiology of Sexist and Racist Oppression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). However, one might similarly argue (as I do, following Ngo), that a focus on the physiological (and psychical and pragmatic) at the expense of the phenomenal body leads to similarly problematic omissions. An important part of the work being done by phenomenological analysis of race and habit is to furnish an account of the affective ground that helps to explain these

hypertension—all indicators and effects of emotional stress and anxiety—are not the only ways the body is at stake in encounters with habitual racism. The experience of racism has a phenomenal depth that goes unseen and unaccounted for if we limit our analysis to those effects that can be easily measured and quantified. Turning to Helen Ngo's analysis of the lived experience of racism and racialized embodiment, we'll see that these encounters also affect people of color in phenomenological and existential registers. In other words, racism has profound adverse effects on the way the body is lived, and the way the self is consolidated.

2.1 Bodily Fragmentation and the Non-Event of Racialization

I'll begin with an anecdote from Ngo's own experience to anchor the analysis. She recounts being called out while shopping in a Parisian marketplace. Hearing a vendor shout, "Ni Hao!" (Hello!), she is immediately and self-consciously aware of herself:

> My gut sinks. *Ni Hao!* I pretend not to notice, but a lump grows in my throat, my mouth goes dry. *Madame! Ni Hao! NiHaoNiHaoNiHaoNiHaoNiHaoNiHaoooo!* He's turned it into some screeching 'Oriental'-sounding song. This is humiliating […] I continue along. The Market noise washes over me. I walk, but my gait feels hollow, mechanical. *I* feel hollow…The singularity of this event recalls all the past ones. *The woman who tried to pay me for her Zen Buddhism book at the metro bookstand. The other woman who asked me for the price. The man calling out from the Bodega in Brooklyn. The one who muttered it under his breath in East Village. All those times while travelling*" (Ngo 2017, 55–46, emphasis in original).

The affective and physiological effects of Ngo's experience can be explained with reference to two other noteworthy features of the event. First, that Ngo's body becomes "hyper-visible" to herself, because it is made (racially) visible by others: "[m]y body is not, in that moment, on the 'margins of my perception' as Merleau-Ponty writes…but visually foregrounded, both for myself and for others (Ngo 2017, 63). This calls attention to the phenomenal depth of the experience, which is compounded by the second feature: this event occurs within a personal history littered with similar experiences, the accumulation of which is instantiated in the present moment. This calls attention to the scope of the event; that it is both mundane and pervasive, and that the effects are cumulative.

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physiological effects. To borrow and slightly modify an example from Ngo, the physiology of someone who was nearly hit by a car could look remarkably similar to someone who just suffered a racist encounter. A critical phenomenology of racial habit furnishes a story about the difference between those two events, and how those differences might play out in the future of that particular body. But it goes further in giving an account of certain other ways racism undermines the body. These dimensions of the experience—the "bodily and existential stress" that renders the non-white body fragmented and inhabitual—are my focus here.

Turning first to the point about phenomenal depth. The effects of habitual racism are often caste in the language of 'objectification,' and similarly, 'over-determination,' or 'pre-determination.' These notions capture something of the way racializing perception transforms people into a Sartrean "in-itself": an object of pure immanence, devoid of agency or possibility, whose meaning—grounded in something external to it, and about which it has no say—is fixed by a racist perceptual schema. George Yancy communicates this idea when he speaks of his body as "confiscated" (Yancy 2017, 17). The original confiscation, he says, occurs in the enslavement, brutalization, exploitation, and experimentation of black bodies. But it also reoccurs in the "quotidian, everyday level of social transaction" illustrated, for instance, in the elevator scenario discussed above, and in the *click* of car doors locking as he passes by (Yancy 2017, 18; 2014, 49).

Everyday instances of habitual racism do not only compromise the phenomenal body, but in some cases threaten life. Take another example from Georgy Yancy. He tells of a childhood encounter with a white police officer who almost "blew him away" after mistaking the telescope he was carrying for a gun.[69] Experiences such as these are widely corroborated and have engendered the rhetorical colloquialism, from which Yancy takes the title of his piece, known as "walking while black," ("driving while black," etc.). These expressions underscore that for habitually racist perception, it is not the action that determines criminality, but blackness comes pre-packaged as dangerous, rendering white fears and retaliation justified *a priori*. Commenting on Yancy's experience, Ngo refers to "the anguish and terrifying shock of having barely escaped being shot for 'walking while black'" as "a profound kind of existential anguish that flood[s] the emotional and psychical (or better: bodily) senses, in the course of such pedestrian encounters" (Ngo 2017, 61).

At the same time that racializing perception renders a person hyper-visible and objectified, it also has an invisibilizing effect.[70] The invisibility racism imposes on people of color is altogether different from the invisibility we discussed in relation to whiteness. In the case of whiteness, invisibility is a function of bodily anonymity related to a specific mode of habituation. Whiteness is

[69] George Yancy, "Walking While Black in the 'White Gaze,'" *New York Times,* September 1, 2013.

[70] What I'm speaking of here is a perceptual and performative invisibility that fails or refuses to see a person of color as having subjectivity or agency, or of exhibiting the Kantian potential for personality. With this perceptual invisibilizing comes a phenomenon of epistemic erasure discussed in Black feminist thought under the name "invisibility frames." See, for example, Kristie Dotson, "Theorizing Jane Crow, Theorizing Unknowability" (2017)

invisible *to itself,* which accounts for its homeliness in the post-civil rights era.[71] The invisibility that attends racist discrimination is just the opposite. In those cases, invisibility is not reflexive but is directed toward the object of perception—the racialized other—and involves an obfuscation or erasure of the latter's subjectivity. It is in this way that racializing perception is an *object*ification.

It is important to differentiate the objectifying perception involved in racialization with other problematic modes of perception. Racist objectification is not a mere act of totalizing perception—a perception which presumes to know the other in its totality, and which Levinas regards as violently reductive (Levinas 1969). Nor is it equivalent to arrogant perception, a mode of perception that organizes the world in a way that serves the perceiver's own desires and interests.[72] Racist objectification is these things, but it is a particular form of arrogant and totalizing perception that involves an imposition of meanings that distort the racialized other's self-conception. Consider Fanon's experience of arriving in predominantly white France from his home of Martinique:

> I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania*…this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was not my idea. I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together" (Fanon 2008, 92).

These descriptions stand in stark contrast to Merleau-Ponty's rendering of embodiment: "To say that my body is always near to me or always there for me is to say that it is never truly in front of me, that I cannot spread it under my gaze, that it remains on the margins of all of my perceptions, and that it is with me" (MP 2012, 93). On his account, the phenomenal/habitual body is co-extensive and co-present with itself. The permanent presence of the body operates like bodily law: "I am not in front of my body, I am in my body, or rather *I am my body"* (MP 2012, 151, my emphasis). According to Merleau-Ponty, although we can examine different parts of our own body or look at our reflection, our body is never experienced as an object apart from the self that

[71] I should point out that although invisibility is part and parcel of white homeliness in the contemporary U.S. context, invisibility is not a necessary condition for white homeliness. White people living under de jure white supremacy who consciously and willingly regard themselves as white will also feel at home insofar as their sense of self is reflected and affirmed by institutional and cultural arrangements. It is because it is no longer acceptable to openly embrace white supremacy that white people are most at home when they stop thinking of themselves as white but nevertheless benefit from covert racial privilege.

[72] The notion of arrogant perception was introduced by Marilyn Frye in her essay "In and Out of Harm's Way, Arrogance and Love" (1983) and developed by María Lugones (2003) and Mariana Ortega (2006) to theorize white exclusionary feminisms.

experiences. By contrast, Ngo argues that confrontations with habitual racism interject a distance into the bodily experience of the racialized person that challenges this picture of the lived body. The racialized person's body is often described as "in front" or "ahead of" itself:

> In the moment having escaped being 'blown away' because his Blackness ascribed to him the default position of 'dangerous,' Yancy's body *is* spread under his own gaze, and he is not simply *his* body (prompting us to hear alternate emphases of Merleau-Ponty's statement, 'I am my body'/'I *am* my body'/'I am *my* body'). Merleau-Ponty's analyses start from the experience of *le corps propre* or 'one's own body,' always supposing that the body experienced is the one *proper* to the self" (Ngo 2017, 63, emphasis in original).

In racist encounters, bodily intentionality is disrupted by the interjection of a racist signification. Such experiences do not only involve a distortion of the body image, but a disruption of the body schema that can have disorienting effects. Ngo explains this disruption and disorientation by pointing out how racialization often places a person at a distance from their own body. Racialized bodily distance is both spatial and temporal. In spatial distancing, she argues, the unity of the body schema is broken open and forcibly held open. This occurs through the incorporation of the third-person perspective into one's bodily experience. Returning to Yancy's elevator scenario, he describes the distance cleaved between himself and his body:

> My movements become and remain stilted. I dare not move suddenly. The apparent racial neutrality of the space within the elevator (when I am standing alone) has become an axiological plenum, one filled with white normativity. As Shannon Sullivan would say, I no longer inhabit the space of the elevator "as a corporeal entitlement to spatiality." I feel trapped. I no longer feel bodily expansiveness within the elevator, but corporeally constrained, limited. I now begin to calculate, paying almost neurotic attention to my body movements, making sure that this "Black object," what now feels like an appendage, a weight, is not too close, not too tall, not too threatening (Yancy 2017, 15).

Note that Yancy is not stunned into complete inaction, but adjusts his bodily comportment in response to the racist encounter. We find a similar analysis in Iris Marion Young's account of feminine bodily comportment. In her influential essay, "Throwing Like a Girl" (2005), Young examines the bodily inhibition that comes with having one's habit-body shaped by a sexist, patriarchal gaze that systematically positions "feminine" bodies as objects. Referencing Young in her work on the phenomenology of hesitation, Al-Saji argues—in line with Ngo's analysis—that what is at issue is not just an objectification, but the interjection of a tension or contradiction. The tension holds between the imagined and dispositional "I can," adopted as the norm of bodies in

general, and the "I cannot" of bodies that are systematically interrupted via othering perception (Al-Saji 2014, 152).

According to Al-Saji, we find in the racialized body a structural situation similar to the feminine body: they are constituted not only in terms of an "I cannot," but by a lived tension between their own bodily sense of agency and intentionality, and the routine denial of that agency and intentionality. In the case of racializing perception, the denial of agency can be literal, as when the will and claims of non-white people are ignored, but it is also carried by a distorted projection of the raced body/person that denies them the agency of self-determination. They are denied the possibility of being (read as) anything other than what the habitually racist perceiver takes them to be.

This brings us to another kind of distancing that adds to the phenomenal depth of the experience. I noted previously that the distance experienced by non-white bodies in racist confrontations is temporal as well as spatial. Temporal distancing occurs when a person is presumed known before they arrive. This corresponds with the idea of pre-determination mentioned earlier, in which someone is perceived as more than, or other than, what they really are, or what they take themselves to be. Drawing on Alia Al-Saji's analysis of racialized time, Ngo argues that racialized bodies come pre-determined in that they have their "essence" fixed by othering perception before any genuine encounter. They are "determined *ahead* of themselves, ahead of what any genuine encounter with them may reveal, and ahead of how they may wish to present themselves (Ngo 2017, 66–67, emphasis in original).

Al-Saji's argument is that by tethering bodies to stereotypes, racializing perception closes off that person's relation to a past and future, which for whites is open-ended and open to interpretation (Al-Saji 2013, 6–8). The idea here is that racializing perception affects a closure of possibilities for non-white people, both with respect to a person's field of action in any concrete instance of racist disruption, but also with respect to how one relates to personal and collective history, which for colonized people take the form of a "caricatured and closed past" (Ngo 2017, 68). Al-Saji writes:

> Though Fanon may sometimes be able to take up the structured possibilities already defined, and follow through their realization according to the routes deposited by the other (to the degree that this is permitted a black body in a white world), he does not see them as allowing variation, as being able to be worked out *differently*. The structure of possibility allows repetition but not creation or variation; it is a closed map. This seems ultimately to

> mean that possibilities are not genuinely felt as *mine,* on Fanon's account (Al-Saji 2013, 8, emphasis in original).

Integrating this idea of racialized time with the previous discussion of spatial distancing, Ngo argues that one arrives both "too early" and "too late" to encounters with habitual racism. To be ahead of oneself, as described in our discussion of spatial distancing, is to arrive "too early": "[A]s pre-determined, she is too early in relation to whom she might reveal herself to be," but she is also too late "in relation to that predetermination" since it forecloses possibilities for action, creativity, and being genuinely understood (Ngo 2017, 67).

Ngo cautions that we should not mistake these characterizations as suggesting that racism affects a complete displacement of the self or subjectivity. It is rather a forced perspective. One is "both here *and* there," upsetting one's bodily orientation: "It is not that one is simply taken away or separated from a 'real' or 'genuine' self (even if we are taken away from the self that we recognize), but rather as a racialized body, one stands in *multiple relations to and perspectives upon* the self, in a way that disrupts the spatial cohesion of the body schema" (Ngo 2017, 66, emphasis in original). For these reasons, Ngo thinks the language of objectification too simple, and prefers to talk about racialization as involving "bodily fragmentation" that induces "existential stress" and "existential instability." Read against the previous analysis of habit and home, this analysis goes to show how being a person of color in a whitely world renders one's body unhomely.

Bodily fragmentation does not only occur in instances of racist confrontation, but the permanent possibility of racism creates a situation of persistent dis-ease. To appreciate the unhomeliness of non-white embodiment we need to consider how the phenomenal depth of racist encounters is impacted by their scope. As we've just seen, the lived experience of the racialized person involves a spatial and temporal fragmentation that takes place at the level of the body schema. The phenomenal depth of racist disruptions is furthered by the fact that such ruptures are frequently experienced in the course of non-events (Ngo 2017, 68).

Let's return to Ngo's experience at the Parisian market. As Ngo tells it, this particular event calls up past instances of similarly racist encounters, and is compounded by them. These are, as Ngo describes, "mundane" events that "are experienced on the level of the body schema, whereby each unannounced interruption to daily living once again throws into question the otherwise unthematized and uncontested sense of one's own body" (Ngo 2017, 69). Racism and racialization are ubiquitous, and have always already shaped non-white embodiment. Ngo continues, "I

highlight here the non-event nature of the many other encounters with racism, in order to underscore the way the racializing schema is already present—and indeed *already operative*—on a pre-conscious, pre-reflective level, in situations where race is not already explicitly thematized" (ibid). The quotidian, non-event nature of so many instances of racism and racialization accumulate in a way that weighs on the body as an affective burden, but it also contributes to the configuration of the lived body. This is what Fanon refers to as the "historico-racial schema" that undergirds the non-white phenomenal body. Ngo speaks to this in her own experience:

> While I might not experience my body or my self *as* "Asian," or indeed as "anything," when I walk out to buy a baguette in the morning, because of the insidiousness of racialization, I *do* experience my body as susceptible to such racialization at any time; personal and collective experience have prepared me for the possibility that my non-white racial identity can be made into an issue—however big or small—at any unexpected, given moment (Ngo 2017, 69, emphasis in original).

Fanon similarly indicates the terrorizing effects of whiteness when he describes his own body as "surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty" (Fanon 2008, 90). The depth and ubiquity of the experience of racism can lead to conditions of existential instability that Ngo argues involve a profound loss of self.

2.2 Existential Instability

How exactly is the self lost in these moments? Recall that Fanon says his being "exists in triple," conveying that he is not just negotiating two conflicting self-conceptions, but the internal contradictions leave him feeling dismembered and disoriented, struggling to build a cohesive self that can carry on. He writes, "My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone…Where do I fit in?… Where should I put myself from now on?" (Fanon 2008, 93–94). Ngo argues that in a racist and whitely hegemonic world, the non-white body schema is "permanently and forcibly held open" and so "lacks a stable enough formulation" and "teeters on the brink of dissolution and undoing" (Ngo 2017, 69). Ngo characterizes this as a state of existential instability: "In experiencing one's body schema as inherently unsettled or at any moment 'unsettleable,' the racialized body not only becomes accustomed to but indeed anticipates these moments of unravelling" (Ngo 2017, 70). Living under conditions of racism means coming to expect your body and identity to be called into question. In these ways, the racialized body can be understood as inhabitual, and as not at home.

Additionally, and taking into account the two forms of distancing discussed above, Ngo argues that bodily fragmentation is a kind of "originary displacement" that leaves one estranged. Consider the connection Yancy draws between his own racialized displacement, and that of Fanon and Du Bois:

> Fanon argues that under colonialism, the colonized are forced to ask themselves constantly, 'In reality, who am I?' (Fanon *Wretched,* 1963: 250). Du Bois argues that Blacks who have given thought to the situation of Black people in America will often ask themselves, "What, after all, am I?" (Du Bois *Conservation,* 1995: 24). Through an uneventful, mundane act of white index fingers locking their car doors (*click, click*), the Color Line is drawn. After so many *clicks,* on so many occasions, I am installed as a stranger to myself, forcing a peculiar question: Where *is* my body? (Yancy 2014, 49).

If home is a starting place, Ngo asks, how can one start when one is both 'here' and 'there,' or when you don't know who or where you are? We might also ask, how can one dwell in a world that is hostile? How can one inhabit a body that is routinely rendered strange?

The influence that others have on our lived body has so far been cast in negative terms, but a properly relational ontology means the "gaze" is not wholly problematic. Furter developing the connection between body and home, Ngo argues that homes and bodies are similarly porous. A house without "pores" (windows and doors) is not a home, but a dungeon. And a body no longer in porous exchange with the world is a corpse (Ngo 2017, 113). I use the language of "transaction" to capture the co-constitutive relation between self and world, but we could equally speak of this in terms of "porosity" (Ngo 2017) or "intercorporeality" (Weiss 1999), all of which capture the fact that to be an embodied subject is to have a "socially-referred character" (Weiss 1999, 165). This means objectification is a part of ordinary self-construction.

Being made to reflect on your body image and reflexively consider yourself through the eyes of others is not always and everywhere a bad thing, nor is it something we can or should want to do away with. However, "while the home's porosity guards against the possibility of a romanticized or idealized conception of insularity and self-reference, we should not take this to mean that we all experience this exposure (or ex*peau*sure) to the same extent or in the same way" (Ngo 2017, 118). Earlier we asked what the difference is between ordinary bodily anonymity and the sort that makes whiteness problematic. Now we must consider how the racializing forces that constitute people as non-white, with all that entails, are different from the standard and expected way in which all bodies are constituted by others. And if the porosity/intercorporeality/transactional nature of bodies mean that negotiating disruptions to our

habit-body is a part of life, then we'll need a way to mark the difference between the problematic disruptions to the habit-body that arise in the context of negotiating others' racist habits, and other normal, valuable instances of bodily disruption and reorientation.

Al-Saji's point about lived tension highlights the fact that not just any third-person perspective has a fragmenting effect. The crucial difference in racializing disruptions to and constitutions of the body schema is the way a person can be systematically rendered unrecognizable to themselves. The objectification of non-white bodies comes by way of distortions that are often insulting and degrading, and that can impede the ongoing consolidation of the self. This is exacerbated by the banality of such disruptions, and their permanent yet indeterminate possibility. These aspects of racialized experience work to destabilize the self in a way that renders them unhomely.

This is not to say non-white people are utterly destroyed, or that bodily confiscation is ever complete. In running a comparison between white and non-white embodiment, there is a danger of pathologizing the latter. Although Fanon speaks of difficulties "elaborating his body schema" in a racist world, and of this elaboration being a "solely negating activity," racializing perception never succeeds at completely rendering the self an object without agency. As Ngo points out, the latter is shown in the fact that Fanon's reflections on experiencing himself as an object are themselves manifestations of subjectivity and agency, and are therefore performative denials of mere object-hood (Ngo 2017, 147). The important point here, however, is that when non-white bodies are "returned" by the white gaze via racist remarks or gestures, they are experienced as not *proper* to the self, but as incongruous and estranged.

Racism doesn't effect a dissolution of the self, or a complete de-worlding, but it can, and often does, render the self insufficiently habituated and consolidated. We've already seen how racism becomes incorporated into the body schema when non-white people are forced to negotiate their identity and bodily being in the face of racializing tropes. But racialized bodily being is also made in the negotiation and management of racist acts themselves. Where there is fragmentation and instability, there is also a question of bodily adjustment and recalibration. The phenomenological asymmetry of race calls upon us to consider not only the experience of racism, but the "work" of anticipating and managing it.

2.3 The Phenomenal Burden of Managing Racism

It is common knowledge among those who live it that managing the experience of racism requires altering one's body in various ways. This idea is sometime invoked within the framework of "respectability politics," which calls critical attention to the way norms of professionalism regarding self-presentation (clothing, speech, etc.) arbitrarily favor a dominant culture, which in the United States is White/Anglo bourgeois culture. The sort of bodily work I'm talking about includes, but is more than, the work of sartorial self-fashioning. "This work can operate at a more immediate and intimate level of gesture, timbre and tonality of voice, posture, gait—in other words, on the materiality of the body itself" (Ngo 2017, 59).

It might be noted that we all comport ourselves differently for special occasions (e.g., job interviews), or as our different roles demand (I do not speak to my grandmother or my boss the same way I might speak to a close friend). In the case of racialized bodies, "this kind of work is operative even during the *non-events* of strolling through a park, walking the streets, or doing the weekly shopping" (Ngo 2017, 58, emphasis in original). Ngo argues that although these might seem like relatively benign points of bodily adjustment, they accumulate into the invisible labor of managing racist perception and bodily response. This bodily work is added onto "the broader, more explicit levels of work involved when encountering (and countering) racism in daily life: the work of calling it out (and when doing so, having to 'prove' it), defending oneself and others from it, taking care of oneself and others in the face of it, and combatting it more generally" (Ngo 2017, 59). A few examples will help make this point. First, consider *New York Times* writer Brent Staples' experience of walking through the streets of the predominantly white neighborhood of Hyde Park in Chicago:

> I became an expert in the language of fear. Couples locked arms or reached for each other's hand when they saw me. Some crossed to the other side of the street. People who were carrying on conversations went mute and stared straight ahead, as though avoiding my eyes would save them…
> I'd been a fool. I'd been walking the streets grinning good evening at people who were frightened to death of me. I did violence to them by just being. How had I missed this…
> I tried to be innocuous, but didn't know how…Out of nervousness I began to whistle and discovered I was good at it. My whistle was pure and sweet—and also in tune. On the street at night I whistled popular tunes from the Beatles and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons.* The tension drained from people's bodies when they heard me. A few even smiled as they passed me in the dark.[73]

[73] Quoted in Claude M. Steel *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect us and What We Can Do* (2010), 6; and again in Ngo (2017), 56.

Similar examples abound of people adjusting their speech patterns, tone of voice, appearance, and behavior to avoid racism and manage white racist anxieties. But, as we learn from Merleau-Ponty, coping is one of the lived body's *modus operandi.* We are constantly "dilating our being in the world" through bodily recalibrations in response to our changing and sometimes unpredictable environments. If this is just what bodies do, then might we interpret this as comparable to ordinary, unavoidable bodily work of adapting and adjusting to social environments? Ngo argues that such an equation would misunderstand what is unique about the situation of racialized embodiment. Racialized bodily work involves

> a different level of bodily adjustment, which extends far beyond what ordinary (read: white) people must attend to when they engage in such activities by virtue of the currency that whiteness brings (respectability, reliability, and so forth). They differ from the general 'work' of self-presentation in the way that they respond to and work against existing, invariably negatively valenced determinations of the racialized person, in order to avoid or interrupt habitual, racialized perceptions (Ngo 2017, 58).

Understanding non-white embodiment as inhabitual should thus not be confused with the claim that the targets of racism are prevented from developing habits. As I've just explained, people of color often come to adopt habits in response to their racist environments. Part of being an embodied subject means being able to make adjustments to one's bodily comportment in cooperative engagement with the environment. This is true of all bodies, but in a racist world these adjustments are largely dictated by whitely ways of being. Here we have one way of understanding the claim that non-white people are constituted by white privilege/supremacy: the racialized habit-body is forged in reaction to and management of racism and white hegemony. The distinction I drew in chapter three between habit-as-orientation and habit-as-homeliness is useful here. Racism doesn't deprive a person of their habits or any orientation whatsoever, but it does demand a level of attentiveness and bodily work that renders its targets unhomely:

> [T]hink of how a body loaded as it is with the work of anticipation and adjustment ceases to resemble a body at ease with itself, or a body focused and fluid in the execution of its projects, however banal or mundane. Instead, such a body is laden with the work of managing others' racialized anxieties and expectations, a burden that is both one-sided and counterproductive (Ngo 2017, 58).

Recalling the ubiquity of racialization, this work can be called up at any moment, "piercing through the seemingly innocuous moments of daily living" (Ngo 2017, 58). Adding these up, Ngo

remarks that it begins to make sense why terms such as "fatigue," "exhaustion," and "stress" have come to define the anti-racist work carried out on a daily basis (Ngo 2017, 59).

These considerations call attention to the way non-white being is phenomenologically burdened in ways that white people are not, and it also helps to explain the ontological claim made in chapter two that non-white being is constituted by white privilege. The latter point stands insofar as people of color are systematically made to conform to whiteness by emulating it in order to disarm objectifying tropes, and the way the imperative to anticipate and manage racism leads people of color to adopt ways of being that are a direct response to white racism. The former point about phenomenological burdening can be understood in two ways. First, as the burdensome work of managing racism, which has adverse emotional, physiological, psychological, and existential effects. And second, even in the absence of overt racism, non-white people bear the burden of migrating toward a white normative center. This migration can be seen to some degree in the anticipatory acts of managing and fending off racism, but there is more to it than that, and the "more" of it bears on the third characterization of home as dwelling.

2.4 'World'-Travelling as Migrating to the (White) Normative Center

It is helpful to think about normative migration in connection with what María Lugones calls "world-travelling." The idea of world-travelling emerged out of considerations of the predicament of women of color in the U.S., though it can apply to anyone who finds themselves an outsider to mainstream culture and politics. World-travelling occurs when one is made to negotiate their place within multiple worlds while retaining a sense of self and identity. "Those of us who are 'world'-travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them…the shift from being one person to being a different person is what I call 'travel.'" (Lugones 1987, 11). A 'world' for Lugones is first and foremost a community of meaning. It is, we might say, a context of significance that is always open to interpretation and elaboration, but that is held together by a shared history, and a stable yet flexible set of (formal and informal) norms, practices, ideals, and proclivities. A 'world-traveller' is someone who moves between different worlds and whose subjectivity is forged from multiple, sometimes conflicting contexts:

> One can "travel" between these "worlds" and one can inhabit more than one of these "worlds" at the very same time. I think that most of us who are outside the mainstream of, for example, the US dominant construction or organization of life are "world travellers" as

> a matter of necessity and of survival. It seems to me that inhabiting more than one "world" at the same time and "travelling" between "worlds" is part and parcel of our experience and our situation (Lugones 1987, 11).

The movement of world-travelling involves adopting ways of life and modes of being that allow one to inhabit a given world more easily, especially one in which some aspect of your self is distorted, suppressed, or otherwise unwelcomed. Three features of world-travelling are important for our purposes. First, world-travelling is a necessity for people of color living under conditions of white hegemonic racism, and the circumstances that necessitate world-travelling involve experiences of racialized exclusion and alienation. Second, world-travelling is accomplished only through sincere attempts at identifying across difference. Because world-travelling is born of necessity, it disproportionately involves people of color making unreciprocated efforts to understand, identify with, and emulate the normative cultural center. Third, although world-travelling takes great effort and is often a matter of survival, it is also an act of world-building that has positive and creative qualities.

The paradigmatic world-traveller is what Mariana Ortega calls a "multiplicitous self," which is a "self capable of occupying multiple positionalities in terms of gender, race, sex, sexual orientation, physical ability, class, and so on," and is thus "capable of occupying a liminal space or a space of in-betweenness" (Ortega 2014, 176). All selves are to some degree multiplicitous, but "there is a crucial difference between those whose experience is one of being mostly at ease in the world and those whose experience is marginalized, oppressed, or alienated in some way and have to constantly engage in what María Lugones calls world-travelling (Ortega 2016, 196). For Lugones, while world-travelling can be undertaken willfully and "lovingly," more often it is a matter of necessity provoked by the dis-ease of not belonging. Helen Ngo positions the metaphor of world-travelling against the terms of being-at-home:

> In contrast to the experience of being-at-home with oneself and one's world, what Lugones describes here is how women of color experience a constant and unrelenting necessity to travel to and from different "worlds," and to negotiate these worlds in which they are not entirely at-home. Indeed, it is the very experience of feeling not-at-home—or echoing our earlier analysis, not "at ease"—that brings on the necessity of travel (Ngo 2017, 106).

The experience described by Lugones, and elaborated by Ngo and Ortega, stands in stark contrast to the comfort and relief of being-at-home. It might be argued that navigating conflicting inclinations and contexts is part of the ordinary work of self-construction, especially in light of the

habit-framework I'm advancing. However, Lugones's idea picks out a phenomenon that exceeds this ordinary work. Pushing the travel metaphor further, Ngo calls attention to the challenges of migration—work that (literally and metaphorically) falls disproportionately on people of color:

> In addition to the effort exerted in traversing such distances, there is also the work and disorientation involved in making oneself intelligible across these worlds, while holding on to a semblance of a continuous self (even if there are a multiplicity of selves) throughout the process (Ngo 2017, 107).

Ngo equates the work of world-travelling to a kind of forced migration. If the language of "travelling" connotes something voluntary, Ngo asks, "[i]n what sense are racialized person's *made* to travel by their relatively disempowered social, historical, political, and economic positions?" (Ngo 2017, 116, emphasis mine). Her answer points to the way people of color bear the burden of adapting their bodily movements, behavior, and comportment in order to pre-empt or manage racism (e.g., whistling Vivaldi, code-switching, etc.). But more than the management of white racist habits, non-white embodiment involves a pressure to answer the normative center. Whether that looks like adaptation and identification through world-travel, or acts of refusal and resistance, non-white selfhood is invariably made in reference to the hegemonic force of white normativity. Drawing a connection between Lugones's work and the unhomeliness of racialized being, Helen Ngo writes:

> If being at home entails a certain measure of stability (physical and emotional) and place for rest and repose, then the experience of having to constantly travel across and between worlds is marked by a distinct lack of those things; it entails constant upheaval…a profoundly unsettling and traumatic experience (Ngo 2017, 107).

Coming now to the second feature of world-travelling that I wish to foreground, Lugones argues that it involves a form of non-arrogant, "loving" perception that requires perspective-taking. World-travelling can't be achieved without openness and reciprocity. This means it is fundamentally different from the colonizing tendencies of ontological expansiveness:

> But there are "worlds" that we can travel to lovingly and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone's "world" is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their "world" we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes.* (Lugones 1987, 17, emphasis in original).

This feature of world-travelling helps fend off a possible misunderstanding. If home is so closely linked to the habitual, and if non-white embodiment is experienced as inhabitual in all these ways,

one might conclude that this renders people of color in some sense "homeless." While a person of color is often not at home in a white world, this doesn't mean they are bereft of any home-relations. Lugones helps us to see how people can and do find ways to inhabit even the most hostile of worlds.

The negotiations involved in world-travelling include what Mariana Ortega calls "hometactics" which is "a decentered praxis of home-making and belonging…that gives up the possibility of full belonging and allows for the possibility of not longing to be on one side or site of belonging" (Ortega 2014, 181). As she is using the word, "tactics" refer to "temporal interventions aimed at producing favorable situations but not necessarily at abolishing a system of power" (Ortega 2014, 182). Hometactics are ways of re-habituating oneself to produce "a sense of familiarity in the midst of an environment or world in which one cannot fully belong, due to one's multiple positionalities" (Ortega 2014, 182).

This idea leads us to the third feature of world-travelling, that it is a creative enterprise. As Lugones and Ortega describe it, world-travelling is a form of home-building within foreign and sometimes hostile territory by inhabiting new ways of being. Because world-travelling is about finding ways to make yourself at home, Ngo takes this to be indicative of something positive and possibly even desirable:

> Travelling is a valuable endeavor insofar as it brings us to different places, exposing us to different ways of living and being, and to people and cultures we might not otherwise encounter. Indeed such encounters often hit us with a refreshing new perspective on our own lives and worlds, and can have a transformative effect. Sometimes it is precisely the distance from the home and world in which one is enmeshed that gives us the latitude to try, see, and experience things differently. Or put otherwise, sometimes it is through the eyes (even gazes) of others that we see ourselves afresh (Ngo 2017, 107–108).

Efforts to navigate the unfamiliar and make significance within it can be valuable and enriching work. This at once underscores the importance of home, and the resilience of those who find themselves outsiders to mainstream organizations of life.

2.5 The Value of Racial Separatism

While Lugones and Ortega show how people of color can and do make home in the unfamiliar, the reality of racism and the oppressive hostility of whiteness can sometimes requires building home apart from that world, as a space of retreat. One needs spaces in which one can exist in the absence of pressures to conform to the dominant culture and manage racism. Recalling Fanon's suggestion that a black man can feel at-home among 'his own' (Fanon 2008, 90), we might consider the need

and value of separatism. The development of counter-hegemonic homes can serve as a strategy of political resistance and as a source of sanctuary.

bell hooks takes this idea to argue that homeplaces—and particularly the homeplaces built by black mothers—are a source of bodily and psychic recovery from the daily subjugation experienced in the face of white racist oppression. hooks challenges paradigms of home that regard it as a politically neutral site of leisure, and she also challenges (white) feminist opposition to that paradigm which re-caste home as a space from which women need to be liberated. These challenges come by underscoring the way the "homeplace" has served as a site of resistance for black women (hooks 1990, 385). hooks invites us to think of "resistance" along with the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn, who defines communities of resistance as "places where people can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal themselves and recover their wholeness" (quoted in hooks 1990, 385). Home-making is "not simply a matter of black women providing service" but is about "the construction of a safe place where black people [can] affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks 1990, 384).

In a similar spirit, Sullivan argues in defense of racial separatism. According to Sullivan, self-segregation can be seen as a transactional response to an oppressive environment that a person or group wishes to avoid, and in that sense, a transactional ontology in a racist context recommends separatism (Sullivan 2006, 177). Transaction is always in play because live organisms exist by and through their environments. But it is possible to limit transaction between relatively isolated groups, and this limited transaction could be desirable if the encounters between these groups tend to result in the systematic oppression of one by the other. What Sullivan calls "transactional separatism" is the attempt "to eliminate situations in which the dominant group's desires are always or primarily that to which an oppressed group has to respond" (Sullivan 2006, 177). The present analysis supports and deepens this point, showing that what is to be gained by transactional separatism is greater access to the benefits of home.

Although people of color do still "live, move, laugh, and love" (Ngo 2017, 72), the existential stress and bodily fragmentation that occurs in confrontations with racism, the general dis-ease and alienation of being in environments that don't reflect, and are actively hostile to, your bodily being, and the condition of having to negotiate multiple worlds, or "world-travel," combine

to form an asymmetry between white and non-white lived experience that warrants closer normative consideration.

I have so far proceeded as if being at home was an unalloyed good. Things are of course more complicated than this. The phenomenological asymmetry between white and non-white embodiment raises additional questions about the value and utility of these modes of being, and about effective strategies for addressing the problem. There's no room here to do justice to these complications, but I will conclude in the final chapter by gesturing at them, in the spirit of drafting a plan for the future.

CHAPTER FIVE

White Anti-Social Habit and Critical Disruption

Our analysis so far has characterized habituation and being at home in the world in a positive light, while being inhabitual and unhomely has been represented mostly negatively. But the situation is more complicated than that. Some ways of complicating this picture have already suggested themselves, though I'll proceed systematically in order to more precisely locate the critique of whiteness. I'll begin by mapping the relationship between habit and normativity, advancing a more holistic normative reading that is missing from the neo-Deweyan account. I will then revisit the question of home, this time positioning it against the virtues of disruption. This repositioning calls upon us to consider the ambivalence of home. I will argue that although home (habituation) is good and necessary, there is a sense in which one can be too much at home. I give the name 'anti-social habit' to the behaviors and habitual orientations that constitute this 'too much.'

1. Habit and Normativity: Three Lenses

There are at least three ways to understand the normative significance of habit. The first two have to do with the content of the habit. Habits can be measured in their efficacy as means to achieve reflectively endorsed ends (external normativity), and habit can generate norms and standards via the establishment of custom (internal normativity). But habit can also be evaluated by whether and to what extent it has achieved homeliness. This third lens approaches habit more holistically, considering not only its content, but also its structuring role. Exploring this third dimension of habit and normativity calls attention to the asymmetry in the lived experience of race as a problem over and above the wrongs of individual racist habits. If we take seriously the primacy of habit—something Dewey insists on and Merleau-Ponty reinforces—then we must also consider the way habituation as a vital function is impacted by whiteness.

The first and most obvious way to map habit and normativity is instrumentally. We can evaluate habits according to their tendency to promote or hinder our reflectively endorsed ends. In this sense, the normative standard is set independently and then applied. To draw on an earlier example, my habit of hitting snooze on the alarm is bad only if it conflicts with my other desires or commitments, for instance, of getting up early. We can and often do cultivate habits in light of our

individual and shared goals. Take, for instance, James Clear's work of popular self-help, *Atomic Habits* (2018), which instructs readers to use the automaticity of habit to our advantage by "habit stacking"—joining a habit we want to develop to a habit we already have. The existing habit then serves as the cue for the developing habit to ease its acquisition.

The process of evaluating a habit with reference to an external standard is easiest with individualized actions (i.e., the habitual), but it also applies to our orientations (i.e., habituation). A person might recognize that they tend toward a certain pattern of thinking, or habitually take certain attitudes or interpretation of events, and ask themselves if these dispositions are serving them. Just as we can work on habitual acts, so too can we work on strategic re-orientations. The main-stream popularization of Stoic philosophy is one such example, as are mindfulness techniques taught through meditation. Similarly, one might decide they need a new outlook and take efforts to pay more attention to certain features of the world, or to approach one's days with optimism and appreciation. These ways of working on our mental, perceptual, and emotional lives amount to strategic re-habituation, and we arrive at these decisions by measuring our actual habits against external standards. From this point of view, habit itself is neutral. Particular habits must be set against our reflectively endorsed ends in order to be rendered good or bad, and adjusted accordingly.

As Sullivan labors to show, and as my own phenomenological rendering of racial habit has emphasized, evaluating our habits is neither simple nor easy. Even if we have a clear sense for our own values and goals, it is no small task to identify how our habitual ways of being and doing aid or undermine those values and goals, or how those values and goals are themselves a function of problematic orientations. Dewey explores the way tastes and moral sensibilities are shaped and fostered through habit, and the way moral norms emerge out of habitual practices. This occurs when standards become fixed by habit and form the uninterrogated common sense that guides our lives. Merleau-Ponty deepens this thought by explaining that when we become accustomed to doing or seeing things in a certain way, we lose sight of the deed as a choice and regard it as an inevitability, as what "one" does, while it recedes into the background. The recession is in part due to the felt rightness that accompanies habit formation, a feature that is more visible from the phenomenological perspective.

The conservative structure of habit—its automaticity, backgrounding, and felt rightness—makes it difficult to know what is really animating our dispositions and perspectives, and thus to

give an honest appraisal of our habits. We therefore must consider the work habit does to generate and embed the uninterrogated norms and common sense upon which we live out our everyday lives. This observation points toward the second way we might map habit and normativity. Rather than measure habits against an external standard, we can observe the way standards themselves—cultural practices, norms, and ideals—are established and sedimented by habit. It is here that I would locate the significance of Dewey's distinction between routine and intelligent habits. As I understand it, this distinction has less to do with the content of the habit than it does with its rigidity and resistance to transformation. Habit becomes problematic when, by not originating from and never entering into critical reflection, our ways of being establish widespread norms that are in fact contrary to our reflectively endorsed ends, or would be if we got critical distance from them. But they also become problematic when they achieve a level of rigidity and sedimentation—usually through ongoing reinforcement—that even a change in the environment is not enough to induce a change in habit. This is the case for habits of racializing perception and white normativity, which persist more than half a century after the end of de jure white supremacy.

This point speaks to habit's constitutive power. The phenomenological sense of habit suggests that habits are deeply personal. I am nothing if not my orientation on the world, which is given by my particular habit-body. But habits are also impersonal. They take up residence in our being without our deliberate consent, they operate without our explicit awareness, and they can be highly resistant to transformation. My orientation is constitutive of who I am, but it is also constituted by impersonal supra-individual structures. These structures work to position bodies differently, and so will also shape those bodily orientations differently. Orientations are therefore not completely idiosyncratic. Social groups are defined in part by how they are positioned within systems of power. That positionality is going to influence, and be influenced by, the dispositions and orientations of those who occupy them. We can thus speak not only about habits that define individuals, but about habits that define groups.

For Sullivan, whiteness is ontologically held together by the white supremacist leading idea. I don't doubt that unconscious commitments to white supremacy play a part in racial formation. But I don't think we need to go so far as to posit a white supremacist unconscious to account for the habitual regulation of racial categories and identities. As our phenomenological analysis has shown, there is more to ordinary "pre-conscious" habit than Sullivan is inclined to admit, and its

role in shaping perception can go a long way in accounting for the "good white people" phenomenon.

Habituation accounts for group-formation and social identity in the following way. A social identity is not just about where one is located in social space, but about how that location has given rise to a shared orientation. Chief among these, for our purposes, are the socially inherited orientations that arise when racial meanings structure perception. The habits of white privilege discussed by Sullivan (ontological expansiveness, ethical solipsism, and othering perception) manifest in habitual behaviors but are part and parcel of a more general process of white worlding and white orientation. This is a point that Sullivan alludes to in saying that one and the same historico-racial schema structures all bodies, even though those bodies are lived very differently. Depending on how the body is located within the racial schema, they will be differently oriented (or disorientated).

This normatively generative power means we must pay attention to habit's conservative structure and constitutive force. My habits constitute my self, but they also constitute other selves, and so we need to ask ourselves how our own habitual orientations and behaviors influence what other people can be and do. One place I find it useful to cleave these group-habitual orientations is along the axis of dominant/non-dominant. Dominant positionalities are defined by proximity to power, but the power in question goes beyond (and in some ways determines) the distribution of capital and political influence. There's another sort of power being hoarded, the power of "dilating one's being in the world," or the power of habituation. Thus, when we consider habituation in these senses a new field of normative analysis opens up, and with it a distinctive aspect of the harms of racial injustice.

The neo-Deweyan approach to whiteness and habit that we considered in chapter two begins from the commitment to racial egalitarianism and sets out to show how contemporary society fails to meet their own professed egalitarian goals. It diagnoses this failure with reference to the unconscious habits that run contrary to the ideals of equal human dignity and worth. By taking stock of the normatively generative power of habit, we can work to more vigilantly and critically attend to our habits, and actively work to reconfigure the ones that are not in line with our reflectively endorsed ends. Sullivan's and MacMullan's analyses of white habit emphasize this danger. The problem of whiteness points to "the practices, habits, and assumptions that impede human flourishing and democracy and that stem from the concept of whiteness as a superior and

pure group within the human family" (MacMullan 2022, 18). The core problem is the habits themselves, but it is exacerbated by their invisibility: "white privilege maintains itself largely by seeming normal, natural, and unobjectionable" because it operates unconsciously, creating a situation in which "[a] white person can be racially privileged without supporting and while even rejecting the idea of racial hierarchy" (Sullivan 2006, 55). I propose that what is at stake is not only a matter of white people being constituted by certain pernicious habits that result in systems of racial domination, but that habituation itself is at stake. This brings us to the third and final way to map habit and normativity.

An imperative appears when we consider habit as a structuring mechanism of organic life apart from any specific habits or particular ways of being oriented. This normative lens is most apparent from the two sets of distinctions we made within habit in the previous chapter. First, Casey's distinction between the habitual and habituation, which shows that habits are not only useful, but that habituation makes meaningful experience possible. Second, my further subdivision of habituation into orientation and homeliness, which shows that habitual experience can be more and less stabilizing and self-affirming. Approaching habit in this more holistic way allows us to criticize not only the individually problematic habits, but the phenomenological asymmetry in our lived experience of race that inhibits freedom and flourishing. If habituation is vital in the ways I have suggested, then we have a problem when this mode of being is made more available to some than others.

This asymmetry constitutes a relational injustice which stems from the harms to those whose bodily being is routinely disrupted, and so who are prevented from fully inhabiting social space. But the problem with this asymmetry extends also to those who are said to be at home in the world. That is to say, the problem of white worlding is also a problem *for* white people beyond the obvious point of complicity in injustice. Those additional problems become evident when we look more closely at the value of home. Considering the distinctions within habit noted above, alongside the constitutive power and conservative nature of habit, we are directed to the often recognized but underexplored "dual nature" of habit as both enabling and inhibiting.

2. The Ambivalence of Home

Taking into account the primacy of habit and its various constitutive and enabling functions, we might conclude that being at home in the world is a good thing, and that correcting the

phenomenological asymmetry is a matter of somehow giving non-white people a greater share of at-home-ness. This is certainly true, but it oversimplifies the situation. Two considerations are particularly important for a normative analysis of racial habituation. First, the degree of habituation achieved when one is at home in the world is not an unqualified good. Habituation can present issues that are most apparent when set against certain advantages of the multiplicitous world-travelling self, and so I'll return to that discussion in order to make this point. Second, the ease and comfort of white habituation is predicated on non-white estrangement, and is therefore not an unproblematic ideal toward which we ought to strive. Taken together, these considerations indicate that addressing the ongoing problem of racial inequality will require somehow disrupting white people "at home."

Our analysis of non-white estrangement has already served to highlight the homeliness of white experience, yet it also calls attention to the problem with this aspect of whiteness, not only as an instance of phenomenological resource hoarding—if we can speak in those terms—but as an impoverished mode of being all its own. The affordances of habituation are an undeniably good and necessary part of human functioning and flourishing, and we should not downplay the profound alienation and estrangement of non-white experience. But an honest account of racial habit requires that we contextualize and further problematize the home.

What makes homeliness an impoverished mode of being? Lugones proposes that it can stand in the way of world-travel: "I take this maximal way of being at ease [in a 'world'] to be somewhat dangerous because it tends to produce people who have no inclination to travel across 'worlds' or have no experience of 'world' travelling (Lugones 1987, 12). In my previous analysis, world-travel figured among the burdens of non-white racial work, existing alongside (and sometimes overlapping) the bodily work of managing racism and white anxiety. Why then might one aspire to be a world-traveller? An answer begins to form if we recall two other features of world-travel. When done right, world-travelling involves efforts at mutual understanding and a willingness to adopt new ways of being, and this makes it a creative and sometimes enriching experience. These benefits of world-travelling are lost on the whitely habituated person.

But there's still an open question as to why world-travelling carries these positive features, and why being maximally habituated stands in the way. The answer has to do with the reifying tendencies of habitual perception, and the disclosive potential of phenomenological disruption. As we saw in the previous chapter, the stability afforded by habitual perception works by submerging

mediation and allowing one to encounter the world as if one were making immediate contact with the necessary and natural. In other words, habituation works to make the world a home in part by alleviating the need to interpret, which simultaneously de-historicizes what we perceive. Habituated perception encounters the world as so many ready-made objects, replete with institutions that appear eternal and immutable, behavioral patterns that go uninterrogated, and value schema that impose themselves as if categorical. The familiarity of home and the habituation that secures such a feeling are important parts of what makes a human life go well. But the more at home one feels, the more locked in to narrow and sectarian frames one is likely to become. And in culturally diverse societies, experiencing the comfort of home wherever one goes is likely an indication that others are subjected to extreme alienation and made to bear the phenomenological burden of one's own comfort. Thus,

> …while the home certainly holds important significations in the ways noted above—as a starting place, as a place tracking our bodily habits, as a place of rest—it is also true to say on the other hand that there are certain dangers that come with an over-attachment to or over-identification with it. It is possible, in other words, to become *too much* at-ease or too much at-home with the world, such that one stops encountering others and fails to consider what it is to be herself in the eyes of another (Ngo 2017, 108, emphasis in original).

Here we find phenomenological support for the pragmatist imperative to remain open and adaptable. If perception is habitual and necessarily theory-laden, then it is also unavoidably ethical. It follows that we need ways to critically engage with and guide perception. In some instances, alienating disruption can be a means for coming to awareness of self and surroundings. Ngo argues that the experience of bodily fragmentation renders one "uncanny," which refers to an experience of estrangement and disorientation that comes from finding oneself in unfamiliar places or situations. She borrows her concept of the uncanny from Heidegger, who presents it as a basic aspect of the human condition, and something that we must pass through in order to become homely (Ngo 2017, 122).

Why is the passage through the uncanny an essential stage on the path to homeliness? A return to Heidegger's earlier work gives us an answer. [74] Uncanniness is an experience that follows from the breakdown of meaning. Often incited by the breakdown of the ready-to-hand, these moments tend to be revealing. What gets revealed—or at least there is an opportunity for

[74] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927/1962), Part III, "Worldhood of the World," esp. 92–122.

disclosure, should one take it up—is the underlying structures that shape the experience; their historical contingency and openness. I should pause to emphasize that disruption only creates an opportunity, not an inevitability. Phenomenological disruption and the experience of uncanniness doesn't necessarily and always lead to revelation and the determination to reconfigure one's habit-body. As the current political climate in the United States shows, rendering white people "dis-eased" with whiteness, to borrow MacMullan's expression, could and often does lead to backlash, a point to which I'll return shortly.

Where Ngo turns to Heidegger to work out the value of disruption, we can return to Dewey. In particular, we can rethink Dewey's distinction between routine and intelligent habits. Reading this distinction through the broader conception of habituation as orientation and dwelling, I would say that globally routine habits involve a refusal of heterogeneity and a closure of worlds, where globally intelligent habits involve an openness to and integration with worlds. Heidegger's call to be "homely in the unhomely" is similar to Dewey's call to adopt intelligent habits. Both signal the importance of dwelling, but in a way that doesn't side-step or refuse what is unfamiliar. Instead, they call for a passage through the unfamiliar and efforts to render it familiar, or to build homes, which is just to say they both implore adaptability.

Understanding the value of estrangement through Dewey gives us a clearer answer to the question of the political potential of phenomenological disruption, if only because his answer appreciates that these opportunities are open-ended. Intelligent habits open up spaces of possibility, which affords a life of expanded significance and a greater ability to cope when problems arise. Phenomenological disruption, or what Ngo would call a "passage through the uncanny," keeps habits from becoming routine (in the Deweyan sense), and prevents orientations from becoming too fixed.

Returning to Lugones's concern about being too at-ease, I think we need to make a stronger claim. It's not just that some people lack the experience and inclination to world-travel, it's that their worldly orientation doesn't present such endeavors as real possibilities. From the perspective of whiteness, non-white worlds don't register as real 'worlds' with significant offerings. And even when their whitely orientations are challenged, white people seem to find ways to rationalize and re-enforce their existing habits. To endeavor genuinely, reciprocally, lovingly into another world is unthinkable except in the appropriative, consumeristic, or voyeuristic ways characteristic of white domination.

Nevertheless, Lugones's analysis of world-travelling and Ngo's critical uptake of the uncanny compel us to think about the productive potential of phenomenological disruption. The interruption of bodily intentionality that breaks up the immediacy of perception and creates a state of "alienation from situation" opens onto opportunities for critical re-configuration. With this in view, I recommend an attitude of ambivalence toward the condition of familiarity and adequation that constitutes the "at home," and I see the need to explore a social praxis of disruption that interrupts problematic habits of thought, perception, behavior, and practice.

As Ngo puts it, "[t]he question of whether an activity can be properly described as 'world'-travelling as opposed to 'forced migration'…turns precisely on [the] question of power" (Ngo 2017, 115). The same can be said of whether a condition qualifies as proper homeliness or as what I will call 'anti-social' habituation, the ideal mode of habituation being determined by whether it instantiates unequal and non-reciprocal power relations. In many ways, non-white unhomeliness secures white homeliness. Ngo makes this point particularly well:

> …the habitual perception of racialized bodies (e.g., in the case of veiled Muslim women) *serves to reinforce* the normalized invisibility of white bodies, in the same way that…the spatio-temporal fragmentation in racialized bodies (in response to the stresses of navigating a racist world) ensures the smoothness and spatial extension of white embodiment. In other words, whiteness gets installed as the normative center by virtue of this pushing out of racialized bodies to the margins; the canniness of white bodies is predicated on the uncanniness of racialized ones" (Ngo 2017, 125, emphasis in original).

But also, and such is the case for whiteness, whether habituation is anti-social turns on whether the condition involves a calcified orientation that stalls growth and adaptation. In the case of whiteness, the orientation is not only calcified, but is actively and invidiously maintained in order to preserve unearned advantages and protect a person's unconscious racial self-conception. This situation calls for disrupting whiteness in a way that renders white people strange to themselves. This white self-estrangement or "double-consciousness" involves being seen through the racially lucid eyes of their non-dominant counterparts.

While I believe phenomenological disruption has an important role to play in addressing the contemporary problem of whiteness, it is equally important that we not lose sight of the distinctly violent and coercive nature of racializing disruption: "More than the general disorientation and natal condition we all experience having been thrown into the world and charged with the task of making sense of it, racialized uncanniness *arises from a socially and historically constructed system of racist oppression and domination,* a system which imposes upon the racialized body

an uncanniness that is not indigenous to it, and moreover, an uncanniness that *benefits* its white oppressors" (Ngo 2017, 125, emphasis in original). Those who experience themselves as racially uncanny rarely, if ever, do so by their own volition. Ngo thus argues that there is an additional uncanniness particular to racialized being. Although the non-white experience of estrangement can illuminate the value and potential of such interruptive moments, we must keep historical context in view and neither romanticize nor pathologize this experience.

This critical re-evaluation of home and travel leads naturally to the question of what is to be done. The sort of disruption I'm recommending occurs most often in unfamiliar contexts that present barriers to one's habitual orientations, or otherwise through experiences of being made to see yourself through the eyes of others. There is thus an imperative that those in dominant subject positions have regular and meaningful exposure to difference. And, on the other hand, that those in marginalized subject positions create homeplaces to which they can retreat and cultivate positive relations-to-self.

There are, however, additional worries to register regarding each of these suggestions. Regarding the whitely/dominant need to shake things up, so to speak, Sullivan cautions that this could become just another instance of ontological expansiveness. Although she ultimately recommends that habits of white privilege can only be reconfigured by changes to their environments, she insists that white people learn to know when their presence is justly unwelcomed. Sullivan thus defends a sort of racial separatism in the interest of allowing people of color homeplaces where they can escape the deluge of white normativity and racism. I will say more about Sullivan's views on this shortly. I bring it up here to prompt a concern that bears on the current discussion. Mariana Ortega warns of the dangers of separatism, which has to do, once again, with the orientational rigidity that can sometimes attend homeliness:

> It cannot be denied that even for those multiplicitous selves who are border-crossers and world-travelers, the home question is still a question. Perhaps it is even a more painful question precisely because that home seems harder to find…Yet, despite the determination of this will to belong that may provide a feeling of security and comfort, we cannot avoid recognizing the limits and pitfalls of such security, namely, the reification of those who do not fit a version of authentic belonging (Ortega 2016, 197).

Ortega is echoing a common refrain in debates surrounding identity politics. There seems to be at once a deep and urgent need, both strategic and existential, to establish spaces and communities of belonging—to home-build—and a danger of raising new ontological partitions and new

microcosms of oppression. I take up those strategic questions more directly in the final section of this chapter. I want to focus here on how Ortega's insights call attention to the necessity of home spaces, at the same time as she problematizes their value. What she, Lugones, and Ngo are all pointing to are so many ways in which at-homeness is multi-valenced, and that our ways of redressing issues of racist oppression and phenomenological asymmetry must trouble the value of home by locating it within social contexts and systems of power. I take the foregoing considerations as indicative of what David Theo Goldberg refers to more generally as the danger of homogeneity:

> Why, I am often asked, is heterogeneity to be celebrated, homogeneity berated? What, after all, is wrong with wanting to live among one's own, to be comfortable with kinship, pleased with one's cultural (indeed "natural") kin, threatened by the unrecognized and alien? Turning away from others, from those not like one, retreating into the comfort of consorting with one's "own," the narrowing inevitably associated with homogeneity is one among other modes of working things out, of resolving tensions (Goldberg 2009, 369)

He answers:

> Besides the fact that such presumed homogeneity necessarily takes for granted the coherence, purity, boundedness, and racial identity of cultural likeness, such homogeneity can only be purchased with the coin of severe repression, of purging difference and denying its influence if not its miscegenating seed. The sustaining of homogeneity necessarily requires restriction, keeping out those one takes to be unlike one, in some ways keeping in those one identifies with or who are at one with one. Hardly a natural condition, the very possibilities of the distinctions require work both to define and to sustain them. Their premise is built upon repression, aggression, blindness to other identifications, cross-seminations. Seemingly safe, the insistent closures and totalizations of homogeneity prompt and promote, mobilize and multiply their counter, resistances, the commitment to undress, transgress, redress. In short, homogeneity is a recipe for constitutive conflict and repetitively destructive, debilitating politics" (Goldberg 2009, 369).

Goldberg advocates for "heterogeneous dispositions," which he describes as "dispositions against closure" that "offer an antidote to the conceit of holding things constant, to the arrogance of control" (Goldberg 2009, 368). The issue being raised here calls attention to the potential dangers of homeliness, and these are dangers, I insist, be kept in view. But we must also be mindful of the reason why they are dangerous: a home for some comes at the cost of home for others. The problem of homogeneity/homeliness is ultimately tied to tendencies toward exclusion, which deprives others of belonging. If we read Goldberg's heterogeneous dispositions alongside Dewey's notion of intelligent habit, we can expand the latter to include the cultivation of habits that resist the closure of habit in general. How is this to be accomplished? What would such a habit look like?

For these answers I turn to Ami Harbin's work on disorienting moral life, and Al-Saji's phenomenology of hesitation.

Just as worlds can feel inhospitable and unfamiliar to those who are the targets of racism and habitual marginalization, it can also cease to feel like a home for someone who undergoes the disorienting and disruptive effects of trauma or loss. Ami Harbin (2016) discusses disorientation as a disruptive shift in one's life that makes it hard to go on. In moments of disruption, which can last for days or years, the world loses much of the sense it once had and becomes unintelligible in life-altering ways. If habit affects a familiar intimacy with one's surroundings, then disorienting events are an interruption of one's habitual mode of being that turn the sphere of one's life into an unfamiliar place.

Harbin takes up the topic of disorientation to explore how these moments can be vital to moral growth. Becoming unsettled can have what Harbin calls "tenderizing effects," which she characterizes as the effect of coming to live unprepared, to sense vulnerability, to engage in solidarity, and to be open to living against the grain of oppressive norms (Harbin 2016, 121). These tenderizing effects work undercover to change habits and lead to "acting despite ourselves," i.e., to initiating shifts in how we relate to others without necessarily prompting moral resolve. Harbin writes, "[r]ather, the effects of these disorientations partly prompt shifts in ways of being through *compromising* moral resolve, including the push to determine what one must do. Being tenderized leads to capacities to relate to vulnerable others more gently and generously and to exercise one's powers more reluctantly" (Harbin 2016, 122, emphasis in original). One of the key ways tenderizing effects can be morally productive absent, or prior to, moral resolve is by "allowing individuals to relate differently to others and themselves as knowers" (Harbin 2016, 91). This works by throwing once certain beliefs into doubt, generating a greater awareness of one's own epistemic fallibility and engendering epistemic humility:

> As disoriented, I am more likely to develop awareness of how what I notice and how easily I know are related to how settled I feel in my identity as a knower, and how readily I feel I am capable of acting on the basis of my knowledge" (Harbin 2016, 91).

If we allow "knowledge" a broader scope to include bodily intentionality, then we can say that having our habits disrupted throws us into a state of bodily uncertainty, creating the necessary space for critical interrogation and re-orientation. Contrasting the bodily uncertainty of

phenomenological disruption with the bodily confidence characteristic of white habituation, we might conclude that we need a way to destabilize whiteness at the bodily level.

Alia Al-Saji similarly argues that hesitation resulting from certain forms of bodily disruption can have the effect of undoing oppressive habits. Al-Saji takes the idea a step further in imagining how we can exploit this bodily uncertainty to effect positive transformations. While they both find promise in the experience of phenomenological disruption, Harbin and Al-Saji also insist on their contingency, explaining that the benefits are neither guaranteed, nor do they serve to justify the harms in cases when disruption follows from racism or other traumatic experiences. To mark this context-sensitivity, Al-Saji distinguishes between "affective hesitation," which is made possible by the anonymous temporal structure that sustains habit, and "paralyzing hesitation," which is produced in trauma or that stems from having internalized the oppressive, objectifying gaze of others (Al-Saji 2014, 153). While Harbin sees potential even in the latter sort of disorientation, Al-Saji emphasizes the former, calling for a deliberate effort to unseat our own perceptual habits.

Al-Saji shares the view, common among those I've been engaging with, that the bodily "self-reference" or self-awareness of hesitation is not always immobilizing and destructive. Hesitation can allow an interval to open, where perception can become reflexive and self-critical, inciting one to "glimpse the margins of experience" and question what it ordinarily takes for granted (Al-Saji 2014, 154). Al-Saji writes, "…to hesitate is to feel one's way tentatively and receptively; time is "tâtonnement,"[groping] says Bergson, that is, a search without finality or teleology, an experimentation that does not dictate the future it will find" (Al-Saji 2014, 143). Consequently, "hesitation does not only delay, it also opens onto elaboration and becoming otherwise. Since all is not given, what happens in the interval is becoming" (ibid.). If habituation is dangerous for its susceptibility to locking a person into a certain objectifying frames of reference, affective hesitation carries possibilities for holding open a gap between "having" and "searching" that might mitigate those dangers, and it does this by rupturing the immediacy of experience and making it possible to re-orient oneself around different habits. I take affective hesitation to be precisely the sort of globally intelligent habit needed to reconfigure hegemonic orientations. Bringing this back to the problem of white habituation, Al-Saji writes:

> white privileged bodies expect to feel "at home" in all spaces, including those that they colonize. This implies, on my reading, that environmental change can only be effective if it is able to create a certain tension or discomfort, a fracture, at the level of habits of white privilege—what I have called hesitation (Al-Saji 2014, 150).

Harbin's work on disorientation and Al-Saji's work on hesitation signal the productive potential of disruption, which has a certain affinity with Dewey's theory of inquiry. According to Dewey, concepts are tools that emerge from an organism's interaction with its environment. More specifically, concepts are the product of inquiry, and inquiry begins in "problematic situations." A situation only becomes "problematic" when it is recognized as something needing a solution. Prior to that, it is merely "indeterminate"—unsettled but not yet in a way that has commanded the resolve to understand or act. Indeterminate situations come from existential causes, meaning they "grow out of actual social tensions, needs [and] troubles" (Dewey 1986, 493, quoted in MacMullan 2022, 69). A critical phenomenology of racial habit suggests that, given the homeliness of white habituation, we must create these tensions.

Generally speaking, phenomenological disruption refers to a rupture in the intentional relation such that what was expected doesn't appear, or something unexpected does. This creates a condition of indeterminacy, which can transform into a problematic one if the occasion is taken up in the right spirit. Phenomenological disruption is the practice of inducing moments of indeterminacy. Forcing the experience of being "pulled up short," as Gadamer might say. These are precisely the moments that Dewey says give rise to inquiry. When not all is given, when something is amiss, we are forced to look harder, to reflect, and to identify the problem that needs to be worked out. We must create instances of disequilibrium for white people, who otherwise move through the world as if their whiteness were unproblematic (or non-existent).

Adopting phenomenological disruption as social praxis may be a way of subjecting social and perceptual practices to critical scrutiny by interrupting the habits that carry them. The need for critical disruption comes from the perceptual structures that reinforce, and are reinforced by, the habitually followed practices and institutions of a culture or society. Moments of disruption can help us catch sight of the intentional threads that stitch together perception and can lead to a greater appreciation for one's own contingency and historicity, and a greater sense of empowerment to think and be differently. The goal of putting the world out of play is not just to find bad habits and dislodge them. It is to hold open a space that allows for an expansion of perspective and new acquisitions of shared meaning. It is to avoid getting too fastened into ways of seeing that we close ourselves off to others. As Harbin and Al-Saji demonstrate, alienation from situation opens up critical opportunities for this to happen. If intercorporeal anonymous

subjectivity is the originary source of world-creation, then insofar as disruption breaks up the immediacy of subjective engagement, it makes intervention and re-orientation possible.

3. Anti-Social Habit

The ambivalence of home illuminates two features of social life that we can now address more directly. The first is that habituation generates a condition of being at home in the world (enablement) and the second is that being at home in the world can lock in certain dispositions and orientations to the exclusion of others (disablement). The disablement of habituation consists in the fact that too much habit and too entrenched of custom generates a kind of existential unfreedom for those who are at home in the world. Even in a world where every person enjoys absolute habituation—feels absolutely at home—it would be in important respects a socially dysfunctional world. Such a situation is not a real possibility, and it is certainly not our own. Difference seems to be a permanent feature of human lifeworlds, and increasing human global migration and communication is only going to produce greater differentiation. But where this differentiation exists alongside certain hegemonic power structures underlying the social order (imperialist white-supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, as bell hooks would say), there will inevitably be some who don't fit within dominant norms and who don't get to participate in the production and institutionalization of meaning and value. The upshot of this analysis has been to articulate and prescribe an attitude of ambivalence toward the condition of being at home in the world, and to explore possibilities for socially productive tension and critical disruption.

By 'anti-social habit' I mean the habitual ways of perceiving, thinking, and behaving that eventuate in a social world that is a home for some but not others. These include explicitly prejudicial attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs, such as those associated with pathological racism and sexism, for example. But 'anti-social habit,' as I'm using it, goes beneath and beyond those explicitly hostile dispositions of antipathy to include more subtle ways of being and thinking, such as those exemplified by the well-meaning white liberal on which Sullivan fixes her attention. Furthermore, the 'anti-social' nature of certain habits is not meant in the colloquial sense of reclusion or the disposition to isolate from social life. Rather, habit that is anti-social on my account is habit that operates to construct a socio-political milieu that is inhospitable to difference, and that tends toward world-closure.

I use the language of 'anti-social' habit instead of the more familiar language of 'good' and 'bad' to indicate that these habits are bad in a particular way and with reference to uniquely social concerns. On the neo-Deweyan account, habits are thought to be good or bad when they help to realize or undermine some reflectively endorsed end. This language limits us to a normative conception of habit that is purely instrumental and fails to capture the peculiarities of habit as a socially enabling or disabling phenomenon in its own right. More specifically, the instrumentalizing language of 'good' and 'bad' individuates habit into discrete actions and behaviors that are themselves the objects of moral or practical evaluation. This characterization doesn't leave normative space for us to think about and evaluate habit *qua* mode of human functioning.

Habit can be socially disabling, and therefore anti-social, in two non-exclusive ways. First, when the *kind* of habit (whether practical, epistemic, or perceptual) is harmful or degrading. This is the version of problematic perception most often identified in the epistemologies of ignorance literature, and by the neo-Deweyan account of white habit. But habit can be anti-social in another way. Habit is socially disabling when the *degree* of habituation results in an impoverished mode of being. For lack of a better term, this amounts to being 'over-habituated.' The socially disabling harm of excessive habituation is three-fold: It disables the habituated subject by locking them into a particular form of life or orientation, preventing that individual from recognizing alternative possibilities. Habits are often described as 'second nature' because they operate as if they were natural and irreproachable instincts, which takes them off the table as candidates for critical evaluation or replacement. Thus, the second disablement of over-habituation is that it results in the inability or unwillingness of the habituated subject to recognize the narrow contingency of their ways of being and seeing, including the inability to recognize their complicity in the suffering of others (presuming they register the suffering of others at all) and as a result exacerbates that suffering. The third disablement is an aspect of the first two and features in the phenomenological asymmetry discussed above. It is that over-habituation tends to be both the cause and consequence of conditions that lead to the under-habituation of others. It is a symptom and generator of social inequality.

Those who are excluded from playing a part in constructing the social world, and who exist in a world constructed according to norms and values that are not their own or that are in conflict with their own, are phenomenologically burdened in a way that bears on social freedom. This leads to the condition I attempted to capture with the idea of 'white worlding' and its affiliated

phenomenological asymmetry: a world constructed in the image and to fit the needs of some and not others produces existential indeterminacy in those for whom habit and custom do not coalesce. Existential indeterminacy is the condition of being persistently disrupted in one's habit-body, alienated from social space, interpersonal interactions, and institutional arrangements, and thereby precluded from enjoying a degree of habituation that allows for one to feel oriented and at-ease, and to take up a wider range of possibilities.

4. Disrupting Whiteness

These recommendations have so far remained relatively abstract. What sorts of concrete moves can be made to reconfigure whiteness? Sullivan calls on white people to reconfigure their habits of privilege by adopting better ways of transacting. She gives three suggestions: 1) that we (white people) reject the Western/capitalistic assumption that rootedness and settlement are the marks of civilization and the only way to inhabit space; 2) that we curb our expansiveness. Part of curbing expansiveness means recognizing when separatism is called for, and when spaces can be appropriately claimed for non-white refuge; and 3) that we recognize discomfort is not inappropriate or unjust. I agree with all of these, and I recognize this list is not exhaustive, but there are a few outstanding questions about how this prescriptive program gets initiated and instituted.

4.1 "Direct" vs. "Indirect" Interventions

First, there is the issue of how we go about changing these habits once we've morally resolved to do so. On Sullivan's view, we can't change our habits by an act of will alone. We have to replace habits of white privilege by working on them indirectly, through our environments. This involves changing the "psychic foods" we take in. In proposing this route, Sullivan leaves an important questions unanswered: how does one come to recognize the need for this intervention?

If unconscious habits are unavailable to direct reflection—otherwise they wouldn't be unconscious—it seems plausible that we can become aware of them through other channels. One such channel would be acknowledging that the society within which one was brought up is racist in various ways. This racial lucidity, coupled with the understanding that no individual is impervious to the influences of the culture they inhabit, might lead one to accept that their own transactional unconscious is likely invested with white supremacist commitments, and to begin

attending to their habits with more care. Another channel would be to look for the signs in oneself, which on Sullivan's view would be the habits of white privilege that exist to protect the white psyche. If one notices tendencies toward ontological expansiveness, ethical solipsism, and objectifying perception, then one is likely the unproud owner of a racist unconscious.

Sullivan's audience is the good white liberal who has a sincere commitment to racial equality but fails to recognize the subtle ways in which their own habits contribute to a racially unjust world. This means she is writing for and about a certain kind of white person—the white person who is at least partially open to critique and self-transformation. This partial openness is crucial. It means the person is receptive to the racial lessons that Sullivan is teaching, and is willing to earnestly consider their own complicity and the measures needed to undo their white privilege.

But as Sullivan's own argument insists, the failure to recognize one's whiteliness is not innocent or accidental. Her whole view is animated by the point that habits are unconscious and highly resistant to critical reflection. What is presumably standing between the white privilegist and their professed goal of racial justice is their own white supremacist psyche. But none of the aforementioned suggestions are directions a whitely person is likely to take if the racist unconscious is as forceful and insidious as Sullivan makes it out to be. One must have some degree of self-awareness already in order to look for the cues and signs that one is implicated in racism. Acknowledging one's own complicity requires recognizing that there is something to be complicit in, and as Medina persuasively argues, first-order racial lucidity (lucidity about the facts and circumstances of race and races) and racial meta-lucidity (lucidity about one's own knowledge and ignorance with respect to the facts and circumstances of race and races) are intimately connected (Medina 2013: 46). Racial meta-ignorance helps to reinforce, and is reinforced by, first-order racial ignorance. Reading Medina through the lens of habit, racial ignorance and meta-ignorance are features of an habitual orientation that is sustained by unconscious investments in white privilege, and will actively assimilate any new information in a way that reinforces existing (racist) beliefs and dispositions. Sullivan's plan only works if white people are open to it, but Sullivan's own account suggests they aren't.

The ability to recognize racism in oneself depends on the ability to recognize it in the world, and to have some understanding of one's place in that world such that the perspectival shift can be made. Whether we are looking for indications of complicity in our racial location (a phenotypically white person brought up in a white supremacist world is likely to have acquired some white

supremacist tendencies) or in our personal habits (ontological expansiveness, ethical solipsism, and objectifying perception are indications that one's psyche has been infiltrated by a white supremacist collective unconscious) we have to be *looking*. Sullivan's indirect approach to reconstructing whiteness doesn't account for how good white people come to the racial lucidity that motivates them to seek out new environments. Nor does it speak to the possibility—implied by its own premises—that white efforts at transforming their own privileged habits aren't just new instances of white supremacist sublimation.

To elaborate on that last point, if we take seriously the idea that the anti-racist avowals are themselves a way of protecting the white psyche, then we can't rely on them to do the motivating work. As Sullivan argues, post-civil rights emphasis on diversity, multiculturalism, and colorblindness are instruments of white domination (Sullivan 2006, 192–93). They are a theatrical performance of racial equality that distracts from the fact that racism still very much structures our contemporary world, while also seeing to its continuation by enacting habits of appropriation and objectification. If Sullivan is right, then the "good white people" are no closer to reform than the avowed white nationalist. Before we can expect white privilegists to seek out anti-racist psychic foods, they need to recognize and sign on to the imperative to do so. And if the reason they haven't yet is not simply because they didn't know any better, but because they are animated by an unconscious investment in protecting their race and class privilege, then what makes Sullivan believe the efforts to uncover their own racist unconscious will be sincere? How can we ensure that well-meaning whitely folks won't continue to invent and pedal strategies that purport to advance racial equality but really prop up the white world?

In light of these concerns, we might consider an alternative strategy. Terrance MacMullan argues that we can't just sneak up on whiteness and startle it away (MacMullan 2022, 76). His approach involves first getting white people to engage in an inquiry into whiteness that will inspire them to actively re-channel the impulses behind their habits. This idea comes from observing the connection between pre-conscious habit and inquiry. MacMullan focuses on how the ideas and concepts surrounding race operate in and through our habits. From this perspective, the whiteness problem is a problem regarding how best to understand whiteness so that we can devise intelligent strategies for combatting racial injustice. Following Du Bois, MacMullan argues that the idea of race is problematic because of how we *use it,* either consciously or unconsciously:

> While we have largely rejected white supremacist *categories* in the Deweyan sense regarding people of color, we still carry the *habits of action and thought* that were institutionalized

> centuries ago. If this is so and these habits are ones to be eliminated or transformed, we need to use revised categories of race, especially the least analyzed and most detrimental one — that of whiteness—in order to achieve a situation where our actions match our egalitarian words (MacMullan 2022, 105, emphasis in original).

Habits are "frameworks of meaning that are passed from old to young that organize inchoate and new experiences" (MacMullan 2022, 116). In other words, they are orientations. The problem of whiteness is rooted in the unacknowledged habits that continue to play out a white supremacist drama. The habits formed during centuries of legalized and enforced white supremacism outlasted overt language that codified white supremacism in our laws:

> Du Bois critiqued whiteness not as a collection of inherently evil people, but as a flawed *idea* and set of *habits* that have ossified around most people of European descent living in America. These ideas and habits have placed these people in disequilibria with their world, their history, and people of other cultures and traditions (MacMullan 2022, 114, emphasis in original).

In light of these considerations, MacMullan advocates for a more "direct" method that involves making white people "dis-eased" with whiteness, i.e., creating an indeterminate situation with respect to their own racial position that will inspire inquiry. This inquiry will allow them to lay claim to whiteness as a kind—something with historical weight that we must contend with—while rejecting whiteness as an ideal. The next step is to reconstruct current habits by redirecting the impulses behind them:

> Just as the concept of whiteness emerged from rudimentary and uncontrolled inquiries in the Enlightenment, our reconceptualization of whiteness must also emerge from inquiry, but one that is more reflexive, deliberative, and consciously directed toward improving our experience of whiteness and race (MacMullan 2022, 60).

I read Sullivan's and MacMullan's views as complimentary, rather than adversarial, despite MacMullan's claims to the contrary (MacMullan 2022, 168). They aren't offering alternative strategies for interrupting white habit, but are describing different stages and aspects of the same process. The good white people Sullivan addresses are people who have already started inquiring, even if this inquiry has led them down some wrong turns. What's more, rearranging our environments is a way of reshaping our impulses. I can't just think hard about my impulses and expect them to reconfigure themselves. They take shape transactionally and so must be reformed transactionally. Remembering that environments are not just material spaces but symbolic ones, and that habits are not just motor but cognitive and affective, it is impossible to pull concepts,

habits, and impulses entirely apart. If by "direct" intervention MacMullan means we can become anti-racist by an act of will, then he is surely mistaken. If by "direct" he means white people can reconfigure their racist habits by achieving a better understanding of race, an awareness of their own racial habits, and by making efforts to sublimate their impulses into anti-racist habits, and that all of this involves deliberate commitments to the reconstructionist project, then what he means is something much closer to Sullivan's own approach than he is inclined to admit. The approach is "direct" only in the sense that the whitely person must be consciously involved in the reconstruction. That is something Sullivan also agrees with. But given the nature of habit, the conscious effort has to be vigilantly attentive to the possibility of nefarious unconscious motivations, and it must involve changes to environments. As I see it, changing one's environment is not different from inquiring. Inquiry involve seeking out new information, new "psychic foods" that get metabolized to form new beliefs and conceptual schema.

Sullivan's tips for how white people can transact in anti-racist ways demonstrates the marriage between inquiry and habit. Her recommendations are the goal, as are MacMullan's suggestion to redirect impulses. The means for achieving these goals is a combination of ongoing inquiry and environmental adjustments, where inquiry is understood as a form of environmental adjustment, only the environments are discursive. But the issue still stands. If the problem of whiteness is a problem of unconscious investments in white supremacy, and the unconscious is not only hidden from conscious reflection but actively undermines critical reflection and transformation, how does the process of (sincere) inquiry and reconfiguration get off the ground? Even if we grant the possibility that unconscious habits are not permanently inaccessible, as Sullivan insists we do, her tendency to characterize the unconscious as the white person's inner demons lands us in cynicism.

4.2 Strategic Reorientation

Sullivan's "indirect" approach calls on white people to shed their white privilege by seeking out environments that are likely to replace racist habits with anti-racist ones. MacMullan's "direct" approach calls on white people to own their whiteness while also rejecting it as an ideal, and to do this by re-directing the impulses behind their racist habits. Both of these views address sympathetic white audiences who are looking for anti-racist self-help. One could hardly imagine a hardened white nationalist or a fully (though unconsciously) committed white privilegist selecting a book from

the shelf that promises to show what's wrong with whiteness. Sullivan's and MacMullan's readership consists of philosophers, race theorists, and white folks who are already open to the idea that they may be complicit in racial wrongs. The combined strategy of inquiry and environmental intervention is fine as far as it goes, but the most worrisome and dangerous among us aren't going to be moved by these arguments, which means the self-help model can't work for them. This raises further questions that need to be addressed: is there a way forward that doesn't depend quite so much on individual white people's willingness to change? In other words, is there a more explicitly political strategy for resistance in light of what we now know about the habitual operations of white supremacy? The answer to that question depends on a different question: what inspires this inquiry in the first place?

I take MacMullan's characterization of the indirect approach as "sneaking up on whiteness" to be unfair. Changing one's environments with the goal of reconstructing one's own white privileged habits involves deliberate, intentional, thoughtful actions. MacMullan is right, however, that we need to work on the concept and the habits at the same time, for reasons my critical phenomenology of habit has already made clear: conceptual schema undergird habits of thought and perception, which influence habits of behavior. But Sullivan's point is that the concept is sometimes out of reach because it operates unconsciously and is being continually reinforced by the racist configuration of the world around us. I suggested in chapter two that we think of unconscious and pre-conscious habit as a difference of degree rather than kind. In this respect, Sullivan overstates the difference between the work her psychoanalytic account is doing, and what a phenomenological account can do. We don't need to posit a white priviligest homunculus—an insidious puppeteer undermining one's better moral angels via habit—in order to account for white people's repressed desires to maintain power and advantage. Unconscious habits are those affective ties that we can't, or won't, admit to ourselves because doing so means giving up advantage. Sullivan's concession to the in-principle accessibility of unconscious habit supports the continuity between unconscious and pre-conscious habit. This continuity is also necessary if we want to grant the possibility of undoing white habituation. Such a possibility lies in making those affective ties visible and subjecting them to the hesitation and tenderizing effects of phenomenological disruption.

More work needs to be done to think through disruptive strategies, and I take this work to require that we approach this at the level of political, collective action, rather than via individual

moral entreaties such as we get from Sullivan and MacMullan's self-help models. What is needed is a political approach to the problem. One that doesn't rely quite so much on the good will efforts of individual white people, which are a necessary but not sufficient condition for transformation. When MacMullan says we have to become "dis-eased" with whiteness, he hints at the precipitating factor and anticipates some important phenomenological insights that my own view brings to the table. I take the productive potential of phenomenological disruption to be an important step in figuring out how to generate white dis-ease. Such interventions will have to proceed with caution. I will end with a few dangers that the work ahead must keep in view.

4.3 Burdening and Backlash

Phenomenological disruption works to interrupt white habit by inducing a version of "white double-consciousness" similar to, but not identical with, Alcoff's use of this term (Alcoff 2015, 128–129). As I am using this term, white double-consciousness disrupts the fluidity and anonymity of experience by making the white subject acutely aware of their own raciality, compelling the white subject to see themselves through the gaze of differently racialized others. The experience of objectification, or the taking-oneself-*as,* is important for critical disruption to do the revelatory work it is supposed to do. The crucial function of disruption (what makes it 'critical') is the loosening of intentional threads to reveal the indeterminacy of one's own ways of being. Critical disruption has the effect of alienating the subject from their actions and intentions, placing subjects in view of themselves in a new way that renders their own perspective and situation contingent and capable of alteration.

This is an undeniably uncomfortable experience, and the affective dimension that is supposed to make disruption productive can result in the opposite effect. For instance, the discomfort and shame of being publicly called out for doing or saying something racist might cause the person called out to think critically about their own behavior, engage in sincere perspective-taking, consider the needs and experiences of others, recognize their own epistemic limitations and maybe even become inspired to seek out new concepts and evaluative frames that will augment their perception and change their behavior. But the discomfort accompanying disruption might have the opposite effect and result in backlash. The problem of backlash occurs when the affective disruption of the kind I am prescribing is met with resistance, hostility, and even violence resulting in the subject of critique doubling down on their habitual orientations rather than gaining critical

distance from them.[75] The unavoidable possibility of backlash and the danger it presents for people of color requires that we proceed with extreme care and caution in turning phenomenological disruption into a political strategy.

There is a second concern to keep in view—call this the 'problem of burdening.' The call for white double-consciousness could be taken to mean that white people who want to change should move into more "diverse" neighborhoods, or spend more time with people of color, and immerse themselves in non-white discursive and artistic spaces. This conclusion might suggest the practical goal of maximizing racial integration, but there is good reason to resist this course of action. For one thing, it raises questions about who bears the responsibility of being society's moral educators, and it calls up a need to unburden the already over-burdened. The problem of burdening arises when the task of public moral education, for instance, consciousness raising efforts to reveal and overturn racist and sexist ideology, is put on those who suffer under, and therefore are already significantly burdened by, these particular social ills. Prescribing non-white exposure as the solution to white habituation is insensitive to the exploitative nature of the remedy.

This is something Sullivan was concerned about too, and she acknowledges how this can turn into just another case of ontological expansiveness. Her answer to the problem is somewhat unsatisfying. She writes, "it is not the case that eliminating white privilege…necessarily or always requires the integration of white and non-white people… If white people want to counter their ontological expansiveness, they must attempt to determine when engagement with non-white people is and is not appropriate (Sullivan 2006, 168). In other words, white people need to respect the need for transactional separatism. I find this unsatisfying because the integrative move is meant to aid in white people's racial lucidity, but one would need to be racially lucid—indeed, be fluent in racial dynamics and politics—to discern when and where their presence is inappropriate. My dissatisfaction with this suggestion is not necessarily meant to signal a weakness in Sullivan's efforts to imagine ways forward, but might just be that the way forward is unavoidably imprecise and subject to trial and error.

It is worth noting, also, that Sullivan's call for separatism is not unqualified. She recognizes that separatism can also come with certain dangers. In particular, it raises the issue of who gets to do the work of policing identities that separatism seems to require. It also risks increasing

[75] See George Yancy, *Backlash* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018) and Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

mainstream culture's perception of oppressed groups as exotic others (Sullivan 2006, 179). These issues are related to the concern I raised in section two about home-building resulting in new ontological barriers. Sullivan argues that these dangers are not insurmountable, and can be addressed by attending to the specific contexts and histories in play (regarding identity policing) and asking whether any particular instance of separatism will undercut the flourishing of oppressed groups (regarding exoticization). However, it is still the case that "sometimes…the most respectful thing for white people to do is leave non-white people alone" (Sullivan 2006, 180). But only *sometimes.* "At other times, white people's distancing themselves from the interests and lives of non-white people can function as a racist dismissiveness of them" (Sullivan 2006, 180). How can we tell the difference? According to Sullivan, that question can't be answered in an abstract universal way. It must be addressed within specific contexts. As I said above, knowing what those context are requires attaining a certain level of racial lucidity and fluency achieved through inquiry. And for inquiry to be widespread, it needs to be initiated through a praxis of disruption.

While groups that suffer marginalized disorientation need homeplaces, those in the grip of anti-social habit need their homes disrupted. A political strategy of productive disruption will need to involve investigating possibilities for disruption that are unburdening, i.e., forms of disruption that do not put the work of moral education squarely in the laps of the already marginalized, or re-inscribe the phenomenological asymmetry. If it is possible to enact disruption that is not burdening, these practices will still face the problem of backlash.[76] Predicting when and where backlash will occur is largely beyond the powers of the philosopher, though the work ahead is to imagine strategies of disruption that could institute white dis-ease without placing people of color directly in harm's way.

In light of these considerations, I would add a few additional items to Sullivan's to-do list for reconfiguring whiteness. Recall that she suggests we 1) reject assumption that rootedness and settlement are the marks of civilization and the only way to inhabit space, 2) curb our

[76] In some ways, the problem of backlash is also a problem of burdening. For instance, a well-meaning white person might observe an excessive police presence when walking through a predominantly black neighborhood. Intending to call out the issue and express solidarity with the residents, the "good white person" proceeds to taunt the police by shouting "ACAB" ("All Cops Are Bastards"—an expression that originated in the UK but became commonplace in the U.S. after the Black Lives Matter movement). We might take this as an example of phenomenological disruption. The (white) police are being made aware of how their role and presence are problematic, and this awareness creates a state of indeterminacy and dis-ease. The problem with this sort of disruption is that if it results in backlash, the people who suffer most are the black residents. This person has just pierced a beehive and dashed, leaving the locals to fend off the angry swarm.

expansiveness, and 3) recognize discomfort is not inappropriate or unjust. I propose we also 4) make efforts to improve our own racial lucidity via inquiries into race, 5) cultivate habits of affective hesitation and heterogeneous dispositions, and 6) prompt those inquiries and white people's moral resolve to reconfigure their own habits by exploring phenomenological disruption as a mode of political resistance, mindful of the problems of burdening and backlash.

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