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Bernhard Waldenfels is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the Ruhr-Universitaet and the co-founder of the German Society for Phenomenological Research (Deutsche Gesellschaft für phänomenologische Forschung). He is the most influential contemporary phenomenologist in Germany.

In his expansive writings, Waldenfels is interested in the responsive phenomenology of embodiment by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Alfred Schütz. During his time in Paris, he studied with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur but is also influenced by other French philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Foucault. And while his works encompass a wide variety of topics, the questions of embodiment, experience, and Alterity are at the center of his thinking.

In his books, *Der Stachel des Fremden* or *Topographie des Fremden*, he explores the notion of the Other in relationship to the idea of ‘order’ (*Ordnung*). The perspective of the Other, can be seen as the ‘disturbance’ of the ‘order.’ Thus, Waldenfels juxtaposes the notion of ‘order’ with the idea of the ‘extraordinary’ (*das Ausserordentliche*).

One of his English books on this topic is the collection of papers called *The Question of the Other* (SUNY Press, 2007). It can be described as the development of a ‘responsive phenomenology.’ He explores the notion of experience not by starting with intentions or common understanding, but rather ‘experience’ as something that happens to us: it can interfere with our projects and urges us to respond. And only in our responding to the Other can we in return become ourselves. Thus, Otherness is not something that is ‘contained’ in another person or ‘outside of us,’ rather we ourselves can be ‘other’ or contain otherness. This can be experienced, for example, in the intertwining of self and other through our embodied encounter. Spread out into time and submerged into the fabric of the world, Otherness means that we are never fully ‘at home’, but it is this discomfort that allows us to invite something radically new into our being in the world. We thereby remain open to change.

In addition to notions of Otherness, Waldenfels’ second major research focus has been the phenomenology of embodiment. He interprets the body as the intertwining/interplay (*Umschlagstelle*) between nature and culture, self and other. Only in relationship towards the other or the world can I understand myself. With his detailed phenomenological analysis, he invites the reader into his ambiguous and complex thinking.

Over time and with Waldenfels’ sincere engagement with the classical philosophical tradition as well as to contemporary scientific disciplines, literature, the arts, and questions of everyday life,

he has reformed the phenomenological tradition in Germany. His works have been translated into English, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Turkish, Serbian, and Russian.