discussion points, however, from a reader who found in this book an astute, fascinating, and highly recommended scholarly treatment of a theologian whose relevance for the present, as Chapman argues, should be made as clear as possible.

DOI: 10.1093/jaarel/lfh013

Bradley E. Starr
California State University, Fullerton

Body/Meaning/Healing. By Thomas J. Csordas. Palgrave, 2002. 321 pages. $24.95.

With all the academic attention to questions of "the body" in recent years, it is rare to find a work like *Body/Meaning/Healing* that so self-consciously struggles to integrate (rather than to polarize) a range of theoretical and methodological approaches from multiple disciplines. In this ambitious collection of essays written over approximately fifteen years, Thomas Csordas casts his net wide, both conceptually and ethnographically, in an attempt to pull together the most productive approaches to understanding embodiment in recent theorizing and to organize them into a coherent and meaningful model to guide academic inquiry. The result is a book that is as rich in provocative theoretical excursions as it is in subtle and skillful ethnographic documentation.

Ironically, perhaps, the main difficulty of the book stems from just this richness. There is, in fact, *so much* going on in the text that it is sometimes challenging to discern what, precisely, Csordas wants us to take away from the endeavor. Though this may be part of his literary strategy (it certainly does encourage creative engagement with the material at hand), it tended to distract me at times from the substantial (if dispersed) theoretical advancements being offered. Nevertheless, if approached with the spirit of discovery and the understanding that core theoretical gems may have to be actively mined, this book has significant contributions to offer any scholar of religion, embodiment, psychological anthropology, human development, or philosophy.

The book is composed of ten chapters (plus an introduction), organized into three parts. Part 1, "Charismatic Transformations," explores the rhetorics of transformation in charismatic Catholic healing through detailed ethnographic case studies of the healing process as experienced by healers, patients, and other participants. Part 2, "Navajo Transformations," broadens the discussion in part 1 both in terms of the level of analysis and in terms of ethnographic range. In this section Csordas examines not only the very personal and intimate reframing of existential distress associated with ritual healing but also the larger identity politics that are invoked as different ritual groups distill different meanings from human suffering. In part 3, "Modulations of Embodiment," Csordas attempts to bring together some of the theoretical strands working their way throughout the text and to integrate them into a coherent model for approaching questions of embodiment and experience.

Though the book is packed with detailed ethnographic accounts and engaging theoretical puzzles, the penultimate chapter “Somatic Modes of Attention” is in many ways the book’s most gratifying essay, as it is here that Csordas most clearly articulates his understanding of the interplay among psychological processes, embodied practice, and subjective transformation in the context of religious healing. Csordas brings together the theoretical and methodological projects of (in particular) Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu. From Merleau-Ponty, Csordas takes the idea that, at its most fundamental level, human experience is preobjective, meaning that it is initially undifferentiated in relation to the surrounding environment, which is itself undifferentiated. It is only through the selective application of attention that, for example, I come to see the coffee cup sitting on my desk as something *other than* my desk and as something *other than* me. In other words, it is the investment of human attention that effectively “materializes” objects as somehow separate from the things around them.

But Csordas extends (or, more accurately, deepens) this argument by emphasizing the ways in which modes of attention are always already *somatic* in the sense that they necessarily occur in and through the body. Merleau-Ponty, of course, claims this as well but tends to focus primarily on the ways in which our embodiedness forces a necessarily limited experience of (and hence constitution of) objects in the world. Csordas comes at this from a slightly different angle, arguing that the kind of human attention that “materializes” objects is not simply the partial and incomplete attention we can give because of our limited vantage points as embodied beings (though it is indeed this) but, rather, that the *process of attending* is itself inherently bodily. What this means for Csordas is that the notion of “attention” itself is wrested from the cognitive/intellectual domain and situated more complicatedly in the embodied, sensual experience of the world.

In addition to grounding processes of attention squarely in the sensations of the body, Csordas makes a parallel move in the other direction, and it is here that I find Csordas to make his most important contribution. He takes the discussion of objectification (the process of differentiating objects out of undifferentiated experience) through selective attention into the realm of the psychological in a more aggressive way than Merleau-Ponty does, examining the ways in which particular somatic modes of attention can be *learned* (drawing here on Bourdieu’s notion of the *habitus*) and can be engaged in formulating the *self* as the object in question that is to be differentiated from its surroundings in particular ways. In other words, Csordas offers us a model for thinking about how selves are literally constituted in and through socially meaningful embodied experiences in the world (not just what our bodies *do* but how they *feel*) and how targeted manipulations of those experiences that draw on larger systems of cultural meaning (e.g., charismatic faith healing) can in turn transform those selves in more or less directed and meaningful ways.

Two principal (and related) concerns emerged for me as I read this book. First, in Csordas’s eagerness to bring about an innovative orchestration of interdisciplinary concerns about how individuals are existentially configured in the world,

it seems that he may have lost sight of the need to account for the differential experiences of people whose bodies are more explicitly marked or carry different social and historical meanings than others. Csordas claims, for example, that "in normal perception, one's body is in no sense an object, but always the subject of perception" (127). While this may be a reasonable *theoretical* stance, it would seem to be a problematic position to take with regard to actual human experience. At the very least, we might imagine the "objectness" of one's body to become more fundamental to processes of perception in different or more intense ways for certain classes of people (e.g., women, people of color) than for others.

Though Csordas might respond to this that his central point is that perception itself is preobjective and is characterized by a generalized being-in-the-world, which only subsequently differentiates objects and the relations between them (including the self and the body), and that the perception of one's body as an object with distinct qualities (black, white, male, female) is therefore a second-order process, this seems to run the risk (and this is my second concern) of purifying or essentializing the notion of "experience" to such an extent that it becomes abstracted from the material conditions in which it emerges. Certainly, this is not Csordas's intention. But one significant missing component from his model is a way for talking about the gradual and selective incorporation of the "objective" world into "preobjective" modes of experiencing. Does Csordas mean to suggest, for example, that one's preobjective experience of being-in-the-world remains constant throughout one's lifetime? Is my preobjective orientation to the world the same today as when I was five years old? Or have the twenty-nine intervening years of living gradually shaped not just my *differentiation* of the world into meaningful objects but my very *experience* of the world on a fundamental, preobjective level? Csordas does emphasize that *preobjective* does not mean *precultural*, and his own claims about the transformative processes of ritual healing would seem to argue against an understanding of pure, unchanging preobjective experience. But he does not then tell us how culture or embodied experiences get *into* our preobjective orientations (indeed, this is the classic psychological anthropological problematic of how the "outside" gets "inside"), and his insistence on the notion of the preobjective makes it very difficult to find the appropriate language for talking about such processes.

It seems to me, then, that if Csordas's model is to avoid the dangers of postulating some kind of essential human experience or subjective orientation to the world that is common to everyone, everywhere, at every time (despite its different *materialization* in the process of discerning objects), it must more explicitly allow for this reconfiguration of the preobjective as dynamic and contingent, without worrying (as one senses Csordas might) that this would somehow undercut the larger theoretical claims of the project. On the contrary, such an elaboration would strengthen the model's theoretical punch.

Body/Meaning/Healing is an engaging work that is sure to be of interest to scholars of many disciplines, including religion, psychology, anthropology, human development, and philosophy, as well as those interested in ethnographic methodology. Csordas is without a doubt at the cutting edge of some of the most exciting

theory about embodiment to emerge in recent years. This book gives readers an excellent orientation to both the scope and depth of his substantial contributions in this area.

DOI: 10.1093/jaarel/lfh014

Rebecca J. Lester
Washington University

Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida. By Hent de Vries. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. 443 pages. $24.95.

Hent de Vries is a professor of philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. His main goal in this book is to reflect on how the notion of violence relates to ethics, politics, and understandings of collective and individual identities. He contends that if we are to come to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of violence in human culture, we will need to take religion more seriously (both as an ingredient in violence and as a potential cure).

Religion and Violence consists of four large chapters, each about 100 pages long. The first chapter focuses on Kant and his recent interpreters, such as Jacques Derrida, Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, and Charles Taylor. Focusing on *The Conflict of the Faculties* and *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, de Vries argues that these works, which have not received as much attention as they deserve, "cast a remarkable light on the debates concerning the emergence of the modern public sphere and its present-day transformation in the challenges that globalization, multiculturalism, and the information age pose to the institutional arrangements that make up liberal democratic societies, their conceptions of citizenship, justice, tolerance, hospitality, and so on" (19).

The second chapter shifts the focus to Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, particularly as it is refracted in the thought of Levinas and Derrida. Tensions between philosophical and biblical theology, as they consider radical evil, violence, and the monstrosity of human acts, are unpacked by the author. Derrida can sensitize us to the very subtle ways in which all of us may feel a "call" from some mysterious source to sacrifice something near and dear to us. Whether we are theistic or atheistic, sacrifice may be a much more essential part of our everyday existence than we usually realize. The first two chapters, considered together, argue that "modern" philosophy, despite its ostensible secularity and autonomy, has actually accepted the sphere established for it by religion. Religion has established "the transcendental condition of possibility for the philosophical" (211). De Vries suggests that the story of modern philosophy could be told under a heading such as "Philosophy within the Boundaries of Mere Religion" (211).

The third chapter considers the significance of mystical speech in relation to politics and theology. Authors shaping the discussion include Michel de Certeau, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, and Martin Heidegger, along with the omnipresent Derrida. De Vries puts forward a hypothesis in two parts: "First, the turn to religion discernible in modern and contemporary philosophy goes