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# Phenomenology and the Crisis of Contemporary Psychiatry: Contingency, Naturalism, and Classification

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Phenomenology and the Crisis of Contemporary Psychiatry:  
Contingency, Naturalism, and Classification

by

Anthony Vincent Fernandez

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
College of Arts & Sciences  
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a contribution to the contemporary field of phenomenological psychopathology, or the phenomenological study of psychiatric disorders. The work proceeds with two major aims. The first is to show how a phenomenological approach can clarify and illuminate the nature of psychopathology—specifically those conditions typically labeled as major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder. The second is to show how engaging with psychopathological conditions can challenge and undermine many phenomenological presuppositions, especially phenomenology’s status as a transcendental philosophy and its corresponding anti-naturalistic outlook.

In the opening chapter, I articulate the three layers of the subject matter of phenomenological research—what I refer to as “existentials,” “modes,” and “prejudices.” As I argue, while each layer contributes to what we might call the “structure” of human existence, they do not do so in the same way, or to the same degree. Because phenomenological psychopathology—and applied phenomenology in general—aims to characterize how the structure of human existence can change and alter, it is paramount that these layers be adequately delineated and defined before investigating these changes.

In chapters two through five, I conduct hermeneutic and phenomenological investigations of psychopathological phenomena typically labeled as major depressive disorder or bipolar disorder. These investigations address the affective aspects of depression and mania, and the embodied aspects of depression. In addition to clearly articulating the nature of these



phenomena, I show how certain psychopathological conditions involve changes in the deepest or most fundamental layer of human existence—what I refer to as existentials. As I argue, many of the classical phenomenologists (including Husserl and Heidegger) believed that these structural features were necessary, unchanging, and universal. However, this presupposition is challenged through the examination of psychopathological and neuropathological conditions, undermining the status of phenomenology as a transcendental philosophy.

While this challenge to classical phenomenology is only sketched in the early chapters, in chapters six and seven I develop it in more detail in order to achieve two distinct ends. In chapter six I argue that psychopathology and neuropathology not only challenge phenomenology's status as a transcendental philosophy, but also supply a key to developing a phenomenological naturalism (which I contrast with a naturalized phenomenology). Phenomenological naturalism, as I articulate it, is a position in which phenomenology is not subsumed by the metaphysical and methodological framework of the natural sciences, but nonetheless maintains the capacity to investigate how the natural world stands independent of human subjectivity (and how events in the natural world can bring about changes in the most fundamental structures of human existence). In the seventh chapter I argue that a phenomenology in which existentials are contingent and variable rather than necessary and unchanging allows phenomenologists to contribute to new dimensional approaches to psychiatric classification. Rather than begin from distinct categories of disorder, these approaches begin from distinct core features of human existence. These features, referred to as either dimensions or constructs, can vary in degree and are studied in both normal and pathological forms.

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary psychiatry—and especially psychiatric classification—finds itself in a state of crisis. Publication of the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) (1980) successfully increased inter-rater reliability, or the likelihood of two or more clinicians diagnosing the same patient with the same disorder. However, it is now generally accepted that this came at the cost of validity, or the extent to which our current categories pick out *real* disorders (where “real” can be defined in a variety of ways).

The recent and widespread response to this crisis has pushed psychiatry toward the domain of neuroscience. Many psychiatrists today—including those running the United States’ National Institute of Mental Health—are committed to the belief that psychiatric disorders are brain disorders. This does not necessarily mean that our current categories of disorder map onto *distinct* neurobiological correlates (although many officials of the American Psychiatric Association have made and defended such claims over the preceding decades). Rather, it means that the kinds of conditions classified as psychiatric disorders have neurobiological substrates, and that we should, in principle, be able to unearth these substrates and use them to guide both classification and treatment.

However, in addition to the move toward biological psychiatry—which has most recently taken the form of a science of brain circuitry in the Research Domain Criteria Initiative—other interdisciplinary approaches have been developed in parallel. Phenomenology makes up one of these approaches, and is practiced by psychiatrists and psychologists—including Broome, Fuchs, Parnas, Sass, and Stanghellini—as well as philosophers—including Aho, Morris, Ratcliffe, and

Zahavi. While these figures have made considerable contributions to our understanding of particular disorders and disordered states, especially those conditions classed as depression or schizophrenia, the foundations of phenomenological psychopathology have been largely neglected. There has been little systematic consideration of how the investigation of psychopathological conditions challenges the aims, methods, and subject matter of phenomenological research.

In light of this neglect, I have written this dissertation with two aims. The first is to show that phenomenology has an important role to play in our understanding and classification of mental disorders—even if our ultimate aim is to develop a neurobiological system of classification. The second is to show that phenomenology itself has much to gain when it takes seriously the kinds of alterations that occur in severe psychopathology. Many of these alterations challenge the transcendental presuppositions of Husserlian (and early Heideggerian) phenomenology, forcing us to reevaluate the conception of phenomenology as the search for necessary and invariant features of human existence. In addition, by challenging these presuppositions we are able to make headway in debates that have failed to advance for nearly a century—such as the phenomenology/naturalism debate—and secure stronger foundations for interdisciplinary and collaborative research between phenomenologists and empirical scientists.

## **Chapter Summaries**

In the first chapter I ask, “What is the subject matter of phenomenological research?” I argue that in spite of the increasing popularity of phenomenology, the answers to this question have been brief and cursory. As a result, contemporary phenomenologists lack a clear framework within which to articulate the aims and results of their research, and cannot easily engage each other in constructive and critical discourse. Examining the literature on phenomenology's

identity, I show how the question of phenomenology's subject matter has been systematically neglected. It has been overshadowed by an unending concern with phenomenology's methodological identity. However, an examination of recent contributions to this literature reveals that a concern with articulating phenomenology's subject matter has gradually increased, although such articulations remain preliminary. In light of this, I delineate, define, and illustrate three layers of phenomenological research, which I term “existentials,” “modes,” and “prejudices.” As I define them, existentials—also referred to as transcendental, essential, or ontological structures—make up the categorial structures of human existence, such as intentionality, intersubjectivity, and situatedness. Modes consist of the phenomena included within each existential; for example, the existential of situatedness includes the modes of joy, anxiety, and boredom, among others. Prejudices consist of the tacit presuppositions and ways of understanding that have sedimented throughout the course of our life—they are the fundamental biases through which we make sense of our lived world. While the delineation of these layers is drawn primarily from classical phenomenological texts, they are defined and illustrated through the use of more contemporary literature. Following the articulation of this subject matter, I briefly consider some of the debates that can be facilitated by the adoption of this framework, including those with which I engage in the following chapters.

In the second chapter I examine the ways that our language and terminology predetermine how we approach, investigate, and conceptualize mental illness. I address this issue from the standpoint of hermeneutic phenomenology, and my primary object of investigation is the phenomenon referred to as “mania.” Drawing on resources from classical phenomenology, I show how phenomenologists attempt to overcome their latent presuppositions and prejudices in order to approach “the matters themselves.” In other words, phenomenologists are committed to

the idea that in our everyday, natural attitude, we take for granted a number of prejudices that predetermine how we understand what we experience. In order to properly approach the phenomena themselves, we need to find ways of neutralizing our prejudices in order to develop new (and hopefully more accurate) accounts of the phenomena under investigation.

One of the most popular examples of such an attempt at neutralization is what Husserl calls the epoché, which is the practice of bracketing or suspending presuppositions. However, later phenomenologists developed alternative approaches. Heidegger, for instance, engaged in etymological analyses to discover latent meanings in our language and terminology, and Gadamer engaged in historical analyses of how our traditions sediment into latent prejudices.

After discussing the various ways that phenomenologists have attempted to neutralize presuppositions and prejudices prior to engaging in their investigations, I apply some of these principles and methods to the domain of psychopathology, addressing prejudices in contemporary discussions of the phenomenon of mania. I examine recent attempts to link the phenomenon that we today refer to as “mania” with the ancient Greek concept of “μανία” (mania), and argue that the practice of linking contemporary and historical concepts can be detrimental to attempts at reclassifying disorders. In addition, I consider the implications of the shift in terminology from “manic depressive illness” to “bipolar disorder”—especially how conceiving of mania as one of two “poles” predetermines its description by both clinicians and patients. Finally, I address the implications of the headings under which mania and bipolar disorder are discussed within diagnostic manuals. For example, I discuss the removal of the headings of affective and mood disorders in the DSM-5, and the explicit decision by the authors to place bipolar disorder between depressive disorders and schizophrenia. What I aim to accomplish in this chapter is not so much a phenomenological investigation of mania as it is a

pre-phenomenological investigation. In other words, I offer a preparatory investigation of the phenomenon (or phenomena) referred to as “mania” in contemporary discourse, with the intention of laying the groundwork for the following chapters.

In the third chapter I offer an alternative phenomenological account of depression, characterized as a degradation of the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world. This account contrasts with recent accounts of depression offered by Ratcliffe and others. Ratcliffe develops an account in which depression is understood in terms of deep moods, or existential feelings, such as guilt or hopelessness. Such moods are capable of limiting the kinds of significance and meaning that one can come across in the world. I argue that Ratcliffe’s account is unnecessarily constrained, making sense of the experience of depression by appealing only to changes in the mode of human existence. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s critique of traditional transcendental phenomenology, I show that many cases of severe psychiatric disorders are best understood as changes in the existentials themselves, rather than just the modes of existentials. Working in this vein, I argue that we can make better sense of many first-person reports of the experience of depression by appealing to a loss or degradation of the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world, rather than attempting to make sense of depression as a particular mode of being situated and attuned. Finally, I argue that drawing distinctions between disorders of existentials and modes will allow us to improve upon the currently heterogeneous categories of disorder offered in the DSM-5.

In the fourth chapter, I show how phenomenologically oriented studies can help us overcome the apparently paradoxical nature of mixed states. First, I argue that some of the symptoms included in the diagnostic criteria for depressive and manic episodes in the DSM-5 are not actually essential features of these episodes. Second, I reconsider the category of major

depressive disorder from the perspective of phenomenological psychopathology, arguing that severe depressive episodes should not be characterized by any particular moods (such as sadness, hopelessness, or guilt), and should instead be characterized by a diminished capacity for finding ourselves situated in and attuned to the world at all. In other words, the affective dimension of depression should be characterized as a change in the way we have moods, not as a change from one kind of mood to another. Third, I turn to mania, arguing that manic episodes, taken as the opposite of depressive episodes, should be characterized not by any particular moods (such as euphoria, grandiosity, or even irritability), but should instead be characterized by an enhanced or heightened capacity for finding ourselves situated in and attuned to the world. In other words, the affective dimension of mania, like the affective dimension of depression, should be understood as a change in the way we have moods, not as a change from one kind of mood to another. Fourth, I return to the phenomenon of mixed states and argue that the affective dimension of depression and mania, when conceived along the phenomenological lines I set forth in the previous sections, dissolves the paradox of mixed states by showing that the essential characteristics of depression and mania cannot and do not coincide. Many cases of mixed states are diagnosed because moods that we take to be essential features of either depression or mania arise within the context of what is considered to be the opposite kind of episode (e.g. dysphoria, typically associated with depression, often arises in what is otherwise considered a manic state). However, if we conceive of the affective dimension of depression as a *decrease* in the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world through moods, and the affective dimension of mania as an *increase* in the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world through moods, then the particular mood one finds oneself in is irrelevant to the diagnosis of either

depression or mania. As a result, the manifestation of any particular moods in what otherwise seems to be a pure manic or depressive episode does not constitute a mixed state.

In the fifth chapter, I address embodied aspects of depression and melancholia by critically analyzing and evaluating Fuchs' concept of corporealization, as well as the *Leib/Körper* distinction (i.e. the distinction between the lived and corporeal body) that it is founded upon. First, I show that each of the foundational concepts—*Leib* and *Körper*—are problematically heterogeneous, each including a diverse set of phenomena requiring further delineation and clarification. Second, I consider the historical origins of this heterogeneity and ambiguity within Fuchs' work. I show that Fuchs' *Leib/Körper* distinction, while owing more to Plessner than Merleau-Ponty, is to a great extent his own development. Third, I delineate five senses of the body, or of embodiment. These senses of the body are meant to clarify the diverse phenomena included under Fuchs' label of corporealization and offer examples of features of embodiment that challenge Fuchs' *Leib/Körper* polarity. Fourth, I argue that the concepts of *Leib*, *Körper*, and corporealization will need to be more rigorously defined before they can adequately illuminate the phenomena to which they are applied.

In the sixth chapter I address the phenomenology/naturalism debate, reevaluating the relationship between these two philosophical approaches in light of the kinds of deep or ontological contingency that I articulated in the preceding chapters. I begin by summarizing the historical debate, outlining three critiques of naturalism leveled by Husserl, and two critiques leveled by Merleau-Ponty. As I show, Merleau-Ponty's two critiques are versions of Husserl's first two critiques—the argument from self-refutation and the misconstrual of consciousness. However, Merleau-Ponty never offers a version of Husserl's mature, transcendental critique



because he does not subscribe to the strong transcendental presuppositions that stand at the basis of Husserl's phenomenology.

By returning to Husserl's clearest distinction between the transcendental and empirical domains—found in his solution to the paradox of subjectivity in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*—I develop a Merleau-Ponty inspired (if not Merleau-Pontian) solution to the phenomenology/naturalism debate. I argue that Merleau-Ponty reconsiders Husserl's paradox of subjectivity (where Husserl asks how we can be the subject that constitutes the world and an object in the world) through an explicit examination of psychopathology and neuropathology—thereby establishing what I refer to as “the paradox of madness.” I argue that Merleau-Ponty's formulation reveals a deep, ontological contingency in what Husserl took to be necessary transcendental structures of consciousness and world, revealing that these transcendental structures are in fact embedded in and contaminated by the very world they constitute and disclose. This contamination complicates Husserl's strict divide between the transcendental and the empirical—the divide that stands as the foundation of his mature, transcendental critique of naturalism. In light of this, I argue that what we draw from Merleau-Ponty's work is not a naturalized phenomenology (i.e. a phenomenological study of consciousness as an element of the natural world) but a phenomenological naturalism (i.e. a stance in which phenomenology maintains a philosophical priority over the natural sciences, but is nonetheless capable of articulating the relationship between subjectivity and nature).

In the seventh chapter I consider the possibility of a phenomenological-dimensional approach to the understanding and classification of mental illness. Contemporary classification—enshrined in the DSM—follows a categorial, rather than a dimensional, model of disorder. However, as the result of programs such as the National Institute of Mental Health's Research

Domain Criteria (RDoC) initiative, psychiatrists are moving toward dimensional models for understanding and classifying psychopathology. In light of these changes, I argue that in spite of phenomenology's historical alignment with categorial approaches, it contains the resources required for the dimensional study of disordered subjectivity. This approach relies on the account of ontological contingency I initially sketched in chapter three, refining my characterization of contingency as dimensional alterations of existentials—which I distinguish from modal changes. While my primary intent is not to make phenomenology conform to specific advances in psychiatric research and practice, I do sketch how a broadly dimensional approach in phenomenology might open the door for further collaborative and interdisciplinary work with dimensionally oriented psychiatric research.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**THE SUBJECT MATTER OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH:  
EXISTENTIALS, MODES, AND PREJUDICES<sup>1</sup>**

**1 Introduction**

What do phenomenologists study? Put another way, what is the subject matter of phenomenological research? Surprisingly, such a question is hardly asked in the contemporary literature. This does not mean that the nature of phenomenology's subject matter is never addressed. My point is—to put it phenomenologically—that subject matter is rarely thematized; it is rarely made the primary object of investigation. It is typically treated as a secondary issue deserving of only cursory treatment, overshadowed by more important issues at the heart of phenomenology.

Before addressing what these other issues are, and why they are seen as more deserving of our consideration, I should clarify what I have in mind when I speak of subject matter, as this term is open to a variety of interpretations. I am not concerned with outlining the distinct subject matter of various phenomenologists, such as Husserl's transcendental ego, Heidegger's being-in-the-world, or Merleau-Ponty's embodied subjectivity. I am also not interested in offering *examples* of phenomenological subject matter, whether this is interpreted along the lines of the transcendental structures—such as intentionality, intersubjectivity, or temporality—or along the lines of particular aspects of human existence—such as race, gender, or psychopathology.

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this chapter is forthcoming in *Synthese*, and has been reproduced with permission from Springer.

In addition, I do not aim to repeat the often vague and overgeneralized claims in many introductory texts. In such texts we are often told that phenomenologists study consciousness, subjectivity, experience, meaning, sense, and so on. While all of these claims are correct, they are not particularly useful to the phenomenological researcher, or aspiring researcher. As I see it, telling an aspiring phenomenologist that her subject matter is experience, meaning, or (the tautological) *phenomena*, is equivalent to telling an aspiring physicist that her subject matter is nature, motion, or the physical universe. None of these answers is incorrect. Yet they fail to instill the researcher with a clear picture of what, exactly, she will be researching.

In contrast with these approaches, I delineate, define, and illustrate three distinct layers of phenomenological research, which I refer to as “existentials,” “modes,” and “prejudices.”<sup>2</sup> While my account is descriptive of much of the phenomenological literature, my primary aim is *prescriptive*. That is to say, insofar as phenomenologists are concerned with continuing productive discourse and debate, they ought to rely on a shared account of subject matter. What I provide is a framework and set of terminology that, if followed, will allow phenomenologists working across diverse areas to articulate the matter of their studies in a clear and consistent manner. These diverse areas might include the study of race (Alcoff 2006; Lee 2014), gender (Oksala 2016; Young 2005), sexual orientation (Ahmed 2006), somatic illness (J. Aho and Aho 2009; Carel 2014), disability (Wieseler 2012), psychopathology (Ratcliffe 2015; Stanghellini and Rosfort 2014), religious experience (M. Henry 2002; Marion 2012; Steinbock 2007), and even the human relationship with the natural world (C. S. Brown and Toadvine 2003; James 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> These terms are translated from the German: “existential” [*Existenzial*], “existentials” [*Existenzialien*], “mode” [*Modus*], “modes” [*Modi*], “prejudice” [*Vorurteil*], and “prejudices” [*Vorurteile*].

This account offers a clear picture of phenomenology's subject matter that can be presented to researchers in other disciplines—both philosophical and scientific—who are interested in collaborative or critical engagements with phenomenologists. Perhaps even more important, this framework should facilitate and encourage internal debate within phenomenology itself—both foundational and applied. While increasing internal debate within phenomenology may seem counterproductive, a close examination of the contemporary literature reveals that most of the constructive discourse in phenomenology—both critical and complementary—occurs between phenomenologists and their predecessors or between phenomenologists and figures from other contemporary disciplines.<sup>3</sup> There is comparatively little engagement among contemporary phenomenologists themselves, with most references to contemporaries amounting to little more than a nod of recognition in the course of advancing one's own project.

While I cannot establish a definitive cause for this state of affairs, it seems to be more straightforward and more rewarding to engage with one's phenomenological predecessors or with researchers in other disciplines than with one's contemporaries. The former because one engages with the very texts from which one's own framework and vocabulary have been taken up. The latter because the frameworks and vocabularies of other disciplines are often more structured and clearly articulated than those of contemporary phenomenology. The reason that contemporary phenomenologists are not engaging in the constructive dialogue necessary to drive a research program forward (rather than off in a variety of self-insulating directions) is that there

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<sup>3</sup> In one text, Zahavi says that the future prospects of phenomenology will depend upon the phenomenologist's "ability to articulate and strengthen what is common to the phenomenological enterprise instead of getting involved in the sectarian trench warfare that has regrettably plagued the history of phenomenology" (2008, 684). I want to stress that when I speak of facilitating and increasing debate within phenomenology, I do not have in mind the kind of "trench warfare" that Zahavi remarks on here—insofar as this analogy brings to mind a debate in which everyone's positions have been decided in advance. Rather, my primary concern in this chapter is to offer a shared framework that supports constructive debate, driving the discipline forward as a whole.

is no shared subject matter—or, more accurately, no shared articulation of subject matter—within which such dialogue can take place. Often, too much risks being lost in translation for the engagement to be worthwhile.

While readers may find this claim suspect, I ask only that they reserve judgment until they have considered the account that I offer below. If it illuminates the subject matter of phenomenological research to an extent that has not been achieved in previous work, then perhaps my diagnosis of the field is accurate, and this further clarification of subject matter will support an already burgeoning (if disjointed and often sectarian) field of research.

I develop this project in three parts. In the second section, I address the neglect of subject matter in contemporary phenomenological literature, focusing on the overriding concern with phenomenology's *methodological* identity. In the third section, I delineate, define, and illustrate the three layers of phenomenological research, which I refer to as “existentials,” “modes,” and “prejudices.” While I distinguish these layers by drawing on classical phenomenological texts, I further define and illustrate them by drawing on more contemporary literature. In the fourth section, I briefly sketch some of the phenomenological debates—both foundational and applied—that will be facilitated and supported by the account of subject matter I offer here, focusing especially on how this account offers a neutral standpoint from which to engage in a number of important debates.

## **2 Phenomenology's Methodological Identity**

Why is the subject matter of phenomenology neglected? And what are the issues that are considered more deserving of philosophical treatment and clarification? In order to answer these questions, we need to look to the literature in which we would expect the nature of phenomenology's subject matter to be addressed. There is one question that should be impossible

to answer adequately without a careful and systematic account of subject matter: “What is phenomenology?” However, the question of phenomenology’s subject matter has been systematically neglected in the literature on phenomenology’s identity.

This systematic neglect is by no means new, being exemplified in works as early as Herbert Spiegelberg’s *The Phenomenological Movement* (1981; first edition published in 1960). However, while subject matter maintains its secondary status even today, the tides seem to be shifting. Concern with explicating subject matter has made its way into the literature on phenomenology’s identity—even if this concern has not been made explicit. Considering a number of texts that have made substantial contributions to the understanding of phenomenology’s identity, I here illustrate the systematic neglect of, and gradual increase in concern for, phenomenology’s subject matter.

Spiegelberg, in *The Phenomenological Movement* (the book that perhaps did more than any other to introduce the English-speaking world to phenomenology), twice confronts the question, “What is phenomenology?” In the first instance he answers negatively, saying, “The question is more than legitimate. But it cannot be answered, since, for better or worse, the underlying assumption of a unified philosophy subscribed to by all so-called phenomenologists is an illusion” (Spiegelberg 1981, xxvii). However, in contrast to this opening stance in the preface, Spiegelberg himself offers a unified vision of phenomenology at the end of his book. Following his nearly 700-page history of the phenomenological movement, he closes with a detailed but succinct section entitled “The Essentials of the Phenomenological Method.” Here he returns to the question dismissed in the preface: “What is phenomenology?” After reminding his reader of the diverse manifestations of phenomenology, he says,

...this situation offers no excuse for dodging the persistent question of the more systematically-minded reader: What, after all, *is* phenomenology? While our long story

contains plenty of reasons why a meaningful answer cannot be given in one brief sentence, it calls all the more for a determined effort to satisfy a legitimate and even welcome demand for enlightenment and clarification. Even if there were as many phenomenologies as phenomenologists, there should be at least a common core in all of them to justify the use of the common label. (Spiegelberg 1981, 677)

Considering (and dismissing) the possibility of finding this “common core” in the *results* of phenomenological studies, Spiegelberg turns to the phenomenologist’s *method*. He argues that if a common core is to be found anywhere, it will be in the essentials of the method that run like a thread through the history of the movement.

This stance—that phenomenology either lacks an identity or has a primarily methodological identity—has been repeated through decades of scholarship. When questions of subject matter are asked in the literature on phenomenology’s identity, they are almost always given a secondary role. An example of this continued approach is found in Steven Crowell’s article, “Is there a phenomenological research program?” (2002). While Crowell’s primary goal is to show that phenomenology meets the criteria for standing as a legitimate philosophical research program, a large part of his discussion is aimed at establishing the identity of phenomenology—or, rather, establishing the claim that phenomenology does, in fact, have a distinct identity. Drawing on Robert D’Amico’s book, *Contemporary Continental Philosophy* (1999), Crowell sets out three criteria that must be met for phenomenology to count as a philosophical research program (or what D’Amico refers to as a philosophical tradition): (1) The program requires constraints whereby others can arrive at the same conclusions “from either defended or broadly uncontroversial assumptions”; (2) the program “requires an open horizon of issues, problems, and possible clarifications. It cannot consist of only the ‘founding’ texts”; and (3) it “must also be clear how to go on and do what the ‘founding’ texts did” (D’Amico 1999, 252; quoted in Crowell 2002, 423).



Of these three criteria, the first and the third are clearly methodological. The second, while perhaps not clearly methodological, is also not directly aimed at the issue of subject matter. A set of problems needs to be situated within a basic framework of subject matter, but the problems themselves do not make up a research program's subject matter. While Crowell disagrees with D'Amico's conclusion that phenomenology does not (and perhaps cannot) meet these criteria, he seems content to take up primarily methodological criteria as those that must be met for phenomenology to count as a legitimate philosophical research program. This commitment is born out in Crowell's treatment of two introductory texts on phenomenology—by Dermot Moran (2000) and Robert Sokolowski (2000)—in which he focuses primarily (but not exclusively) on their ability to establish certain methodological commitments across a range of phenomenological works.

Sifting through these works, Crowell carefully extracts the authors' criteria for an investigation to count as phenomenological. From Moran's text, he extracts three criteria, all of which are methodological in nature. However, one criterion, referring to phenomenology's orientation toward "essences," grants us the beginnings of an answer to the question of phenomenology's subject matter. From Sokolowski's text, he extracts six criteria, all of them, again, methodological in nature. However, in this case, three of the criteria also address subject matter, at least to some degree. Along with a repetition of the reference to "essences," Sokolowski points to phenomenology's orientation toward human experience and its thematizing of appearances.

In addition to extracting criteria for establishing phenomenology's identity (as well as its status as a research program) from these two texts, Crowell briefly articulates his own criteria, shedding more light on phenomenology's subject matter. Speaking of phenomenology and

analytic philosophy, he claims that both “are distinguished from transcendental philosophy by a focus on meaning” (2002, 438). The point at which phenomenology is distinguished from analytic philosophy, then, will be found in the differences between their conceptions of meaning. Drawing on the work of Dummett (1978), Crowell argues that while Frege limited meaning to *linguistic meaning*, Husserl broadened this notion to *all intentional experience* (2002, 438). As he explains, it is this broader concept of meaning—what Husserl called the noema—that stands as the subject matter of phenomenology. As he says, it is “the structure of noematic *meaning* that constitutes the reflective topic of the phenomenological research program” (Crowell 2002, 440). While this reference to the “structure of noematic meaning” brings us closer to an answer, it remains decidedly preliminary—especially when contrasted with the relatively robust references to various features of phenomenological method. In light of this, we can examine more recent approaches to subject matter in the phenomenological literature.

In their edited volume, *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, Luft and Overgaard echo Spiegelberg’s pessimism when they say, “Phenomenology is not, and never was, a philosophical *school*, if one understands by that a group of philosophers committed to identical, or very similar, sets of doctrines” (2011, 1). However, they immediately follow this up by echoing Spiegelberg’s optimism, saying, “Yet the importance phenomenology assumes today would be inconceivable if phenomenologists did not share certain *methodological* commitments as well as closely related ideas about the proper domain of phenomenological research” (2011, 1). While still giving precedence to method, they also point toward a “domain of phenomenological research.”

But what is this domain? Sebastian Luft and Søren Overgaard claim that there are three “basic ideas or fundamental paradigms” that are shared by the majority of phenomenologists—

(1) the first-person perspective, (2) description, and (3) intentionality (2011, 9). They characterize the first two as methodological and the third as doctrinal. However, doctrine or not, intentionality can certainly be addressed as a kind of subject matter. As they characterize it, to say that the structure of intentionality is a fundamental paradigm or basic idea of phenomenology is to say that what phenomenologists study is “consciousness-of,” broadly construed. However, they also admit that the focus on intentionality faded in the work of later phenomenologists.

Offering a somewhat broader portrayal of phenomenology’s subject matter, they say,

Indeed, it may be argued that phenomenology has discovered a novel subject domain with its own structure and governing principles: the realm of consciousness or subjectivity and its world of experience, famously dubbed the *lifeworld* by Husserl. Despite their many departures from, and criticisms of, Husserlian phenomenology, it is also in the investigation of this domain, broadly construed, that one must locate the efforts of all later phenomenologists. (Luft and Overgaard 2011, 2)

Here we make some headway, obtaining a more robust answer to the question of phenomenology’s subject matter. Phenomenologists study subjectivity and the lifeworld, focusing especially on the structure of intentionality, or consciousness-of.

Continuing in this vein, we can consider Dan Zahavi’s brief introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*. He opens his introduction by saying, “In contrast to such volumes as, say, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind* or the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Economics* [...] the contributions in the present handbook are not unified in terms of their subject matter, but in terms of their methodological approach, which is indebted to and affiliated with a specific philosophical tradition” (Zahavi 2012, 1). Once again, Spiegelberg’s firm commitment to a methodological identity for phenomenology is echoed. However, in spite of Zahavi’s explicit reference to methodological continuity and identity, much of his discussion of phenomenology’s constitutive elements actually focuses on subject matter. For example, he says, “Phenomenology shares the conviction that the critical stance proper to

philosophy necessitates a move away from a straightforward metaphysical or empirical investigation of objects to an investigation of the very framework of meaning and intelligibility that makes any such straightforward investigation possible in the first place” (2012, 2). In short, phenomenology should be understood “as the philosophical analysis of the different types of world-disclosure,” as well as “a reflective investigation of those structures of experience and understanding that permit different types of beings to show themselves as what they are” (2012, 2).

Here we find not only that phenomenologists study subjectivity, the lifeworld, and the structure of their intentional correlation, but “world-disclosure” in general, including the “structures of experience and understanding” (Zahavi 2012). This is at least the *kind* of answer one should hope for when asking after the subject matter of phenomenological research, even if the answer remains brief and preliminary. The aim of the following section is precisely to offer a more complete version of this *kind* of answer. However, before proceeding, we should briefly address one of the few texts that does take phenomenology’s subject matter as its primary theme.

In his chapter, “Making Meaning Thematic,” (2013) Crowell picks up on his preliminary account of subject matter discussed above, offering a more complete picture of the primary theme of phenomenological research. Clarifying the aims of his essay, he says,

I shall argue that phenomenology – all phenomenology – is transcendental insofar as it *makes meaning thematic* as philosophy’s primary field of investigation. Taking as its theme not things but the meaning or intelligibility of things, phenomenology transforms transcendental philosophy by expanding its scope to embrace all experience, not just the cognitive, axiological, and practical “validity spheres” addressed in Kant’s three *Critiques*. Thus phenomenology accomplishes a universal generalization of the transcendental turn: inquiry into the (normative) conditions for the possibility of knowledge becomes an inquiry into *intentionality* or “mental content” as such: our experience of something *as* something. (Crowell 2013, 10)

This statement, unpacked and articulated throughout his essay, stands as one of the most direct accounts of phenomenology's subject matter available today. In light of this, it will be helpful to briefly contrast my own aims with Crowell's, developing a clearer picture of what I aim to offer the contemporary phenomenologist.

My project should not be seen as contradicting Crowell's account (or any of the other more preliminary accounts, for that matter). Rather, my project should be seen as *complementing* Crowell's approach. Where Crowell focuses on the sense of meaning in phenomenology as compared to other philosophical approaches, I focus on what is meant when we speak of the *structure of meaning*. In this sense, my account can be seen as an elaboration and further clarification of Zahavi's references to "different types of world disclosure" and "structures of experience and understanding." As will become clear in the following section, what phenomenologists mean when they speak of "structures of experience" or the "structure of the lived world" is often ambiguous, not being qualified in the appropriate manner. As a result, such references can be interpreted in various ways, especially when discussing differences or changes in these structures. As I show, much of this ambiguity can be overcome by properly distinguishing three distinct layers of phenomenological research, all of which play a role in the "structure" of meaning and the lived world (at least insofar as we use "structure" in a fairly loose sense).

### **3 The Layers of Phenomenological Research**

I refer to the three layers of phenomenological research as "existentials," "modes," and "prejudices." Each layer plays a role in establishing the structure of meaning, or in disclosing the lived world. However, each does so in a different way and to a different degree. In this sense,

each layer consists of a different kind of ordering element or structuring principle that cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of the other layers.

Each of these layers belongs to what I refer to broadly as “human existence.” I do not employ this term in opposition to any of the other terms used to refer to the subject matter of phenomenological research, including the “transcendental ego,” “embodied subjectivity,” or “being-in-the-world.” Rather, insofar as my aim is to supply a framework that applies equally to phenomenologists of all persuasions, one of my primary concerns is to use a set of terms that can be employed in a largely neutral manner with respect to certain phenomenological debates. Some of these debates, as well as how my terminology is meant to avoid or circumvent them, are discussed in the concluding section.

I must also briefly note an absence in my account of the subject matter of phenomenological research. Insofar as I address the phenomenological study of the *structure of meaning* rather than the *meanings* or *meaningful objects* themselves, there are certain aspects that are left out of my account. There is a long tradition in phenomenology of studying not just how the world is disclosed to us, but also the kinds of things that show up to us in this disclosure or experience. Heidegger exemplifies such studies in his famous distinction between the present-at-hand and ready-to-hand (Heidegger 1962, 95–102), as well as in his later studies of the work of art (Heidegger 2008b, 139–212). Such studies still hold a place in phenomenological research today—perhaps most clearly in the work of eco-phenomenologists (e.g. Toadvine 2014). However, my account is confined to delineating the layers of phenomenological research as they pertain to the structure of meaning or experience, rather than to the meaningful or experienced objects themselves. While these two kinds of studies are necessarily linked, I consider the

articulation of the former to be a more foundational starting point in the project of articulating the subject matter of phenomenological research.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1 Existentials

Existentials make up the first layer of phenomenological research and are understood as the subject matter of a phenomenological *ontology*. While the term “existentials” is a Heideggerian coinage, it is roughly analogous to what other phenomenologists refer to as transcendental, essential, or ontological structures. They are understood as comprising the basic and constitutive features of human existence. Some of the existentials discussed most often in the classical and contemporary literature include intentionality, intersubjectivity, and temporality.

There are two reasons I have opted to use the term “existentials.” First, it does not include the word “structure,” thereby avoiding potentially problematic terminological confusions stemming from the broad and heterogeneous use of the word in contemporary works. Second, terms such as “transcendental” and “essential” stake out positions in debates that I here intend to remain neutral on. For example, the question of just how essential to human existence some of these features are remains debatable. My aim is to facilitate such debate rather than engage in it myself.

While there are a variety of ways that we might clarify what existentials are, one of the most straightforward is by making clear what existentials are *not*. Heidegger says that existentials “are to be sharply distinguished from what we call ‘*categories*’—characteristics of Being for entities whose character is not that of Dasein. Here we are taking the expression ‘category’ in its primary ontological signification, and abiding by it” (1962, 70). Heidegger goes

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<sup>4</sup> I do not mean this as a methodological priority. There are many examples in the phenomenological canon where the study of particular meaningful objects or events sheds light on the structure whereby such meaningful objects are disclosed.

on to discuss the meaning of κατηγορεῖσθαι (categories) in ancient philosophy, focusing specifically on the understanding of ontology as the study of the basic categories that determine a thing's possibilities for being, or what it can be understood *as*. However, after initially claiming that existentials are *not* categories and going on to define what is meant by the traditional sense of ontological categories, Heidegger draws an analogy between the two. He says, “*existentials* and categories are the two basic possibilities for characters of Being. The entities which correspond to them require different kinds of primary interrogation respectively: any entity is either a ‘*who*’ (existence) or a ‘*what*’ (presence-at-hand in the broadest sense)” (Heidegger 1962, 71).<sup>5</sup>

What this amounts to is that existentials *are* categories, although in a special sense that refers specifically to those characteristics that pertain to human existence. In fact, the term “existentials” saw little use in Heidegger’s lectures leading up to the publication of *Being and Time*, where he often used the term “categorical” [*kategorial*] when referring to the kinds of characteristics that he would later rebrand as existentials. In short, existentials should be understood as *categorical characteristics of human existence*.

In order to transition from a general discussion of what existentials are to a more concrete illustration of existentials in phenomenological research, we can turn our attention to the study of a particular existential. I focus here on the existential of situatedness [*Befindlichkeit*].<sup>6</sup> My reason

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<sup>5</sup> I follow Stambaugh in translating *Existenzial* and *Existenzialien* as “existential” and “existentials,” respectively (rather than the more awkward “existentiale” and “existentialia” employed in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation).

<sup>6</sup> In the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time*, *Befindlichkeit* is translated as “state-of-mind.” This translation is widely accepted as inaccurate and misleading. In light of this, it is common to use alternative translations, including “attunement” (Zahavi 2008), “affectedness” (Crowell 2013), “sofindingness” (Haugeland 2013), and “situatedness” (Guignon 2003). Throughout this chapter I use the latter term, modifying quotations from Heidegger’s work where appropriate.



for this starting point has nothing to do with the existential of situatedness itself. Rather, my reason stems from the way that situatedness is articulated in the context of *Being and Time*. This existential, more than any other, is discussed in its relation to *modes*, which stand as the topic of the following subsection and the next layer of phenomenological research.

Heidegger opens his discussion of situatedness with the following lines:

What we indicate *ontologically* by the term “situatedness” is *ontically* the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our Being-attuned. Prior to all psychology of moods, a field which in any case still lies fallow, it is necessary to see the phenomenon as a fundamental *existential*, and to outline its structure. (Heidegger 1962, 172–173)

In these opening lines we find reference to a number of issues discussed, in brief, above. First, situatedness, like all existentials, is understood as ontological. Again, this refers to ontology in the sense of the philosophical study of the basic categories of reality. However, in the case of phenomenology, the primary interest is in the basic categories that pertain to human existence. Second, we find reference to “structure” [*Struktur*], exemplifying how the overuse of this term can easily confuse an otherwise straightforward discussion. Heidegger refers to the project of outlining the structure of situatedness, rather than referring to situatedness itself as a structure (e.g. a “transcendental structure”). While the existential referred to as situatedness is a constitutive feature of human existence, the existential itself has a structure, or set of constitutive features, that must be adequately articulated in order to properly understand the phenomena included within this categorial constituent of human existence.

The work of delineating these constitutive features is perhaps the most difficult and intensive part of any phenomenological investigation. This accounts for what is often referred to as “phenomenological description”—which should itself be differentiated from the “phenomenological descriptions” found in qualitative studies in the human and social sciences, as well as in the philosophy of mind, typically understood as systematic descriptions of the way

things seem or appear to me. Much of the contemporary phenomenological literature is aimed at fleshing out the constitutive features of a particular existential, enriching (and sometimes correcting) the preliminary accounts offered by the classical phenomenologists. Much of Zahavi's work, for example, is conducted in this vein, fleshing out the nuances and intricacies of the existential of intersubjectivity, expanding upon the concept as it is employed and developed in the work of figures such as Husserl, Scheler, and Stein (Zahavi 2015).

As for the structure of situatedness, Heidegger finds that this is best articulated through the use of an example. His initial example in *Being and Time* is the mood of fear, which he uses not for the purpose of articulating the features of fear in its particularity, but for the purpose of articulating the constitutive features that hold for any mood whatsoever—each mood being understood as a more or less distinct way of being situated in the world. For example, he argues that fear has three essential components. These are “(1) that in the face of which we fear, (2) fearing, and (3) that about which we fear” (Heidegger 1962, 179). After outlining these features, he says, “These possible ways of looking at fear are not accidental; they belong together. With them the general structure of situatedness [*Befindlichkeit*] comes to the fore” (Heidegger 1962, 179). These structural features of situatedness are developed in more detail throughout *Being and Time*, such as when Heidegger offers a phenomenological study of anxiety, as well as in other texts, such as his lengthy discussion of boredom in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2001a).

### **3.2 Modes**

Heidegger's discussion of the phenomenological study of fear, with its aim of outlining the basic structure of the existential of situatedness, offers a clear point of transition into the phenomenological study of modes. Fear, like all moods, is a *mode* of situatedness. Each

existential is a categorial constituent of human existence that encompasses or includes a diverse set of modes. In this sense, one can speak of modes of intentionality, intersubjectivity, temporality, and so on. It should also be noted that this way of understanding modes is by no means confined to Heidegger. Husserl, for example, employs a similar distinction in one of his discussions of intentionality in *Ideas I*. He says that while we are capable of a variety of intentional relations—such as those with perceived, imagined, or remembered objects—these should be understood as mere *modifications* of intentionality. As he says, “the universal essential property of consciousness remains preserved in the modification” (Husserl 2014, 63).

In addition, in some (rare) cases modes are discussed not as pertaining to a specific existential, but to human existence as a whole. One example is found in Heidegger’s account of “falling” in *Being and Time*. He speaks of falling as an “*existential mode*,” which is an admittedly awkward phrasing in light of the fact that the adjectival use of “existential” typically refers to the quality of being an ontological (i.e. categorial) feature of human existence, while a “mode” is understood as ontic, being a particular or concrete phenomenon rather than an ontological category (Heidegger 1962, 221). However, what Heidegger has in mind by an “*existential mode*” is, in this instance, a mode that pertains not to any particular existential, but to human existence as a whole—a holistic, all-encompassing manner of comporting oneself, for instance.<sup>7,8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In another case, Heidegger speaks of three modes that, taken together, make up the “existential mode” that he refers to as falling. These are idle talk (a mode of the existential of discourse), curiosity (a mode of the existential of situatedness), and ambiguity (a mode of the existential of understanding). In light of this, it seems that even when the term “mode” is used to refer to a modality of human existence as a whole, it can still be more finely delineated into the modal changes within individual existentials.

<sup>8</sup> This distinction—between existentials and modes—is often missed, in many cases leading to incoherent interpretations of phenomenological texts. One example of this kind is found in an article by Visker (1994). He argues that, according to Heidegger, certain existentials

As shown above, phenomenological analyses of modes are capable of shedding light on the general structure of the existential to which the mode belongs. In this sense, phenomenological studies of modes often play a similar role to the phenomena of Husserl's free phantasy variations. The phenomena taken up in such variations are dealt with explicitly as instances of a general type or category. If we do this with an entity within the world—a coffee mug, for example—we are taking it as representative of a category. If we do this with a feature of human existence—a mode of intentionality, for example—we are taking it as representative of an existential.

However, this is not the only reason modes are investigated in the course of phenomenological research. In many cases, modes are studied for their own sake—that is to say, for the sake of understanding the particular mode itself, rather than the general categorial characteristic to which the mode belongs. While such investigations generally took a back seat to the study of existentials in classical phenomenological research, they are often the prime focus of more contemporary studies. Phenomenological investigations of race and gender, for example, are typically concerned with illuminating certain *modes* of human existence that are either completely neglected in the classical texts, or downplayed and not given their due.

One of the most famous examples of such an investigation is found in Iris Marion Young's essay, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality." Outlining the aim of her study, she says, "If there are indeed typically 'feminine' styles of body comportment and movement, this should generate for the existential

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(specifically, falling and the "they") can disappear—which seems to be a strange or counterintuitive notion. The trouble with this interpretation, and one that Visker fails to notice, is that falling and the "they" are simply not existentials—they are modes. As such, they are just some of the ways a world can be made available to us, and there is nothing especially intriguing about their absence.

phenomenologist a concern to specify such a differentiation of the *modalities* of the lived body” (Young 2005, 28; my emphasis). In this work, Young is careful to situate her project within the larger context of phenomenological research. As she says, “I assume that at the most basic descriptive level, Merleau-Ponty’s account of the relation of the lived body to its world, as developed in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, applies to any human existence in a general way” (Young 2005, 31). Her own project, then, is not to challenge or even to amend Merleau-Ponty’s account of the basic, constitutive features of any human existence whatsoever. She is not claiming a *radical*, ontological (or existential) distinction between masculine and feminine embodiment and subjectivity.

Articulating the aims of her project in a positive manner, she says, “At a more specific level [...] there is a particular style of bodily comportment that is typical of feminine existence, and this style consists of particular *modalities* of the structures and conditions of the body’s existence in the world” (Young 2005, 31; emphasis in original). These “structures” and “conditions” are precisely what I here refer to as “existentials,” and their distinction from and relation to “modes” or “modalities” is made quite clear in the course of Young’s work. The existentials always manifest in some mode or other, and these modal changes—at least as explored by Young—are not meant as a challenge to the phenomenological accounts of the existentials.

Young’s goal, and the goal that we find throughout much of contemporary phenomenological research, is to bring to the fore subtle and oft-neglected features of particular modes of human existence. We find this not only in the phenomenology of race and gender, but also in the phenomenology of sexual orientation, disability, and psychopathology, among other domains. However, to say that these contemporary phenomenologists are engaged in the study of

modes, or modal features of human existence, is not to say that they *merely* investigate modes—leaving the classical frameworks unrevised and uncriticized. As mentioned above, it is precisely through the study of modes that phenomenologists are able to come to more general insights regarding the structure of the existential to which the mode belongs.

While some contemporary phenomenologists do study particular modes for their own sake, many are also concerned with how the study of diverse modes sheds light on the general, shared features of human existence in ways that might be overlooked by those with a more narrow focus, such as the classical phenomenologists. In this sense, the field of classical phenomenology understood as a phenomenological ontology is far from a dead enterprise. Many of those engaging in “applied” phenomenologies can hardly be understood as *merely* applying phenomenological concepts and insights to new topics.

Nevertheless, this is not a universally shared conception among contemporary phenomenologists. Many, if not most, contemporary phenomenological works are in fact characterized as the application of phenomenological concepts and insights to new domains, without the reciprocal feedback of these applications to a refined understanding of our basic set of existentials. In some cases this refinement of our conception of the existentials does occur, in spite of the author’s characterization of his or her own project. One contemporary phenomenologist who does seem to characterize her work along these lines is Oksala. In some of her work, especially her phenomenological studies of gender, she stresses that the phenomenological study of new phenomena (or phenomena ignored in the classical literature) can sometimes point the way toward foundational revisions in phenomenology. While Oksala herself seems to emphasize the potential to catalyze methodological changes, she also discusses how such studies require a rethinking of subject matter (Oksala 2006).

If phenomenologists accurately articulated the implications and subject matter of their own research, more attention might be paid to renewing the phenomenological focus on existentials. This chapter will, I hope, stand as a resource for those concerned with articulating the aims of their work in this way. In particular, the use of a shared and widely applicable vocabulary should do much to overcome the often tiresome effort involved in translating the insights and conclusions of contemporary investigations expressed in a particular phenomenologist's jargon, just for the sake of seeing if they apply to, conflict with, or complement another contemporary phenomenologist's work.

### **3.3 Prejudices**

The third layer of phenomenological research is “prejudices.” Gadamer offers the clearest account of prejudices in his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, defining them as the “biases of our openness to the world,” and saying that “Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience” (Gadamer 2008, 9). In short, prejudices “are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us” (Gadamer 2008, 9). This characterization highlights the fact that we can never be free of prejudices and that we can at best make our prejudices explicit and apparent.

However, this position on prejudices—shared by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty in addition to Gadamer—was not always the standard position. One of the primary aims of Husserl's epoché, for example, was to bracket out or suspend metaphysical and scientific prejudices that might set a phenomenological analysis on the wrong track. It is important to point out that the way the epoché was meant to work made reflection on one's own metaphysical and

scientific prejudices irrelevant, or unnecessary. Because the epoché was understood as achieving its purpose through a kind of attitudinal shift, it did not seem to require that the phenomenologist be aware of the particular prejudices he happened to hold in the first place.

This does not mean that Husserl never concerned himself with explicating and unearthing his own prejudices, as well as the prejudices of the philosophers and scientists of whom he was so critical. In a sense, the natural attitude can itself be understood as a kind of prejudice, or perhaps a mode that opens us up to a set of prejudices. In order to motivate the need for suspending this attitude, Husserl had to make clear the kinds of prejudices that were included within it, and why these prejudices made it impossible to properly engage in phenomenological research. However, Husserl's own position toward prejudices changed with the advent of genetic and generative phenomenology. In his later works he studied how personal and social histories alter our understanding and experience of the lived world. This background of intelligibility (i.e. our set of prejudices taken as a whole) through which we engage in the lived world is often discussed under the labels of "tradition," the "sedimentation of meaning," or even "ontic structures" (Husserl 1970, 145).

This turn in Husserl's concern with prejudices—from methodological pitfalls to be avoided to a phenomenological subject matter in their own right—is echoed throughout the phenomenological tradition. A further explication of these two ways of approaching prejudices will be helpful in articulating what prejudices are and the role they continue to play in phenomenological research.

First, as should be apparent from the mention of the epoché, prejudices are often addressed for methodological reasons. Specifically, they are attended to when preparing for a phenomenological investigation into modes or existentials. As hermeneutic phenomenologists



are wont to remind us, there is no experience without interpretation. Every time we take something *as* something in particular—which is to say, whenever we confront any meaningful entity at all—we do so through an (often tacit) act of interpretation. This applies not only to our perception of objects and people within our world, but even to how phenomenologists (or any researchers for that matter) approach the phenomena of human existence.

This is why attention to prejudices makes up a fundamental part of the preparatory stage of phenomenological investigation. All of the classical phenomenologists have been concerned with prejudices in this way, and for these reasons, but not all of them have dealt with the problem of prejudice in the same manner. Heidegger, for instance, claimed not to employ the epoché, and that to do so was actually alien to phenomenology (understood, at least in his early work, as a hermeneutics of facticity, or an interpretive investigation of our concrete being-in-the-world). Merleau-Ponty was also concerned with making his own metaphysical and scientific prejudices explicit, rather than assuming he could suspend them by employing a kind of attitudinal shift. This is illustrated throughout *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which Merleau-Ponty often begins an investigation of a new phenomenon by attending to the accounts that have already been given and attempting to unearth the presuppositions or prejudices built into each of these accounts.<sup>9</sup> A similar stance is found in Sartre's book, *The Imaginary*, where he discusses how the term “imagination” [*imagination*] might prejudice or problematically predetermine our approach to this aspect of human existence (e.g. deciding in advance that what we “imagine” must be image-like).

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<sup>9</sup> Examples of this kind of preparatory work are found in section I of his introduction, where he offers a careful analysis of the concept of “sensation” in philosophy and the sciences (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 3–12), as well as the introductory remarks in the final chapter on freedom (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 458–483).

The second way of approaching prejudices has much in common with the standard ways of approaching existentials and modes. They are studied for the sake of gaining an understanding of the background of intelligibility through which we make sense of and interpret our world. This is exemplified in Husserl's phenomenological studies in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, especially in his historical and genealogical study of the development of our capacity to understand and perceive the world *as* objective—a development that Husserl attributes in large part to the work of Galileo (Husserl 1970, 23–59). However, while Husserl may have been the first to thematize prejudice as a distinct subject matter for phenomenological research, he was certainly not the last. One of the most straightforward examples of a phenomenological study of prejudice is found in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, where he considers the case of a young child who touches a candle flame. He says, “The light of a candle changes appearance for the child when, after having burned him, it ceases to attract the child's hand and becomes literally repulsive” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 52). Here we not only have a straightforward case of the development of a new prejudice—one in which the candle flame now means something different to the child than it did before he touched it—but we also have a prejudice that we might classify as pre-cognitive, or at least non-intellectual. In the above discussion regarding the preparatory loosening and making explicit of prejudices, it is all too easy to think of prejudices in a purely conceptual sense. We can understand such preparatory work as the phenomenologist confronting her inadequate or incorrect concepts and attempting to avoid or suspend them in the course of her investigation. What we find in Merleau-Ponty's example, by contrast, is a case where the prejudices inhabit, or at least manifest in, the child's behavior as well as his perceived world. We might say that the child now has a different *understanding* of the candle flame from the one he had a moment ago,

but this risks neglecting the fact that, in a very real sense, the flame is now *perceived* differently—it is a different kind of meaningful object in the child’s world.

In spite of the simplicity of this example, I do not mean to imply that all bodily or perceptual prejudices are as straightforward or crude as the one just described. There are a number of examples that can illustrate a higher degree of complexity in the workings of such prejudices, but for the sake of simplicity I will return to the work of Young. In her essay, Young not only clarifies some of the modal distinctions between masculine and feminine bodily comportment, but also asks *why* these comportments differ in the ways that they do. Her particular interest in this question stems from Erwin Straus’s failure to offer an adequate answer in his own brief foray into the phenomenological study of feminine embodiment. His answer—which can hardly be called an answer—is that there must be some *feminine essence* that differentiates the male from the female in their bodily comportment and behavior (Straus 1966; Young 2005, 27–28).

Young, seeking an alternative account, first asks whether differences between masculine and feminine bodily comportment stem from a difference in the amount of practice males and females have in performing certain kinds of actions (e.g. girls are often not encouraged as much as boys to play sports or engage in other physical activities). However, she considers this issue to be secondary to one that is much more systemic and culturally ingrained. As she says, “The girl learns actively to hamper her movements. She is told that she must be careful not to get hurt, not to get dirty, not to tear her clothes, that the things she desires to do are dangerous for her” (Young 2005, 43). Such events, while not as brute and direct as the burning of one’s finger, largely serve the same purpose of instilling one with a set of prejudices about oneself and one’s world that shape one’s self-interpretation and behavior. As Young goes on to say,

Thus she develops a bodily timidity that increases with age. In assuming herself to be a girl, she takes herself to be fragile. Studies have found that young children of both sexes categorically assert that girls are more likely to get hurt than boys are, and that girls ought to remain close to home, while boys can roam and explore. The more a girl assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile and the more she actively enacts her own body inhibition. (Young 2005, 44)

What we find in Young's work—even if she does not refer to it by this exact term—is the study of how prejudices are passed down, how prejudices shape our self-interpretations, and even how prejudices determine which modes we develop and employ in our engagements in the world. Many of the modes of feminine body comportment, for example, can be understood as stemming from a self-interpretation of one's own body as weak or fragile.

Such a study differs in important respects from the ones employed in the preparatory service of phenomenological investigations into existentials and modes. In much the same way that we can distinguish between the two approaches to modes—one being to discover features that hold for all modes of that type (or for the existential they belong to), and the other being for the sake of understanding the particular mode itself—we can distinguish between the two approaches to prejudices. One approach is in the service of a phenomenological ontology concerned with clarifying our basic existential structure, and serves to make sure that we do not allow our tacit biases and presuppositions to skew our understanding of the constitutive features of human existence. The other approach, while perhaps not in the service of understanding prejudices for their own sake, is at least in the service of understanding how prejudices predetermine the kinds of meaning that manifest in our lived world.

#### **4 Conclusion: The Future of Phenomenological Discourse**

Taken together, these three layers of phenomenological research—existentials, modes, and prejudices—offer a framework for articulating what we can refer to broadly as the structure of meaning or the structure of world-disclosure. Studies of the first layer, existentials, articulate

the structure of human existence in general, or the framework through which any meaning whatsoever is disclosed to us. Existentials are themselves understood as *categorical constituents of human existence*. Studies of the second layer, modes, focus on the ways our world can be disclosed. Typically we speak of modes *of* existentials (i.e. the phenomena that belong to a categorical characteristic of human existence), but in some cases we can speak of modes of human existence as a whole. The third layer, prejudices, consists of the various biases and presuppositions at play whenever we experience a meaningful object or event. These three layers, taken together, stand as an answer to the question, “What do phenomenologists study?”

My aim in this chapter has been to develop a preliminary articulation of the subject matter of phenomenology for contemporary researchers. As mentioned above, this has required me to take on a standpoint of neutrality with respect to a number of important debates in phenomenology. In light of this, I think it only fair to sketch some of the debates and issues upon which I remain neutral.

These debates can be divided into two broad categories—foundational and applied. Foundational debates are concerned with the aims, methods, and subject matter of phenomenology. Applied debates are typically concerned with articulating the nature of particular features or aspects of human existence. In some cases this involves articulating the existentials, modes, or prejudices that already stand as core interests of phenomenological research, such as the existential of intersubjectivity (Zahavi 2015) or the mode of anxiety [*Angst*] (Withy 2015). In other cases these studies are concerned with broader features of human existence that have been ignored or downplayed in the phenomenological canon, such as gender (Oksala 2016; Young 2005), sexual orientation (Ahmed 2006), or race (Alcoff 2006; Lee 2014). Most phenomenological research today (excepting historical scholarship on phenomenology)

falls into the category of applied phenomenology. However, this does not mean that foundational issues and concerns never enter into these discussions. As pointed out above, the study of aspects of human existence that have been ignored in the canonical texts can complicate and bring to light foundational issues of aims, methods, and subject matter that were missed or passed over in previous works (Oksala 2006).

As for foundational aspects of phenomenology, there are countless issues that might be addressed. I here sketch just a few issues related to the development of phenomenological methods and to phenomenology's compatibility with various metaphysical stances. First, while there is considerable scholarship on phenomenological methods in general, these works do not typically take account of the distinctions among the layers of phenomenological research. There is no reason to think that the same methods apply equally to the study of all three layers. For example, the study of prejudices seems to require distinct historical, genealogical, and hermeneutic methods that may not apply to the study of existentials. In addition, phenomenological methods and tools that help us zero in on and better articulate essences (e.g. Husserl's free phantasy variation) may apply to existentials—at least insofar as we conceive them as essential categories—but may not apply to the study of modes and prejudices. The distinctions I offer can help tailor phenomenological methods to the kinds of phenomena they are meant to approach and articulate.

Second, while phenomenology's compatibility with various metaphysical stances is often discussed in historical scholarship, these issues have also entered into more contemporary debates. Much of the applied phenomenological literature (e.g. in the cognitive sciences and psychopathology) is concerned with phenomenology's compatibility with diverse forms of naturalism (Petitot et al. 1999; Stanghellini and Rosfort 2014; Zahavi 2013). In addition, the

question of phenomenology's status as a transcendental philosophy has become more pressing. Phenomenology's capacity to do justice to the accidental, contingent, and particular—in addition to the essential, necessary, and universal—is a condition for recent phenomenological work on infancy, (non-human) animality, and illness (see Heinämaa, Hartimo, and Miettinen 2014). Much of this debate hinges on to what, or to whom, the structural layers belong—is it a transcendental ego (Husserl 2014), an embodied subject (Husserl 1989; Merleau-Ponty 2012), being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962), or even appearing as such (Patočka 1970)? While an embodied subject might allow for a high degree of contingency and variability in its structural features, a transcendental ego would not—and a reference to “appearing as such” might bypass some of these metaphysical questions altogether.

There is still a long way to go in sorting out these issues, not only for the sake of understanding the classical texts, but also for the purpose of securing contemporary phenomenology on a sound footing by clarifying the nature of its subject matter. Much like the debates over methods, these debates over subject matter can be facilitated by the application of the layers I have delineated in this chapter. On the issue of necessity versus contingency, there is no reason that all three layers should be understood as either necessary or contingent. Existentials might be necessary, while modes and prejudices are historically variable. In addition, if modes and prejudices are typically understood as ontic, while existentials are ontological, this might entail that modes and prejudices are consistent with forms of naturalism while existentials are not. These kinds of questions can be better addressed by engaging with each layer separately, articulating its status independent of the other layers.

In closing, my primary aim in this chapter has been to facilitate and encourage constructive discourse in contemporary phenomenology. Whether foundational or applied,

critical or complementary, this kind of discourse, dialogue, and debate is precisely what is required in order to drive phenomenology forward as a legitimate and productive philosophical research program. A clear articulation of subject matter, meant to encompass the current diversity of phenomenological research rather than constrain it, will hopefully act as a catalyst for this much needed debate.

In the following chapters I draw on these distinctions in order to investigate psychiatric disorders—specifically those that fall under the labels of major depressive disorder (MDD) and bipolar disorder. I show that by drawing more nuanced phenomenological distinctions, we can better understand the disorders in question and hopefully develop a more rigorous and accurate system of classification.



**CHAPTER TWO**  
**LANGUAGE, PREJUDICE, AND THE AIMS OF HERMENEUTIC**  
**PHENOMENOLOGY:**  
**TERMINOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON “MANIA”<sup>10</sup>**

**1 Introduction**

In this chapter I take up the phenomenological focus on prejudices, offering preparatory investigation of the phenomena typically referred to as “depression” and “mania.” This preparatory investigation lays the groundwork for the following chapters, where I develop phenomenological accounts of MDD and bipolar disorder.

What is “mania”? What is its relationship to moods? Is it itself a kind of mood? Or is it a change in the way that we have moods? Should it be understood as the polar opposite of depression, or is the relation between these two phenomena more subtle and complex? These are some of the guiding questions that must be asked before engaging in a phenomenological investigation of mania. One of the basic tenets of phenomenology is that we cannot elucidate a phenomenon until we have asked after it in the right way.

In light of this introduction, I should make clear what the aims of this chapter are, and what they are not. I do not here offer a *psychological* phenomenology of mania, understood as a rich and systematic description of what it is like, or what it feels like, to be manic. Instead, I offer a *philosophical* phenomenology of mania or, to be more precise, a pre-phenomenological

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<sup>10</sup> A version of this chapter has been previously published in *Journal of Psychopathology*, 2016, Vol. 22 (1), 21 – 29. Copyright 2016 by Anthony Fernandez.

investigation of what we refer to as “mania.” While philosophical phenomenology is typically understood as an account of the essential characteristics of human subjectivity, existence, or being in the world, there is an important preparatory stage to any phenomenological investigation. This preparatory stage can be conducted in various ways, but is generally concerned with the suspension of latent prejudices that threaten to lead a phenomenological investigation down the wrong path.

When applied to the domain of psychopathology—and specifically to the phenomenon referred to as “mania”—such an investigation is concerned with unearthing and making explicit the latent presuppositions and prejudices not only of researchers and clinicians in the field of mental health, but also of mental health service users and the general public. By unearthing and making explicit such presuppositions, one is better able to uncover and engage with the phenomenon of mania itself, rather than engaging with the preconceived notions that cover over the phenomenon in question.

In the second section, I distinguish psychological from philosophical phenomenology, situating my project within the interdisciplinary field of phenomenological psychopathology. In the third section, I explain how phenomenologists prepare their investigations by attending to latent prejudices that might predetermine their accounts in problematic ways. In the fourth section, I illustrate how phenomenologists attend to such presuppositions by describing how Heidegger and Sartre attend to linguistic prejudices prior to engaging in their phenomenological investigations. In the fifth and final section, I apply some of these methods to the phenomenon (or phenomena) typically referred to as “mania” in contemporary psychiatric discourse. I discuss some of the prejudices that predetermine how we conceptualize and approach mania, laying the groundwork for further phenomenological investigations of manic subjectivity.

## 2 Two Senses of Phenomenology

Before we can properly engage in a phenomenological or even a pre-phenomenological investigation of mania, we first need to clarify what phenomenology is (at least within the context of this chapter). There are many ways that we might distinguish among different kinds of phenomenology. However, the central distinction for this chapter is between *philosophical* phenomenology and what we can call, broadly, *psychological* phenomenology<sup>11</sup>—by which I refer to phenomenology as practiced throughout the human and social sciences, including the medical sciences. Both kinds of phenomenology are used to approach human consciousness and subjectivity, and both approach it in a manner that is typically considered to be qualitative, rather than quantitative. However, they differ in their methods and aims.

Psychological phenomenology typically consists of qualitative studies of lived experience gathered through first-person reports, structured and semi-structured interviews, or questionnaires. The aim of such studies is to give a rich descriptive account of “what it is like” to have a certain kind of experience; such as what it is like to be a single mother in the United States, or what it is like to be a cancer survivor. The psychological phenomenologist will take up her qualitative data and engage in a thematic interpretation, looking for primary themes that run through most, if not all, of the reports supplied by her study participants.

Philosophical phenomenology, by contrast, is comprised of a number of methodological tools—including the *epoché*, the reduction, and imaginative variation. These tools are used to

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<sup>11</sup> There is also a form of phenomenology that is sometimes referred to as “phenomenological psychology.” This is typically characterized as a philosophical phenomenology that is nonetheless consistent with naturalism and the sciences of the mind (rather than being consistent with transcendental philosophy). Because this kind of phenomenology is not particularly relevant to the current investigation (and risks unnecessary confusion and conflation with psychological phenomenology) I will not discuss it further within the context of this chapter. For further reading on this subject, see Husserl’s *Phenomenological Psychology* (Husserl 1977b).

delineate essential features of human subjectivity and existence such as affectivity, understanding, temporality, selfhood, and intersubjectivity. Many contemporary phenomenological studies of schizophrenia, for example, focus on the ways in which selfhood, typically understood as an essential feature of human subjectivity, can become disrupted or disordered (Sass 2001; Sass and Parnas 2007; Sass, Parnas, and Zahavi 2011). In order to properly account for such disruptions, phenomenologists differentiate among a number of different levels of selfhood, pinpointing the level at which the disruption occurs. In addition, they might investigate the implications of this disruption of selfhood for other features and aspects of consciousness, including intersubjective relations, perception, and affectivity.

In spite of these differences between psychological and philosophical phenomenology, the two are not altogether unrelated. Their relationship can be clarified by attending to the distinction between *evidence* and *subject matter* in each discipline. In the case of psychological phenomenology, the subject matter is what it is like to have a certain kind of experience. The evidence, on the other hand, is found in the data derived from first-person reports, interviews, and so on. By contrast, the subject matter of philosophical phenomenology consists of the essential features of human existence, subjectivity, or consciousness. The evidence used in philosophical phenomenology sometimes consists of first-person reports of lived experience, but might also consist of thematic accounts of what it is like to have certain kinds of experiences, such as those produced by qualitative researchers. In other words, the *subject matter* of psychological phenomenology can play the role of *evidence* in philosophical phenomenology.

It is important to keep these distinctions in mind, especially in light of the interdisciplinary nature of phenomenological psychopathology, which often incorporates both psychological and philosophical phenomenology without distinguishing the two. The particular

aims of this chapter fall into the latter camp, being more of a philosophical than a psychological investigation into the phenomenon of mania. In addition, it can be referred to as a pre-phenomenological investigation, insofar as its primary aim is to *prepare* for a proper investigation into the phenomenon of mania; however, these kinds of preparatory investigations have always made up a core component of philosophical phenomenological research.

### **3 Prejudice, History, and Sedimentation**

The phenomenological preoccupation with prejudices began with Edmund Husserl's attempt to suspend or bracket his own metaphysical (and especially naturalistic and scientific) prejudices about the nature of the mind or human subjectivity. He achieved this by developing what he called the *epoché* (Husserl 2014). While his concept of the *epoché* developed and transformed throughout the course of his philosophical career, it can be characterized as a shift from the natural attitude (in which we take our metaphysical prejudices for granted) to the phenomenological attitude (in which we critically reflect upon the constitutive features that must be in place in order for our world to appear to us in the ways that it does). This change in attitude is also characterized by a shift away from a concern with *things* (broadly construed), and toward a concern with essential features of the phenomena in question.

In spite of the centrality of the *epoché* in Husserl's works, it was not directly adopted by his successors, including Heidegger, Gadamer, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Nevertheless, each of these phenomenologists retained a general concern with and critical attitude toward prejudices, and especially with the ways that prejudices threaten to lead phenomenological as well as scientific investigations down the wrong track.

The post-Husserlian tradition that most clearly concerns itself with prejudices is hermeneutic phenomenology (or philosophical hermeneutics) as developed by Heidegger and

Gadamer. While all phenomenologists study how the lived world is opened and made available up to us, hermeneutic phenomenologists are particularly interested in the way that our openness to the world is predetermined in particular ways. To put it another way, all phenomenologists are interested in the transcendental conditions for meaning in general; hermeneutic phenomenologists, however, are also interested in historical, cultural, and linguistic conditions for particular kinds of meaning.<sup>12</sup> While conditions for meaning in general are typically referred to as transcendental, ontological, or existential structures, conditions for particular meanings are simply referred to as prejudices.

In everyday discourse, we typically understand prejudices as *negative* biases, or preconceived notions about particular people or cultures. While this sense is included in the hermeneutic notion of prejudice, the hermeneutic concept is both broader and deeper than the everyday sense of the term. Prejudices, according to hermeneutic phenomenologists, are not inherently negative. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Gadamer defines prejudices as the “biases of our openness to the world” (Gadamer 2008). The world is always opened up and made available to us through our prejudices, and it would be impossible to have any experience without them. While some prejudices certainly come with negative consequences—either for ourselves or for others—many prejudices are normatively neutral, or even positive.

As discussed in the previous chapter, clear examples of prejudices, and changes in prejudices, are found in the work of Merleau-Ponty and Young. Merleau-Ponty, for example, discusses the case of a young child who burns his finger on a candle flame. After burning his

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<sup>12</sup> This statement requires further clarification. It can be argued that the phenomenological study of prejudices already took full form in Husserl’s genetic and generative work in which he studied how our life-world offered new possibilities for scientific investigations in light of our inherited conceptual backgrounds and understandings (Husserl 1970; Husserl 1977a). While I would not argue this claim, the hermeneutic turn of Heidegger and Gadamer is still more closely related to the project I am here engaging in, if only for its explicit concern with language.

finger, the flame, and fire in a general, now has a different meaning for him, and he even perceives it differently. Fire becomes repellant. In Young's case, she addresses prejudices that shape our understanding of our own bodies and our gendered identity. Arguing against Straus's essentialism about gender, she claims that our socio-historical prejudices define what it means to be a girl or a woman in contemporary western society, and that these ways of understanding and comporting ourselves are not essential; they might differ in other times and places.

Another term phenomenologists typically use when discussing the historical passing down of prejudices is "sedimentation." While we are constantly affected by cultural milieus and life events, some of the meaning-laden features of these milieus become fixed, constitutive features of our lived world, predetermining the kinds of meaning that will manifest for us. As Merleau-Ponty says,

Were it possible to unfold at each moment all of the presuppositions in what I call my "reason" or my "ideas," then I would always be discovering experiences that have not been made explicit, weighty contributions of the past and of the present, and an entire "sedimented history" that does not merely concern the *genesis* of my thought, but that determines its *sense*. (Merleau-Ponty 2012)

In this sense, "sedimentation" in phenomenology and hermeneutics has a parallel meaning to "sedimentation" in the Earth sciences. In the same way that a body of water carries along particles, the temporal and historical flow of human life carries along an array of meanings and meaningful events. And just as some of these particles deposit and become sediment that reshapes the landscape, some of the meaning-laden events in our life sediment into prejudices that reshape the form of our lived world.

It is important to stress that while the term "sedimentation" brings to mind a sense of reification, this does not mean that what has sedimented is in any way inert. As Merleau-Ponty says, "this word 'sedimentation' must not trick us: this contracted knowledge is not an inert mass

at the foundation of our consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 2012). Instead, the meanings and prejudices that have sedimented into our lived world orient us in particular ways, predetermining the kinds of sense and meaning that will be made available to us.

While the meaningfulness of life experiences in general can sediment into the prejudices of our lived world, one of the primary avenues for passing down such prejudices is through language. In addition, the meanings built into our languages and terminologies are not passed down in a pure or unaltered form. As Gadamer argues, language and discourse are always situated within a historical and cultural milieu. Our terms do not retain their meanings after migrating from one cultural milieu to another. Because their meaning is always situated or contextual, changes in context necessitate changes in meaning.

This insight has important implications for the study of historical concepts, including the study of historical notions of mental illness. However, before engaging in an investigation of the ways our language and terminology prejudice the study of mania, it can be helpful to look at similar studies that have been conducted by phenomenologists.

#### **4 Two Studies of Prejudice: “Subjectivity” and “Imagination”**

In order to illustrate how and why phenomenologists attend to linguistic prejudices, I here briefly address two examples. The first is Heidegger’s bracketing of the term “subjectivity.” The second is Sartre’s concern with the presuppositions built into the term “imagination.”

“Subjectivity” is often referenced as the subject matter of phenomenology. However, even this central term of phenomenology is not immune to the uncritical passing down of prejudice. In taking ourselves to be studying human subjectivity, we predetermine our approach to this phenomenon in at least three ways. First, the reference to “subjectivity” immediately brings up a subject-object dualism, which might be further qualified as a mind-body dualism.



Second, it can bring with it the sense of being unscientific. Insofar as the aims of the natural sciences are to study *objective* phenomena, a study of the *subjective* is immediately characterized as an investigation that does not meet the standards of rigor inherent in these sciences. Third, the term carries with it a sense of singularity, or individuality. It presumes an isolated ego as the starting point of our investigations, which means that we will be required to give an argument for how this ego is capable of coming into contact with the world and with other egos.

While many psychological and even philosophical accounts of human existence presuppose the legitimacy of starting from an isolated ego, phenomenologists are typically critical of such a starting point. Husserl, for instance, shifted over the course of his career from privileging subjectivity to privileging intersubjectivity. Heidegger, for his part, was eminently critical of the prejudices that inhere in the terms “subjectivity” and “consciousness.” He largely excluded these terms from his work, instead preferring the terms “being-in-the-world” or “*Dasein*” (which translates simply to “being-there”) (Heidegger 1962). His reason for excluding the term “subjectivity” from his philosophical vocabulary was not that his subject matter was something other than subjectivity. Rather, he excluded the term because his ability to accurately characterize the phenomenon we attempt to refer to by the term “subjectivity” is jeopardized by the use of this term (for the reasons listed above).

It is important to note that none of these latent prejudices inhering in the term “subjectivity” *necessarily* result in inaccurate portrayals of human existence. Rather, the phenomenologist’s worry is that insofar as we remain unaware of such prejudices and allow them to uncritically seep into our phenomenological accounts of human existence, we always risk the repetition and further sedimentation of unjustified—and *possibly inaccurate*—portrayals of the phenomena in question. Such a risk is something that phenomenologists are fundamentally

opposed to, and they engage in a variety of methods developed for the purpose of unearthing, making explicit, and ultimately suspending such prejudices.

One of the clearest and most accessible illustrations of a phenomenologically preparatory investigation is found in Sartre's book, *The Imaginary* (Sartre 2010). Here, Sartre offers a detailed phenomenological and psychological study of imagination, images, and perception, with the aim of elucidating imagination in ways that extend far beyond standard philosophical and psychological portrayals of this phenomenon. However, as he makes clear in the opening chapter, a phenomenologist cannot simply jump into his investigation of imagination unprepared. To do so would be decidedly unphenomenological, risking the reiteration of latent, sedimented prejudices about imagination, perception, and subjectivity in general. If the goal of phenomenology is to bring us closer to "the matters themselves," then such an unprepared investigation could hardly be called phenomenological, insofar as it promises to find in the phenomenon nothing more than what the investigator himself has already put into it.

Sartre opens his book by reflecting not on the phenomenon of imagination, but on what has been said of imagination and how the concept has been developed and repeated. As he says,

It is necessary to repeat here what has been known since Descartes: a reflective consciousness delivers us absolutely certain data; someone who, in an act of reflection, becomes conscious of 'having an image' cannot be mistaken. Undoubtedly there have been psychologists who affirm that we cannot, in the limiting case, distinguish an intense image from a weak perception. (Sartre 2010)

In short, imagination has been characterized—in both philosophy and psychology—as a degraded or diminished perception. It is simply a perception that has lost its vibrancy and is less distinct.

These characterizations are easily arrived at, repeated, and accepted because they are built into the very terminology employed in our investigations. By claiming that we are

investigating “imagination” or a “mental image” we predetermine our account as one of a relation of consciousness to its object. An image, after all, is always an image *of* something. Images refer to whatever it is they are images *of*. If we uncritically take up these prejudices, then we necessarily approach imagination as “a certain way in which the object appears to consciousness, or, if one prefers, a certain way in which consciousness presents to itself an object” (Sartre 2010). In other words, imagination will be approached as a pseudo-perception, essentially involving an intentional relation between a subject and an object. What Sartre is trying to make clear is that this account of imagination is an assumption built upon tacit prejudices, rather than the outcome of a philosophically sound reflection on the phenomenon itself. Until we become aware of these prejudices, we have little hope of discovering in imagination anything but what our prejudices have already placed there.

With this illustration of hermeneutic investigations conducted for the purpose of laying the groundwork for phenomenological analyses, we can begin to apply these tools to the domain of psychopathology, and specifically to the phenomenon or phenomena that we refer to as “mania.”

## **5 Mania: A Preparatory Investigation**

Why do we require a hermeneutics of mania? It seems, after all, that we already have a substantial literature on descriptive accounts of mania from the ancient Greek physicians, to Kraepelin (Kraepelin 1989), to the symptomatology provided in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association 2013). However, as I argue, it is precisely these kinds of accounts that we need to regard with a healthy skepticism, analyzing not only the descriptions of symptoms, but also the prejudices behind these descriptions. I here focus on three points of terminology and the prejudicial implications relevant to the production of a phenomenology of mania. First, I

address the identification of today's "mania" as described in the DSM-5 with "μανία" [mania] as discussed in ancient Greek medical texts. Second, I consider the implications of the shift in terminology from "manic depressive illness" to "bipolar disorder." Third, I examine how the headings under which mania is discussed—such as "affective disorders" and "mood disorders"—predetermine the kinds of features we attend to in our investigations.

It is now commonplace in psychological and psychiatric discourse to invoke the 2,500-year history of "μανία." As David Healy points out, such invocations are often presented in the opening lines of journal articles and textbooks on bipolar disorder, or on mood disorders more generally (Healy 2011). Such discussions add a sense of legitimacy to the disorder and its constitutive manic as well as depressive episodes (depression being similarly linked with the ancient Greek accounts of melancholia). In a time when each iteration of the DSM seems to shower us with an array of new disorders, many remain skeptical of the reality of these psychiatric constructs. In light of this, it is of paramount importance that one be able to establish the *reality* of the psychiatric construct upon which one stakes a career (not to mention one's financial success, such as in the case of the psychopharmaceutical industry). While many of these disorders have histories dating back mere decades (if even that), bipolar disorder seems to establish itself as a phenomenon that has been with us for millennia. By pointing back to "μανία" in the ancient Greek texts, one aims to establish an all-important legitimacy to this pathological way of being.

But this history of mania, taken at face value, threatens to predetermine our approach to this phenomenon of human existence, and in ways that are eminently problematic. As Healy points out, in order to effectively establish the purity of the 2,500-year lineage from "μανία" to "mania," our historical accounts are often forced to walk the line between fact and fiction. As he

explains, one of the primary anecdotes referred to in the course of establishing the lineage of “mania” is typically trimmed of most of the features that conflict with contemporary diagnostic criteria. In the standard rendering of the quotation, a woman is said to suffer from insomnia, loss of appetite, thirst, nausea, raving, dysthymia, and incoherent speech. To the contemporary reader, the only symptoms that might be seen as out of place in a manic episode are thirst and nausea. However, there are a number of other symptoms that are left out of the standard quotation, including a high fever, profuse sweating, severe pain, dark urine, and increased menstrual flow (Healy 2011). When all of these symptoms are discussed together, we see the apparently manic symptoms cast in a different light. The likelihood of Hippocrates’ patient undergoing what we would today call a manic episode is decidedly eroded.

Similar “histories” are found in contemporary work on the writings of Aretaeus of Cappadocia. For example, Angst and Marneros, in their brief discussion of the history of bipolar disorder, admit that “mania” in the ancient Greek context is a difficult concept to pin down. The term is found not only in the work of physicians such as Hippocrates and Aretaeus, but also in religious and mythological writings, as well as works of philosophy. However, even while admitting the profound heterogeneity of what this term refers to, Angst and Marneros state,

Some authors have claimed that the concept of mania and melancholia as described by Hippocrates, Aretaeus, and other ancient Greek physicians is different from the modern concepts, but this is not correct. Rather, the classical concepts of melancholia and mania were broader than modern concepts (they included melancholia or mania, mixed states, schizoaffective disorders, some types of schizophrenia and some types of acute organic psychoses and ‘atypical’ psychoses). (Angst and Marneros 2001, 5)

While it may not be incorrect to claim that these early concepts are *broader* than the contemporary concepts discussed under the same label, the additional claim that the concepts are not thereby *different* is profoundly problematic. It seems that if the ancient concepts of mania and melancholia do in fact include what we today refer to as schizoaffective disorders,

schizophrenia, and so on, then they are the conceptual forerunners of these contemporary disorders as well. However, one would be hard pressed to find an article arguing that the contemporary concept of schizophrenia has been with us for 2,500 years because it appears similar to some of the descriptions found in ancient Greek medical texts on “μανία.” In contrast, what makes the lineage from “μανία” to “mania” believable is, more than anything, the shared term. In the absence of this term, it is unlikely that one could get away with offering such pseudo-histories with the intent of establishing the legitimacy of the contemporary concept of “mania.”

The production of such histories threatens not only our understanding of the ancient Greek concepts of mental disorder, but also our ability to properly develop and articulate our contemporary concepts. If we believe that we can draw a more or less clear line of descent from “μανία” to “mania,” we allow the contemporary concept to sediment even further; we forget that today’s mania is itself an artifact, a construct developed within a particular scientific and cultural milieu. This is not to say that when we use the term “mania” we are not referring to a real form of suffering, and perhaps even to a phenomenon with neurobiological underpinnings. Rather, what we risk in the continual affirmation of these histories and the uncritical forgetting that follows from them is the reification of our contemporary constructs. When we become content with an unquestioned (and unquestionable) classification of disorders, we fail to engage in the critical reflection necessary for a successful reclassification.

In addition to the implications of this fabricated history of mania, we also have to attend to more recent terminological shifts in how we refer to the disorder to which mania belongs. It is today all too easy to forget that the term “bipolar disorder” only rose to prominence in the past few decades, replacing earlier concepts such as “manic depressive insanity,” “manic-depressive

reaction,” and “manic depression.” This shift seems innocuous enough, but we must be attentive to how a shift in terminology (especially when the history of this shift is forgotten) can tacitly reshape the conceptual landscape of the phenomenon in question.

In the particular case of the shift to “bipolar disorder,” it is worth considering how we today conceive of the relationship between depressive and manic episodes, and how this conception has changed along with our terminology. When we today refer to “bipolar disorder,” we are immediately presented with a picture of a disorder comprised of two opposing extremes; depression and mania are polar opposites. As portrayed in the latest editions of the DSM, depression is characterized by a mood of sadness, despair, or guilt, while mania is characterized by euphoria (or in some cases irritability). In other words, depression and mania are themselves conceived of as contrasting moods, or at least as contrasting sets of moods.

While this conception of the relationship between mania and depression as polar opposite mood states may be accurate, the use of the term “bipolar disorder” already predisposes researchers and clinicians toward this conception. Earlier terms such as “manic-depressive illness”—while incorporating a sense of these two pathological ways of being as fundamentally related—are somewhat less restrictive as to the nature of this relationship.

By examining competing models of this disorder, we can gain a better sense of how our terminology allows us to take for granted the relationship between depression and mania. For example, in the 1960s, around the same time that a few researchers (Angst 1966; Perris 1966) began to develop the bipolarity model that would replace the looser conception of manic-depressive illness, two alternative models were developed and put forward. These models are referred to as the “continuum model” and the “triangular model.”

On the continuum model, depression and mania are not conceptualized as opposing phenomena with euthymia or mental health in the middle. Rather, mania is understood as a more severe reaction than depression. The continuum, then, is between euthymia and mania, with depression standing in the middle. By construing the relationship between depression and mania in this manner, the continuum model is supposed to overcome paradoxical depictions of mixed states. Rather than having to explain why features of two opposing phenomena can manifest at the same time, this model simply accommodates mixed states by positing that the movement from euthymia to mania (and vice versa) passes through depression (Court 1968; Court 1972).

The triangular model, in contrast, posits each of these three states—depression, mania, and euthymia—as positioned on separate corners of a triangle. One can thereby move between euthymia and depression without moving through mania, between euthymia and mania without moving through depression, and between depression and mania without moving through euthymia. This again offers a less paradoxical depiction of mixed states, while not necessarily characterizing depression and mania as polar opposites (Whybrow and Mendels 1969).

I am not here arguing that the conception of the relationship between depression and mania that is built into the term “bipolar disorder” is necessarily inaccurate. In addition, I am not arguing that the continuum or triangular models more accurately portray the relationship between depression and mania. Rather, the point I wish to stress is that the use of the term “bipolar disorder” prejudices the development and clarification of our concepts of mania and depression. By maintaining an explicit awareness of the presuppositions built into this term, we can more accurately attend to the phenomena of depression and mania, as well as the relation that holds between them.



In cases such as these, where a term has inbuilt prejudices that might cover over important features of a phenomenon, it is sometimes useful to put the term out of use (at least temporarily) by employing a term that does not include such prejudices. As discussed above, Heidegger did this with his use of the term “*Dasein*” rather than “subjectivity,” in spite of the fact that the object of his investigation was what many philosophers would have uncritically referred to as the subject. Psychiatrists might do something similar (if less radical) by simply going back to terms such as “manic-depressive illness.” Such terms, while retaining presuppositions regarding the intimate relationship between depression and mania, at least leave the nature of this relationship open to further inquiry in ways that “bipolar disorder” does not.

Finally, it is worth examining how we label mania in our diagnostic manuals, and how these labels predetermine how we conceive of their essential features. For example, in the DSM-III, the entry on mania is included under the heading of “affective disorders” (American Psychiatric Association 1980). In the DSM-IV, this heading is changed to “mood disorders” (American Psychiatric Association 1994). However, in the DSM-5 the headings of “affective” and “mood disorders” have been removed; the headings of “bipolar and related disorders” and “depressive disorders” now stand independently of each other, without an overarching label to subsume them (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

The general headings under which mania and other disordered phenomena are discussed may not be something that researchers and clinicians typically attend to. However, the authors of the DSM-5 explicitly acknowledge that the change in headings is meant to facilitate a reconceptualization of bipolar disorder. The opening line of the section on “bipolar and related disorders” reads as follows:

Bipolar and related disorders are separated from the depressive disorders in DSM-5 and placed between the chapters on schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders and

depressive disorders in recognition of their place as a bridge between the two diagnostic classes in terms of symptomatology, family history, and genetics. (American Psychiatric Association 2013)

Both the removal of the earlier labels of “affective” and “mood disorders” as well as the placement of “bipolar disorder” between “schizophrenia” and “depressive disorders” were the result of explicit decisions made by the authors of the DSM-5 for the sake of facilitating the reconceptualization of these disordered phenomena. This new presentation is meant to tacitly emphasize the links not only between the symptoms of bipolar disorder and the symptoms of depressive disorders, but also the links between bipolar disorders and forms of schizophrenia.

This reshaping of the concept of “bipolar disorder,” as well as the concepts of “mania” and “depression,” may serve to open up or broaden the set of symptoms and relevant phenomena that are attended to in psychiatric and psychological studies. However, it is still worth pointing out that one of the starkest points of contrast between phenomenological psychopathologists and more traditional psychiatric researchers is the relative diversity of phenomena that the former group is willing to attend to and take seriously. While the majority of traditional research on mania is on its emotional and affective features, phenomenological psychopathologists focus on a wide variety of features, many of which are not found in the DSM symptomatology.

For example, Sass and Pienkos have recently argued that self-disturbances are central not only to schizophrenia, but to depression and mania as well (Sass and Pienkos 2013b; Sass and Pienkos 2013a). In addition, Fuchs has argued that, in addition to the affective features of mania, manic being in the world includes marked shifts in one’s mode of embodiment, as well as in one’s temporal flow and intersubjectivity (Fuchs 2014).

However, in spite of contemporary phenomenological psychopathologists’ willingness to attend to novel phenomena—and especially those that continue to be neglected in the DSM

symptomatology—they are by no means immune to the effects of prejudice (linguistic and otherwise). To take just one example, in a recent phenomenological study, Fuchs opens his discussion of manic existence by stating, “Mania is obviously the antithesis of depression” (Fuchs 2014). As I have discussed above, the antithetical (or bipolar) relationship between depression and mania is only *obvious* if we forget just how recently we embraced the label of “bipolar disorder.” Similar uncritical adoptions of conceptual prejudice (linguistic and otherwise) can be found throughout the psychiatric, psychological, and phenomenological literature. I have been guilty of this in my own work, often taking for granted the polarity between depression and mania as a starting point for my phenomenological investigations (Fernandez 2014a; Fernandez 2014b).

## **6 Conclusion**

The philosophical program of phenomenology has the potential to open our eyes to a complexity and diversity of phenomena that our latent prejudices might otherwise cover over. While phenomenological research has already done much to broaden the horizons within which we conceptualize and understand mental illness, there is much work left to do. One way that philosophical phenomenology can support psychopathological studies is through its preparatory hermeneutic investigations of the phenomena to be investigated, interrogated, and articulated. Yet is it precisely this aspect of phenomenological research that has been largely neglected in the contemporary literature on phenomenological psychopathology. My hope is that this chapter makes some contribution to this area of research, not only by laying the groundwork for further investigations into mania, but also by convincing others to engage in similar hermeneutic projects that will set the stage for more careful and attentive phenomenological and psychiatric research in the future.

With this preparatory investigation in hand, I advance in the following three chapters onto phenomenological accounts of affectivity and embodiment in depression and bipolar disorder.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DEPRESSION AS EXISTENTIAL FEELING OR DE-SITUATEDNESS?

#### DISTINGUISHING EXISTENTIALS FROM MODES IN PSYCHOPATHOLOGY<sup>13</sup>

##### 1 Introduction

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a remarkably difficult phenomenon to characterize. One reason for this difficulty is the profound heterogeneity of cases found in this ambiguously defined category. Horwitz and Wakefield (2007) argue that the dramatic rise in the number of patients diagnosed with MDD stems from the recent pathologizing of what may be normal kinds of sadness. Others argue that MDD is comprised of at least three distinct kinds of disorders—psychotic, melancholic, and non-melancholic depression (Parker 2000; Parker 2006; Malhi, Parker, and Greenwood 2005). Even a cursory examination of the diagnostic criteria required to receive a diagnosis of MDD reveals that it is possible for two people to be diagnosed with MDD without sharing a single symptom.<sup>14</sup> This insight, coupled with the fact that we have little

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<sup>13</sup> A version of this chapter has been previously published in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, copyright 2014, Vol. 13 (4), 595 – 612, and has been reproduced with permission from Springer.

<sup>14</sup> The DSM-5 currently lists nine relevant symptoms for the diagnosis of MDD (American Psychiatric Association 2013). In order to qualify for a diagnosis of MDD, a patient must have at least five of the symptoms, with one of the five being either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure. Taking into account that five symptoms must be met, and that there are nine total symptoms to select from, it would seem that any two people diagnosed with depression must share at least one symptom. However, many of the symptoms are actually clusters of possible symptoms, in many cases including polar opposites. For example, item three can be met by having either significant weight loss or significant weight gain; item four can be met by having either insomnia or hypersomnia; and item five can be met by having psychomotor agitation or retardation. Taking into account the divergence of symptoms such as weight gain versus weight

knowledge of the underlying neurobiological causes of MDD, easily leads one to question the legitimacy of such profoundly heterogeneous diagnostic categories. If the categories in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) are distinguished only in terms of symptom clusters (and we do not have evidence of an underlying cause shared among patients who have been diagnosed with MDD) then there is little reason to consider MDD a homogeneous category of disorder. It is likely, as authors such as Horwitz, Wakefield, and Parker argue, that the category of MDD actually envelopes a number of disordered and non-disordered mental phenomena that have not been adequately distinguished.

In spite of the problems that emerge from such a heterogeneous construct, phenomenological investigations of depression have been able to shed new light on depression, or depressive disorders, offering insights into aspects of depression that are often ignored in contemporary psychiatry, such as embodiment (Fuchs 2005a; 2005c) and temporality (Fuchs 2013b; Ratcliffe 2012). These investigations have made great strides toward answering questions such as, “What is depression?” and, “What is it to be depressed?” In this chapter I make another contribution to this swiftly growing field of inquiry. In so doing, I offer new avenues for delineating among kinds of depression, in the hopes that this will prove some small step toward the project of drawing homogeneous categories out of a remarkably heterogeneous construct.

In the second section, I review the recent literature on the phenomenology of depression, focusing especially on the Heideggerian account developed by Matthew Ratcliffe. In the third section, I revisit the distinction between existential and mode. Illustrating this distinction, I show that Ratcliffe—drawing on Heidegger’s assumption that structures of existence are necessary and unchanging—confines his account of depression to changes in mode, rather than changes in

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loss, or insomnia versus hypersomnia, it is in fact possible for two people to be diagnosed with MDD without sharing a single symptom.

existentials themselves. In the fourth section, I argue that developments in genetic phenomenology, especially in the work of Merleau-Ponty, cast doubt on the assumption that existentials are necessary and universal and unchanging. I show that the ontological structure of human existence and perception must be understood as contingent, rather than necessary. Acknowledging the contingency of existential structures opens new avenues for phenomenological investigations into psychiatric and neurological disorders. In the fifth section, I take up the account of contingency developed in the previous section and apply it to depression. I develop a phenomenological account, arguing that some people diagnosed with MDD have actually undergone a change in their basic structure of existence. In this case, rather than understanding their depression as a kind of mood or feeling, it is more accurately understood as an erosion of the degree to which they are situated in and through moods. I show that this account differs from Ratcliffe's in some fundamental respects, but that the two accounts are not mutually exclusive, as an erosion of the structure of situatedness does not exclude the possibility of having particular moods or existential feelings within this eroded or degraded form of existence. In concluding, I address the heterogeneity of depression, and argue that sensitivity to changes in the structure of existence can offer us new tools for delineating among categories of psychiatric disorders.

## **2 Phenomenology and the Emotional Dimension of Depression**

The emotional dimension of depressive disorders has taken center stage in recent research in phenomenological psychopathology. However, there is marked disagreement over the kind of changes in feeling and mood that occur for depressed persons. Ratcliffe, for example, has written extensively on the feelings of guilt and hopelessness associated with some depressive episodes (Ratcliffe 2008; 2010; 2013; 2015). Fuchs, on the other hand, discusses a loss of bodily

resonance, which is tied to what he considers to be a corporealizing of the body (Fuchs 2002; 2005a; 2005c; 2014). Aho, following Fuchs' lead, describes depression as involving a loss of affectivity, but also a diminishing of the capacity to transcend this loss through a process of reinterpretation (K. Aho 2013). Svenaeus takes an alternative route, examining the effects of antidepressants on emotions and the self (Svenaeus 2007). And Stanghellini and Rosfort contrast MDD, which often includes feelings of guilt or a loss of feeling, with the depression experienced by subjects with borderline personality disorder, which often consists of feelings of loneliness and desperation coupled with negative affectivity (Stanghellini and Rosfort 2013; 2014).

While each of these authors has developed a phenomenological account of depressive disorders, I will focus on the work of Ratcliffe. In contrast with others working in the area, Ratcliffe has focused the bulk of his attention on depressive disorders, and most of this work, in turn, is developed within the framework of his theory of existential feeling. Grounding his account of depression in Heidegger's conception of ground moods as developed in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962) and *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2001a), Ratcliffe is able to offer insight into the all-encompassing and world-determining nature of depression.<sup>15</sup>

As discussed in chapter one, Heidegger's notion of moods and ground moods emerges from his conception of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*. *Befindlichkeit* is Heidegger's own coinage, and is notoriously difficult to translate. It is meant to convey the basic structure of human existence whereby one finds oneself situated in and attuned to the world. This structure, taken together with understanding and discourse, constitutes the world-disclosive character of Dasein.

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<sup>15</sup> The term “ground mood” [*Grundstimmung*] is typically associated with *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, rather than *Being and Time*. However, Heidegger does discuss such moods (specifically anxiety) in *Being and Time*, but refers to them by a different term—*Grundbefindlichkeit*—which was originally translated as “basic state-of-mind” (Heidegger 1962).



Some popular translations are “situatedness” (Guignon 2003), “sofindingness” (Haugeland 2000), and “affectedness” (Dreyfus 1990). I will use the term “situatedness,” although the alternative translations should be kept in mind, as each translation emphasizes a different aspect of this existential structure, and no translation adequately conveys the full meaning of the term. *Stimmung*, most often translated as “mood” in Heidegger's works, is another term with a rich meaning, impossible to fully convey with any single English word. Besides “mood,” it can be translated as “atmosphere” or “tune.” While *Befindlichkeit* is the basic structure of being situated in the world, *Stimmung* is the particular mode of attunement in which we find ourselves; our situatedness is always manifest in and through some mood (Heidegger 1962, 179). According to Heidegger (and Ratcliffe), we are always already attuned to the world in a particular manner, and this manner is determined by a mood (or existential feeling).

Rather than taking up Heidegger's conception of mood directly, Ratcliffe opts for an account of what he terms “existential feeling.” There are a number of reasons for breaking away from Heidegger's term, but the most important is that “mood” does not adequately differentiate between intentional and pre-intentional affective phenomena.<sup>16</sup> An intentional feeling is about something in particular, whether this be an object, a person, an event, or even a situation. Pre-intentional moods, on the other hand, disclose the world as a whole. This does not mean that they are intentional moods with a wider scope. Rather, in disclosing the world as a whole, they both open and constrain the range of intentional feelings that can manifest. And as world-disclosive, they are a condition of possibility for intentionality.

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<sup>16</sup> Throughout this chapter, “intentional” will be used as a technical, phenomenological term. In this sense, it refers to the fact that consciousness is always consciousness of something or other. Consciousness is always about, or directed at, something within the world (or in some cases, the world itself). Certain kinds of emotions are also intentional, which is to say, they are felt as being toward or about something.

This difference is illustrated by Heidegger's notions of anxiety [*Angst*] and fear. Anxiety, for Heidegger, is not about anything in particular, instead enveloping and disclosing the world as a whole. Fear, on the other hand, is intentionally directed at some entity or event within the world (Heidegger 1962). Anxiety falls into Heidegger's category of ground moods [*Grundstimmungen*]. These moods are foundational, disclosing the world in such a way that they both open and constrain the possible range of meaning, significance, and feelings that can manifest within the world. This sense of ground mood is much closer to Ratcliffe's own notion of existential feeling, but they are still not a perfect match.

The central aspect of Heidegger's notion of moods that Ratcliffe incorporates into his own category of existential feeling is “that experience incorporates a background sense of belonging to the world and that this background is changeable in structure...” (Ratcliffe 2008, 52). One group of existential feelings that Ratcliffe is interested in are feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity. While there are a variety of ways that the world as a whole might reveal itself as unfamiliar or uncanny, Ratcliffe stresses that these kinds of experiences are not constituted by simple lacks in our usual familiarity. As he says, there is a distinct “*feeling of unfamiliarity*,” rather than just an “*absence of the feeling of familiarity*” (Ratcliffe 2008, 54). This is similar to Heidegger's claim that we are always already in a mood. Even the everyday experience of an “evenly balanced lack of mood” (Heidegger 1962, 173) is, for both Heidegger and Ratcliffe, a mood, or existential feeling. It is a way, and perhaps the most common way, of being situated in the world.

In order to gain a sense of Ratcliffe's phenomenological account of depression as primarily constituted by a shift in existential feeling, I will focus on two existential feelings that he argues are found in many cases of depression. The first is deep guilt; the second is a loss of

hope. Examining these existential feelings will clarify what it means for them to be pre-intentional, forming the background of the lived, meaningful world.

Deep guilt, according to Ratcliffe, differs from more shallow kinds of guilt by being pre-intentional. We can feel guilty about some particular deed or a series of events, but these kinds of guilt do not encompass our world as a whole. They determine the sense and meaning of particular aspects of ourselves, our lives, and even our relations with others, but they are not so deep and fundamental as to constrain our full range of possible meaning, significance, and feelings. Only pre-intentional existential feelings are capable of this depth. Deep guilt orients our world as a whole, modifying what is possible and the range of ways in which we can be affected (Ratcliffe 2010). As Ratcliffe states, “Whereas object-directed guilt is one of many emotional attitudes that one might adopt towards one's various deeds, guilt in severe depression envelops all experience. It is pre-intentional; it limits the range of intentional states that one is able to have” (Ratcliffe 2010, 612).

An alternative mode of being situated in the world is through a loss of hope. Ratcliffe makes an important distinction between “loss of hopes” and “loss of hope.” One can lose all hopes without also losing the existential feeling that acts as the background upon which one is able to hope at all. An event that precipitates the loss of all hopes is typically one in which a central component of one's life, something that offered a profound sense of direction and meaning, is lost. For example, following the loss of a loved one, or displacement from a homeland, a person may be incapable of finding anything to hope for (Ratcliffe 2013). The primary context within which a person's life, goals, dreams, and desires made sense is stripped away. A new context must develop before the old hopes can be restored, or new hopes attained.

In contrast to these cases, Ratcliffe argues that many instances of depression actually involve the loss of a more fundamental kind of hope. In depression, the condition of possibility for hope might be lost. As he says, “Many first-person reports of hopelessness in severe depression indicate that it involves more than a lack of specific hopes, however encompassing their content might be. It is the possibility of hoping that is experienced as absent” (Ratcliffe 2013). And further, this absence is explicit. “It is evident from first person accounts of depression that hope is not simply absent – the absence itself is unpleasantly salient; it is felt” (Ratcliffe 2013). The reason for this salience, he argues, is that certain situations and contexts, even for the depressed person, carry with them the expectation that one should feel hope.

As discussed above, Ratcliffe's phenomenological understanding of depression is based primarily in his theory of existential feeling. Many cases of severe depression are best understood in terms of all encompassing, pre-intentional existential feelings that disclose our world as a whole. Existential feelings are often invisible to us because they do not undergo any sudden or profound shifts. However, in some psychiatric disorders, and depression in particular, the existential feelings through which we are attuned to and situated in the world do undergo sudden or profound shifts. The world seems bereft of significance, offering no possibility of hope or meaningful change.

### **3 Distinguishing Between Existentials and Modes in Phenomenology**

While Ratcliffe often refers to changes in depression as existential changes, or changes in the structure of experience and worldhood, his inquiries are actually limited to investigations of mode. This is not made explicit in his phenomenological accounts because he does not adequately distinguish between existentials and modes in his work. By examining the use of the terms “existential” and “mode” in the phenomenological canon, especially as developed in

Heidegger's *Being and Time*, I will show that Ratcliffe offers a phenomenological account of depression that addresses only changes in the mode of human existence.

The distinction between existentials and mode runs through the history of phenomenology, although the term “existential” comes from Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. It is used throughout Husserl's works, from the *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 2001a; Husserl 2001b) to the *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Husserl 1970). It also arises in the texts of Dilthey, a philosopher whose work had a profound influence on the development of Heidegger's early thinking (Guignon 1983).

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, uses the notion of structure to refer to characteristics (or in some cases the entirety) of the basic framework of human existence. He refers to individual structures as *existentials*, and together they make up the ontological structure of existence. As he says, “The question about [the ontological structure of existence] aims at the analysis of what constitutes existence. The context of such structures we call '*existentiality*'. Its analytic has the character of an understanding which is not existentiell, but rather *existential*” (Heidegger 1962, 33).

An existentiell understanding is, according to Heidegger, obtained through an ontical investigation of human existence. It is sought in an investigation of facticity, of the life and world of a concrete human existence. An existential understanding, on the other hand, is obtained through an investigation of the essential structures that must hold in order for our manifold modes of existence to manifest. Heidegger states that the aim of his project is to reveal structures that “are not just any accidental structures, but essential ones which, in every kind of Being that factual Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its Being” (Heidegger 1962, 38).

The clearest example of this distinction between ontological structures and ontic modes is offered in Heidegger's treatment of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*. As discussed above, Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit* roughly translates to situatedness, while *Stimmung* translates to mood, atmosphere, or tune. The relationship between these two notions is important, but is often passed over in discussions of this aspect of Heidegger's work. *Befindlichkeit* is, for Heidegger, an essential structure of human existence. That is to say, being always already situated in the world is a fundamental, categorial<sup>17</sup> characteristic of human existence. This situatedness, however, is always manifest through some *Stimmung*, some mood or other. Situatedness, then, can be understood as the category (existential) that includes any and all moods, or particular ways of being attuned. The particular mood of fear, or boredom, or joy need not hold in all cases. At one time I may be situated in a mode of fear, while at another time I may be situated in a mode of boredom. Fear, or boredom, or any other kind of mood, does not make up a fundamental feature of human existence; therefore, it is not an existential. All of these moods, however, share something important. Each one, when it manifests, plays the role of situating us in the world. In light of this, it is situatedness in general that is an existential. Its particular manifestations, on the other hand, are non-essential.

Typically, when the classical phenomenologists refer to the “structure” of human existence, they refer to the set of existentials. However, in some cases this reference to “structure” is used more loosely, referring to severe to dramatic changes in the mode of situatedness. Ratcliffe often refers to changes in “structure” in this looser sense—e.g. “It is a

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<sup>17</sup> In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicitly differentiates his notion of existential structures from Aristotelian categories. However, this distinction is stressed precisely because the two notions share important similarities. As he explains, existentials pertain only to the entity whose being is being-in-the-world. Categories, on the other hand, pertain only to beings that do not have a world (e.g. present-at-hand or ready-to-hand entities). In some of Heidegger's early lecture courses, he even refers to existentials as “categories of Dasein” (Heidegger 2008a; 2010a).

profound shift in the overall *structure* of experience, in the kinds of significant possibility that are available,” (Ratcliffe 2010, 616) and “It is the whole *structure* of world experience that is affected, rather than experiences that occur within an already given space of experiential possibilities” (Ratcliffe 2013, 607).

After recognizing Heidegger's distinction between structure and mode, it becomes clear that Ratcliffe's accounts of *existential* changes in depression are in fact accounts of *existentiell* changes in depression; that is to say, ontic changes rather than ontological changes.<sup>18</sup> In Ratcliffe's account, the basic existentials of those who are depressed remain the same.<sup>19</sup> What has occurred is a severe shift in the ground mood, or existential feeling, that discloses the world as a whole. In spite of the profundity of this change, it is still a change in mode, rather than existential structure.

In spite of my criticism of Ratcliffe, he has good philosophical reasons for confining his theory of depression to modal, rather than existential, changes. It is a basic assumption in much of classical phenomenology that everyone must have the same existentials, and that these cannot be altered. However, as I argue below, this assumption is challenged in the works of Merleau-Ponty, and is shown not only to be unjustified, but also untrue.

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<sup>18</sup> One might wish to argue this point by appealing to Heidegger's discussion of anxiety as “ontological.” It must be understood that anxiety itself is not ontological (although it is certainly deep, in the sense of being pre-intentional). One might be led to believe that anxiety is itself ontological because it has the power of disclosing the ontological structure of Dasein as Care. For Heidegger, anxiety is ontologically instructive, but only in a methodological sense. In other words, Heidegger finds that the mood of anxiety discloses Being-in-the-world in such a distinctive way that it reveals a previously hidden structure of human existence. However, in spite of this disclosive power, anxiety is still only a mode of human existence, and is therefore ontic, rather than ontological. This follows for the deep existential feelings of guilt and hopelessness as discussed by Ratcliffe.

<sup>19</sup> In his essay, “The Varieties of Temporal Experience in Depression,” (2012) Ratcliffe may offer phenomenological accounts of *existential* changes in temporality; that is to say, changes in the structure of temporality. However, more work would have to be done before changes in the structure and mode of temporality can be adequately differentiated.

#### 4 The Contingency of the Structures of Existence

Heidegger is not the only phenomenologist to claim that there are essential, unchanging structures of human existence. This assumption, while stemming from Kant's first *Critique*, was championed by Husserl during his transcendental turn, coming to fruition in *Ideas I*. Husserl sought a sound foundation for philosophy and the sciences, and he believed he discovered this foundation in the pure, unchanging, and universal structures of the transcendental ego. However, following his transcendental turn, Husserl began to work towards a genetic, and ultimately generative, phenomenology (Steinbock 1995b). While a purely transcendental phenomenology was conceived as a static account of consciousness (i.e. as seeking only invariant structures), his genetic phenomenology integrated concerns with genesis and development into the phenomenological research project.<sup>20</sup>

Merleau-Ponty, taking his lead from Husserl's genetic developments (especially in the unfinished *Crisis* and unpublished writings), pushed Husserl's project even further, arguing that ontological structures (or existentials) could themselves change and develop. Through his continuous engagement with the sciences, especially psychology, he was forced to contend with cases of human behavior, motility, and perception (Merleau-Ponty 1964; 2012; 1983) that could not be made sense of by appealing to the essential structures offered in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. These confrontations spurred the development of a phenomenology that sought to reveal the foundational structures of human existence and worldhood while simultaneously

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<sup>20</sup> This project is given a cursory discussion in *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1977a), but is developed in more detail in *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* (Husserl 2001c) and *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (Husserl 2008), reaching a climax (at least in the published works) in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Husserl 1970). In these works, Husserl developed a phenomenology in which personal-biographical (genetic) and social-historical (generative) circumstances play a role in shaping the structures of the life-world.



acknowledging the contingency of these structures. While this project was never completed, continuing to occupy his philosophical thought even in his final, unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1968), Merleau-Ponty did offer a preliminary sketch of his *truly genetic* phenomenology in his magnum opus, *Phenomenology of Perception*. What he seeks in this text is a phenomenology that takes seriously “error, illness, and, in short, embodiment” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 126). For Merleau-Ponty, understanding the body is a condition for understanding contingency; a phenomenology that neglects the body has no chance of appreciating this feature of human existence.

The particular occasion that acted as the catalyst for Merleau-Ponty's reconception of phenomenology was the case of Schneider.<sup>21</sup> Originally a subject of study for Adhemar Gelb and Kurt Goldstein, Schneider was a World War I veteran who suffered a profound change in his perception and motility after being struck in the occipital lobe by a piece of shrapnel. Gelb and Goldstein, a psychologist and neurologist, respectively, compiled an extensive case study of Schneider's remarkable condition. In so doing, they offered neurological and psychological interpretations of his condition. Merleau-Ponty, in turn, took up these interpretations and critiqued them from the phenomenological perspective, offering new insights into the structure of Schneider's world.

Merleau-Ponty begins this study by recalling a particular difficulty Schneider exhibited in performing certain kinds of tasks. As he says, Schneider “is incapable of performing 'abstract' movements with his eyes closed, namely, movements that are not directed at any actual situation,

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<sup>21</sup> Another excellent example of changes in the structure of existence is the case of Ian Waterman, especially as interpreted by Shaun Gallagher in *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (2005). I have chosen to focus on Merleau-Ponty's investigation of Schneider's case, rather than Gallagher's investigation of Waterman's, because Merleau-Ponty remains more closely aligned to philosophical, or transcendental phenomenology, which is the primary framework within which this chapter is written.

such as moving his arms and legs upon command, or extending and flexing a finger” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 105). Further, he “cannot describe the position of his body,” and, “cannot say at which point his body is touched” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 105). However, he is capable of performing all of these functions with his eyes open, although his movements are still stiff and unnatural.

What is remarkable, though, is that he is able to perform “concrete” movements with little to no difficulty, even when his eyes are closed. As Merleau-Ponty says, “Even with his eyes closed, the patient executes the movements that are necessary for life with extraordinary speed and confidence, provided they are habitual movements: he takes his handkerchief from his pocket and blows his nose, or takes a match from a matchbox and lights a lamp” (2012, 105).

Merleau-Ponty is faced with the challenge of offering an account that does justice to the complexity of the phenomena at hand. Searching for a way to frame the project appropriately, Merleau-Ponty asks, “If I know where my nose is when it is a matter of grasping it, how could I not know where my nose is when it is a matter of pointing to it?” (2012, 106). In examining Schneider’s case, Merleau-Ponty realizes that grasping movements are in a sense complete from the very start. They have a proper end that is anticipated in advance. As soon as Schneider is told that he cannot end his movement by grasping or touching, but must instead point at some object or part of his body, he cannot even begin the movement. From this, Merleau-Ponty tentatively concludes that “the knowledge of location can be understood in several senses” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 106).

Two of these senses of location are the space of habitual action, and the space of an objective milieu. Schneider retains space as the realm of habitual action, evidenced by the ease with which he performs concrete movements. In contrast, he lacks the world as an objective

milieu (or as a uniform, homogeneous space), evidenced by his inability to move his body for its own sake, or without a lived, habitual goal.

However, the appeal to Schneider's loss of his objective milieu still leaves other aspects of his disorder unaccounted for. For example, when asked to perform a military salute, Schneider has to become fully absorbed in the activity. He cannot simply raise his hand and salute. As Merleau-Ponty says, "along with the military salute come other external marks of respect" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 107). In short, Schneider can only perform actions within a concrete or real milieu. When asked to perform an action outside of its proper context, he first needs to make the context real. Only then can he perform the action successfully.

As Merleau-Ponty explains, most of us are capable of performing actions even when they are abstracted out of a concrete milieu, existing only in a kind of fictional milieu. That is to say, most of us are capable of performing actions *as* fictional, *as* existing outside of a larger context, or *as* having no proper end. We are able to project a virtual situation around us within which we can move and act. As he says, "The function of 'projection' or 'conjuring up' (in the sense in which the medium conjures up and makes the dead person appear) is also what makes abstract movement possible" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 115).

Schneider has lost this ability to project, or conjure up, virtual milieus, or milieus *as* virtual (whether these be objective, fictional, or what have you). He can only act in a space that is real for him. The only way he can bring himself to salute is to make the context within which saluting makes sense real and concrete. As Merleau-Ponty says,

Within the busy world in which concrete movement unfolds, abstract movement hollows out a zone of reflection and subjectivity, it superimposes a virtual or human space over physical space. Concrete movement is thus centripetal, whereas abstract movement is centrifugal; the first takes place within being or within the actual, the second takes place within the possible or within non-being; the first adheres to a given background, the second itself sets up its own background. The normal function that makes abstract

movement possible is a function of “projection” by which the subject of movement organizes before himself a free space in which things that do not exist naturally can take on a semblance of existence. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 114)

What Schneider has lost is the function of projection in its entirety. He has not lost the ability to conjure up this or that virtual milieu. This is to say, his disorder does not stem from a loss of certain modes of projection, nor can it be accounted for in terms of one mode of projection limiting the range of others. The issues Schneider presents are not important in their particularity. He does not suffer from a psychological block that prevents him from pointing with his eyes closed or performing a salute. Rather, he has lost the function that allowed him to conjure up virtual milieus at all. In this sense, it is not a *mode* of projection that he lacks; it is the *structure* of projection. The virtual, and all that belongs to it, is no longer an aspect of his existence.

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological interpretation of the concrete case of Schneider, while offering a plethora of new insights into the world of people living with neurological and psychiatric disorders, offers at least one major contribution to the field of phenomenology. It provides strong evidence for the claim that some (if not all) existential structures are contingent, rather than necessary. In the case of Schneider, a basic structure of his existence was lost. Schneider completely lacks the capacity to conjure up virtual milieus. As I argue below, some cases of people diagnosed with depression also involve changes in existentials (in addition to modes). However, these changes do not involve a total absence of an existential, such as we see in Schneider’s case.

## **5 A New Phenomenology of Depression**

Following the above discussion, changes in existentials should be seen as comprising a legitimate realm of phenomenological investigation. As explained above, Ratcliffe's phenomenological account of depression is unnecessarily constrained to discussions of mode.

Once we examine reports of depression in light of the possibility of a change in existentials themselves, it becomes clear that some cases of people diagnosed with MDD consist primarily in a degradation of the existential of situatedness. In these cases, the core of the disorder is not to be found in despair, guilt, or hopelessness. Rather, the disorder is an erosion of the degree to which one is situated in the world at all.

The idea of a degraded mood already carries with it a sense of severity and pathology. However, if we join with Heidegger (and Ratcliffe) in believing that certain ground moods (or existential feelings) are in fact world-disclosive, both revealing the world through a context of significance and situating us within this significance, the profundity associated with the loss or degradation of this existential becomes immense.

Many reports of depression, including a number of those cited by Ratcliffe and other phenomenological psychopathologists (K. Aho 2013; Fuchs 2005a), refer to a loss of meaning and significance. Tools do not call out to us to be taken up in our everyday projects and concerns. The world is still there, but not as forcefully as it once was. Nothing within the world solicits the engagement of the depressed person. This does not apply only to “things.” Cultural practices, personal, professional, and family roles all lose significance. The sense of the future bringing anything meaningful, either positive or negative, is either absent or severely eroded. The past, too, offers little to stand on. If you are still capable of reflecting upon your situation, who you were and who you are ceases to offer a space of possibilities.

According to Heidegger, moods throw one into a situation (Heidegger 1962, 174). They disclose one's world, both opening and constraining one's range of future possibilities. In this sense, they disclose and give sense to the ground of lived meaning in which we find ourselves situated. They disclose the world such that we can desire, act, and even will. But many people

diagnosed with depression are incapable of finding themselves on such solid foundations. Their particular situation is not disclosed as forcefully as it once was. Their world does not reveal itself as a space within which and against which to carve out the story of their life. Many people diagnosed with depression are, in a sense, de-situated.

There are numerous first-person reports of depression that illustrate this erosion of the structure of being situated and attuned through moods. A few of them read as follows:

Depression steals away whoever you were, prevents you from seeing who you might someday be, and replaces your life with a black hole [...] Nothing human beings value matters any more—music, laughter, love, sex, children, toasted bagels and the *Sunday New York Times*—because nothing and no one can reach the person trapped in the void. (Karp 1996, 24)

You can't... even remember what it's like to go and do something and feel pleasure from it. You look at the world, the array of things that you could do, and they're completely meaningless to you. (Karp 1996, 32)

The first thing that goes is happiness. You cannot gain pleasure from anything. That's famously the cardinal symptom of major depression. But soon other emotions follow happiness into oblivion: sadness as you know it, the sadness that seemed to have led you here; your sense of humor; your belief in and capacity for love. Your mind is leached until you seem dim-witted even to yourself [...] You lose the ability to trust anyone, to be touched, to grieve. Eventually, you are simply absent from yourself. (Solomon 2001, 19)

Reports such as these, where the world itself is devoid of significance and meaning, are the most unsettling, and also the most difficult to convey. We have few words, if any, that are capable of accurately conveying the profound lack that is the central phenomenon of so many experiences of depression. One's children no longer show up as beings that must be cared for and nurtured. The image of one's spouse evokes no feeling of love. There is an all-pervasive meaninglessness, coupled with an inability to feel. This loss of feeling even penetrates the perceptual field. Many report that the world as a whole seems dimmer, the sense of touch is markedly diminished, and all food tastes bland.

Heidegger, in discussing the fundamentality of moods, says,

Under the strongest pressure and resistance, nothing like an affect would come about, and the resistance itself would remain essentially undiscovered, if Being-in-the-world, with its situatedness, had not already submitted itself to having entities within-the-world “matter” to it in a way which its moods have outlined in advance. *Existentially, situatedness implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us.* (Heidegger 1962, 177 translation modified)

This passage seems to be an admission of what one’s world would be like in the absence of moods and situatedness. For Heidegger, however, the absence or even erosion of moods is not a real possibility. The above quotation is meant to stress the essential role moods play in human existence; it is not meant to bring this essential role into question. Nonetheless, it is clear from the above quotation that if this existential structure did, in fact, suffer degradation, the ability to have things matter would be greatly eroded.

For many people with depression, there is a wholesale leveling-down of sense and meaning. The world as a whole (along with the things within it) does not seem to press upon one as forcefully. There is a general inability to be affected. And further, the world is not just meaningless *for me*; it seems meaningless for everyone, or in general. This kind of depression is not experienced as a loss of a particular human capacity, but as a degradation of the world itself, making the fundamental lack all the more profound.

The phenomenological account of depression I am developing here differs from Ratcliffe's account in one important respect. For Ratcliffe, depression is understood as consisting primarily of *ways of being attuned to and situated in a world*. My account, in contrast, offers an understanding of depression whereby *the degree to which one is attuned to and situated in a world through moods can itself undergo change*.

Depression, for Ratcliffe, is a mode of finding oneself. He appeals to existential feelings, or ground moods, capable of disclosing the world as a whole. These existential feelings may close off the possibility for having certain kinds of emotions and feelings, and perhaps even

certain thoughts and desires. But they also open up the world in a certain way. The existential feeling of deep guilt, for example, discloses the world through an all-pervasive sense of guiltiness. The person in a mood of deep guilt experiences herself as guilty, but not about anything in particular. Instead, she is guilty as such, and only feelings and emotions that conform to this mode of world-disclosure are capable of manifesting in her world (Ratcliffe 2010).

Ratcliffe offers what might be called a positive account of depression. The possibility of finding oneself situated in the world cannot erode. The loss of any mood is necessarily the emergence of a new mood. This idea finds its roots in Heidegger's account of mood, where he states, "The fact that moods can deteriorate and change over means simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood" (Heidegger 1962, 173).

In contrast to Ratcliffe's positive account, I am offering what might be termed a negative account of depression. Some cases of people diagnosed with depression are best understood not as an erosion of a particular mood, or as the emergence of a new mood, but instead as an erosion of the category of moods as a whole; that is to say, as an erosion of the structure of situatedness. This incorporates a degree of negativity, or negation, that occurs at the ontological level, not merely the ontic. While Ratcliffe's account forces us to interpret every self-report of a loss of feeling as a "*feeling of not feeling*" (i.e. as itself a positive feeling), my account allows us to take such self-reports at face value, allowing for the possibility of an erosion or degradation of one's capacity to be affected.

Merleau-Ponty's study of Schneider can also be understood as a negative account. However, while Merleau-Ponty offers an example of the total absence of a structure of human existence (i.e. the category of virtual milieus is absent from Schneider's world), my account of depression illustrates the possibility of a structure eroding, rather than disappearing. And just as



the structure of situatedness is subject to the possibility of erosion, it is also subject to the possibility of re-sedimentation. This is evidenced by cases of recovery in which depressed people are eventually able to feel again. The range and intensity of moods increases, and the possibility of finding oneself situated in a world by which one can be affected is gradually reestablished.

This understanding of depression as a structural rather than a modal shift is further supported by phenomenological accounts of depression developed by Aho and Svenaeus (K. Aho 2013; Svenaeus 2007). While neither of their accounts explicitly engage with the possibility of depression as a change in an existential, both offer phenomenological accounts of depression as an inability to feel (despite the fact that their accounts are still founded on a conception of depression as a kind of ground mood). Further, both Aho and Svenaeus discuss the function of antidepressants not as bringing about a shift in mood (e.g. from sadness to happiness), but as restoring the possibility of being able to be affected and feel in general. As Aho quotes from a report of recovery following antidepressant treatment, “I [now] marvel at my ability to move in and out of ordinary feelings like sadness and disappointment and worry. I continue to be stunned by the purity of these feelings, by the beauty of their rightful proportions to actual life events” (K. Aho 2013; Dormen 2001, 241). Reports like this one bring to light a loss of feeling, rather than a kind of feeling, at the core of the depressed existence.

Aho's further reflections on transcendence (or the lack of transcendence) in depression also aligns with the account of depression I have offered here. He argues that while we are typically capable of reinterpreting our circumstances in such a way as to make them our own, to make them something we can incorporate into our lives and use as a foundation for future goals and projects, depression seems to negate this capacity (K. Aho 2013). In the time between depressive episodes, a person is capable of integrating her identity as someone with MDD into

her larger life narrative, perhaps even interpreting her previous depressive episodes as important events, changing the course of her life for the better. But in the midst of a depressive episode this is an impossibility. As Aho says, “In the fog of depression, the significance and poignancy of the past no longer resonates, and the future offers no hope for recovery, for anticipated projects or possible ways of living to look forward to. All that exists is the disordered paralysis of the present moment” (2013).

While Aho does not distinguish between structural and modal changes in his discussions of affectivity and transcendence, it seems that his account of affectivity and situatedness in depression is cashed out in modal terms, while his account of transcendence is developed as an existential disorder. In describing the loss of affectivity in depression, Aho refers to Heidegger's discussion of profound boredom in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2001a). While he does not claim that depression is analogous to Heidegger's account of profound boredom, he clearly takes up Heidegger's discussion as a model, thereby predetermining his discussion of depression as a kind of ground mood. In his discussion of transcendence, on the other hand, he conceives of depression not as a mode of transcendence that blocks off the possibility for other modes, but as a loss of possibilities in general.

My account of the erosion of the existential of situatedness can be understood as analogous to Aho's account of the erosion of transcendence. For Aho, depression is not a way, or mode, of transcending one's current predicament and projecting into the future. Rather, it is a degradation of one's capacity to transcend at all. In much the same way, my account of depression is not one in which depressed people are merely situated in and attuned to the world in a distinct way, or mode. Rather, depression involves a degradation of the degree to which one

is situated and attuned at all. It is, in Heidegger's terms, an ontological change, rather than an ontic one.

Once depression is understood in this sense (i.e. as a degradation of the degree to which one is situated), important issues arise within the context of temporality. While Ratcliffe is primarily concerned with how depression takes away one's future, I am more concerned (at least in the present context) with how depression takes away one's past.

In Ratcliffe's account of depression, shifts in existential feelings cause us to dwell in our past, rather than projecting towards our future. He argues that the impossibility of any future becoming, or change, is coupled with a reification of the past. As he says, "The future is no longer a dimension of possibilities for activity, and there is no hope of relief from this predicament. Experience therefore dwells in the past, in a domain of deeds that are fixed, where no acts can be compensated for" (Ratcliffe 2010, 612).

The structure of situatedness plays a fundamental role in disclosing my past. In situating me with respect to my past, my moods disclose my facticity, or the personal-biographical details of my life that have shaped my identity. As Heidegger would put it, situatedness, manifest through some particular mood, throws me into my past. He says, "The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*" (Heidegger 1962, 174). In other words, the structure of situatedness discloses (and thereby throws me into) my past in such a way that it determines the scope of my future possibilities. My past actions and roles have placed certain burdens upon me, and my moods disclose these burdens.

If we understand depression in terms of deep, all-pervasive moods, dwelling in the past seems the most reasonable correlate to a loss of future possibilities. If, however, some cases of depression are understood as erosions of the existential of situatedness, the depressed person

must be understood as losing her past, just as she should be understood as losing her future. An erosion of situatedness—far from making one dwell in the past—does not offer one a past to dwell in. Not only is the world one in which there is no one to become; it is a world in which there is no one to have been. Rather than a past identity reifying into who one will always have to be, who one is, has been, and will be are lost.

This account of the erosion of situatedness further explains why nothing within the world holds any value. Objects, events, people, and even identities all gain their meaning from a context or situation. In suffering an erosion of situatedness, as well as all the modes by which one could be situated, this contextual background degrades. The inability to find anything meaningful, or even to be affected by anything, necessarily follows from the loss of the context within which things gain their meaning.

While I have argued above that depression is not, at its core, a disorder of mode, but is instead a disorder of an existential, this need not imply that all modal changes are irrelevant to the disorder. As Ratcliffe illustrates, feelings of guilt and hopelessness characterize many cases of depression, and this aspect of the disorder cannot be ignored. As I have stressed, the kind of depression I am discussing should be understood as an *erosion* of the structure of situatedness, rather than a complete *absence* of this structure. In this eroded form of existence, we may be attuned and situated through dulled or blunted moods. This leaves open the possibility of being guilty, hopeless, or even anxious (e.g. in agitated depression) while nonetheless suffering a degradation of meaning and significance, coupled with muted affectivity. Without the proper

distinction between structural and modal changes, cases such as these would be inherently paradoxical.<sup>22</sup>

In sum, I have offered a phenomenological account in which some cases of MDD are characterized not by a change in the kind of mood one is situated in, but by a degradation of the degree to which one is situated in and through moods. This degradation ultimately amounts to a kind of de-situatedness, in which the world is not disclosed as a realm of meaning or significance. The depressed person has a degraded structure of finding herself in the world, and is therefore incapable of being embedded in a realm of meaningful action. In spite of this degradation or erosion of the structure of situatedness, depression is also often characterized by all-pervasive, yet muted, ground moods or existential feelings. In this way we can understand cases in which a depressed person reports that her world is devoid of meaning, yet also permeated by feelings of guilt or anxiety.

## **6 Conclusion**

In the above sections I argued for an alternative phenomenology of depression in which some cases of depression are, at their most fundamental level, disorders of the existential of situatedness, rather than of one of its modes. This was contrasted with Ratcliffe's phenomenology of depression, in which depression is primarily constituted by a change in existential feeling, which is understood as a profound shift in the mode of human existence. As I argued, Ratcliffe's account does not do justice to a large portion of reports of depression and

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<sup>22</sup> The kind of phenomenological account of depression I am developing here is not without precedent. The double aspect of depression as a degradation of feeling, coupled with feelings of guilt, was explored by some of the phenomenological psychiatrists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Ludwig Binswanger, Hubertus Tellenbach, and Erwin Straus. They considered this double aspect to be central to the diagnostic category of *melancholia*. I am grateful to Giovanni Stanghellini for bringing this historical link to my attention.

depressed experience. Specifically, it does not adequately account for the diminished affectivity and situatedness of people diagnosed with depression. Further, my account of depression does not exclude his account. His accounts of depression in terms of existential feelings are convincing, and they certainly have explanatory power. However, his account assumes a stable structure of existence, within which there can be a variety of different modes. This kind of phenomenological account unnecessarily limits the range of possible phenomenological explanations. We should be open to the possibility—especially in cases of severe psychiatric and neurological disorders—that the existentials can change. In developing our phenomenological investigations in this way, we will find that accounts such as Ratcliffe's can often be embedded in these more foundational accounts, in many cases with fruitful results.<sup>23</sup>

The final point of discussion is the issue of heterogeneity in major depressive disorder and other psychiatric disorders. This heterogeneity, as mentioned above, brings with it a host of problems, not the least of which is the severely diminished utility of the current diagnostic categories in the DSM-5. In the case of MDD, the phenomena included in this category are so diverse that it is no longer acceptable to believe that we are dealing with a single disorder that happens to manifest in a variety of ways. Rather, it is likely, as Horwitz and Wakefield (2007) have argued, that a number of non-pathological cases are included in the diagnostic category; it is also likely that the group of patients who do have disorders are not all suffering from the same disorder.

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<sup>23</sup> I do not mean to suggest that phenomenological accounts of persons diagnosed with depression are necessarily illegitimate if they appeal only to changes in the mode of existence. Due to the heterogeneity and ambiguity of the diagnostic criteria for MDD, it is likely that many people with this diagnosis have not suffered any change in their basic existential, and for them, Ratcliffe's account is likely to be accurate.

How exactly to engage in the project of dividing these heterogeneous categories into homogeneous groups is an issue that requires a high degree of sensitivity and creativity. I believe phenomenology can offer us some useful tools for such an undertaking. As illustrated in this chapter, phenomenology can at least make the important distinction between changes in the structure of human existence and changes in the mode. Those who have undergone a change in their structure of existence should be understood as having a disorder that is different in kind from those who have only undergone a change in their mode of existence. It is my hope that such distinctions will offer tools for increasing the accuracy of targeted clinical interventions, and assisting in the project of creating diagnostic categories with greater utility than those currently available.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**RECONSIDERING THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF DEPRESSION AND**

**MANIA:**

**TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DISSOLUTION OF THE PARADOX OF**

**MIXED STATES<sup>24</sup>**

**1 Introduction**

Both the general public and professional psychiatrists typically conceive of depression and mania as polar opposites—embodied in the term “bipolar disorder” itself. However, the possibility of mixed states (i.e. states that incorporate symptoms considered essential to both depressive and manic episodes) has a long history. In his book, *Manic Depressive Insanity and Paranoia*, Emil Kraepelin elucidated the possible manifestations of such states (Kraepelin 1989). Some authors even point as far back as Hippocrates and Aretaeus of Cappadocia, arguing that these ancient physicians described cases of melancholic symptoms appearing during the course of behavior that we would today characterize as manic (Cassidy et al. 1998; Akiskal 1996; Swann et al. 2013; Angst and Marneros 2001).

The formal definition of mixed states, given in the DSM-5, consists of either a state meeting full criteria for a manic or hypomanic episode, accompanied by at least three depressive symptoms, or a state meeting full criteria for a depressive episode, accompanied by at least three manic or hypomanic symptoms (American Psychiatric Association 2013). This shares some

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<sup>24</sup> A version of this chapter has been previously published in *Journal of Psychopathology*, 2014, Vol. 20 (4), 414 – 422. Copyright 2014 by Anthony Fernandez.



similarities with earlier conceptions of mixed states, but there is one important difference in the DSM. While Kraepelin did not conceive of depression and mania as opposing poles, the DSM conception implies the opposition of the two phenomena, thereby establishing mixed states as a problematic, if not paradoxical, form of human subjectivity. Many of the particular symptoms of each kind of episode are clearly juxtaposed. For example, a major depressive episode is characterized by a depressed mood while a manic episode is characterized by an elevated or expansive mood. Another characteristic of a major depressive episode is a loss of interest or pleasure in activities, while a manic episode often includes excessive involvement in activities that have potential for painful consequences. As a result of this characterization of depressive and manic episodes, mixed states of any sort (whether they are predominantly depressive or manic) present us with a kind of paradox. If depression and mania are, in fact, polar opposites, how can essential features of both disorders manifest simultaneously?

Questions of this kind have given rise to a large body of psychological and psychiatric research that attempts to reconceive the essential features of depression and mania with the intention of bestowing some sense on the strange phenomenon of mixed states (Castle 2014; Court 1972; Dilsaver et al. 1999; Ghaemi 2013; Goldberg et al. 2000; González-Pinto et al. 2004; C. Henry et al. 2007; C. Henry et al. 2003; Koukopoulos, Sani, and Ghaemi 2013; M'Bailara et al. 2012; McElroy et al. 1995; Pacchiarotti et al. 2011; Perugi et al. 1997; Perugi et al. 2013; Perugi, Quaranta, and Dell'Osso 2014; Swann et al. 1993). One account, made popular by Kraepelin, characterizes mixed states as the outcome of prolonged periods of transition between depressive and manic episodes, or vice versa. According to this account, the movement from one kind of episode to the other is typically either rapid or includes a transition through a non-episodic state. However, in some cases a person moves from one kind of episode to the other

without the typically rapid transition, thereby displaying a mixture of what seem to be two opposing states (Kraepelin 1989; Swann et al. 2013). Another, more radical account, is that depression and mania are not actually two opposing poles. Instead, mania is a severe mental disorder, while depression is a less severe disorder on the same spectrum. According to this conception, the opposing poles, or extremes, are actually mania and a non-episodic state. Because depression stands at a point between these states, it is not unusual to find depressive and manic symptoms arising simultaneously (Court 1972).

While either of these accounts might explain the possibility of mixed states, in this chapter I consider another solution. Rather than *explaining* mixed states, I attempt to *explain them away*. In other words, I argue that mixed states may not actually exist—instead, they are artifacts of inaccurate diagnostic constructs that have been perpetuated in light of misattributions of the essential characteristics of depressive and manic episodes.

In the section section, I argue that some of the symptoms included in the diagnostic criteria for depressive and manic episodes in the DSM-5 are not actually essential features of these episodes. In the third section, I reconsider the category of major depressive disorder (MDD) from the perspective of phenomenological psychopathology, arguing that severe depressive episodes should not be characterized by any particular moods (such as sadness, hopelessness, or guilt), and should instead be characterized by a diminished capacity for finding ourselves situated in and attuned to the world at all. In other words, the affective dimension of depression should be characterized as a change in the way we have moods, not as a change from one kind of mood to another. In the fourth section, I turn to mania, arguing that manic episodes, taken as the opposite of depressive episodes, should be characterized not by any particular moods (such as euphoria, grandiosity, or even irritability), and should instead be characterized by

an enhanced or heightened capacity for finding ourselves situated in and attuned to the world. In other words, the affective dimension of mania, like the affective dimension of depression, should be understood as a change in the way we have moods, not as a change from one kind of mood to another. In the fifth section, I return to the phenomenon of mixed states and argue that the affective dimension of depression and mania, when conceived along the phenomenological lines I set forth in the previous sections, dissolves the paradox of mixed states by showing that the essential characteristics of depression and mania *cannot* and *do not* coincide. Many cases of mixed states are diagnosed because moods that we take to be essential features of either depression or mania arise within the context of what is considered to be the opposite kind of episode (e.g. dysphoria, typically associated with depression, often arises in what is otherwise considered a manic state). However, if we conceive of the affective dimension of depression as a decrease in the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world through moods, and the affective dimension of mania as an increase in the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world through moods, then the particular mood one finds oneself in is simply irrelevant to the diagnosis of either depression or mania. As a result, the manifestation of any particular moods in what otherwise seem to be a pure manic or depressive episode does not constitute a mixed state.

## **2 Symptomatology in Phenomenology and Mainstream Psychiatry**

The DSM-5 organizes and distinguished its categories of disorder by reference to symptom checklists. The kinds of symptoms listed for each disorder are varied, but there is predominance of behavioral criteria or, at the very least, criteria that can be interpreted behaviorally. A diagnosis of major depressive disorder (MDD), for example, is made when a patient presents with five or more of the following symptoms (with at least one of the symptoms

being the first or second on the list) over a period of at least two weeks: (1) depressed mood; (2) diminished interest or pleasure; (3) significant weight loss or weight gain; (4) insomnia or hypersomnia; (5) psychomotor agitation or retardation; (6) fatigue or loss of energy; (7) feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt; (8) diminished ability to think or concentrate; (9) recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or a suicide attempt or plan (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

Many of these symptoms seem dissimilar and unrelated, especially considering the fact that there does not seem to be any core symptom around which the rest are organized or motivated. In light of this, it is reasonable to ask how such a set of symptoms became *the* symptoms by which MDD is diagnosed.

There are a variety of ways we can formulate such a question and each formulation will give us a different answer. A historical formulation, for example, would ask about the actual events that led to the selection of the particular criteria in the DSM. A more philosophical formulation, however, might ask why the particular *kinds* of symptoms listed in the DSM have been selected. What is it about these symptoms that made them attractive for use as DSM diagnostic criteria? This is the kind of question I wish to address here.

Many of the symptoms of MDD, including (1), (2), (7), (8), and (9) listed above, seem to be experiential, or subjective. That is to say, they are symptoms that seem to be observable primarily from the perspective of the patient herself. Others, such as (3) and (6), seem physiological, rather than primarily behavioral or experiential. However, nearly all of these symptoms come with some kind of qualification that allows for them to be met, or checked off, as a result of observations made by a clinician, family member, or close acquaintance, rather than the patient herself. For example, depressed mood, diminished interest or pleasure in activities,

and diminished ability to think or concentrate are all followed by the qualification that these items can be met by observations made by others. Such a possibility for diagnosis is also implied in the physiological symptom of significant weight loss or weight gain, as this item includes the qualification, “when not dieting,” which implicitly integrates a behavioral character into the symptom, allowing the diagnosis to be made by outside observation. Out of all the experiential or subjective symptoms that can be used to make a diagnosis, only one—feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt—does not include the qualification that it can also be confirmed by outside observation, rather than just first-person report.

It follows from this insight into the preponderance of behavioral, or behaviorally qualified, diagnostic criteria that what makes a particular symptom likely to make the list of characteristic features of a psychiatric disorder is the quality of being easily observable. Each symptom listed in the DSM can be quickly and easily observed by a clinician, patient, family member or close acquaintance, or some combination thereof.

The reason for qualifying symptoms in such a way as to allow for observation or confirmation from multiple sources is clear enough. Easily observable symptoms expedite the process of diagnosis and, in turn, reduce the time it takes to implement targeted interventions—whether these be psychopharmaceuticals or psychotherapies. However, the symptomatology of many of the DSM categories of disorder still leaves one wanting. The most easily observable symptoms are not necessarily the most essential, or characteristic, of the disorder in question. The authors of the DSM, however, do not seem to acknowledge this difference. As they say in the preface to the DSM-5, “. . .the current diagnostic criteria are the *best available description of how mental disorders are expressed* and can be recognized by trained clinicians” (American Psychiatric Association 2013 my emphasis). And, further, they claim that the DSM is used by

researchers and clinicians who “...strive for a common language to communicate the *essential characteristics* of mental disorders presented by their patients” (American Psychiatric Association 2013 my emphasis).

While the assumption that the easily observable symptoms listed in the DSM are also essential characteristics of these disorders is problematic, the privileging of easily observable symptoms within the context of a diagnostic manual is not problematic in itself. As said above, there are legitimate practical reasons for the privileging of such symptoms. However, there is another issue that, when combined with the privileging of easily observable symptoms over essential characteristics, problematizes the situation. This additional issue is that of validity. While the DSM categories are, for the most part, reliable—in the sense that most clinicians, when presented with the same patient or the same symptom cluster, will make the same diagnosis—they are not necessarily valid. Validity does not have a single definition within the context of psychiatric research and practice, but it is often used to refer to a disorder being “real,” which many take to mean that it has a distinct neurobiological cause, or biomarker. Proponents of the DSM have promised time and again that the DSM categories of disorder will be neurobiologically validated in the near future, but this promise has been left unfulfilled for the past few decades.

Another kind of validity, and one that is particularly relevant to philosophical phenomenological investigations of psychiatric disorders, is construct validity. Jablensky and Kendell explain that a category of disorder has construct validity when it “is based on a coherent, explicit set of defining features” (Jablensky and Kendell 2002). Phenomenological psychopathology can assist in the project of offering coherent features by finding essential characteristics of a disorder that help us make sense of other, less foundational characteristics.

And, further, it can assist in the project of offering explicit features by supplying careful and robust descriptions of the essential characteristics.

In the following sections I consider depression, mania, and mixed states, in turn, from a phenomenological perspective. In so doing, I illustrate phenomenology's role in discovering and accurately describing essential features of disorder. Finally, I argue that this kind of phenomenological research can help us overcome issues inherent in our conceptualizations of disorders and disordered phenomena, such as mixed states.

### **3 The Phenomenology of Depression**

The last decade has seen a renewed interest in the phenomenology of depression. Figures such as Kevin Aho (K. Aho 2013), Thomas Fuchs (Fuchs 2002; 2005a; 2005c; Fuchs 2013b), Matthew Ratcliffe (Ratcliffe 2008; 2010; 2012; 2013), and Giovanni Stanghellini (Stanghellini 2004) and René Rosfort (Stanghellini and Rosfort 2013; 2014) have all contributed to this growing body of literature. Each of these phenomenological psychopathologists has developed a focus on a particular aspect of depressive disorders, but there remains substantial overlap in their work. Some have focused on issues of temporality, or shifts in the way time and the temporal flow manifest in cases of depressive episodes (K. Aho 2013; Fuchs 2013b; Ratcliffe 2012). Some focus on issues of embodiment, or changes in the way people experience their body or have bodily engagements with the world (K. Aho 2013; Fuchs 2002; 2005a; 2005c). Others focus on the relationships between depressive episodes and other disorders, such as borderline personality disorder (Stanghellini and Rosfort 2013; 2014).

In spite of the varied interests of these phenomenological psychopathologists, there is one point of focus that they all share. Every phenomenological psychopathologist who studies depression must, to some extent, consider the affective dimension of depressive episodes. As

discussed in the preceding chapter, this focus has taken a variety of forms, and a few competing interpretations of the affective dimension of depressive episodes have been offered. However, each phenomenological account of this feature of depression might be understood as an attempt to make sense of the central, but rather ambiguous, symptom referred to as “depressed mood.” The DSM describes this symptom in the following terms: “Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, as indicated by either subjective report (e.g., feels sad, empty, hopeless) or observation made by others (e.g., appears tearful)” (American Psychiatric Association 2013). As is made clear in this brief description, the DSM does not actually include a definition of depressed mood. Instead, it offers the clinician a few examples—sadness, emptiness, and hopelessness—and in so doing leaves open the possibility for other kinds of moods or affective phenomena to fulfill this criterion, while giving very little instruction on how to go about deciding which other affective phenomena or changes in mood actually count as “depressed mood.”

This very ambiguity is used by Stanghellini as the starting point for one of his phenomenological investigations of depression and mania. As he says, “In ICD-10, depressed mood is defined quantitatively as ‘lowered mood’ and it is also assumed that the differentiating criteria between normal and pathological sadness is merely quantitative. Depressed mood is also used as a synonym to ‘sadness’, assuming that persons affected by major depression feel sad—rather than having no feelings at all” (Stanghellini 2004). As he goes on to explain, the ambiguity inherent in the poorly defined symptom of “depressed mood” in both the ICD and DSM create difficulties in drawing boundaries between pathological and non-pathological moods and affective states. Adequately describing what it is that we are trying to express or point to when



we refer to “depressed mood” can, as he says, go a long way toward overcoming controversies over the pathological/non-pathological boundaries, at least in the case of depression.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, much of the recent phenomenological research on describing and defining what exactly we mean by a “depressed mood” has come from the work of Ratcliffe. Two papers in particular—one on deep guilt (Ratcliffe 2010) and one on hopelessness (Ratcliffe 2013)—bring to light the distinct characteristics that these moods take in the context of depressive disorders. In order to adequately characterize these moods, Ratcliffe accounts for them as “existential feelings.” The concept of existential feeling is Ratcliffe’s own development, but it is owed in large part to Martin Heidegger’s account of moods and ground moods in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962) and *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2001a). Existential feelings are understood as all-encompassing, and even world-disclosing, affective phenomena that are pre-intentional (meaning that they are not about, or directed toward, anything in particular), thereby shaping the meaningfulness of our world as a whole. In the case of deep guilt, for example, the person perceives himself as being guilty as such (i.e. not guilty for any distinct reason). Further, this deep guilt, pervading the person’s lived world in its entirety, determines the kinds of intentional feelings and emotions (i.e. feelings and emotions that are about, or directed toward, something) that can manifest. Only feelings and emotions that conform to the all-encompassing guiltiness of the person’s lived world can arise. Hopelessness, or what Ratcliffe refers to as “radical hopelessness,” is a similar phenomenon that is also common in patients diagnosed with MDD. In this case, what is so radical about the hopelessness of depression is that it eliminates the possibility for hoping at all. While most cases of hopelessness are contextual—in the sense that the feeling of hopelessness is linked to the fact that the person finds herself in a hopeless situation—the hopelessness of the person in a

depressive episode is not a response to any particular context and a change in context will not cause the hopelessness to subside. It is the person's very existence, or subjectivity, that has undergone a profound change.

While Ratcliffe's accounts enrich the rather impoverished descriptions of "depressed mood" in the DSM, others have focused on a different feature of the affective dimension of depression that, while historically important, is mostly ignored in the contemporary symptomatology. This is the phenomenon of the loss of feeling, or what is sometimes referred to as the feeling of the loss of feeling. While Ratcliffe's work does touch on this, he characterizes it as another kind of existential feeling, arguing that the loss of feeling is, in fact, a *feeling* of the loss of feeling, thereby making it a distinct affective phenomenon in its own right (as opposed to an actual shift in the degree to which we can be affected by the world).

This phenomenon of the loss of feeling is characteristic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conception of melancholia, which was picked up by historical phenomenological psychopathologists such as Tellenbach (1980), but also plays a central role in contemporary works by Stanghellini and Fuchs. Stanghellini refers to a loss of emotional resonance as characteristic of melancholic depression (Stanghellini 2004), while Fuchs focuses how melancholia alters our embodiment, referring instead to a loss of *bodily* resonance that incorporates a diminished capacity for perception (Fuchs 2005a).

Stanghellini, in investigating the loss of feeling associated with depressive episodes, points out that the DSM does in fact refer to such a phenomenon, but immediately downplays its importance, or even eliminates it as a legitimate expression of "depressed mood," by allowing for the clinician's observations of the patient's behavior to override the patient's descriptions of her own experience. This comes to light in the DSM-5 in the line, "In some cases, sadness may

be denied at first but may subsequently be elicited by interview (e.g., by pointing out that the individual looks as if he or she is about to cry). In some individuals who complain of feeling ‘blah,’ having no feelings, or feeling anxious, the presence of a depressed mood can be inferred from the person’s facial expressions and demeanor” (Stanghellini 2004). In other words, even if a patient does in fact undergo an existential shift in which his capacity for being affected by his world is diminished, and he subsequently reports this shift in a psychiatric interview, the clinician’s “expert” interpretation of the patient’s facial expressions supplies overriding evidence for the fact that the patient is actually sad (thereby having what the DSM considers to be a “depressed mood”). Such lapses into behaviorism undercut the very possibility of alternative interpretations of the existential changes occurring on the side of the patient’s subjectivity.

Continuing in the vein of research opened up by Fuchs, Stanghellini, and others, in chapter three I developed an account of the affective dimension of depressive episodes that is similar to their accounts of the loss of emotional and bodily resonance, but focuses more heavily on the distinction between this kind of change and a change in mood. I argue that one of the essential features of a major depressive episode is—contrary to the popular account of depression as a kind of mood—a degradation or diminishment of the capacity for having moods at all. In this sense, the fundamental affective shift in depressive episodes is in what Heidegger refers to as *Befindlichkeit*—commonly translated as “situatedness” or “affectivity”—rather than *Stimmung*—commonly translated as mood, atmosphere, or tune, in the sense of tuning an instrument. According to Heidegger, *Befindlichkeit*, which refers to the fact that at any time we find ourselves always already situated in and attuned to the world, is a categorial characteristic of human existence. That is to say, it refers to an essential feature of human existence that is itself a category that encompasses a certain group of phenomena. The phenomena that fall into the

category of *Befindlichkeit* are *Stimmungen*, or moods. Moods, according to Heidegger, are particular ways of finding ourselves in the world, and determine the ways we can be affected by this world. The relationship between these terms is, then, that *Befindlichkeit* refers to the category of moods as a whole, while a *Stimmung* is a particular mood, and thus a particular way of being situated in and attuned to the world.

By following this distinction, we can see that the affective changes expressed in the DSM, as well as in the work of Ratcliffe, are of a fundamentally different kind from the affective changes I have discussed in the preceding chapter. If we understand “depressed mood” as a *kind of mood*, then it is a shift in what Heidegger refers to as *Stimmung*. Depression, characterized in this way, should be understood as a distinctive mode of being situated in and attuned to the world. However, if we understand “depressed mood” as a *diminished capacity to have moods*, then it is a shift in what Heidegger refers to as *Befindlichkeit*. Depression, characterized in this way, should be understood as a diminishing of the intensity of moods as a whole. (It should also be noted that the shift I am proposing here is in some ways alien to Heidegger’s own account. Heidegger does not seem to allow for the possibility of changes in the degree to which one is situated in and attuned to the world. Rather, he only allows for changes from one mood to another.)

Of course, these two accounts are not mutually exclusive. Moods with diminished intensity are still moods. It is possible for a depressed person to be situated and attuned through a dulled or blunted mood of guilt, hopelessness, or sadness. However, this does not imply that any of these moods should be considered an essential characteristic of depression. Rather, the fact that all moods are, for the depressed person, dulled or blunted, is an essential characteristic. In light of this, if “depressed mood” is to remain an essential characteristic of depression, it should

be redefined as a decrease in the intensity of moods as a whole—not as an ambiguous set of moods that includes sadness, hopelessness, and guilt.

A similar account of depression has arisen from psychological research on what is referred to as emotion context insensitivity (Rottenberg, Gross, and Gotlib 2005; Rottenberg 2005). As Jonathan Rottenberg explains, “depression flattens the emotional landscape, greatly constricting the range of emotional reactions to differing emotional contexts” (Rottenberg 2005). This account, however, differs from my own in one important respect. According to Rottenberg and colleagues, depression is still a distinctive mood. What makes it distinctive is that, rather than causing the depressed person to be more easily affected by negative events—thereby becoming more susceptible to sadness, despair, and related emotions—it instead causes the depressed person to be less emotionally affected by their context in general. In other words, depression, as a mood, reduces the degree to which one is affected by, and has emotional responses to, one’s world. My own account, by contrast, appeals to the same phenomenon—low emotional sensitivity to context—but does not explain this reduction in sensitivity by appealing to the distinctiveness of a particular mood. Rather, I argue that it is the capacity to be situated in and attuned to the world through a mood in general that is an essential characteristic of depression, and that explains the low emotional sensitivity to context.

To return to the above discussion of the easily observable versus the essential characteristics of depression, the account I offer here portrays a degradation of *Befindlichkeit*, or a diminished capacity for being situated in and attuned through moods, as an essential characteristic of depression. The particular kinds of moods that may often manifest in depression, such as sadness, hopelessness, or guilt, are considered non-essential because their manifestation is not a necessary feature of a depressive episode (this is, of course, in contrast to

the DSM characterization). “Depressed mood,” then, should be redefined as a lowering or diminishing of the intensity of moods as a whole, and not as a particular kind of mood.

#### **4 The Phenomenology of Mania**

Continuing from the account of depression I have sketched, we can reconsider the phenomenon of mania from a phenomenological perspective. Reviewing the criteria for a manic episode as listed in the DSM-5, it seems that particular kinds of moods are considered essential characteristics of a manic episode. While the depressed person is sad, empty, or guilty, the manic person displays an elevated, expansive, or irritable mood (although the latter clearly holds a secondary status, as is evidenced by the qualification that the person must present with four, rather than three, additional symptoms if her mood is only irritable, rather than elevated or expansive).

If we reconsider mania in light of the phenomenological account of depression given above, we can bring into question to what an elevated or expansive mood actually refers. Are these *kinds* of moods, in the way that sadness and guilt are kinds of moods? Or is the reference to elevated and expansive moods similar to my reinterpretation of “depressed mood”? If it is the latter, this forces us to rethink our conception of the essential characteristics of mania as portrayed in both popular culture and professional psychiatry.

The further descriptions of a manic episode offered in the DSM-5 refer to the manic mood as “euphoric, excessively cheerful, high, or ‘feeling on top of the world’” (American Psychiatric Association 2013). However, while these constitute the popular conception of the affective dimension of mania, the DSM-5 also states, “Rapid shifts in mood over brief periods of time may occur and are referred to as lability (i.e., the alternation among euphoria, dysphoria, and irritability)” (American Psychiatric Association 2013). In other words, the DSM-5 describes

mania as characterized both by a certain kind of mood (e.g. euphoria, or excessive cheerfulness) and by increased lability, or the ease and frequency with which moods change over.

This is again similar to the DSM's characterization of the affective dimension of depression. Depression, according to the DSM, is characterized by particular moods, but may also be characterized by a loss of feeling. The DSM's characterization of mania, by comparison, includes references to particular moods, but also to the fact that these moods may change rapidly.

To clarify this characterization, we can reconceive mania along the same lines as depression. If depression is an erosion of *Befindlichkeit*, or a decrease in the degree to which we find ourselves situated in and attuned to the world, then we might understand mania as an amplification or intensification of *Befindlichkeit*. What would follow from such an existential shift? One thing that would be likely to follow is that a person in the midst of a manic episode will be profoundly affected by the world around them. Persons, events, and even objects appear as more meaningful (whether positively or negatively), affecting the person to a greater degree. In the psychological and psychiatric literature this is referred to as emotional reactivity. At least two psychiatric studies show that a fundamental characteristic of both manic and mixed manic states is emotional hyper-reactivity, rather than a distinctive mood tonality (C. Henry et al. 2007; M'Bailara et al. 2012). This account is similar to the one I am proposing here, although it focuses on a narrower dimension of manic affectivity.

Another feature that would be likely to follow from an intensification of the existential structure of *Befindlichkeit* is the lability of mood, or the ease with which moods change over. This feature of manic states, as mentioned above, is discussed in the DSM-5 (however, it does not actually make it into the diagnostic criteria, so the authors of the DSM-5 may not count it as an essential feature). And it is also proposed as an important characteristic of mania in a number

of psychiatric and psychological studies (C. Henry et al. 2007; M'Bailara et al. 2012; Perugi et al. 1997; Perugi, Quaranta, and Dell'Osso 2014).

These reformulations of the essential characteristics of both depression and mania, while perhaps of interest in their own right, may be applied in the context of other issues in psychopathology and psychiatric classification. In the following section, I address the paradox of mixed states in light of the phenomenological account of depression and mania offered here.

### **5 Dissolving the Paradox of Mixed States**

To reiterate, mixed states are defined as cases in which one meets the full criteria for a depressive episode while exhibiting manic symptoms, or cases in which one meets the full criteria for a manic episode while exhibiting depressive symptoms. The paradox, then, arises in light of the fact that depression and mania are conceived of as polar opposites. The possibility of having symptoms, not to mention essential characteristics, of one kind of episode manifesting in the midst of the other seems, on the face of it, paradoxical. My solution to this apparent contradiction, unlike the solutions discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is neither that depression and mania are polar opposites that may nevertheless overlap in cases of prolonged transition, nor that depression and mania are not, in fact, polar opposites. Rather, I argue that depression and mania *should* be understood as polar opposites, and that *they do not, in fact, manifest at the same time*. The belief that mixed states are possible stems from a misunderstanding of the essential features of depression and mania.

As I have argued, the affective dimensions of both depression and mania should not be characterized as particular moods, or even as general kinds of moods, such as dysphoric or euphoric moods. Instead, the affective dimensions of these states should be characterized as changes in what Heidegger refers to as *Befindlichkeit*, which refers to the fact that we always



already find ourselves situated in and attuned to the world through a mood. Depression, under this account, is characterized by a diminished or eroded intensity of moods. This results in low emotional reactivity—as evidenced by the fact that people in depressive episodes are largely unaffected by the world around them. Mania, by contrast, is characterized by an intensification of moods. This results in emotional hyper-reactivity—as evidenced by the fact that people in manic episodes can be profoundly affected by the world around them.

It follows from this recharacterization of the essential features of depression and mania that many of the symptoms we considered constitutive of mixed episodes should not be understood as playing any such role. Because no particular moods, or even kinds of moods, constitute essential features of depression or mania, they cannot be used as evidence of mixed episodes. In other words, sadness, guilt, and related moods and emotions should not be considered legitimate symptoms of depression. Euphoria and excessive cheerfulness, in turn, should not be considered legitimate symptoms of mania. It follows from this that these symptoms should not only be abolished from discussions of the classification of mixed states, but should also be removed from the symptomatology of pure manic and depressive states.

## **6 Conclusion**

In sum, I have considered the paradox of mixed manic and depressive states from the perspective of contemporary phenomenological psychopathology. I argued that contemporary psychiatric classification in the DSM-5 privileges easily observable symptoms while neglecting essential features of disorders. Further, the authors of the DSM-5 seem to portray their symptomatology as capturing the essential features of disorders, thereby sedimenting the problematic nature of their system of classification. I followed this discussion with an illustration of how philosophical phenomenology can assist in the project of separating essential from non-

essential features of a disorder by offering more accurate descriptions of disordered subjectivity that can, in turn, be used to draw more accurate boundaries between categories of disorder. Finally, I argued that the phenomenological accounts of the affective dimensions of depression and mania I offered in this chapter help us overcome the apparent paradox of mixed states.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL EMBODIMENT: A CRITIQUE OF THOMAS FUCHS' CONCEPT OF CORPOREALIZATION<sup>25</sup>

#### 1 Introduction

The growing interdisciplinary field of phenomenological psychopathology is currently championed by a number of key figures (including Fuchs 2005b; Ratcliffe 2015; Sass, Parnas, and Zahavi 2011; Stanghellini and Rosfort 2014). Fuchs, for his part, has brought to light the essential place of the body in pathologies that are typically given the label of “mental illness.” As he argues, phenomenological accounts of many psychopathologies, including those of depression, schizophrenia, and anorexia nervosa, inevitably fail to reach the core of the disorder insofar as they neglect its bodily features and characteristics.

One of Fuchs' primary contributions to the literature is his concept of *corporealization*. This concept, developed within the framework of the *Leib/Körper* distinction pioneered by early 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Helmuth Plessner, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, constitutes a central component of Fuchs' philosophical and psychiatric research. While the concept of corporealization was originally offered by Fuchs as a way of illuminating the phenomenon of melancholia, he has since employed this concept (along with his *Leib/Körper* distinction) in his phenomenological accounts of other psychiatric disorders, as well as broader philosophical arguments pertaining to the relationship between mind and body (Fuchs 2011).

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Some authors have offered direct philosophical treatments of Fuchs' *Leib/Körper* distinction, as well as his concept of corporealization (J. Aho and Aho 2009; Svenaeus 2005). Other researchers, working in phenomenology, psychiatry, and psychology have applied it in their own work with the intention of illuminating certain features of psychopathological embodiment (Danielsson and Rosberg 2015; Micali 2013; Sass and Pienkos 2013b; Slaby, Paskaleva, and Stephan 2013; Smith 2013). The concept of corporealization, originally developed within the context of Fuchs' own research program, now shapes the growing interdisciplinary literature on embodiment and its pathologies. In light of this, I offer a critical analysis of his concept of corporealization as well as the *Leib/Körper* distinction, assessing the value and utility of these concepts in the study of psychopathological embodiment.

In the second section, I offer a summary account of Fuchs' own philosophy and phenomenology of the body in illness and in health. The particular focus of this summary account is the heterogeneity of phenomena encompassed by Fuchs' concepts, setting the stage for the clarificatory work conducted in the following sections. In the third section, I briefly address the historical and conceptual origins of the heterogeneity in Fuchs' characterization of *Leib*, *Körper*, and corporealization. I argue that the meanings of *Leib* and *Körper* differ in the two traditions that Fuchs draws upon—Plessner's philosophical anthropology and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. In addition, Fuchs' own concepts have been further articulated and developed by drawing on more recent work on embodiment, thereby diverging in a few important respects from his original sources. In the fourth section, I draw on classical and contemporary phenomenological studies of the lived body in order to delineate five distinct *senses* of the body that are appealed to in Fuchs' discussions of corporealization. I argue that a different kind of corporealization can occur within each sense of the body, and that confusion

can arise if these senses of the body are not adequately disambiguated. In the fifth section, I argue that the concepts of *Leib*, *Körper*, and *corporealization* will need to be more rigorously defined in order to better illuminate the phenomena to which they are applied.

## 2 Fuchs' Phenomenology of Embodiment

Fuchs' phenomenology of the body in melancholia, schizophrenia, and other disorders is filled with complexities and nuances, but the foundation upon which all other aspects of his phenomenological account hinge is certainly the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*. His clearest explication of this distinction is offered in the following lines:

My starting-point is the polarity of the lived and the corporeal body as conceptualized by the phenomenological tradition, especially by Merleau-Ponty. The *lived body* means the body as the medium of all our experience, our embodied being-in-the-world. I act through my body, perceive and exist through it, without explicitly reflecting on it. Hence, lived bodiliness means my relation to the world as mediated and lived by the body. The *corporeal body*, on the other hand, is the material, anatomical body of physiology and medicine which can be observed and grasped. It appears whenever the lived-body loses its “taken for granted” mediating role and becomes obstinate or fragile, as e.g. in the experience of heaviness, fatigue, clumsiness, injury, or illness. The lived-body turns into an objective or corporeal body whenever we become aware of it in an embarrassing way. Lived bodiliness is a constant outward movement, embedded in the environment and participating in the world. Corporeality appears whenever this movement is somehow disturbed or disrupted. Then the lived-body is thrown back on itself, materialized or, as I put it, “corporealized”. (Fuchs 2005c, 108)

This account, given in roughly the same terms in a number of Fuchs' works, is often summed up with the line, “*The lived body is the body that I am, the corporeal body is the body that I have*” (Fuchs 2005c, 108).

Fuchs characterizes the lived body as granting access to, or opening up, the world of everyday experience and engagement. We experience *through* the lived body, but in a predominantly *pre-reflective* manner. By this Fuchs means to bring out the sense of the lived body as unnoticed or invisible when it is properly functioning, allowing for fluid and unhindered perception and engagement. He explains this notion in saying, “The meaning of this

*transparency of the body* should be noted carefully: [...] The mind is not a transmundane asylum of pure subjectivity, but it is the integration of all these living bodily processes, which render themselves transparent to the world” (Fuchs 2005b, 95). In much the same way that the glasses in front of my eyes recede from awareness in order to grant me clear (but mediated) perceptions of my world, the lived body fades into the background in everyday life. Fuchs characterizes this feature of the lived body as “mediated immediacy” (Fuchs 2005b).

In much of his work, Fuchs investigates the various capacities involved in the proper functioning of the lived body. He typically refers to these capacities as “mediating processes.” Such capacities include the conative dimension, implicit temporality, intercorporeality, and excentric positionality, among others. These kinds of processes are typically discussed in classical phenomenology under the heading of transcendental, ontological, or existential structures. However, following Fuchs’ focus on the role of the body as a mediator of experience and perception, I will employ the term “mediating process” throughout this chapter.

One mediating process that play a fundamental role not only in Fuchs’ conception of the lived body, but in his account of corporealization, is the conative dimension. The *conative dimension* is defined as the body’s “seeking and striving for satisfaction” (Fuchs 2005b, 99). In later work he develops this notion into *affective-conative momentum*, which he defines as “the basic ‘energetic’ momentum of mental life which can be expressed by concepts such as drive, striving, urge or affection” (Fuchs 2013b, 78). Any activity in which there is a movement toward an end involves some degree of conation.

As Fuchs stresses time and again, this transparent mediation of the lived body is vulnerable to all sorts of dysfunctions and disturbances, especially in cases of illness. This is where the concept of *Körper*, or the corporeal body, enters into his phenomenological project.

Fuchs' concept of the corporeal body is not as homogeneous as his concept of the lived body. Sometimes this heterogeneity is simply a matter of emphasis, but at other times the characterizations are quite divergent. For example, he often characterizes the corporeal body as "the obstinate or heavy body that eludes my disposal; the body as shown or exposed to others; the body that I am bound to, or that I reflect upon" (Fuchs 2002, 224–225). While this characterization already seems to include a few distinct senses of the body, Fuchs also says that "The corporeal body [...] is the material, anatomical object of physiology and medicine which can be observed and grasped" (Fuchs 2005c, 108). This latter definition differs from the former in putting little emphasis on the body of everyday experience, instead shifting the focus to the body as thematized in the medical and biological sciences. From the picture of the corporeal body that Fuchs develops throughout his work, it seems that both of these characterizations—while divergent in a number of respects—are equally legitimate portrayals of the corporeal body.

In addition to the divergent definitions of the corporeal body, there are also numerous ways that the body can corporealize, or reveal itself in its materiality. The body can be brought to the fore in a variety of circumstances and for a variety of reasons, many of which Fuchs catalogues and illustrates. These include experiences of (1) heaviness, fatigue, injury, or illness, along with (2) clumsiness and (3) cases in which one's body becomes an object perceived by others. This latter case, in which one is caught in the gaze of the other, itself allows for at least three distinctions, which Fuchs categorizes as (a) being shamefully exposed to the other, (b) consciously attending to one's physical appearance (e.g. by dressing a certain way or putting on makeup), and (c) being examined by a physician (Fuchs 2002, 224–225).

Just as there are various events or situations in which the corporeal body can come to the fore, there are various kinds of phenomena that count as the corporeal body and as

corporealization. However, in spite of the heterogeneity that Fuchs himself displays in his illustrations of the corporeal body, he still maintains (and perhaps even prioritizes) the homogeneity of each of his concepts, *Leib* and *Körper*. As he summarizes, “the corporeal body appears whenever a reaction or resistance arises to the primary performance of the lived-body; when the body loses its prereflective, automatic coherence with the surrounding world; when our spontaneous bodily expressions are disturbed, blocked, or objectified by an inversion of our attention upon ourselves” (Fuchs 2002, 225).

In spite of the variety of phenomena discussed above, these examples still offer a fairly limited picture of what Fuchs includes under the heading of corporealization. The examples of cases such as fatigue, clumsiness, and being seen by the other are all similar in the sense that they refer primarily to *experiences* of one’s body. As mentioned above, Fuchs also refers to another sense of corporealization that aligns more closely with his definition of the corporeal body as the object of physiology and medicine. For example, after speaking of a constriction of lived spatiality in cases of melancholia, he says,

a loss of vitality in many systems of the organism comes about; processes of shrinking and dying prevail. The excretions cease; appetite and libido are reduced or lost. The patients look older than they are, their complexion becomes pale, the hair dull. In the worst cases the weight loss may progress to the point of cachexia, and the regulation of the blood circulation gets disturbed. All this literally means a corporealisation, namely in the sense of coming nearer to the corpse, the dead body. (Fuchs 2005c, 109)

This characterization differs markedly from the previous examples of corporealization by referring primarily to a general slowing down or debilitation of the actual biological organism, rather than to the body as an object of perception or experience. This does not mean that the person *cannot* experience these physiological changes. Rather, it means only that these changes exhibit a kind of corporealization whether or not they are experienced or attended to.



There is—in addition to Fuchs’ references to the corporeal body as the material body that shows in up in cases of restriction or objectification, as well as the degradation of the physiological or biological body—another sense of the disorder or dysfunction of lived bodiliness that is sometimes included under the heading of corporealization. This sense is explicitly tied up with Fuchs’ notion of the mediating processes by which we have access to and engage with the lived world. As mentioned above, many of these mediating processes can themselves undergo changes in which their typical opening up of the world is diminished. This results in a constraining of lived spatiality and a general loss of access to the lived world. Speaking of the conative dimension, he says,

Normally, it is this dimension that opens up the peripersonal space as a realm of possibilities, “affordances,” and goals for action. In depressive patients, however, drive, impulse, appetite, and libido are reduced or lost, no more capable of disclosing potential sources of pleasure and satisfaction. As a result, the patient’s imagination, the sense of the possible, fails to generate future goals and plans, leaving the self confined to the present state of pure bodily restriction. (Fuchs 2005b, 99)

In sum, all of these diverse phenomena fall under Fuchs’ heading of corporealization—including the body that shows up in clumsiness, fatigue, illness, the gaze of the other, biological dysfunction, and disruptions of the mediating processes. In addition, there is a diversity of phenomena encompassed by his notion of *Leib*, at least insofar as it includes both the biological body insofar as it is properly functioning and not attended to as an object of experience, as well as the properly functioning mediating processes of embodied subjectivity, such as the conative dimension and exentricity. The heterogeneity and ambiguity in these concepts of the body, including *Leib*, *Körper*, as well as the process of corporealization, are what I aim to clarify and further delineate in section four. Prior to developing these clarifications, however, it will be worthwhile to consider the historical origins of this heterogeneity.

### 3 The Historical Origins of the *Leib/Körper* Polarity

As mentioned above, Fuchs does not develop his concepts of *Leib* and *Körper* from scratch. He draws this distinction from the work of Plessner and Merleau-Ponty. However, as I show, the *Leib/Körper* distinctions of Plessner's philosophical anthropology and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology are not drawn in the same manner. The terms have substantially different meanings in the two traditions, yet Fuchs draws on both as if they were largely consonant. In addition, while Fuchs' concepts are inspired by both traditions, they have been supplemented by more recent work from figures such as Polanyi (1966) and Leder (1990). As a result, his concepts have taken up their own distinct meanings, and the original concepts from which he drew his inspiration do not seem to fulfill the needs of his own research project.

The two works upon which Fuchs relies most heavily are Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012; original publication in 1945) and Helmuth Plessner's *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (1975; original publication in 1928). The nature of the relationship between the *Leib/Körper* distinction as employed by Plessner and the phenomenologists is somewhat clouded in light of inaccurate scholarship on the topic. Krüger, for example, claims that the distinction originated in the work of Plessner and was later taken up by Merleau-Ponty. As evidence for this claim, he points to Merleau-Ponty's reference to one of Plessner's articles in *Phenomenology of Perception*. However, while Merleau-Ponty did read and cite one of Plessner's texts—the one in which Plessner introduces his own *Leib/Körper* distinction (Buytendijk and Plessner 1925)—the concepts developed within Merleau-Ponty's work diverge from Plessner's. Merleau-Ponty's concepts drew a much greater influence from the manuscripts that he read while visiting the Husserl Archives (Carman 1999; Rojcewicz and Schuwer 1989); these included the manuscripts that were later published as *Ideas Pertaining to a*

*Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book, or Ideas II* (Husserl 1989) (in which Husserl engages in a thorough phenomenological study of embodiment), as well as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Husserl 1970) (which, while focusing on psychology and the natural sciences, also includes a discussion of Husserl's *Leib/Körper* distinction).

In addition to the historically independent developments of the *Leib/Körper* distinctions in the work of Plessner and in the phenomenological tradition, the two sets of concepts also diverge from each other in a few substantial respects. For example, Plessner was critical of the phenomenological and existential traditions, particularly with regard to what he saw as their role in a dualistic metaphysics. Reflecting on his own philosophical anthropology, he says that existentialism (by which he refers to phenomenology more broadly) plays into Cartesian dualism. Concerning itself only with the “inside,” or the study of human life from the first-person perspective, it leaves the study of the “outside” to the exact sciences (Plessner 1969). This failure to engage with the corporeal nature of human beings “indicate[s] not only extreme timidity and poverty of thought, but also the introversion which is the professional disease of philosophers, especially those of the existentialistic bent (Heidegger)” (Plessner 1969, 500). According to Plessner, phenomenology simply confines itself to one side of a Cartesian dualism, rather than overcoming it in any important respect.<sup>26</sup>

In light of his conception of phenomenology, Plessner's *Leib/Körper* distinction was developed precisely for the purpose of overcoming a dualistic approach to human existence. For Plessner, there is the body that I live in and through (*Leib*), and the body that I experience from

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<sup>26</sup> Most phenomenologists and scholars of phenomenology will dispute this claim. However, irrespective of its accuracy, it is the position held by Plessner, and an important motivator behind his particular *Leib/Körper* distinction.

the outside, in the way I do other bodies (*Körper*) (Greene 1966; Krüger 2010; Lindemann 2010). However, these are not two separate bodies. Rather, they are two perspectives that apply to any living organism (Greene 1966).

While Fuchs' distinction between *Leib* and *Körper* seems to fall in line with Plessner's account, there are also a few senses in which Fuchs' concepts diverge from Plessner's. For instance, Fuchs' largely negative portrayal of *Körper* is not characteristic of Plessner's approach. Even when Fuchs is not offering a distinctly pathological account of *Körper*, he still characterizes it as the body that appears in cases of heaviness, fatigue, clumsiness, and so on. Even his discussions of the role of the corporeal body in our relations with others focus primarily on feelings such as shame, guilt, and the reifying effects of being caught in another's gaze. This understanding of *Körper* as that which "appears whenever a reaction or resistance arises to the primary performance of the lived body," (Fuchs 2002, 225) as well as the portrayal of reflection as having an analytic or decomposing effect, seems to be a conception adopted from the work of figures such as Polanyi (1966). Plessner does discuss *Körper* as that which shows up in the course of reflection, but for him this reflection often plays a positive role. For example, the capacity to take on the perspective of the other, or even of one's social world [*Mitwelt*] as a whole, is a condition for social organization (something that is understood as a primary point of differentiation between humans and non-human organisms) (Greene 1966; Krüger 2010; Lindemann 2010). In addition, Fuchs' focus on the corporeal body as disturbing or blocking our typical perceptual access to the lived world seems to be adopted from the work of Leder (1990), in which the transparency and absence of the body is privileged for its role in granting access to the world.

While this offers an initial characterization of Plessner's *Leib/Körper* distinction, the phenomenological use of these concepts remains to be clarified. In light of the fact that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment was influenced in large part by the work of Husserl, it is worth addressing Husserl's treatment of the body in *Ideas II*.

In this text, Husserl rarely uses the term *Körper*, even when discussing the material body. *Leib* remains the preferred term (despite the fact that, in a few instances, he uses *Leibkörper* to refer specifically to the living body *as experienced*). The rare instances in which Husserl does employ the term *Körper* typically refer to an extreme limit of natural-scientific abstraction. The "body," in such cases, is no longer conceived of as animate, or even biological. It is a *mere thing*. Behnke, speaking of this distinction in Husserl's work, says that in *Ideas II* "he often uses the word *Leib* to refer to both the 'lived body' of later phenomenologists *and* the 'animate' (rather than 'inanimate') object studied by the biologist or physiologist" (Behnke 1996, 139). Husserl's *Leib* encompasses nearly every sense of the human body excepting the abstract sense of "body" as employed, perhaps, in the domain of physics.

When we compare Husserl's *Leib/Körper* distinction to Fuchs' (as well as Plessner's) distinction, we find that the entirety of Fuchs' *Leib/Körper* polarity is encompassed within Husserl's singular concept of *Leib*. The abstract body of physics, which is the only kind of body that Husserl regularly refers to as *Körper*, makes no appearance in Fuchs' work, standing outside the domain of his philosophical program.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In at least one article, Fuchs laments the neglect of *Körper* in the work of phenomenological psychologists (Fuchs 2002, 224). I believe this neglect is justified in light of the clarifications I have offered here. Insofar as these phenomenological psychologists were taking up the distinction as developed by Husserl, all of the phenomena Fuchs wishes to discuss under the heading of *Körper* are already enveloped in Husserl's concept of *Leib*.

Merleau-Ponty's use of the distinction is somewhat less clear, as he does not regularly employ the German terminology. The term that has been translated as "the lived body" is *le corps propre*. However, as Landes argues in his introduction to the current English translation of *Phenomenology of Perception*, this term is more accurately translated as "one's own body" (Landes 2012). In spite of this additional source of conceptual confusion, we can still examine Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology of the human body in light of his discussions of the body as conceptualized in the sciences. Here we find a phenomenology of the body that closely resembles the one developed by Husserl—albeit with a richer and more nuanced approach to certain aspects of embodiment.

Merleau-Ponty, articulating the reifying effect of the natural scientific attitude on the human body, says, "Sensing, thus detached from affectivity and motricity, became the mere reception of a quality, and physiology believed itself capable of following, from the receptors right through to the nervous centers, the projection of the exterior world into the living being. The living body thus transformed ceased to be my body, that is, the visible expression of a concrete Ego, in order to become one object among all others" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 56). This conception of the body is reminiscent of the profoundly abstract *Körper* that we see in Husserl's *Ideas II*. The scientific notion of the body as articulated by Merleau-Ponty is never something that a person can *be*, even in the most severe cases of pathology. Rather, *Körper* is something that emerges when bodies are thematized in certain kinds of scientific discourse.

#### **4 Distinguishing the Several Senses of the Body**

In light of the ambiguity and heterogeneity in the two basic concepts of *Leib* and *Körper*, I here develop an alternative set of distinctions, clarifying the diverse senses of the body that show up throughout Fuchs' work. These distinctions are not drawn from a single source, instead

being taken up and adapted from both classical and contemporary phenomenologists, including Husserl and Merleau-Ponty as well as Morris (2003) and Leder (1990).

I here take up a phenomenological approach, which might be usefully contrasted with Plessner's approach. Plessner develops a *Leib/Körper* distinction and shows, throughout the course of his career, that by adhering to such a distinction we can shed light on various features of human life. By contrast, the phenomenological approach to the body begins from a broad and holistic concept of *Leib*. Further distinctions and abstractions (e.g. *Leib* and *Leibkörper*) are drawn out of the concept of *Leib* in light of the particular phenomena encountered by the phenomenologist.

In light of this, my account is not meant as a final stance on how we should distinguish the diverse senses of the lived body. Each of my categories is itself open to further refinement and modification. For example, most senses of the body might be addressed from my own perspective, from the perspective of a particular other, or from the perspective of others in general. In addition, these senses of the body need not be understood as absolutely distinct. Depending on how one abstracts from the concept of *Leib*, it is possible to attend to the body through two or more senses simultaneously. In light of this, my primary aim is to elucidate those senses of the body that are relevant to Fuchs' concept of corporealization.

My distinctions are grouped into five categories:

- (1) the body-as-organism
- (2) the body-as-expressive
- (3) the body-as-perceiving
- (4) the body-as-motile
- (5) the mediating processes of embodied subjectivity

In each subsection, I first describe the sense of the body in question. Second, I offer a brief illustration of this sense of the body as displayed in Fuchs' work. Third, I consider examples (typically external to Fuchs' work) that are meant to complicate his *Leib/Körper* distinction. The additional complications expressed in these examples are not necessarily resolved within the space of this chapter. Rather, in challenging the *Leib/Körper* polarity as employed by Fuchs, they are meant to motivate phenomenological considerations of the kinds of fine-grained distinctions that will be required in order to develop an adequate phenomenology of psychopathological forms of embodiment.

#### **4.1 The Body-as-Organism**

The body-as-organism refers to bodies in the sense of material, biological entities. This is a naturalistic sense of the body, but one that has not achieved the complete abstraction of Husserl's *Körper* (i.e. the sense of brute matter, or pure extension). This is the body as studied within the biological and medical sciences, including the body that is the object of neurobiological studies of perception, motility, affectivity, and so on.

While this sense of the body corresponds to Fuchs' notion of the corporeal body that manifests when examined by a physician, it is important to keep in mind that it is not an entirely third-personal sense of the body. We are capable to attending and relating to our own bodies as biological organisms, especially when our biological body fails to function as expected.

When distinguishing *Leib* and *Körper*, Fuchs clearly assigns the biological and organic body to the side of *Körper*. One example of this sense of the body is offered in his account of the physiological implications of melancholia. As he says, "a loss of vitality in many systems of the organism occurs, which further restricts the space of the lived body. The exchange with the environment is inhibited, excretions cease; processes of slowing down, shrinking, and drying up



prevail. All this literally means *corporealization*, in the sense of resembling a corpse, a dead body” (Fuchs 2005b, 99).

However, while the body-as-organism might seem to be the most clear-cut case of a sense of the body that aligns with Fuchs’ notion of *Körper*, this alignment seems less clear when we examine some of his other examples. For instance, Fuchs says, “I cannot see my seeing; the biochemical alterations of the retina and the processing of its sensory input in the brain cannot be observed by the subject either. But in perceiving the subject embodies or enacts these processes. Their invisibility precisely means their transparency” (Fuchs 2005b, 95–96). Referring here to the biochemical processes of visual perception, it is clear that Fuchs is discussing the “anatomical body of physiology and medicine,” which he assigns to the side of *Körper*. However, insofar as he is stressing the invisibility and transparency of these biological processes, he seems to be characterizing them in terms of *Leib*.

The issue that comes to light here is that Fuchs does not have a clear and distinct set of criteria for what counts as *Leib* and what counts as *Körper* (even allowing for a gradation between these two poles). The smoothly functioning biological processes of the body can, by one criterion, count as *Körper*; yet, by another criterion, count as *Leib*.

This points to the need to develop more stringent definitions of *Leib* and *Körper*. However, prior to developing these more stringent definitions it can be helpful to zero in on distinct senses of the body within which various kinds of corporealization might occur. The body as organism is meant as one of these initial distinctions. Rather than attempting to capture either the healthy body or the ill body, it captures the sense of the body as it is *thematized* in those sciences devoted to the study of organic beings. Within this category we can then address how

the body *as* biological organism may be healthy or ill, functional or dysfunctional, without determining the range of these possibilities in advance.

#### 4.2 The Body-as-Expressive

The body-as-expressive refers to one of the primary ways that we encounter bodies in everyday life. It is the body as expressive of a consciousness, subjectivity, and even personality; as Merleau-Ponty puts it, it is the body as “the visible expression of a concrete Ego” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 56). Any instance in which we see a body *as* the body of another, or even *as* the body of myself, incorporates (at least to some degree) the sense of the body as expressive.

Typical characterizations of the body as expressive often point to the expression of moods or emotional states. However, there are other, less typical characterizations that also belong to this sense of the body. Along with expressing “inner” feelings, the body expresses characteristics such as cultural background, social class, or even occupation through one’s attire or manner of speaking. In this way, the body can be expressive of one’s role or place within a social milieu just as much as it can be expressive of one’s emotions.

As Fuchs portrays the expressive body, any reflection upon or explicit attention to one’s material body is a manifestation of *Körper*, which is typically accompanied by an analytic or decomposing effect (Fuchs 2010, 241). Fuchs points out that this often occurs in cases of shame, guilt, or embarrassment, where one’s body becomes a public display of oneself in the eyes of the other. As he says, “we meet at the roots of ridiculousness and shame a ‘corporealization’” (Fuchs 2002, 227). In such cases we become explicitly aware of having a material body that publically expresses our own subjectivity.

While some instances of explicit awareness of one’s own material body exhibit these features, there are other cases where an explicit awareness of being watched by the other opens

up one's range of possibilities and freedom for action. These cases, I argue, cannot be adequately made sense of if they are characterized along Fuchs' polarity of *Leib* and *Körper*. Perhaps the best example of this effect is found in the popular film trope in which a parent is running late to his child's event, such as a spelling bee or a dance recital. Looking out over the audience and not finding his parent there to look back at him, the child is unable to fluidly engage in his activity (whether intellectually or bodily). However, once the parent arrives and the child becomes aware that his parent is watching him, he is able to engage in his activity fluidly. In this case it is precisely the event of being exposed to and caught in the gaze of the other that frees one up for engagement.

A similar phenomenon often occurs in competitive sports. It is common to speak of professional athletes as the epitome of transparent, fluid bodily engagement in which one lacks explicit awareness of her bodily movements. However, this is not an entirely accurate characterization. There are many cases where the explicit awareness of being watched (especially by a competitor) actually opens up new possibilities for fluid engagement. For example, in order to fake a pass with the intention of getting your opponent to move into the wrong position, you need to attend precisely to the fact that your body is in the gaze of your competitor and the ways that your body expresses your intentions (whether accurately, ambiguously, or deceptively).

One might argue, against this characterization, that in such cases the athlete is not actually *reflecting* on her body in the gaze of the other. Perhaps she is, instead, *implicitly* attending to how her body expresses her intentions. However, even if this is the case, it only serves as further evidence that more fine-grained distinctions need to be developed in order to

properly characterize the various ways we can attend to our bodies (and the corresponding ways that our bodies can manifest in experience).

Cases such as these inevitably complicate pre-defined bodily distinctions such as that between *Leib* and *Körper*. In order to do justice not only to the phenomenon of expression, but also to the diverse ways that a body might be *unexpressive* (e.g. when trying to hide one's emotions, or in cases of flattened affect, dysthemia, or autism), alternative distinctions may need to be drawn.

### **4.3 The Body-as-Perceiving**

The body-as-perceiving goes hand in hand with the body-as-expressive. While examples of being caught in the gaze of the other (such as Sartre's analysis of the man caught peeking through a keyhole) are typically offered as illustrations of the body as expressive, they necessarily implicate the body as perceiver as well. In order to take one's own body as expressing one's subjectivity in the eyes of another, the other's body must be simultaneously implicated as a perceiver to whom one's own body is expressive.

Perception has received considerable attention in both classical and contemporary phenomenology, but much of this literature focuses on visual perception and often fails to thematize the role of the body. Husserl, for example, explored how objects present themselves to us through a particular aspect. In such a perception, the object is never exhausted by the perspective I take on it. In my perception of a cube, for instance, the absent sides are intended along with the sides that are immediately present. Without such intending it would be impossible to have an experience of an object *as* three-dimensional.

The role of the lived body in perceiving is more adequately attended to in texts that explore tactile perception. While visual perception is an *embodied* perception, it is easy to

downplay or ignore the role of the body in such perceiving. Tactile perception, by contrast, brings our embodiment to the fore, with the lived body being made more thematic in phenomenological investigations. For example, exploring the distinctly localized nature of tactile perception, Husserl considers the implications of perceiving our world through the medium of a burnt finger or swollen hand (Husserl 1989, 72). While he was primarily concerned with addressing these sensations as examples of anomalous perception (Taipale 2014), his examples often fall in line with Fuchs' investigations. The burnt finger or swollen hand, for instance, fails to grant adequate access to the world because the body itself becomes the object of our perception. In the oscillation of touching and being touched, our attempts to probe an object with a burnt finger are inevitably reversed. Our being touched overrides our attempt at touching, granting us an understanding of the state of our own body rather than of the world we attempted to access.

Fuchs often brings this perceptual role of the lived body into sharp relief in his discussions of melancholia. He says, "Sense perception and movement are weakened and finally walled in by this rigidity, which is visible in the patient's gaze, face, or gestures," and "*Corporealization* thus means that the body does not give access to the world, but stands in the way as an obstacle, separated from its surroundings" (Fuchs 2005b, 99). As he makes clear, melancholia is characterized by a perceptual focus or rumination on one's own corporeality. The once transparent *Leib* gives way to the opaque *Körper*.

However, while Husserl's examples are roughly in line with Fuchs' account, there are also numerous examples that challenge or complicate this picture of a transparent lived body and an opaque corporeal body (even when allowing for a gradation between them). In the case of sexual or otherwise sensual activities, there is doubtless a kind of reflexive focus on one's body.

One's corporeality comes to the fore and is made explicit. Yet this coming to the fore is itself an increased rather than a decreased capacity for perceptual discrimination of objects beyond the boundaries of our body. In such cases we see that a movement toward corporeality need not coincide with an alienation from the world or from others. Our corporeality can stand as the object of our perception while at the same time increasing our perceptual access the world and reducing our alienation from the other. It is difficult to place such a phenomenon on a spectrum between *Leib* and *Körper*. It seems to exceed this polarity and require a more complex account of embodied existence.

In the work of Merleau-Ponty, we find an additional case that further complicates this polarity. Considering the famous case of Schneider,<sup>28</sup> Merleau-Ponty points out that “when his head, arm, or leg is touched, he cannot say at which point his body was touched; he does not distinguish between two points of contact on his skin, even if they are 80 millimeters apart; he recognizes neither the size nor the form of objects pressed against his body” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 105). Here we have a case where the body limits, rather than opens, perceptual access to one's lived world. However, in Schneider's case, this limiting is not brought about by the perceptual focus on the body that we find in Fuchs' characterization of melancholia or Husserl's characterization of the burnt finger. Schneider is often unaware of the location or position of his body, or of parts of his body. In a sense, Schneider is less embodied, and his diminished capacities for tactile discrimination stem from this reduced embodiment.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Schneider was a World War I veteran who underwent profound changes in his perception and motility after being struck in the head by a piece of shrapnel. His condition was studied extensively by the psychologist and neurologist, Adhémar Gelb and Kurt Goldstein.

<sup>29</sup> When I say that Schneider is “less embodied,” I mean this in a sense that differs from Fuchs' account of disembodiment in schizophrenia. As he portrays it, certain cases of schizophrenia are characterized by a kind of external awareness of oneself in which the primary perspective upon one's own body becomes the perspective of the other. In light of this, subject with schizophrenia

In a sense this might be characterized as the opposite of what we find in sensual perception, where an increased awareness and perception of one's own body is simultaneously an increased awareness of the other. In Schneider's case we find a body that recedes from his own explicit awareness while at the same time reducing awareness and perceptual discrimination of the world. Both examples stand in contrast to Fuchs' typical characterizations of the lived body as transparent and the corporeal body as opaque. In the case of Schneider we might speak of a transparency of the body coupled with an opacity of the world. However, what this case seems to call for is a distinction between *transparency* and *absence*. Neither the transparent nor the absent body shows up to us in our immediate perception of the world, but the former grants us access to the world while the latter limits it. In other words, the body's fading into the background need not facilitate our access to the world. This fading may itself be a source of opacity and disruption.<sup>30</sup>

#### **4.4 The Body-as-Motile**

In addition to the kinds of disruptions that might occur in the body as organic, expressive, or perceiving, there are also disruptions that are best characterized as pertaining to the body as self-moving, or motile. Heidegger, for example, speaks of our embodied intentionality in and toward the world as a "bodying forth" [*Leiben*] (K. Aho 2005; Heidegger 2001b). Merleau-Ponty, too, discusses our bodily transcending toward the world as well as our embodied intentionality, stressing that our movement toward the world stems from an "I can," rather than an "I think." Through this bodily transcendence and embodied intentionality, the spatiality of the

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is understood as disembodied. Schneider, by contrast, exhibits a disembodiment even while the spatial location of his body continues to serve as the zero-point of his perception.

<sup>30</sup> I do not here employ the term "absent" in the manner of Leder (1990). He seems to employ the term in a fairly broad sense that includes something akin to Fuchs' notion of transparency.

world is opened up and made available to us. However, as Merleau-Ponty explains, we move through this space primarily as lived and habitual, rather than as an objective milieu.

As Fuchs points out, our bodily motility is susceptible to disturbance. As he says, “In melancholia, the body loses the lightness, fluidity, and mobility of a medium and turns into a heavy, solid body that puts up resistance to the subject’s intentions and impulses. Its materiality, density, and weight now come to the fore and are felt painfully. Thus, melancholia may be described as a reification or *corporealization* of the lived body” (Fuchs 2005b, 99).

While it is certainly the case that melancholic individuals often undergo a shift in their motility in the sense described by Fuchs, there are other examples that seem to fall under the broad label of corporealization while maintaining important differences from the kinds of phenomena that Fuchs addresses. Young, for example, addresses the differences between masculine and feminine bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality. She explains how women move differently from men, including in instances of throwing, climbing, sitting, and walking.<sup>31</sup> She says that women “are not as open with their bodies as are men in their gait and stride,” and that “women [...] tend to sit with their legs relatively close together and their arms across their bodies” (Young 2005, 32). She also stresses the lack of fluidity in women’s movements, including the concentration of motion in the body part most immediately associated with the activity.

She argues that feminine embodiment is characterized by an ambiguous transcendence, an inhibited intentionality, and a discontinuous unity. As she explains, all embodied

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<sup>31</sup> In the context of her essay, Young makes clear that she is by no means offering an essentialist account of feminine embodiment. She admits that her account does not apply to all women, and that it is primarily the product of a particular social and historical milieu. Nonetheless, she considers these examples to be representative of many women in the contemporary western world.



transcendence toward the world is laden with immanence insofar as it begins from a material body. According to Merleau-Ponty, this immanence is only the starting point from which we move out “in an open and unbroken directedness upon the world in action” (Young 2005, 36). Young, however, argues that feminine bodily movements do not only begin in immanence, but remain in it; they are “overlaid” with immanence. In addition, inhibited intentionality is characterized by the “I can” of the intentional arc always being accompanied by an “I cannot.” As Young points out, women often see certain physical tasks and activities as perfectly achievable—but only by someone other than themselves. Finally, a discontinuous unity is exhibited in the incomplete or partial movements that are characteristic of the distinctively feminine ways of throwing, lifting, or running. As Young points out, it is typical for a girl to throw a ball by using only her arm, not bringing the rest of her body into the motion. In such cases, the motion itself is discontinuous, with part of the body remaining reified or objectified even while another part engages in a more or less fluid action.

In Young’s account, feminine motility is confined or constrained. It does not transcend toward the world in a fluid and unhindered manner. This characterization echoes Fuchs’ account of the corporealization of the body in melancholia. However, there are distinct features of Young’s account that complicate the *Leib/Körper* distinction. For instance, the sense of one’s body as weak or fragile does not always obtrude; instead, it often fades into the tacit background. The body is not *experienced* or *felt* as weak and fragile in the way that the melancholic body is said to be *experienced* or *felt* as dense and heavy. Instead, the sense of one’s body as weak becomes that which one *experiences through*. What we find in Young’s account is that certain features of embodiment that we associate with *Körper* rather than *Leib* can themselves become

transparent mediators once a kind of corporealized existence has become one's habituated and everyday mode of engagement.

#### **4.5 The Mediating Processes of Embodied Subjectivity**

The final category consists of the mediating processes of embodied subjectivity. One of the primary aims of Fuchs' work is to show how these mediating processes can become impaired or dysfunctional in a variety of psychiatric disorders. As Fuchs portrays them, these processes typically play the role of opening up one's lived world and making it available for action. The conative dimension, for instance, moves us out toward the world, while the process of intercorporeality is a condition for our social relations and engagements with other embodied subjects. The impairments or dysfunctions of these mediating processes thereby constrain (rather than open) our access to the world, and they do so in a variety of ways.

The impairment of the mediating process that Fuchs refers to as excentric positionality is one that plays an important role in the corporealizing of the body in melancholia. As he says, "In severe melancholia [...] the excentric position collapses and gives way to an egocentric state of corporealization that the patient is unable to transcend" (Fuchs 2005b, 100). This mediating process is itself the very condition for the subject's capacity to take two distinct perspectives upon itself, or for the subject to both *be* and *have* a body. Fuchs argues that the subject loses this capacity and is confined to the material boundaries of her body.

An alternative example of an impairment of the mediating processes—and one that poses some difficulty for Fuchs' account—is found in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (specifically the case of Schneider mentioned above). As Merleau-Ponty explains, Schneider lacks the capacity to engage in abstract movements (at least when his eyes are closed, or when he is unable to view the part of his body he is meant to move). Abstract movements are defined by

Merleau-Ponty as those movements that lack a proper end in the concrete and habitual world, such as movements performed for their own sake. As he illustrates, Schneider has no trouble grabbing a handkerchief out of his pocket and blowing his nose. But when asked to extend his arm and move it up and down upon command, he does not even know how to begin. In order to engage in such a movement, he first has to discover where his body is. As Merleau-Ponty says,

If the patient is asked to execute an abstract movement with his eyes closed, a series of preparatory operations are necessary for him “to find” the operative limb itself, the direction or the pace of the movement, and finally the level on which it will unfold. If, for example, he is simply asked to move his arm, he is at first dumbfounded. Then he moves his whole body and the movements are subsequently restricted to the arm that, in the end, the subject “finds.” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 112)

In this case it seems that Schneider is dealing with his body as an object, or as *Körper*. As Merleau-Ponty says, “we observe that the patient who is questioned on the position of his limbs or on the location of a tactile stimulus seeks, through preparatory movements, to turn his body into a present object of perception” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 110). It is clearly a body that he *has*, rather than a body that he *is*, insofar as he has to find it as if it were a foreign object before attempting to manipulate this object in order to complete his task.

However, when we reconsider Schneider’s condition in light of the impaired mediating process that stands as a source of his disorder, it becomes more difficult to properly categorize Schneider’s sense of his body as either *Leib* or *Körper*. Merleau-Ponty argues that Schneider has lost the capacity to project virtual milieus. As he explains, while we often engage in the concrete, habitual world that is immediately given to us in perception, we also maintain the capacity to overlay this concrete milieu with a virtual one. This is what we do when we play or act. In such cases we engage in our world precisely *as* fictional. We take up a role that we know is not our own and engage with others as if they too were the fictional figures they play at being. However, this is just one of the many kinds of virtual milieus that we might project. Another virtual milieu

is the objective. Merleau-Ponty argues that the capacity to project virtual *objective* milieus is a condition for engaging in certain kinds of abstract movements.

Merleau-Ponty illustrates the contrast between the same bodily movement engaged in *concretely* and *abstractly* in an example of a man motioning for his friend to approach. In such a gesture, there is no consideration of the sequence of bodily movements that must be displayed in order to convey to my friend that I want him to approach. The gesture has its proper end in the concrete situation between us, and my movements unfold in a largely transparent or implicit manner. However, I also have the capacity to reproduce this same movement abstracted from the situation that gives it its sense and meaning. In such a case I take on a fundamentally different relationship to my body (even if the motions look the same to a spectator). As Merleau-Ponty says,

If I now execute the “same” movement, but without aiming at a present or even an imaginary partner, that is, the same movement as “a sequence of movements in themselves,” if in other words I execute a “bending” of the forearm toward the arm with a “supination” of the arm and a “bending” of the fingers, then my body, which was just previously the vehicle of movement, now becomes the goal of movement. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 113–114)

Taking up Fuchs’ distinction, we would say that the gesture performed in a concrete situation illustrates the body taken as *Leib*. The body is not attended to, but is the fluid medium through which I engage with my friend. The reproduction of this gesture abstracted from the situation that gives it its sense illustrates, in contrast, the body as *Körper*. In such a case I must attend to the movements of the body itself, and such attention may be accompanied by an analytic or decomposing effect. However, according to Merleau-Ponty, it is this latter kind of movement that Schneider is unable to engage in. He cannot take his body as a *thing* abstracted from its concrete and habitual situation.

How then are we to make sense of Schneider's movements and manipulations of his body in the earlier example? How does it contrast with the bodily reproduction of a gesture abstracted from its concrete milieu? In both cases the subject seems to *have*, rather than *be*, his body. But the two cases display fundamentally different kinds of *having*, and it would seem that we require fundamentally different concepts of *Körper*, or corporeality, in order to properly articulate this distinction.

This tension is not ultimately resolved by Merleau-Ponty, and the question of how it should be overcome remains open. In light of this, my reliance on the classical phenomenological texts should not be taken as a recommendation that we simply return to these texts in order to take up and apply their conceptual frameworks to our contemporary problems. Many of the contrastive examples I have offered point us toward tensions and ambiguities that can only be resolved by continued phenomenological research and clarification.

## **5 Reconsidering the Concept of Corporealization**

To summarize, in his work Fuchs offers us a rich but overly broad and heterogeneous notion of psychopathological embodiment in his concept of corporealization. This concept is founded upon a *Leib/Körper* distinction that, while employing the same terminology as Plessner and the classical phenomenologists, actually diverges in important respects from the concepts as employed by these philosophers. However, in spite of this divergence, much of Fuchs' work stands squarely within the phenomenological tradition, especially with respect to his analyses of affectivity, intersubjectivity (Fuchs 2013a), and temporality (Fuchs 2013b).

My aim in analyzing the heterogeneity and ambiguity within the concepts of *Leib*, *Körper*, and corporealization has been to assess the extent to which these concepts shed light on the phenomena of psychopathological embodiment. By recategorizing these senses of the body, I

showed that the notion of corporealization itself has a diversity of senses throughout Fuchs' work that we would do well to distinguish among in future phenomenological studies of psychopathological embodiment. Some of these heterogeneous senses of the body call for more fine-grained distinctions within the respective concepts of *Leib* and *Körper*, but do not necessarily challenge the polarity between *Leib* and *Körper* itself. Other examples, however, cross the boundaries between *Leib* and *Körper*, displaying problematic ambiguities in the definitions of these concepts and challenging the extent to which they can stand as a legitimate starting point for phenomenological studies of psychopathological embodiment.

The ambiguities displayed in these examples call for an alternative approach to the body—one that has not decided its primary distinctions in advance. However, this does not require that the concepts of *Leib*, *Körper*, and corporealization be given up entirely. It seems clear enough that Fuchs' concepts point us toward important features of psychopathological embodiment—features that have been neglected far too long in mainstream psychiatric research. Yet, even while pointing us toward these important features, they limit our capacity to properly articulate, distinguish, and make sense of a diversity of embodied phenomena.

By developing more rigorous definitions of *Leib*, *Körper*, and *corporealization*, these concepts can better illuminate the phenomena to which they are applied. At the same time, by being defined more narrowly, they can leave room for the phenomenological explication of phenomena that are not amenable to categorization under the broader concepts described above. Ultimately, such changes should allow for the development of new concepts that more adequately capture and illuminate the phenomena that exist in these diverse domains.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF NATURALISM<sup>32</sup>

#### 1 Introduction

Recent interest in phenomenology in the cognitive sciences, psychiatry, and psychology has renewed the now century old debate over the proper relationship between phenomenology and naturalism. It is well known that Husserl vehemently criticized naturalism (originally in the form of psychologism, but later in the broader form of physicalism and psychophysicalism) as a basis for philosophical and even scientific thinking. However, recent debates have—in many cases—sought to challenge and undermine this position.

Some authors, such as Dan Zahavi (Zahavi 2013) and Shaun Gallagher (Gallagher 2012), have recently argued that—while transcendental phenomenology cannot be naturalized—there is a form of phenomenology that is amenable to both philosophical naturalism (at least in some forms) and to integration with the sciences (especially the sciences of the mind). This form of phenomenology is typically referred to as *phenomenological psychology*—as opposed to *transcendental phenomenology*—and is understood as a study of the mind that employs certain phenomenological methods while allowing that the mind itself is a complex phenomenon in the natural world.

Zahavi and Gallagher derive this form of naturalism primarily from Husserl's 1917 lectures on phenomenological psychology (Husserl 1977b). As Zahavi explains,

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<sup>32</sup> Portions of this chapter have been previously published in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, copyright 2015, Vol. 29 (3), 291 – 301. This article is used by permission of The Pennsylvania State University Press.

On the one hand, we have transcendental phenomenology, and on the other, we have what he calls phenomenological psychology. What is the difference between these two approaches? Both of them deal with consciousness, but they do so with quite different agendas in mind. For Husserl, the task of phenomenological psychology is to investigate intentional consciousness in a non-reductive manner, that is, in a manner that respects its peculiarity and distinctive features. Phenomenological psychology is consequently a form of descriptive, eidetic, and intentional psychology which takes the first-person perspective seriously, but which – in contrast to transcendental phenomenology, that is, the true philosophical phenomenology – remains within a pre-philosophical attitude and stops short of effectuating the reflective move needed in order to attain the stance of transcendental philosophy. The difference between the two is consequently that phenomenological psychology might be described as a local regional-ontological investigation which investigates consciousness for its own sake. In contrast, transcendental phenomenology is a much more ambitious global enterprise. It is interested in the constitutive dimension of subjectivity, that is, it is interested in an investigation of consciousness in so far as consciousness is taken to be a condition of possibility for meaning, truth, validity, and appearance. (Zahavi 2013, 38)

While I consider this proposal—and others like it—to be a reasonable approach to overcoming the traditional dichotomy between phenomenology and naturalism, much of the contemporary literature on the naturalization of phenomenology still neglects the complexities and nuances of the historical debate. The problem of the relationship between phenomenology and naturalism is “solved” by neglecting to bring the truly phenomenological—that is, transcendental phenomenology—into contact with the natural. Zahavi, for example, takes those components of the phenomenological toolkit he finds useful for the contemporary study of the mind, but leaves the philosophical program of transcendental phenomenology to continue in its own line of investigation, separate from the concerns of philosophical naturalism and the sciences.

My aim, in this chapter, is to begin by taking seriously the classical phenomenological standpoint as developed by Husserl (as well as by Merleau-Ponty).<sup>33</sup> Only after the historical

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<sup>33</sup> While other phenomenologists certainly engaged with debates over naturalism and the sciences, the extent to which Husserl and Merleau-Ponty confront these issues far exceeds the



debate has been clarified, do I explore the prospects for a relationship between philosophical (that is, transcendental) phenomenology and naturalism.

In the second section, I offer a brief outline of Husserl's three critiques of naturalism<sup>34</sup>—primarily as developed in *Logical Investigations*, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.<sup>35</sup> In the third section, I briefly outline two of Merleau-Ponty's critiques of naturalism as developed in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, arguing that these two critiques can be understood as further developments and refinements of Husserl's first two critiques of naturalism. In the fourth section, I summarize the Husserlian and Merleau-Pontian critiques. In the fifth section, I explore a critique developed—at least in nascent form—by Merleau-Ponty. As I argue, this critique stands in parallel with Husserl's third critique of naturalism as developed in the *Crisis*—however, in Merleau-Ponty's version the critique is turned on its head, criticizing transcendental phenomenology rather than philosophical naturalism. I argue that certain cases of pathology reveal that human subjectivity is embedded not only in the cultural world of meaning, but also in the natural world of brute materiality, forcing phenomenology to confront the possibility of a contaminated transcendental.

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discussions of the topic found in the works of figures such as Heidegger and Sartre. It is for this reason that I confine the current chapter to their works.

<sup>34</sup> There might be reasons to argue that Husserl has more than three critiques of naturalism, but the division I rely on here is fairly well established, being most clearly articulated by Moran (2008).

<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that each critique is found only in one of these texts. “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” for example, seems to have brief forms of each critique contained within it. The reason I rely on these texts is that each offers the clearest and most complete form of one particular critique of naturalism.

## 2 Husserl's Three Critiques of Naturalism

### 2.1 The Argument from Self-Refutation

Husserl's first critique of naturalism is actually a critique of psychologism. It is given in its most comprehensive form in *Logical Investigations*, but is briefly presented at the beginning of "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" before Husserl goes on to explore other critiques of naturalism, broadly construed. In this work, Husserl also differentiates between negative and positive critiques of naturalism. The critique of psychologism falls into the former category, because the critique focuses on the *consequences* of psychologism. A positive critique, by contrast, focuses on the *principles* and *methods*, rather than just the consequences, of a particular philosophical stance. The rest of Husserl's criticisms as given in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" and the *Crisis* fall into this latter camp.

The philosophical stance referred to as psychologism is difficult to define, particularly because the term does not refer to a single philosophical stance (much like the term "naturalism"). As Dermot Moran puts it, "*Psychologism* is a philosophical label, usually pejorative, for a whole set of different positions not all of which are easily definable, but which may be said to hold, at least in some sense, that logic and arithmetic reduce to, or are explained by, the psychological acts wherein logical and mathematical concepts operate and originate" (Moran 2000, 102). In short, the rules of mathematics and logic, understood as foundational for both philosophy and the sciences, and taken as features of the world as studied by these sciences, must come from the human mind.

One reason Husserl took psychologism as a problematic philosophical stance was that housing the basic rules of logic and mathematics in the human mind, or consciousness, undermines the legitimacy of every systematic science and philosophy. He considered logic and

mathematics to be the foundational sciences, the sciences upon which every other science relied. If the rules of mathematics and logic are simply products of human psychology, then neither universal truths nor the world independent of human consciousness (explored by these foundational sciences) would be within our grasp. Rather, the rules of mathematics and logic, as laws emerging from the human mind, could only be understood as offering us insights to the world as it seems to us. We would have no standpoint from which to claim that logic and mathematics are tools that give us access to the world as it really is—that is to say, as it is independent of human cognition. In the same way that we must admit that colors are phenomena of human vision, and not of the world in itself, we would have to admit that the rules of logic and mathematics simply tell us about the world as it is for us.

In light of these issues, Husserl believed that psychologism must be discarded, and that a new philosophical account of the origins and role of logic and mathematics must take its place. As Moran puts it, “Psychologism is a betrayal of the very essence of logic as a science. To secure understanding of this ideal domain of truths, it is necessary to distinguish the objects of logic, thoughts, from all factually occurring psychic processes” (Moran 2000, 103). Logic and mathematics had to be extricated from any “factually occurring psychic processes” if they were to hold a place of primacy for our scientific and philosophical understandings of the world.

The argument goes as follows: The natural sciences, including physics, chemistry, and biology, assume the validity of the ideal laws of logic and mathematics in the course of their investigations and in the development and defense of their theoretical standpoints. The universal validity of these laws forms the necessary background for natural scientific investigations. However, insofar as these sciences claim that the only legitimate method for gaining insight into the world is through scientific empiricism, these sciences have no standpoint from which to

claim the universal validity of the *a priori* laws of mathematics and logic. Therefore, the natural scientist's appropriation of the ideal laws of logic and mathematics, which are *a priori* universal laws, is illegitimate.

As Husserl saw it, the philosophical standpoint of psychologism finds itself in the midst of a vicious circle that it itself created by not being properly self-reflective. The position of psychologism (at least when it is held by one also committed to the legitimacy of the empirical sciences) can stand only so long as one does not interrogate its presuppositions—which is just another way of saying that the position of psychologism does not stand at all.

## **2.2 The Misconstrual of Consciousness**

While Husserl never repudiated the critique of psychologism that he developed in *Logical Investigations*, he did develop additional critiques of naturalism throughout his career. In “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” he argues that there are certain principles and methodological presuppositions inherent in naturalism that make it an unappealing foundation for either philosophy or the sciences (including psychology).

One of the most important turns from *Logical Investigations* to “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” is Husserl's broadening of his critique from psychologism to naturalism in general. The term “naturalism” is problematic for the same reasons as the term “psychologism”. That is to say, neither refers to a particular philosophical doctrine, instead referring to a broad set of loosely associated philosophical and scientific stances. In order to understand Husserl's position, then, we need to briefly address the definition of naturalism given in this essay.

As Husserl says,

...the naturalist... sees only nature, and primarily physical nature. Whatever is is either itself physical, belonging to the unified totality of physical nature, or it is in fact psychical, but then merely as a variable dependent on the physical, at best a secondary

“parallel accomplishment”. Whatever is belongs to psychophysical nature, which is to say that it is univocally determined by rigid laws. (Husserl 1965, 79)

In short, the naturalistic standpoint is understood by Husserl as one in which all reality, or each thing taken as real, must be explainable in terms of the natural (and primarily the physical) world. If something does not immediately present itself as physical, or material, then it must be in some way reducible to the physical.

According to the naturalistic stance, then, consciousness is never simply psychological—it is always psychophysical. Husserl says as much in ascribing to the naturalist the view that “every psychological judgment involves the existential positing of physical nature, whether expressly or not” (Husserl 1965, 86). He believes this is a legitimate description of the naturalistic standpoint because psychological phenomena, if they were actually conceived as separate from and independent of the physical domain, “would deprive the psychical of its character as an objectively and temporally determinable fact of nature, in short, of its character as a psychological fact” (Husserl 1965, 86). In other words, if psychological phenomena are not psychophysical phenomena then, at least according to the naturalist, they do not exist in the domain of the “real”—they would not be the proper objects of scientific study. As a result, Husserl is able to argue that even when a naturalistic philosophy does not explicitly characterize consciousness as psychophysical, it must still be taking it as such.

With Husserl’s characterization of naturalism (in the form of psychophysicalism) in hand, his critique can be adequately addressed. As he argues, one of the major issues that arises in Husserl’s essay is that psychology, ever since its original development in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has worked within the framework of the natural sciences (Husserl 1965). There is an unfounded belief that all sciences must be natural sciences, and that all natural sciences must follow a single method—the experimental. As a result, psychology has been primarily experimental psychology.

This, according to Husserl, has put psychology in a position in which it will inevitably fail to obtain the results it seeks, always misconstruing the intentional form of consciousness because of naturalistic and objectivistic presuppositions.

This is because, in order to properly conduct experiments, the experimenter needs to have a clear picture of what it is that is being experimented on. In the case of psychology, this is particularly problematic because the actual structure and features of consciousness are not immediately apparent and require a special kind of interrogation—which, according to Husserl, is the phenomenological. Only after phenomenology has clarified the various features of consciousness can these features be studied via a naturalistic, experimental method (Husserl 1965).

In other words, naturalistic psychology skips the preliminary, eidetic phase of investigation. According to Husserl, prior to any experimental exploration of consciousness, we must first map out and describe the essence not only of consciousness itself, but of each particular feature of consciousness, including “perception, imagination, recollection, judgment, emotion, will—with all their countless particular forms” (Husserl 1965, 111). Husserl here admits that such an exploration need not be exhaustive, in the sense that it is not aimed at articulating every little nuance of consciousness. He says, for example, that “the ultimate differences of color, its finest nuances, may defy fixation, but ‘color’ as distinguished from ‘sound’ provides a sure difference, than which there is in the world no surer” (Husserl 1965, 111). It is neither the intention nor the role of phenomenology to map out every feature of consciousness. Instead, phenomenology is meant to engage in a project of eidetic intuition, describing the essence of each feature of consciousness. According to Husserl, a scientific study of imagination, for example, would inevitably fail if it has not yet secured and defined the

essential features of imagination. Consequently, a careful, phenomenological method is required to articulate and explicate consciousness prior to any other sort of investigation.

This critique of naturalism is less powerful than the first, not undermining naturalism in a straightforward manner. Rather, it argues that consciousness is a fundamental phenomenon that naturalistic modes of inquiry are ill equipped to understand. In this sense, while the naturalistic attitude may be appropriate to the world *as* physical, or objective (in the literal sense of consisting of objects), it cannot do justice to consciousness, and is therefore incapable of being the ultimate, foundational science. Husserl cashes this out in “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science” by arguing that psychology, properly understood, cannot be called a natural science. The psyche is a phenomenon that requires a different method from the methods of the more appropriately called natural, or objective sciences. The method appropriate to the psyche, or consciousness is, of course, phenomenology (Husserl 1965, 111–116).

### **2.3 The Mature, Transcendental Critique**

The third critique is, as Moran states, Husserl’s mature and explicitly transcendental critique (Moran 2008). He begins with the claim that naturalism is, properly understood, the naturalistic attitude. In other words, naturalism is a particular attitude that we, as conscious beings, can take up as our perspective upon the world. More importantly, it is a derivative attitude that we can take up as our perspective upon the world. The *naturalistic attitude* is understood by Husserl as a rigidification of the *natural attitude*. The natural attitude, in turn, is the basic attitude of everyday life. It is the attitude in which the things before our eyes are taken for granted as given. They may not be seen as explicitly objective, spiritual, or intersubjective, but they are, at the very least, seen as *real*, as existing. The naturalistic attitude, then, is understood as derivative of this pre-theoretical, pre-thematic, natural attitude because the aims

and methods of those investigations performed within the naturalistic attitude also take for granted the things we perceive as real and given (Moran 2008, 414). These investigations do not defend or support this givenness, nor do they seek to articulate it in any meaningful sense. Instead, they seek to intensify our understanding of the things that are taken as given, precisely as objective (consisting primarily of physical objects).

Husserl sees the naturalistic attitude and the sciences that reside within it as incapable of acting as their own foundations. Instead, much of their foundation is presupposed and assumed without any investigation whatsoever. As a result, the sciences conducted within this attitude require a prior, foundational science that will make sense of the very attitude that stands as their foundation. The naturalistic attitude, proceeding within the pre-given and unjustified (but not necessarily unjustifiable) assumptions of the natural attitude, stands upon a foundation that it did not itself build, and cannot (according to its own position) justify.

What we are left with, according to Husserl, is a single possibility. This is a shift towards the phenomenological and transcendental attitude, an attitude that is neither naturalistic nor natural. The transcendental attitude does not, and need not, assume the givenness of the world (as objective or otherwise). Instead, through the reduction, it is geared towards the interrogation and articulation of every possible attitude of human consciousness, as well as the corresponding worlds that emerge in the face of such attitudes (Moran 2008, 417–419).

Husserl concludes, in the course of his transcendental investigations of human subjectivity, that the life-world (including how a world can be taken as objective, interpersonal, and so on) is the constituted accomplishment of the transcendental ego. He even goes so far as to claim that the transcendental ego is not *in* the world. Instead, it is *for* the world, by which he means that it is constitutive of the world (Husserl 1970, 178–181).



Here we see a critique of naturalism that goes beyond the earlier critiques by being explicitly aligned with the perspective of transcendental idealism. Husserl's earliest critique—the argument from self-refutation—does not offer a positive solution to the problems inherent in naturalism, and in this respect the solution is not aligned with any particular philosophical standpoint. The second critique—the misconstrual of consciousness—can still be understood as engaging with naturalism and the sciences on their own terms, at least insofar as it shows that a naturalized psychology will fail to adequately articulate and understand the phenomenon of consciousness. This third critique, on the other hand, is only effective insofar as one buys into a host of arguments and presuppositions aimed at taking transcendental idealism as the foundational philosophical standpoint that grounds all scientific studies, both natural and historical.

In this way, we can understand Husserl's third and final critique of naturalism as both his strongest and his weakest argument, depending on which perspective we take on it. From the perspective of naturalism and the sciences, it seems to offer a much weaker argument than was offered in *Logical Investigations* and even "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" because it aims to supplant philosophical naturalism with a transcendental idealism—rather than focusing on the fact that the sciences fail to live up to their own aims. From the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology, however, it is the strongest insofar as it argues not only that phenomenology has a methodological priority over the natural sciences in the investigation of consciousness, but that the sciences themselves can only stand on solid foundations insofar as they are grounded upon the constituting powers of the transcendental ego.

### **3 Merleau-Ponty's Two Critiques of Naturalism**

Merleau-Ponty, following in Husserl's footsteps, developed two parallel critiques in *Phenomenology of Perception* and later texts. The first critique, which is developed as a parallel to Husserl's original argument from self-refutation, is somewhat novel insofar as it argues that the absurdity and skepticism inherent in philosophical naturalism and the natural sciences stems from the notions of objectivity and thinghood, rather than the grounding of logic and mathematics in the mind. The second critique, developed in parallel with Husserl's argument that naturalism inevitably misconstrues consciousness, is not particularly novel, instead being a further development and refinement of what is largely the same position expressed by Husserl.

#### **3.1 Merleau-Ponty's Argument from Self-Refutation**

Merleau-Ponty's presentation of Husserl's first critique of naturalism is given voice in the fourth section of the introduction to *Phenomenology of Perception*, entitled "The Phenomenal Field." It is fully articulated, however, in a later chapter under the title, "The Thing and the Natural World." Beginning with the introduction, Merleau-Ponty argues that both science and philosophy have "been carried along by the originary faith of perception" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 54). The empirical sciences, in particular, can be understood as further developments of perception itself. As he says, "At first, science had been nothing but the continuation or the amplification of the movement that is constitutive of perceived things. Just as the thing is the invariant of all sensory fields and of all individual perceptual fields, the scientific concept is the means of fixing and objectifying phenomena" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 54). In other words, it was perception itself, not science, that gave us things and objects. The further delineation and articulation of these objects, the practice of the sciences, was nothing more than an enhancement of perception's own powers.

However, in spite of the scientist's engagement with the world of things, he fails to acknowledge the origin of his capacity for discrimination and discernment—his ability to carve up the world into its constituent parts. He appropriates the notion of the thing, rather than adopting it. As Merleau-Ponty explains, science takes up the notion of the thing from perception and uses it to define

a theoretical state of bodies not subject to the action of any force, defined force in the same way, and reconstituted, with the help of these ideal components, the movements actually observed. It established the chemical properties of pure bodies statistically, deduced from them the chemical properties of empirical bodies, and in this way seemed to possess the very blueprint of creation or, in any case, to rediscover an immanent reason in the world. The notion of geometrical space indifferent to what it contains, or the notion of a pure movement that does not by itself alter the properties of the object, provided phenomena with the inert milieu of existence where each event could be linked to the physical conditions responsible for the intervening changes and where each event thus contributed to this determination of being that appeared to be the task of physics. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 54–55)

In short, the scientist's notion of the object, of the objective "thing" that exists in a homogeneous geometrical space, capable of being moved from one domain to the other with no changes whatsoever to the "thing" itself, is a notion with roots leading back to the perceived world. The scientist's conception of the world as that which exists independent of human consciousness is in fact a product—genealogically speaking—of the very consciousness the scientist ignores. It is from perception itself that the nascent idea of the thing first arises, yet the scientist feels justified in claiming its absolute existence independent of and without reference to the world as perceived.

It follows from this denial that a new self-refutation is created: a new circle, much like the circle Husserl first posited in *Logical Investigations*. Husserl's circle became a vicious one because the adherent of psychologism wished to place the laws of logic and mathematics—the universality and necessity of which stood as the very foundations of the sciences—in the

particular and contingent world of the sciences themselves. The laws of logic and mathematics, placed within the mind and, in turn, within the brain, lost all claim to necessity and universality, becoming laws of consciousness rather than laws of the world in itself.

The self-refutation of Merleau-Ponty's circle emerges when we replace the laws of logic and mathematics with the notion of the thing, or the object. The notion of discrete entities, capable of being studied in isolation (in fact, requiring that they be studied in isolation), is the development of a notion granted by perception. Once this notion has been smuggled into the natural sciences, and its past has been forgotten, the circle begins. Having achieved so much success in their studies of the physicochemical world, the scientist turns his gaze upon the biological, the neurological, and, soon enough, the psychological. In the end, human consciousness and perception must be explained in the terms already set by the natural sciences. That is to say, they must be explained in terms of the object. Consciousness and perception are turned into links on the chain of efficient causes. As Merleau-Ponty says, "The centrifugal phenomenon of expression had to be tied to centripetal conditions, that particular manner of treating the world we call 'behavior' had to be reduced to third person processes, experience had to be brought down to the level of physical nature, and the living body had to be converted into a thing without an interior" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 55).

With the naturalization (in the sense of objectification) of consciousness complete, the origin of the notion of the object is forgotten. But if we interrogate this notion, if we perform the genealogy that the scientist ignored, we find that the very notions we have used in our articulation of human consciousness came from consciousness itself. And not from consciousness's own self-understanding, but from what Husserl would call "the constituted pole" (Husserl 1970, 183)(Husserl 1936/1970, 183). Consciousness has been explained in terms of that

which we are conscious *of*, that is, the physical world of things. Yet we have no standpoint, besides that standpoint of consciousness itself, from which we might try to justify the turning of this gaze upon the phenomena of consciousness. And consciousness would certainly not allow for that.

### **3.2 Merleau-Ponty on the Misconstrual of Consciousness**

The second critique of naturalism offered by Merleau-Ponty begins by following the same path as the first critique, but soon turns off in a different direction. Rather than concern himself with the possibility of doing science in general, Merleau-Ponty asks how we should go about developing a science of the mind, a psychology. His concern over the proper methods and metaphysical foundations of psychology as a distinctly human science is not new, the way having been opened up by Husserl in his “Philosophy as Rigorous Science.” However, Merleau-Ponty gives new voice to an old problem, more accurately articulating how the methodological and metaphysical presuppositions of the natural sciences do violence to the phenomena of human life.

Following his discussion of science’s appropriation of the “thing” or object from the domain of lived human perception, he says,

Given these requirements, the living body could not escape the determinations that alone made the object into an object, and without which it could not have had a place in the system of experience. The value predicates conferred upon the living body by reflecting judgment had to be brought into being through a foundation of physico-chemical properties. Common experience finds an affinity and a meaningful relation among a speaker’s gesture, smile, and tone of voice. But this reciprocal relation of expression, which reveals the human body as the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being in the world, must, for a mechanistic physiology, be reduced to a series of causal relations. The centrifugal phenomenon of expression had to be tied to centripetal conditions, that particular manner of treating the world we call “behavior” has to be reduced to third person processes, experience had to be brought down to the level of physical nature, and the living body had to be converted into a thing without an interior. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 55)

In short, a psychology that adopts the methodological and metaphysical presuppositions of the natural sciences can only conceive of the human being in terms of that which it is not; that is, in terms of an object. A psychology rooted in the objective, natural sciences has decided what the psyche must be before its investigations have even begun. It does not seek to discover, understand, and make sense of the mysteries of consciousness. Its sole aim is to make consciousness conform to the laws of the world it itself discloses.

Such a psychology denies out of hand the power of consciousness to open up a world and look upon it. It denies all value, all meaning, all intention. It turns the human being into the product of a causal chain, thereby eliminating any vestiges of difference. The human being is pulled down into the homogeneity of the world of the sciences—a world that was, after all, disclosed by and adapted from the openness of consciousness itself.

#### **4 Summary of the Critiques**

Between the works of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, we are offered at least five critiques of naturalism. The critiques can be separated into three groups. The first may be called the foundational critiques (i.e. those that argue naturalism is self-refuting, or self-undermining). Of this category there are two. The first is Husserl's critique, originally developed as a critique of psychologism and put forward in *Logical Investigations*, but repeated in "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science." This critique argues that the rules of logic and mathematics, if they are to stand as the foundation for the natural sciences and philosophy, must be necessary and universal. However, the presuppositions of the natural sciences do not allow us to make such claims about the laws of logic and mathematics. Instead, it claims that these laws must be the product of human psychology that is, in the end, psychophysical, being a contingent feature of the natural

world. In light of this, such laws lose their force, and the investigations of the natural sciences find themselves without foundation.

The second critique in this category is Merleau-Ponty's, developed in the chapter "The Thing and the Natural World." It argues that the natural sciences rely on a concept of the "thing," or of objectivity. However, such a notion comes from perception itself, and was appropriated by the sciences and ultimately used as a way to make sense of the world as it is independent of experience. However, if we perform a genealogy of objectivity, as Merleau-Ponty does, or at least gestures at, we find that the scientist has caught himself in a circle from which he cannot escape. He wishes to explain the entirety of the natural world (which he considers to be synonymous with the entirety of *the* world) in terms of objectivity and thinghood. Included in this world is human consciousness. But ultimately his account of human consciousness was given to him by the world as revealed by consciousness itself, thereby creating the circle and undermining the foundations of the natural sciences.

The next category of critiques is the misconstrual of consciousness. These critiques, offered by both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, argue that the natural sciences do not and cannot do justice to human consciousness. Husserl argues that the experimental methods of the natural sciences only make sense after we have articulated the essential features of consciousness. This foundational project, however, can only be properly conducted by phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, argues that the natural sciences, by turning consciousness into a thing among things, misses the very features that make human consciousness, and all of human life for that matter, what it is. It fails to account for meaning, value, expression, and so on. In short, these critiques argue that psychology should be a legitimate science, but that the natural sciences do

not, and are actually incapable of, offering such foundations. Therefore, an adequate psychology must be founded upon phenomenology.

The third kind of critique is found only in the works of Husserl. It is the mature, transcendental critique. In this critique of naturalism, Husserl argues that the natural sciences rely—without their knowledge—on the naturalistic attitude. This attitude, however, is just one of many attitudes that human beings can take upon the world. The truly foundation science is the one that studies the constituted life-world (including all the various attitudes that have developed within it) and, more importantly, the transcendental ego that constitutes such a life-world. This critique, unlike Husserl's early critiques, makes sense only insofar as one takes the standpoint of transcendental idealism as justified.

This is why the final version of the critique is not found in the work of Merleau-Ponty. While Merleau-Ponty took much from the works of Husserl, he was critical of Kantian transcendental philosophy (which he often discusses under the heading of “Intellectualism”). This critical standpoint stemmed, at least in part, from his thorough engagement with the contemporary sciences of the mind, including the neurosciences, psychiatry, and psychology, with a special emphasis on studies of both development and pathology. I turn to the implications of these studies in the following section, developing a Merleau-Ponty inspired (if not Merleau-Pontian) account of the relation between the transcendental and the natural.

## **5 Toward a Phenomenological Naturalism**

Edmund Husserl, in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, stumbles upon a curious paradox. He asks, how can I be a subject for the world, that is, the subject that constitutes the world, while at the same time being an object in the world? In other words, how can I be the very foundation of the world that my life seems to depend



upon? In spite of the difficulties inherent in such a paradox, Husserl puts forward a solution.<sup>36</sup> However, he admits that the phenomenological project, by its very nature, will produce a series of paradoxes. These paradoxes, rather than revealing inadequacies inherent in the phenomenological project, stand as opportunities for new phenomenological insights. In solving each paradox we are forced to clarify aspects of the phenomenological project that had previously lingered in obscurity.

Further, Husserl anticipates the emergence of particular complications and paradoxes for the future of phenomenology. One of these paradoxes, he believes, will emerge in the confrontation with cases of insanity; that is, with cases of psychiatric and neurological disorders.<sup>37</sup> Such cases involve “intentional modifications” (Husserl 1970, 187) of the “manner of transcendental,” complicating our ability to understand the transcendental structure of such persons by analogy to our own structure.

While it is clear that Husserl considered the emergence of such a paradox to be, in the end, soluble, I believe he underestimated its profundity. I argue that the paradox of madness, if we may call it by such a name, is insoluble. However, its insolubility may not be a blow to the credibility of phenomenology. Instead, I argue that phenomenology can embrace the paradox, rather than overcome it. I further argue that by embracing this paradox and following it to its logical conclusion, a phenomenological naturalism can be attained.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For a detailed study of the paradox of subjectivity in Husserl's work, along with discussions of its origins in the work of Kant and its influence on Heidegger's thought, see Carr (1999).

<sup>37</sup> In the same paragraph he also considers issues that will arise from studies of childhood and animal consciousness. While these issues are certainly worth investigating, my primary concern in this chapter is with pathology, rather than typical development (of either humans or animals). Interestingly, this entire paragraph (Husserl 1970, 187–8) can be read as an outline of Merleau-Ponty's life work (Merleau-Ponty 1983; Merleau-Ponty 2012; Merleau-Ponty 1968).

<sup>38</sup> A “phenomenological naturalism” must not be confused with recent attempts to naturalize phenomenology. Such attempts have been developed in a variety of directions, with the most

## 5.1 The Paradox of Madness

The challenge put forward in Husserl's paradox of madness was taken up by Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. The paradox is addressed throughout the work, making its first appearance in Merleau-Ponty's engagement with the case of Schneider, where he develops an account of the existential ground of the structure of illness.

Critiquing a pure transcendental phenomenology, he argues that its analysis of illness is “less false than it is abstract” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 126). He claims that consciousness in the transcendental tradition is conceived as originary, directly present, transparent, and does not admit of degrees. This means that “The empirical variety of consciousness – morbid consciousness, primitive consciousness, infantile consciousness, the consciousness of others – cannot be taken seriously; there is nothing there to be known or comprehended. One thing alone is comprehensible, namely, the pure essence of consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 127).

While such circumstances of human life are not altogether ignored, transcendentalism confines them to a plane of being that is founded upon, and does not intersect with, the ontological structures of human existence. This pure consciousness, standing as the existential ground for

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common route being an appeal to Husserl's phenomenological psychology, arguing that all transcendental insights can be translated into naturalistic insights regarding the *a priori* form of consciousness, with consciousness being taken as a complex phenomenon in the natural world. Such accounts typically take phenomenology to serve the purpose of clarifying an explanandum so that it can be more readily explained by the natural sciences (e.g. M. W. Brown 2008; Gallagher 1997; Zahavi 2004; Zahavi 2010). In contrast, others have confronted the issue from a standpoint that is more committed to transcendental philosophy (Crowell 2013; De Preester 2006; Moran 2008; 2013; Smyth 2010; Tengelyi 2013; Toadvine 1999). My project is more closely aligned with the latter group, ultimately seeking a phenomenological account of naturalism, rather than a naturalistic account of phenomenology. (Dan Zahavi, in his recent paper, “Naturalized Phenomenology: A Desideratum or a Category Mistake?,” (2013) argues for two routes towards a reconciliation of phenomenology and naturalism. The first is Husserl's phenomenological psychology, while the second is based in transcendental phenomenology's ability to question what “natural” and “naturalism” even mean. My project might be taken as a movement towards the latter solution.)

each and every mode of consciousness, is necessarily unchanging and eternal. As Husserl said, the transcendental ego is neither born nor dies.

But we are born, and our death is certain. And in between birth and death, I may find myself in a world that does not follow the laws of the pure transcendental consciousness. The subject with schizophrenia has her very selfhood put into question. The voice that comes from her throat may belong to someone else. The thoughts arising in her mind may be placed there by another. And those thoughts that are her own may be broadcast for all to hear. The subject with catatonic depression may find himself in a world devoid of meaning, if he can be said to find himself at all. He does not move because there is nothing that calls to him. His world has fallen mute, and him with it.

Equally complex forms of existence emerge in cases of neurological disorders, where subjects may feel limbs that no longer exist, see their loved ones as imposters, or be totally oblivious to the fact that half of their body does, in fact, belong to them. Merleau-Ponty engages with such complex phenomena with the case of Schneider, an injured WWI veteran whose world underwent a dramatic change in form after he was struck by a piece of shrapnel in his occipital lobe. His disorder is remarkably complex, seeping into nearly every aspect of his life, including the perceptual, bodily, linguistic, and imaginative. All of these aspects are tied, in one way or another, to vision. Yet no aspect of his disorder is entirely reducible to a visual anomaly (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 127).

One of the most striking changes in the ontological structure of Schneider's world is in his spatiality. As Merleau-Ponty explains, space, in classical psychology, is conceived of only in the objective sense, as a space that is completely mathematizable and could be expressed in a coordinate system. In contrast, Schneider “is conscious of bodily space as the envelope of

habitual action, but not as an objective milieu. His body is available as a means of insertion into his familiar surroundings, but not as a means of expression of a spontaneous and free spatial thought” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 106). As Merleau-Ponty explains, we typically take consciousness of location as a representation of position. Location is always a determined point in the objective world (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 106). What we find with Schneider is a case in which a certain kind of space (the abstract and objective) is lost, and another kind of space (the concrete and habitual) is retained.

What cases such as Schneider's reveal is a deep contingency in human existence. The admission of contingency in the structures of consciousness and the life-world had already arisen in Husserl's later works, from *Cartesian Meditations* to the *Crisis*, in which he develops the beginnings of a genetic and ultimately generative phenomenology (Steinbock 1995b). However, it becomes apparent in the *Crisis* that such contingency has strict limitations. For Husserl, there is only ontic, not ontological, contingency.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the *Crisis*, he shows that cultural *a priori*, and even the *a priori* of the sciences, are historically contingent. These *a priori* structures, however, are ultimately founded upon the ontological structures of the pure transcendental ego and the life-world. As he says, these structures are grounded upon “a

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<sup>39</sup> The possibility of contingency, by way of facticity and history, became extremely important in Husserl's genetic works (Husserl 1977a; Husserl 1970; Husserl 2001c; Husserl 1989). This is illustrated in the work of Steinbock (1995a; 1995b) where he investigates the development of genetic phenomenology into generative phenomenology in Husserl's (mostly) unpublished works. However, even this generative development in Husserl's project did not allow for ontological contingency. The generative developments, while allowing for contingency at the societal and intersubjective level, remained ontic. (One possible exception to this is found in Husserl's discussion of a flying ark that leaves the earth for many generations (Steinbock 1995b, 119). Husserl argues that even if all past knowledge and culture were lost to this group of humans, the earth-ground would still be their primordial-ground. This is because their bodies, along with their ways of being embodied, developed in relation to the earth. However, it is not clear that Husserl considered the possibility of the human body further developing and evolving in light of its new circumstances.)

universal a priori which is in itself prior, precisely that of the *pure* life-world” (Husserl 1970 my emphasis). These *a priori* structures—taken as pure, universal, and unchanging—are the subject matter of a strictly ontological inquiry.

What Merleau-Ponty discovers in his confrontation with the paradox of madness is that even the foundational, *ontological* structures of consciousness and worldhood are susceptible to contingency. And once such contingency is discovered, we are forced to reevaluate Husserl's “solution” to the paradox of subjectivity.

Once the paradox of subjectivity reemerges in the form of the paradox of madness, it becomes apparent that Husserl was only able to dissolve the paradox by imposing an artificial constraint upon the degree of contingency in the subject. Husserl's “solution” amounted to a complete dehumanizing and decontextualizing of the transcendental ego. As he says, “in the epoché and in the pure focus upon the functioning ego-pole, and thence upon the concrete whole of life and of its intentional intermediary and final structures, it follows *eo ipso* that nothing human is to be found, neither soul nor psychic life nor real psychophysical human beings; all this belongs to the 'phenomenon,' to the world as *constituted* pole” (Husserl 1970, 183 my emphasis). This means that “the 'I' that I attain in the epoché [...] is actually called 'I' only by equivocation” (Husserl 1970, 184). According to Husserl, the paradox of subjectivity was a mere illusion; the transcendental (ontological) ego, he argues, is not actually *in* the world, at least not to the degree that it can be exposed to, or conditioned by, the world. This is not to say that the subject that is in the world does not play any constitutive role. Rather, it means that the structures of subjectivity and worldhood that are formed through cultural and historical contingencies are only ontic structures, which are ultimately founded upon the necessary and universal ontological structures.

## 5.2 Contaminating the Transcendental

While Merleau-Ponty's discovery of contingent ontological structures of human existence adds much to the richness of phenomenological investigations, this still does not achieve a truly genetic phenomenology. Only after phenomenology has engaged in studies of the particular, concrete development of the ontological structures of human existence, taking account of the kinds of circumstances that can and do effect change in these structures, can it be considered a truly genetic enterprise.

Merleau-Ponty said as much with the words, "So long as the means of linking the origin and the essence of the disorder has not been found, so long as a *concrete essence* or a *structure* of the illness that expresses both its generality and its particularity has not been found, so long as phenomenology has not become genetic phenomenology, then these offending retreats into causal thought and naturalism will remain justified" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 127–8). In other words, if phenomenology wishes to be justified in claiming that its method offers fundamental insights into the structure of illness, insights available to no other line of inquiry, it must reformulate itself in such a way as to confront these cases on their own terms, rather than artificially constraining them to the structure of a pure transcendental ego.

Merleau-Ponty shows us that if we take the transcendental ego in this ontologically pure form, phenomenology cannot do justice to the phenomenon of madness. In order to achieve such an end, phenomenology must reconceive the foundational nature of the transcendental subject. However, this does not mean that phenomenology must give up the transcendental entirely, becoming little more than a phenomenological psychology, ultimately subservient to the

naturalism of the sciences.<sup>40</sup> Instead, phenomenology, confronting the paradox of subjectivity in and through the paradox of madness, must affirm the reality of the paradox. That is, it must give us a subject that is exposed (at its ontological core) to the forces of the very world it discloses and constitutes.

What this amounts to is a contaminated transcendental. The *a priori*, ontological structures of the world are contingent precisely because they are contaminated. And the contaminant is the world itself. But what is meant by the world itself? It means, at least, that which is constituted by the transcendental subject, including the layers upon layers of facticity and history that have built up over generations of communities of transcendental subjects, sedimenting into the structures that reciprocally determine how our facticity and history can show up for us.

But such a contaminant was already discovered by Husserl. The ontic structures of the life-world are contaminated by the meaning-content of the world they constitute. What this amounts to is a foundation that is contaminated by that which it founds. One of Merleau-Ponty's insights, however, is that such meaning-content may even penetrate the ontological, rather than just the ontic, structures of human existence.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The possibility of phenomenological psychology was first discussed by Husserl (Husserl 1977b). It is meant as a study of the *a priori* form or structure of consciousness as a complex phenomenon in the natural world. Husserl believed that all transcendental insights had mundane correlates, and as a result, he believed that the insights of transcendental phenomenology could be translated into naturalistic discourse in order to produce a phenomenologically informed psychology. This has been taken up as a possible solution to the phenomenology/naturalism debate in the work of Zahavi (2004; 2010; 2013) and Gallagher (2012). A related approach is taken by Braddock (2001), where he argues that phenomenology should be defined by its subject matter (which he takes to be first-person experience) rather than its method. My own proposal should be understood as distinct from these, as it does not culminate in the positing of a completely naturalized consciousness.

<sup>41</sup> Merleau-Ponty's considerations of contingency in human existence is examined in M. C. Dillon's work, "A priority in Kant and Merleau-Ponty" (Dillon 1987). However, even in this

Yet, if this were all that was meant by the contamination of the transcendental, we would not be forced back into our paradox. We could simply admit that the ontological structures that are constitutive of the world are reciprocally altered by the facticity that these structures themselves determine and produce, without admitting that the ontological structures are wholly embedded in this factual world.

What Merleau-Ponty ultimately offers us is a much more problematic conception of contamination, a conception in which the ontological structures of the world are contaminated by something they disclose but do not themselves constitute, and over which they have no power. When Merleau-Ponty brings phenomenology face to face with the case of Schneider, forcing phenomenology to confront the case on its own terms, rather than the terms set by transcendental idealism, he forces phenomenology to admit the contamination of the transcendental by the natural. As he says, “After all, Schneider's disorder is not initially metaphysical, for it was a piece of shrapnel that injured him in his occipital lobe” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 127).

No amount of meaning bestowing power will negate the effect that the piece of shrapnel, in its collision with Schneider's brain, has upon the structure of his world. The event of this collision sedimented into Schneider's facticity, not only as meaningful, but as brute.<sup>42</sup> It is not the meaning of the shrapnel that threw his ontological structure out of alignment. It does not matter if he considers the shrapnel a blessing or a curse, whether it struck him in battle or while walking

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work, Dillon portrays the depth of contingency in Merleau-Ponty's work as penetrating only *a priori* concepts, rather than *a priori* existential structures. In other words, his interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's contingent *a priori* is one in which Merleau-Ponty has not actually moved beyond the later Husserl.

<sup>42</sup> My use of the term “brute” is not meant to match on to “brute facticity” as discussed by some of the classical phenomenologists. Rather, I mean “brute” in the sense of “meaningless,” or “devoid of meaning.” While the piece of shrapnel is disclosed to us as having a power that exceeds our powers of world constitution, even the disclosure of the shrapnel *as* “brute” does not give it its power. It has a power that stands outside the realm of meaning.



down the street. It does not matter if anyone knows the shrapnel is lodged in his brain or even if anyone knows that shrapnel exists at all. The power it displays in altering the ontological structure of Schneider's world comes neither from the human being, nor the transcendental subject. It comes from nature itself, as something that exists independent of us, but is certainly not inaccessible to us.

It is true that the ways in which such ontological changes are expressed (e.g. through behavior, manners of speaking, and so on) are contingent upon Schneider's historical and biographical situation, but the ontological changes themselves are not altered by such historical contingencies.

### **5.3 A New Naturalism**

What does this mean for the future of phenomenology? What must phenomenology give up in the confrontation with a nature that it has no power over? Must phenomenology give up the goal of being the study of the transcendental ego as constituting power of the world? Or is there a sense of the transcendental that can be meaningfully retained?

Catherine Malabou has asked us to relinquish the transcendental (Malabou 2014). As a rejoinder, I ask, why relinquish what we can simply contaminate? Why take the paradox of madness as a sign of defeat when it could be a sign of revolution? A contaminated transcendental is still a transcendental, if by this we mean the *a priori* structures of consciousness and worldhood. What we relinquish is necessity and purity, not transcendentality. A transcendental that is contaminated by the natural is not of necessity reducible to the natural. Contamination may just mean contamination.

Phenomenology, in holding to its methodological commitment to return to the matters themselves, need not, and must not, hold to a metaphysical position that cannot do justice to the

world before our eyes. Transcendental idealism would have us turn a blind eye to the profundity of psychopathology, infancy, and animality. It would have us constrain such phenomena to a transcendental system to which they do not belong for the sake of a metaphysical system that stands without justification.

To ask after the other side of this project of reconceptualization, if we are to embrace a phenomenology of the contaminated and contingent, where does this put naturalism? It puts it, I argue, exactly where it belongs. That is, within the purview of phenomenology itself. Recent decades have showered us with countless attempts to “naturalize” phenomenology. Such attempts have taken many forms, but the typical goal is to reconceive phenomenology in such a way that it serves the ends of a project it was originally meant to delimit and define.

What we come upon here is something quite different from a naturalized phenomenology. It is, in contrast, a phenomenological naturalism. If phenomenology itself can discover nature in the contingency and contamination of the transcendental, why could it not also define and delimit this nature that it has discovered?

This, I argue, is precisely the project of a self-reflective phenomenology. In discovering phenomena that initially appear to limit its reign, phenomenology at first struggled to hold onto the metaphysical system it had built for itself. But it need not cling to such a system any longer, nor must it accept a limitation to its reign. The natural, *as* that which exists and has a power independent of any and all transcendental subjects, while not constituted by us, is at least disclosed by us. It is well within the purview of phenomenology to investigate the manners of givenness of the natural, as well as its proper relation to the transcendental. In this way, phenomenology can engage with both naturalism and the sciences on its own terms; terms that are philosophically sound and phenomenologically justified.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**PHENOMENOLOGY AND DIMENSIONAL APPROACHES TO  
PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH AND CLASSIFICATION<sup>43</sup>**

**1 Introduction**

As discussed in preceding chapters, contemporary psychiatry finds itself in the midst of a crisis of classification. In this final chapter, I turn toward methodological problems in interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue between phenomenology and psychiatry, and propose a new direction for phenomenological research that might mitigate obstacles to phenomenological contributions to mainstream psychiatry.

The developments begun in the 1980s—with the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III)—successfully increased inter-rater reliability (i.e. the likelihood of two or more clinicians arriving at the same diagnosis for the same patient). However, these developments have done little to increase the predictive validity of our categories of disorder. A diagnosis based on DSM categories and criteria often fails to accurately anticipate course of illness or treatment response. In addition, there is little evidence that the DSM categories link up with genetic findings, and even less evidence that they correlate with distinct neurobiological states (St. Stoyanov, Borgwardt, and Varga 2015).

Some argue that the lack of neurobiological correlates is evidence that psychiatric disorders are not brain disorders, but are instead problems of living (Szasz 1960). Others argue

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<sup>43</sup> A version of this chapter is forthcoming in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, and has been reproduced with permission from Johns Hopkins University Press.

that the lack of validity is evidence that these particular categories are poorly delineated—if we carved up the categories of mental disorder differently, we might make more accurate predictions and discover distinct biomarkers (Malhi, Parker, and Greenwood 2005).

While both of these approaches have received attention in the psychiatric literature, much of the current debate hinges not on whether our current categories are valid, but on whether a categorial approach in general is capable of accurately articulating the domain of mental illness. Prominent figures at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), such as Insel and Cuthbert, argue that the best way to approach current problems in psychiatric classification—at least from a research perspective—is to give up categories and turn toward dimensions (Cuthbert and Insel 2013; Cuthbert and Kozak 2013). Rather than beginning from distinct kinds of illness, we should begin from distinct features of human behavior, experience, and brain circuitry. From these core features, we can study the full range of normal to abnormal phenomena, without being beholden to the still unjustified belief that mental disorders group into more or less distinct categories.

Philosophers have made considerable contributions to our understanding of the classification of mental disorders (Kincaid and Sullivan 2014; Zachar et al. 2015), including dimensional approaches to classification (Murphy 2015; Schaffner 2012). The contribution that I make here also concerns these developments. However, unlike most contributors to the current literature on the topic, my concern is with the role of *continental phenomenology* in dimensional approaches to psychiatric classification. I argue that, in spite of phenomenology's historical alignment with categorial approaches to the understanding and classification of psychiatric disorders, it is well suited to developing research programs along dimensional lines.

In section two, I distinguish categorial from dimensional models of disorder and I clarify the sense of dimensionality that I am concerned with. In section three, I outline the

phenomenological contributions to the philosophical literature on psychiatric classification and argue that this work does not adequately address dimensional approaches because of phenomenology's traditional orientation toward typification. In section four, I motivate, outline, and illustrate a phenomenological-dimensional approach to psychiatric research and classification (drawing inspiration from the NIMH's Research Domain Criteria initiative (RDoC)). In section five, I argue that a dimensional approach to phenomenological research can complement the *trouble générateur* or core gestalt approach employed by contemporary phenomenological psychopathologists such as Parnas and Sass.

## **2 Categorical and Dimensional Approaches to Psychiatric Classification**

Before considering the possibility of a phenomenological-dimensional approach to classifying mental disorders, it will be helpful to clarify the kind of dimensional approach that I am concerned with, and how it differs from more traditional categorical approaches. The major diagnostic manuals assume that the kinds of phenomena studied and treated by psychiatrists are amenable to discrimination—that is, more or less definite lines can be drawn not only between normality and psychopathology, but also among the various kinds of psychopathological conditions (Tabb 2015). This assumption is not necessarily essentialist; it does not require that absolutely clear boundaries can be drawn in all cases (Kincaid and Sullivan 2014). However, it at least requires that we have more or less discrete entities, even if these entities have fuzzy boundaries or are better categorized through family resemblances (e.g. shared property clusters) rather than absolutely essential features (Haslam 2014; Zachar 2014).

Proponents of “dimensional” approaches have recently challenged categorical dominance. However, there are two fundamentally different kinds of dimensional approaches that are not always disambiguated in the literature. One dimensional approach—a major topic of discussion

in the decade preceding the publication of the DSM-5 (2013)—aims to supplement (rather than undermine and replace) categories with dimensions (see Helzer et al. 2008). This approach was taken up in the DSM-5, leading to broad and explicitly heterogeneous categories such as autism spectrum disorder.

Another dimensional approach that recently entered into scientific and philosophical discourse aims to undermine and replace (rather than supplement) categories with dimensions. On this new dimensional approach, the phenomena that vary in degree, or exist along a continuum, are core features of human beings—behavioral, experiential, or neurobiological. Such features might include attention, visual perception, agency, or even the understanding of others’ mental states (Cuthbert and Insel 2013; Cuthbert and Kozak 2013; “Research Domain Criteria Matrix” 2015).

The distinction between these approaches hinges on the kind of phenomena the dimensions belong to. The former approach focuses on *dimensions of categories of disorder*. It posits that the domain of mental disorder is amenable to categorization, but concedes that there are no hard boundaries between health and illness, or between various disordered conditions. The latter approach focuses on *dimensions of human behavior, experience, and neurobiology*. It therefore dispenses with categories of mental disorder entirely.

I reserve the term “dimensional” for this latter approach, which is the one I am concerned with here. I refer to the former approach as “spectral,” drawing on its use in the development of broad categories such as autism spectrum disorder.

### **3 Contemporary Phenomenological Approaches to Psychiatric Classification**

Most phenomenological psychopathologists are critical of the diagnostic criteria as well as the categories of disorder currently in use. Parnas and Bovet criticize the superficiality of

operationalism, which is the diagnostic approach employed since the DSM-III (Parnas and Bovet 2015). Stanghellini argues that many of the diagnostic criteria are poorly defined, offering us vague and problematically heterogeneous accounts of what actually constitutes each disorder (Stanghellini 2004). Ratcliffe and his colleagues have pointed out that some of the categories are so broad that they include somatic disorders, such as inflammation (Ratcliffe et al. 2013). However, in spite of the critical stance toward both the diagnostic criteria and the particular diagnostic categories currently in use, phenomenologists tend to be sympathetic toward—if not overtly supportive of—a categorial approach to classification.

The phenomenological orientation toward categorial approaches to research and classification has a long history, but its contemporary manifestation owes much to Schwartz and Wiggins' early work on typification (1985; 1987). Drawing on the work of Husserl (1973), Schutz (1966), and Polanyi (1966), they argue that our everyday manner of understanding and perceiving objects within the world (including other embodied subjects) is grounded in a process of typification. That is, we experience things as belonging to a certain *type*, or *kind*. These types need not be explicitly defined or clearly delineated; they constitute a tacit, passive background through which we perceive and understand our world.<sup>44</sup>

In light of this account of sense-making, phenomenologists tend to be critical of classificatory systems that ignore this intuitive mode of understanding. Operationalism receives the brunt of this criticism because it not only dispenses with any kind of intuitive understanding, but also seeks to replace this understanding with superficial lists of easily observable symptoms that do not hang together in any meaningful structure. The operational approach fails to acknowledge how psychiatrists (and human beings in general) understand, classify, and make

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<sup>44</sup> For an introduction and critical analysis of typification and ideal types in psychiatric diagnosis and classification, see Fernandez (forthcoming b).

sense of their world. These phenomenologists argue that when classifying a new domain, we would do well to make our system of classification mirror or mimic our everyday ways of understanding phenomena. Psychiatric classification and diagnosis should be developed through an enhanced or scientifically supplemented process of typification that we already employ in everyday life (Wiggins and Schwartz 1994).

This outlook has been developed along two different lines, referred to as the ideal type approach and the prototype approach. Schwartz, Wiggins, and Norko (1989; 1995) propose an ideal types approach to diagnosis and classification. An ideal type (as defined in the work of Weber (1949) and Jaspers (1997)), is a heuristic concept that outlines the basic features of the phenomenon in question. Much like the relation between geometric concepts and their material manifestations, there need not be any real instances of the type in its ideal form. Nevertheless, the ideal type offers a clear starting point whereby a community of researchers and clinicians can orient their investigations. Because it is understood that a pure instance of the type may not exist, the concept casts a wide net, allowing researchers and clinicians to categorize a subject's condition while also stipulating how this particular manifestation diverges from the ideal type in question.

Parnas and Gallagher, by contrast, have most recently advocated a prototype approach to psychiatric classification (2015).<sup>45</sup> Much like ideal types, prototyping acknowledges the inherent fuzziness in the boundaries between psychiatric disorders. Rather than offering essential criteria for diagnosis, the prototype approach begins with an exemplar—one that stands as the best representative of a certain class. They use the analogy of taking a sparrow, rather than a penguin

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<sup>45</sup> Parnas and Zahavi (2002) have also proposed an ideal types approach. However, their approach differs from the one proposed by Schwartz, Wiggins, and Norko insofar as it aims to clarify the *essential* features that must hold for a condition to count as belonging to the category question.



or an ostrich, as the prototype for the category “bird.” While penguins and ostriches are certainly birds, they fail to exhibit a number of features typically associated with birds (e.g. flying), while exhibiting a number of features not typically associated with birds (e.g. efficient locomotion in water or on land). As a result, these birds are poor prototypical representatives of the class “birds”—in many respects they are the exception rather than the rule. Parnas and Gallagher argue that we should approach the classification of mental disorders in much the same way, carefully selecting the prototypical representatives of each category (2015, 75–76). The primary point of differentiation between the ideal type and prototype approaches is that the former anchors its concept in an ideal (and not necessarily real) phenomenon, while the latter anchors its concept in an actual instance of the condition in question.

These approaches offer a corrective to the operational program in which psychiatrists diagnose through structured interviews and symptom checklists—which, as the above authors have pointed out, are not followed by most clinicians. However, insofar as these phenomenological approaches are founded on the process of typification, they are necessarily aligned with categorial classifications, and it remains unclear whether and how phenomenology can engage in dimensionally oriented research and classification. In the following two sections I develop an initial outline of a phenomenological-dimensional approach and argue that this kind of approach need not conflict with more traditional approaches to phenomenological psychopathology.

#### **4 A Phenomenological-Dimensional Approach to Psychiatric Research and Classification**

In light of phenomenology’s traditional orientation toward typification and categorial classification, I need to justify my aim of articulating a phenomenological-dimensional approach. The most compelling reason for developing a dimensional outlook hinges on the distinction

between *diagnostic* and *research* classifications. The DSM, originally developed for use in diagnosis, became the de facto standard by which subjects are selected for research. As a result, it became nearly impossible to design studies that test and challenge the validity of current diagnostic categories; the legitimacy of the DSM categories is necessarily presumed in the construction of the study, producing a vicious circularity at the heart of psychiatric research.

The negative consequences of employing the same categorial classification in both diagnosis and research prompted dimensional approaches, such as the Research Domain Criteria initiative (RDoC). This kind of approach relieves the question-begging constraints that arise when preliminary diagnostic categories delimit the populations employed in research studies. Current diagnostic categories are bracketed or put out of play, and psychopathological research is oriented through basic features of human existence. A dimensional approach supplies a fundamentally different orientation by which to explore mental health and illness—one that cuts across current diagnostic boundaries and spans the health-illness spectrum.

In the following subsections, I 1) introduce the NIMH's RDoC initiative as an example of a dimensional framework, 2) outline a phenomenological-dimensional approach, and 3) illustrate this approach by drawing on recent work by Sass and Pienkos (2013b) and Ratcliffe (2012).

#### **4.1 A Contemporary Dimensional Approach: The RDoC**

While there are numerous ways to frame a phenomenological-dimensional approach, my proposal is roughly guided by the RDoC insofar as it begins from a set of domains, each containing dimensions, or constructs (the two terms are used interchangeably). The current version of the RDoC divides its domains into 1) Negative Valence Systems; 2) Positive Valence Systems; 3) Cognitive Systems; 4) Systems for Social Processes; and 5) Arousal/Regulatory Systems (for definitions, see "NIMH » Development and Definitions of the RDoC Domains and

Constructs” 2016). Each domain captures a broad range of human behavior, experience, and biology, which is refined through a set of constructs and sub-constructs. Systems for Social Processes, for example, include the constructs of 1) Affiliation and Attachment; 2) Social Communication; 3) Perception and Understanding of Self; and 4) Perception and Understanding of Others. Of these, all except the first include additional sub-constructs. Perception and Understanding of Self, for instance, includes the sub-constructs of 1) Agency and 2) Self-Knowledge. Perception and Understanding of Others, by contrast, includes the sub-constructs of 1) Animacy Perception, 2) Action Perception, and 3) Understanding Mental States. These divisions, however, are not set in stone—the NIMH encourages research proposals that investigate new constructs or refine current constructs.

When a new study is proposed within the RDoC framework, its primary orientation is defined by the construct or sub-construct in question (rather than a category of disorder). By orienting the study along these dimensional lines, researchers are able to study this particular dimension of human consciousness across various psychopathological conditions, or across the health-illness spectrum.

#### **4.2 Outlining a Phenomenological-Dimensional Approach**

In drawing on the RDoC I am not proposing that phenomenologists attempt to make their own approach consistent with the RDoC *matrix* (i.e. its set of domains, constructs, and sub-constructs). Rather, in appealing to the RDoC model as a fairly robust dimensional—rather than categorical—approach to psychiatric research and classification, I aim to adapt a broad domain/construct framework for use in phenomenological research.

To begin, it is immediately apparent that phenomenologists do not distinguish or delineate the constitutive features of human subjectivity in a manner analogous to the RDoC

domains. However, most phenomenologists do rely on a shared set of conceptual distinctions to guide their investigations of human subjectivity. These concepts are what Heidegger refers to as “existentials” (1962)(1962), although, as discussed in earlier chapters, they are also referred to as “transcendental,” “essential,” or “ontological” structures. Each existential refers to a basic constitutive feature of human existence, including (but not limited to) selfhood, intersubjectivity, affectivity, understanding, temporality, spatiality, and intentionality.<sup>46</sup>

Because the distinctions among these existentials are largely uncontroversial, I propose that they stand as the *domains* of phenomenological-dimensional research. Selfhood, for example, can stand as a domain at the highest level, and might include the constructs of 1) Core Self and 2) Narrative Self. Within the Core Self, we can include a set of sub-constructs. Drawing on the Examination of Anomalous Experience (EASE), these constructs might include 1) Cognition and Stream of Consciousness; 2) Self-Awareness and Presence; 3) Bodily Experiences; 4) Demarcation/Transitivity (of the self-world boundary); and 5) Existential Orientation (with respect to metaphysical worldview and/or hierarchy of values) (Parnas et al. 2005).

It is important that these dimensions are neutral with respect to health and illness. In order to provide phenomenologists with the tools to study the full range of healthy and psychopathological phenomena, the framework should not predetermine or otherwise limit the possibilities for these investigations. For this reason, the EASE does not in itself provide a dimensional framework of the kind I am proposing. The additional items and subtypes in the EASE are psychopathological phenomena, rather than basic features of human subjectivity. For

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<sup>46</sup> Some of these constitutive features are listed and briefly defined in a chapter on phenomenology and psychiatric classification by Parnas and Zahavi (2002). However, while they do distinguish some of these basic features of subjectivity, they do not propose anything akin to a dimensional approach.

example, Cognition and Stream of Consciousness includes items such as Thought Interference; Thought Pressure; and Perceptualization of Inner Speech or Thought. While these may be the kinds of psychopathological features that phenomenological psychopathologists investigate via a dimensional approach, the dimensional framework itself should not be oriented through these items. By limiting the domains and constructs to the basic features of human subjectivity, the framework remains applicable to broadest range of healthy and psychopathological conditions.

### **4.3 Illustrating Phenomenological-Dimensional Investigations**

In order to better clarify the kinds of investigations that can be developed within a phenomenological-dimensional approach, I consider two examples. These studies are not explicitly developed along the dimensional lines that I have proposed, but they do employ a broadly dimensional outlook, investigating the boundaries *between* and *within* current diagnostic categories. The first example is Sass and Pienkos' (2013b) study of selfhood across melancholia, mania, and schizophrenia. The second is Ratcliffe's (2012) study of temporality in major depressive disorder. With the first example, I show how a broadly dimensional approach provides an effective framework for comparing (apparently) similar features across different psychopathological conditions. With the second example, I show how focusing on one phenomenological domain, or existential, provides an effective framework for teasing apart the conditions enveloped within a single diagnostic category.

Sass and Pienkos take up items from the EASE, designed primarily for studies of schizophrenia spectrum disorders, but employ these items across a variety of psychopathological conditions, including those typically classed as affective disorders. In adopting this orientation, they still take for granted certain categorial distinctions, but the investigation itself is oriented through basic dimensions of human subjectivity. This orientation illuminates subtle distinctions

among the dimensions of human subjectivity and the psychopathological changes these dimensions can undergo.

Sass and Pienkos' investigation of the self-world boundary clearly illustrates their approach. They point out that the self-world boundary is sometimes increased in melancholia, while in mania (and especially psychotic mania) there can be a sense of mystic union with the world, severely diminishing "normal ego boundaries" (Sass and Pienkos 2013b, 124). This latter alteration of the self-world relation seems akin to conditions along the schizophrenia spectrum, where the boundary between self and world is also put into question. However, by attending to this specific dimension, they point out that subtle (yet important) differences remain. First, in mania the diminished self-world boundary is accompanied by an ecstatic or benign mood tone (the mood is neither frightening nor unpleasant) (Sass and Pienkos 2013b, 125). Second, the manic subject does not actually become confused about his own perspective or who he is, despite his feeling of oneness with the world. In conditions on the schizophrenia spectrum, by contrast, the subject can become anxious about his own identity, feeling invaded by the outside world. In addition, the sense of unity is often accompanied by a kind of solipsism—the world is simply an extension of oneself, having no independent reality. Both cases involve a blurring of the self-world boundary, but the boundary is blurred in fundamentally different ways.

Sass and Pienkos' study, while preliminary and exploratory, offers substantial insight into both the similarities and differences across melancholic, manic, and schizophrenic experience. And it is precisely their dimensional orientation—beginning from core features of human existence rather than diagnostic categories (DSM or otherwise)—that allows them to explore these similarities and differences, drawing more fine-grained distinctions between psychopathological disturbances.

However, while Sass and Pienkos offer a careful analysis of dimensions of the Core Self across melancholia, mania, and schizophrenia, they do not use their approach to examine or tease apart the heterogeneity *within* current diagnostic categories. To see how a dimensional approach might highlight and tease apart the diverse conditions enveloped within a single diagnostic category, we can turn to Ratcliffe's study of temporality in major depression.

It is common to characterize temporal experience in depression as a slowing down of perceived temporal duration or velocity. However, as Ratcliffe points out, this is a fairly limited and superficial characterization, at least when considered in the light of robust and detailed phenomenological analyses of the structural features of temporality (Ratcliffe 2012). These features include, but are not limited to, Conative Momentum; the Protentional-Retentional Structure; Teleological Orientation vs. Cyclical Orientation; and Intersubjective Synchronicity, or the sense that "our experiences and activities are ordinarily temporally synchronized with those of others" (Fuchs 2013b; Ratcliffe 2012). Examining these distinct structural elements, Ratcliffe shows that while many conditions classed as MDD include a disturbance of temporal experience, the changes are not the same across all subjects meeting the criteria for this diagnosis.

Some subjects, for instance, undergo a partial or total loss of conative drive/momentum; possibilities do not appear as enticing or worth pursuing. Others experience a loss of some or all of one's futural projects. Still others undergo a more profound change in which the significance that futural projects presuppose is itself absent. Some subjects undergo multiple changes in temporality simultaneously—e.g. loss of conative drive accompanied by loss of futural projects—while others undergo a temporal disturbance along a single dimension.

Like Sass and Pienkos' study, Ratcliffe's investigation is oriented first and foremost through a single domain, or existential—in this case, temporality. This domain is then subdivided into its distinct structural elements, or what I have referred to as constructs and sub-constructs. In so doing, Ratcliffe not only illuminates the heterogeneity of conditions enveloped by the category of MDD, he also offers a preliminary set of disturbances that might guide research aimed at subtyping MDD or further mapping the dimensions of human subjectivity.

These kinds of investigations, whether they ultimately challenge or support current diagnostic boundaries, are made possible by employing a dimensional research framework—one that does not presume the legitimacy of our current diagnostic categories, instead providing a fundamentally new orientation for phenomenological investigations.

### **5 Dimensions, *Trouble Générateur*, and the Core Gestalt**

Having motivated, outlined, and illustrated a phenomenological-dimensional approach to psychiatric research and classification, my aim in this section is to clarify the relationship between my proposal and a more traditional orientation of phenomenological research. The phenomenological psychopathologist, Minkowski, developed a phenomenological approach that uncovers the *trouble générateur*, or “generating disorder” (Minkowski 1927). This genetic<sup>47</sup> orientation investigates 1) the general theme or organization of the psychopathological condition, and 2) the fundamental disturbance at the heart of the disorder, or the alteration that brings about or otherwise influences other aspects of the condition (Sass 2014, 367). More recently, Parnas has developed this notion into what he calls the “core gestalt.”

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<sup>47</sup> Genetic phenomenology, introduced by Husserl, is the phenomenological study of the temporal genesis and unfolding. It investigates necessary laws of temporality as well as contingent development (e.g. in cases of psychopathology). For a more detailed account of genetic phenomenology's role in psychopathology, see Sass (2010).



The notion of Gestalt refers to a *salient unity or intrinsic organization* of diverse phenomenal features, based on reciprocal part-whole interactions. In this framework, psychiatric symptoms and signs cannot be considered as mutually independent, atomic features that become individuated (i.e., identified as *this* or *that* particular symptom) “in themselves,” independently of their experiential context. (Parnas 2012, 67)

In this clarification, Parnas contrasts the core gestalt approach with approaches that characterize psychiatric disorders through clusters of atomistic symptoms. His critique is aimed at the operational approach mentioned above (i.e. the system of classification and diagnosis employed in the DSM). However, my dimensional proposal may fall into his line of criticism as well, at least insofar as it proceeds by distinguishing the diverse elements of human subjectivity, and using these distinctions as a framework for phenomenological research.

I argue, however, that my dimensional proposal need not conflict with, and can even complement, the traditional core gestalt approach. The phenomenological psychiatrist, Ellenberger, distinguished three approaches to phenomenological studies of psychopathology. He referred to these as the descriptive, genetic-structural, and categorical approaches. The first refers to Jaspers’ version of phenomenological psychopathology, which offers clear and systematic descriptions of lived experience. The second refers to the *trouble générateur* or core gestalt approach. And the third refers to the study of “categories of inner experience,” or what I refer to as existentials (Ellenberger 1958, 101). While Ellenberger portrays these as three distinct approaches, he does not claim that they are mutually exclusive. At different stages of investigation we may benefit from employing one kind of study or the other, and information we obtain in one kind of investigation may inform the conclusions of another. For example, while Minkowski employs the *trouble générateur* approach, Ellenberger points out that Minkowski

also made headway by orienting some of his investigations through a specific existential, such as spatiality or temporality, exploring how this particular aspect of human experience is altered or disturbed in the condition in question (Ellenberger 1958, 101–108).

While Ellenberger does not fully explore the possibility of mutually informative investigations across these approaches, I here want to sketch some avenues for complementary research in phenomenological psychopathology. First, if phenomenologists aim to uncover the holistic organization of a psychopathological condition, an adequate understanding of the condition still requires detailed analyses of the structural features involved in the gestalt shift, or what Parnas refers to as part-whole interactions. Dimensional approaches distinguish these structural features, and can provide a framework of the various elements that should be considered when articulating and describing an overall gestalt shift. Reciprocally, clarifying the gestalt or organizing principle of a condition might supply hypotheses for further dimensional research. For example, if a subject's condition seems to involve a general lowering or diminishing of affective intensity or attunement, a dimensionally oriented researcher might hypothesize similar kinds of changes in perception (e.g. lowered intensity of tactile sensation, or diminished response to stimuli), thereby guiding research into another domain of human existence. Furthermore the results of such an investigation can confirm or disconfirm initial claims about the changes involved in a particular kind of gestalt shift.

Second, if phenomenologists aim to discover a core disturbance, or a fundamental alteration that brings about the other aspects of the condition, a dimensional approach can delineate and isolate possible candidates. A good example of this approach is found in Merleau-Ponty's study of Schneider, a World War I veteran who underwent dramatic changes in his perception and motility following a brain injury (Merleau-Ponty 2012). In the course of his

investigation, Merleau-Ponty seeks out a core disturbance that makes sense of the complex and varied layers of Schneider's condition, and he draws considerable influence from the gestalt psychologists. However, in order to make sense of this gestalt and isolate the core disturbance, he moves between discussions of the overall organization of Schneider's condition and detailed investigations of specific elements, such as motility, vision, touch, and projection. He begins by proposing a hypothesis, stipulating a core disturbance at the heart of Schneider's condition. He then investigates various aspects of Schneider's condition in order to assess whether their alteration might be explained by appealing to his earlier hypothesis. When this stipulated core disturbance cannot explain one or more aspects of Schneider's condition, he proposes a new hypothesis, stipulating a different core disturbance, and so on and so forth. Throughout his study, he moves between a core gestalt approach, seeking out a fundamental disturbance, and something not unlike a dimensional approach, investigating distinct structural elements of Schneider's condition in order to test whether these changes can be made sense of within the overall framework he has sketched.

While my own proposal may not require that a phenomenologist move between the core gestalt and dimensional approaches as freely as Merleau-Ponty, his method at least offers an example of how such approaches might be complementary and mutually informative. When conducted on a larger scale, dimensionally orientated investigations can shed much needed light on specific facets of psychopathological conditions, providing resources for the phenomenological study of core gestalts.

In light of these examples, it is not only clear that a phenomenological-dimensional approach can complement and support a core gestalt approach—it is also clear that a phenomenological-dimensional approach need not subscribe to an atomistic characterization of

the structural features of human subjectivity. Conceptually distinguishing domains and dimensions of human subjectivity as a guide for phenomenological research does not entail that these domains and dimensions are separate from each other, or otherwise unrelated to a holistically organized subjectivity.

## **6 The Future of Phenomenological Psychopathology**

While the dominant approach to psychiatric diagnosis and classification remains categorical, the current DSM categories have not been validated. They do not supply adequate guides for predicting course of illness or treatment response, or guiding neurobiological research. In light of this crisis in contemporary psychiatry, dimensional approaches have been put forward as a viable alternative for psychiatric research and classification. Such approaches relieve certain question begging constraints imposed by the use of invalid diagnostic categories as a framework for cutting edge research. By orienting a research program through dimensions rather than preliminary categories, studies can address variations and disturbances across the full range of psychopathological conditions.

In following with these new developments in the field of psychiatry, I have considered the possibility of phenomenological psychopathologists orienting their own research through a broadly dimensional framework. While the RDoC does not adequately accommodate a phenomenological approach, I have argued that phenomenologists organize their research along dimensional lines by relying on their own conceptual distinctions among the basic existentials, or constitutive features of human existence. In addition, I have drawn on recent phenomenological studies with broadly dimensional orientations in order to illustrate how such an approach can cut across diagnostic boundaries or tease apart the heterogeneity of conditions enveloped by a single category. Finally, I have argued that a phenomenological-dimensional approach need not conflict

with the more traditional and currently dominant core gestalt approach. In fact, the two approaches are in many ways complementary and mutually supportive.

Whether psychiatry will ultimately adopt a dimensional system of classification remains to be seen. Nevertheless, dimensional approaches are already being employed in contemporary psychiatric research, and clearly offer a viable alternative to categorially oriented research programs. Insofar as phenomenologists are concerned with maintaining interdisciplinary dialogue and potentially collaborating with psychiatric researchers, it would be prudent to develop a broadly dimensional outlook—even if it differs in important respects from what is currently used in mainstream psychiatry. Employing similar approaches reduces the barriers to interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, increasing the potential for phenomenological research to make its way into mainstream psychiatry, ultimately influencing the course of psychiatric research and practice.

## CONCLUSION

In writing this dissertation, I began with two aims. The first was to show that phenomenology has an important role to play in our understanding and classification of mental disorders, regardless of which kind of classificatory system the psychiatric community ultimately adopts. The second was to show that phenomenology has much to gain from taking seriously the alterations and disturbances found in cases of severe psychopathology.

The first aim is most clearly addressed in chapters two through five, where I showed how phenomenology can help us better understand the kinds of experiential alterations that occur in cases of depression and mania. In chapter two I argued that hermeneutic approaches to phenomenology, with their focus on presuppositions inherent in our terminology, can help us unearth prejudices in psychiatric taxonomy. By focusing, for example, on the meaning of “mania” throughout the history of medical practice, we find that the concept has referred to a diverse array of psychopathological phenomena. Despite recent attempts to legitimize mania and bipolar disorder by appealing to the ancient Greek “μανία”—thereby establishing a lineage of the disorder that spans over 2,000 years—we find that the ancient Greek concept simply doesn’t refer to what we today call “mania.” Not only is the contemporary concept more narrowly defined than the ancient Greek concept. It also includes a host of assumptions about its relationship with depression, such as the notion that mania and depression are polar opposite states. By employing hermeneutic techniques and sifting through the tacit meanings in our terminology, phenomenologists can better prepare their investigations into psychopathological conditions, homing in on the distinct phenomenon they aim to understand.

In chapter three I showed how phenomenology can shed light on the affective aspects of depression. I argued that in spite of depression being commonly characterized as a deep mood, or existential feeling, many instances of depression also include a reduction in affectivity, or the degree to which we are affectively attuned to our world. By distinguishing cases that include this reduction in affect from cases that do not, psychiatrists can more accurately classify various kinds of psychopathological conditions. Such classificatory advances might help us accurately target therapeutic interventions or guide fruitful neurobiological research.

In chapter four, I drew on the account of depression developed in the previous chapter and applied it to the study of bipolar disorder. Reviewing standard characterizations of mixed states—wherein symptoms of mania occur in what would otherwise count as a depressive episode, and vice versa—I argued that such characterizations misconstrue the essential features of each kind of episode. Following this, I argued that if the essential features of each kind of episode are correctly understood, we might find that mixed states do not exist. If depressive and manic episodes are characterized primarily in terms of degree of affective situatedness in the world, including features such as intensity of mood, degree of emotional reactivity, and so on, then we will not find mixed states—one cannot simultaneously manifest high and low mood intensity, or high and low emotional reactivity. If my characterization of depressive and manic episodes is accurate, then the paradoxical status of mixed states will be dissolved.

In chapter five, I turned to psychopathological forms of embodiment, especially those occurring in melancholic depression. Responding to popular accounts of psychopathological embodiment developed by Fuchs, I argued that Fuchs' use of the *Leib/Körper* distinction (i.e. the distinction between the lived and corporeal body) does not adequately capture the diverse ways in which our embodiment can become disordered or disturbed. In order to resolve this issue, I

delineate five senses of embodiment, each of which reveals a distinct aspect of the heterogeneity within Fuchs' *Leib/Körper* distinction. These distinctions, I argue, provide a better framework for phenomenological studies of normal and pathological embodiment, a framework that is sensitive to the diversity of embodied experience.

These four chapters, which owe much to the conceptual distinctions among the layers of phenomenological research that I delineated in chapter one, illustrate how phenomenological studies of psychopathology can help us draw novel distinctions among psychopathological conditions. These distinctions, when taken seriously, can guide psychiatric research and practice.

The second aim—showing what phenomenology can gain from its interactions with psychiatry—is achieved primarily in chapters six and seven. In chapter six, I addressed the phenomenology/naturalism debate, proposing a phenomenological naturalism that is inspired by the challenges that severe psychopathological and neuropathological cases pose for phenomenological research. Most contemporary phenomenologists who engage in this debate advocate a kind of naturalized phenomenology. This is an approach in which subjectivity, or consciousness, is conceived as a complex phenomenon in the natural world, and phenomenology articulates the structural features of this complex natural phenomenon. In short, naturalized phenomenology leaves the transcendental elements behind. A phenomenological naturalism, in contrast, is a position in which phenomenology can investigate the relationship between subjectivity and nature without being beholden to philosophical forms of naturalism or scientific methods. In addition, such an approach challenges the transcendental position of phenomenology, but not by giving way to a naturalistic account of subjectivity. Rather, I argue that the basic features of subjectivity, those that classical phenomenologists deemed transcendental, are themselves susceptible to alteration and disturbance as the result of events in



the natural world. A phenomenology that takes the possibility for such disturbances and their relation to natural events seriously will be more sensitive to the deep structural alterations that can occur in severe psychopathological and neuropathological conditions.

In chapter seven I took a slightly different approach. Rather than clarifying the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of phenomenology, I addressed methodological problems in collaboration and dialogue between phenomenologists and psychiatrists. I showed that in light of shortcomings in recent editions of the DSM, psychiatry is moving away from a categorial approach and toward a dimensional approach to research and classification. Such an approach dispenses with categories entirely, opting instead for a research program that orients its studies through basic features of human experience, behavior, and brain circuitry. These features can be examined along the spectrum from normal to abnormal human existence, including a variety of psychopathological conditions. By drawing on the RDoC (the dimensional approach developed by the NIMH), I showed how phenomenology can develop a dimensional approach of its own, using its basic set of existentials as a set of domains, each containing a set of dimensions, or structural features of the existential. Finally, I argued that while such an approach differs in important respects from the RDoC, it nevertheless provides a parallel research orientation that can reduce the obstacles to collaboration and dialogue between phenomenologists and psychiatrists.

The field of phenomenological psychopathology, despite being founded over a century ago with the publication of Jaspers' *General Psychopathology*, still has much to offer psychiatry, and much to gain in return. My hope is that this dissertation contributes to the continued success of phenomenological psychopathology, not only by offering novel accounts of conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder, but also by cultivating a self-reflective stance in which we

seriously consider the foundations and methods of phenomenological research. Such a stance was central in the work of the classical phenomenologists, but has not received the attention it deserves in much of the contemporary literature in applied phenomenology, including in phenomenological psychopathology. Continued reflection on our methods and subject matter will be key to establishing a strong and unified discipline—one that facilitates the culture of interdisciplinarity required to drive phenomenological psychopathology forward.

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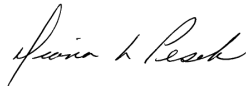
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