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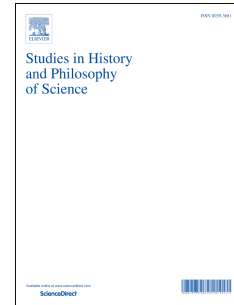
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Afterward: Humboldt was Right¹

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Abstract. Alexander von Humboldt provides a point of reference for questions that arise when reflecting on the papers in this special issue on “Experiencing the Global Environment,” for he aimed to integrate local and global experience and qualitative and quantitative observation in his conceptions of physiognomy and of instruments. What are we to understand by *direct* experience? How do we draw the *limits* of our senses, whether in the larger world or internally? Does recent scholarly interest in distributed cognition illuminate the *distributed experience* of global phenomena obtained through mapping? How do our *concepts* shape our experience, whether local or global? Finally, do recent trends in the sciences, emphasizing *complexity and contingency*, tend to make traditional tensions between local and global priorities and between qualitative and quantitative description less relevant? Humboldt would have thought so.

Key Words: Alexander von Humboldt, physiognomy, direct experience, distributed cognition, complexity.

¹ This is the afterword for the *SHPS* special issue *Experiencing the Global Environment* (Volume 70, August 2018).

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