Having and Being: A Thomistic Critique of Private Property as an Absolute Right

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Abstract

A great deal of our contemporary thinking and the structures of power that dominate our lives are rooted in the Lockeian notion of private property as an absolute and inalienable right. This toxic and alienating ideology sickens our most important relations, including our relation to the beauty of nature, to our neighbors as companions to which we are bound by moral obligation and civic friendship, to the animals and plants with which we share our world, to our labor as a rich and creative expression of our human nature, to the things we use as lasting sources of satisfaction and cultural heritage, and to our urban spaces as centers of civic and cultural life. In this article, I turn to the work of Thomas Aquinas to challenge the perversive ideology of private property as absolute. For Aquinas rights to property are not a product of natural law, but are a human construction rooted in the pursuit of human flourishing. Thus, property claims are not inalienable, but always amenable to human wisdom and judgments in the context of human needs. This has important implications for challenging the dominant Lockeian ideology.

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas, Private Property, Locke, Ideology, Critique, Political Economy

It is a widely held assumption in contemporary philosophy that religion plays an important ideological role in legitimating the current structures of power, and in many cases this assumption can be an important hermeneutic key for understanding certain aspects of religion. In this paper, however, I will argue that Catholic philosophy offers a powerful critique of the contemporary notion of the absolute right to private property and thus provides an important challenge to the ideological foundation of the current Capitalist structures of power that dominate our world. In our current political and economic situation, then, Catholic thought is counter-ideological—at least on the question of property.

In particular, I will turn to the thought of the great medieval Dominican, Thomas Aquinas. This may seem a strange choice in looking for Catholic allies in challenging contemporary notions of private property. We could look at the ideas of John Ball, Lollard Priest and spiritual leader of the 1381 Peasants revolt in England, the French worker-priest movement of the 1940s, the Liberation theology of the Latin American Jesuits in the later parts of the 20th century, among others. Those are all worthwhile projects, but for this paper I will focus on Aquinas. Partly this is because, while there is a mountain of literature on the critiques of property in these other Catholic traditions, there is a great lack of work on Aquinas’ critique of property as an absolute right that I would like to begin to ameliorate. Partly this is because Aquinas’ thinking is generally extremely balanced and his arguments insightful, thus making his work a perennially valuable resource. Perhaps most importantly to many of the readers of this journal, though, the turn to Aquinas is important because it offers an underdeveloped resource for those who wish to challenge many of the worst aspects of our contemporary political economy while retaining a place for some version of private property that is more amenable to the practice of wisdom in response to particular contexts and human needs. Finally, for my own purposes, this article is also a step towards a larger project that argues against the claim that the more radical Catholic movements are aberrations or at best minorities that represent only the left fringes of Catholic thinking and defends the idea that, by its very nature, Catholic philosophy is unified in its rejection of universal and inalienable property rights.

Aquinas’ careful study of Aristotle taught him a wonderfully nuanced and balanced approach to the intellectual life, for unlike Plato’s disdain for common opinion, Aristotle was committed to always trying to find a way to harmonize the conflicts between “the wise and the many” or between different authorities by showing how both sides in the apparent dispute contained aspects of truth, but were approaching the same subject in different contexts or at different levels of reality or of human development. In the case of private property we see Aquinas at his most intellectually charitable, in this regard. He notes that important authorities, including the Apostles in the New Testament and many of the church fathers argued for communal property, and yet others such as St Augustine argued for private property. Both must be right, says Aquinas, on the basis of the distinction between the “use” of things, which we must consider common to all, and the “procuring and dispensing” or possession of things, which can be properly relegated to the individual. So, Aquinas does defend the legitimacy of private property; however, it is crucial to see that he explicitly rejects the claim...
that private property is a natural or inalienable right. According to Aquinas’ argument, by natural all things are given in common to all; thus, “the division of possessions is not according to the natural law, but rather arose from human agreement which belongs to positive law.”

This social construction is justified based on what it accomplishes. In particular, the institution of private property, with regard to the possession of things, effects three important goals, for Aquinas.

Firstly, because everyone is more solicitous about procuring what belongs to himself alone than that which is common to all or many, since each shunning labour leaves to another what is the common burden of all, as happens with a multitude of servants. Secondly, because human affairs are conducted in a more orderly fashion if each has his own duty of procuring a certain thing, while there would be confusion if each should procure things haphazardly. Thirdly, because in this way the peace of men is better preserved, for each is content with his own. Whence we see that strife more frequently arises among those who hold a thing in common than individually.

Thus, for Aquinas private property is valuable because it raises us above the level of servants by making us more solicitous, that is more attentive, careful, and invested in our work. It allows us to be less haphazard, working in fits in starts here and there, and helps to keep our relation to our work orderly and sustained. Finally, there will be more peaceful and harmonious relations among people if they are not constantly trying to negotiate who gets to use which of the common goods. In sum we can see that Aquinas thinks private property is legitimate because it leads to a healthier relation to one’s work and to better relations among people, thus enabling the creative activity by which we are the stewards of nature in the fulfillment of our human nature.

This puts Aquinas much closer to Marx than to modern Liberals in their agreement on the criteria by which to judge the legitimacy of private property. The difference between the two is that Marx believes the conditions that once justified private property no longer hold. As Marx writes in his 1844 manuscripts, “precisely in the fact that division of labor and exchange are embodiments of private property lies the two-fold proof, on the one hand that human life required private property for its realization, and on the other hand that it now requires the supersession of private property.”

So, the stronger challenge to the status quo, stemming from Thomist constructivism, would be the claim that the conditions under which private property is wise policy have passed, that what was appropriate for the pre-modern world no longer holds. But that terrain has been well-traversed by the Liberation theologians and Catholic Socialists. The weaker version, which I will pursue here, accepts that Aquinas’ view of property still holds, but looks to the ways that his rejection of the Lockean claim of private property as a natural right challenges our contemporary political economy by changing our understanding of the grounds on which property is philosophically justified.

**Private Property as Wise Social Construction**

In order to see the alternative offered by Aquinas, we must briefly characterize the contemporary position to which it offers a challenge, and, of course, it is John Locke who provides the definitive argument for the dominant contemporary understanding of property:

Though the Earth...be common to all Men, yet every Man has a Property in his own Person. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The Labor of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labor with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this labor something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men.

At the heart of the argument lie two intuitions: (1) when I work, the fruit of that labor becomes mine, by right, to do with as I alone please and without interference, as long as (2) that fruit was obtained without violating anyone else’s right to private property, in other words as long as I produce something using only property to which no one else has a legitimate claim. The first claim is not true, as we will see below, and the accompanying condition never applies completely to any actual situation, for even a brief look at history suggests that most property was not originally taken justly from the public domain by settlers coming to virgin land or by explorers venturing in unspoiled wilderness. Almost every property was at one point or another unjustly pillaged by colonizers from the people who originally lived in a place and used those resources. But this means that any advantages a person has are not just the result of property that was gifted to him or her by someone who earned it or to whom it was given in turn by someone who did earn it. Rather it means that inherited property is, at least in part, the result of original injustices.

This problem could theoretically be solved in a society where children are taken at birth from their families and raised by the state under conditions of equal opportunity, rather like the scenario that, for different reasons, Plato suggested. The implausibility of this proposal does mean we should neglect to work for restorative justice in the case of historical wrong-doing, but it does highlight the problem with an absolute understanding of rights. In reality rights are always partially conflicting. This is why contemporary combatants over abortion and universal health care cannot even enter into conversation, for when a woman has an absolute right to her body and a fetus has an absolute right to life or when one person has an absolute right to life-saving health care and another person has an absolute right to do whatever he wants with his money (i.e. not to be taxed for someone else’s health care bills) then rational discussion becomes fruitless and decisions are made, not by discussion and persuasion, but by those with the brute political power to silence their opposition.

**Absolute Natural Right/Result of Human Needs**

For modern liberals who see property as an absolute and foundational right these disputes between rival rights-claims remain insoluble. For Aquinas, on the other hand, property rights are not absolute but are a social response to deeper philosophical truths about the human condition and our place in the cosmos, thus opening a space for dialogue about conflicting rights claims through appeal to something more fundamental on which both claims depend. In fact, according to Aquinas, before we can ask whether private property is legitimate, we have to ask whether there can legitimately be any kind of human property, personal or communal, for as he notes Psalm 23 says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,” a line quoted again by St. Paul in the Christian Scriptures. To solve this problem Aquinas distinguishes between ownership as power of the will over a thing’s nature versus ownership as use. The former is only appropriate to God, for only God, and not human beings, have the right to change a thing’s nature, according to Aquinas. But humans do, he argues, have a legitimate right to use the things of nature. Aquinas writes, “God has sovereign dominion over all things; and He, according to His providence, directed certain things to the sustenance of man’s body. For this reason man has a natural dominion over things, as regards the power to make use of them. We must not forget this in the turn to positive law. After the discussion of private property as a social construction, Aquinas
Finally we see a major difference between the contemporary liberal claim for the absolute right to private property and the Thomist understanding of property as a providential gift. The Thomist views property as not a foundational truth but a response to needs that are themselves only to be understood as obstacles to human flourishing. Thus it is human flourishing that is foundational, and property, in whatever form, is legitimated only to the extent that it serves human flourishing.

### Inalienable Right/Conditioned Right

From this understanding of property in general as a response to human need, it follows that private property is not rooted solely in the individual possessor. Rather, its use must be responsive to the social conditions that surround it. For example, in response to the argument made by Ambrose who says: “Let no man call his own that which is common,” Aquinas argues that Ambrose is “speaking of ownership as regards use, wherefore he adds: ‘He who spends too much is a robber.’” Use is socially constructed and legitimated by the needs of human beings, and so when a person spends wastefully while others are in need, this is an illegitimate use of private property, as morally reprehensible as theft. Further, not only is the right to property not unconditional, it is not inalienable. As Aquinas writes,

> Now according to the natural order established by Divine Providence, inferior things are ordained for the purpose of succoring man’s needs by their means. Wherefore the division and appropriation of things which are based on human law, do not preclude the fact that man’s needs have to be remedied by means of these very things. Hence whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succoring the poor. For this reason Ambrose says, “It is the hungry man’s bread that you withhold, the naked man’s cloak that you store away, the money that you bury in the earth is the price of the poor man’s ransom and freedom.” Since, however, there are many who are in need, while it is impossible for all to be succored by means of those who have it in superabundance, each one is entrusted with the stewardship of his own things, so that out of them he may come to the aid of those who are in need. Nevertheless, if the need be so manifest and urgent, that it is evident that the present need must be remedied by whatever means be at hand (for instance when a person is in some imminent danger, and there is no other possible remedy), then it is lawful for a man to succor his own need by means of another’s property, by taking it either openly or secretly; nor is this properly speaking theft or robbery.9

For the Modern follower of Locke, the rights to justly obtained property are inalienable, for the Thomist the legitimacy of possession is conditioned by the moral use of a resource. It follows that we have an obligation to use our possessions in ways that help those in need. Even more radically, those in dire need have a right to those things necessary for human life that supersedes the right to property, for as we have seen rights-language derives its legitimacy only from the more fundamental natural need for the use of possessions that make possible human life.

### Wealth as Deserved/Wealth as Gift

If the notion of property as absolute and self-grounding is undermined from below, so to speak, by the recognition of a more fundamental reality on which claims to property must be based, namely characteristically human needs, property as absolute and self-grounding is also undermined “from above” by the turn to metaphysics, which yields an understanding of property as gift rather than desert. Thus, we must return to Locke’s conditions for the acquisition of private property. As we have already sketched, first occupancy conditions never hold absolutely and thus cannot be the grounds of absolute rights to private property. Now we must argue that the claim that I deserve the fruits of my labor and reward. Thus, for these workers it is much easier to see the fruit of their labors with gratitude as a gift. First this is a gift from all those others who make society possible, from those who gave me the gift of life and the nurturing labor and reward. Thus, for these workers it is much easier to see the fruit of their labors with gratitude as a gift. First this is a gift from all those others who make society possible, from those who gave me the gift of life and the nurturing of my talents, and from the goodness of nature, but for Aquinas wealth is ultimately a gift from a divine source. He tells us that the “the rich man is reproved [by Jesus] for deeming external things to belong to him principally, as though he had not received them from another, namely from God.”10 Further, this understanding of property as a providential gift extends not just to the fact that I have anything at all, but even to discrepancies in wealth. Aquinas quotes Basil approvingly, “Why are you rich while another is poor, unless it be that you may have the merit of a good stewardship, and he the reward of patience?”11 Wealth is not understood as the deserved and expected result of one’s labor but as a gift of providence, and greater wealth is not understood as the result of harder work, but as the missioning of a task through which I cultivate my own character while helping others, while less wealth is not understood as the result of less merit but as the gift of the opportunity to grow through reliance on others.

**Private property as rise from barbarism/ as fall from grace.**

Finally we see a major difference between the contemporary liberal claim for the absolute right to private property...
where time has there ever been a people which has raised itself without private property above a condition of the most oppressive penury and savagery scarcely distinguishable from animal existence.  

According to the traditional Catholic model, on the other hand, private property is a result of the corruption of humanity in its falling away from an originally superior position. As Bede Jarrett writes,

“Where many Christians see private property as an absolute right which is the beginning and end of political economy, Aquinas sees it as a requirement of justice and in fact posits the right of the poor to life as more fundamental than the right of the rich to their property, thus placing the question of charity in the civic square and opening it to rational debate in our communal discussions of ethics and politics. Where many liberals see wealth as the deserved reward for hard work and thus property as an absolute right which is the beginning and end of political economy, Aquinas sees wealth as a gift to human beings that makes possible their flourishing and the development of their character, thus showing political economy, not as an autonomous discipline but as pointing towards a metaphysical background out of which it springs and forward to its completion in ethics and cultural studies. Thus, whereas many Americans understand their culture as defined by their allegiance to particular economy, for a Thomist the economy is supposed to serve the culture, and the study of economics ought to be subservient to both metaphysics and the liberal arts.”

Where many Americans see charity to the poor as supererogatory or an optional personal virtue best left to individual choice, Aquinas sees it as a requirement of justice and in fact posits the right of the poor to life as more fundamental than the right of the rich to their property, thus placing the question of charity in the civic square and opening it to rational debate in our communal discussions of ethics and politics. Where many liberals see private property as an inalienable right subject only to my will, Aquinas sees private property as legitimate only for possessions which are held by an individual in good stewardship, while allowing for common use. This has important practical political implications for welfare, public health care, city planning and zoning, but the dearest to my heart is the challenge it provides to claims to private ownership of our most beautiful places, including the natural beauty of our rivers, the seaside, and mountaintop land, that bars access of others to these goods.

Where many Americans see private property as the glorious culmination of human history, Aquinas sees private property as a necessary evil resulting from our falling away from the great socialist high points of the past, namely the Garden of Eden and the Apostolic community, and as unnecessary for the more spiritually cultivated such as members of a religious order. This emphasis on private property as an amelioration of our human condition that has not always been necessary and is still not necessary among certain communities, which society at large can aim to imitate, is a deep challenge to a triumphalist neo-liberalism that would impose its economic system, as the only possible rational choice, on the world.

For the Thomist, who would critique Capitalist ideology on the grounds that human flourishing is more fundamental than property rights, there remains much work to be done.

Presencing EPIS

Endnotes

1 Summa Theologiae, II,II, Q 66, Art. 2.

2 Summa Theologiae, II,II, Q 66, Art. 1


4 Two Treatises on Government, 1988 [1689], II, para. 27

5 For a particularly powerful account of this truth see Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” The Atlantic, June 2014.

6 ST, II,II. 66. 1

7 ST, II,II. 66. 7


9 ST, II,II. 66. 7

10 ST, II,II. 66. 1
Phenomenology and psychoanalysis appear to be at opposite poles of understanding, with phenomenology positing consciousness as subsuming the totality of all experience, while psychoanalysis holds that many experiences are repressed or otherwise concealed from consciousness. In this article, it is proposed that these two seemingly mutually exclusive points of view are reconcilable through an examination of the phenomenological reduction and psychoanalytic method.

The relationship between an image and an imago, an image that contains deep and hidden symbolism and meaning, provides a basis for linking phenomenology and psychoanalysis, using Husserl’s concept of horizon. At the horizons of the “things themselves” are potential ambiguities, contradictions, and gaps that provide a ground for metaphor and in-depth understanding and constitute evidence for psychoanalytic investigation of the unconscious. There are locations within the phenomenological field of perception, imagination, and judgment that allow for concealment. The unconscious can be understood phenomenologically as that which is hidden and ambiguous at the horizon, facilitated by imagination and dream, what Merleau-Ponty called the oneiric, and what psychoanalysis calls fantasy.

Key Words: Edmund Husserl; Sigmund Freud; Maurice Merleau-Ponty; phenomenological reduction; unconscious fantasy; horizon; oneiric; empiricism, Schermer

Axioms are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses. —John Keats

Edmund Husserl conceptualized phenomenology as the investigation of the things themselves as they appear in consciousness: the noesis-neoma relationship disclosed by the epoche (Husserl, 1980). By contrast, psychoanalysis is the pursuit of that which eludes and escapes consciousness, the repressed or otherwise sequestered unconscious conflicts of which the subject is unaware but which continue to influence his or her thought and behavior.

As such, phenomenology and psychoanalysis are at opposite poles of understanding, the former subsuming the totality of experience within consciousness, and the latter positing consciousness as but a small segment of the total psychosomatic mind-body complex that is largely unconscious. However, in what follows, I will argue that these seemingly diametrically opposed ways of understanding the mind can be reconciled and understood in terms of one another.

To do so, I will consider the problem of how an image, a dream, a work of art, or a symptom, understood through descriptive phenomenology, can become a deep image, an imago that has hidden complex meanings, thus susceptible to deep analysis. I will do this from the standpoint of the phenomenological reduction but with some reference to post-Husserlian thought, especially the work of Merleau-Ponty on perception and imagination. I will try to show that the phenomenological “I” and world, as they constitute themselves in perception, imagination, and judgment include ambiguities, gaps, fragmentations, and “hiding places” which remained in the background for Husserl and which Freud discovered in his analytic work. It is precisely in this overlapping region of phenomenological complexity and psychoanalytic understanding of the depths that much of post-Heideggerian Continental philosophy came about. However, this essay goes back to the beginnings because in the philosophical storm that ensued, some matters vital to Husserl and Freud were neglected.

Although Freud and Husserl lived and worked during the same time period and intellectual climate (the transition from the enlightenment and romantic eras to modernism), and even though they acquired similar ideas about psychology and intentionality from their studies with Franz Brentano, and despite their similar purpose to create an over-riding meta-theory for understanding that transcended and disclosed truths beyond the empiricist thinking of their time, Husserl and Freud went in divergent directions and left a yawning gap between their two points of view. Husserl sought the transcendental truth of consciousness from which psychology and the natural order arose, while Freud sought psychological truth consistent with nature but outside of consciousness. It would appear that never the twain could meet, but I will contend that they do indeed converge in the place of pre-reflective thought, the world where images rule.

The gap between a philosophy of all-encompassing consciousness versus a psychology of consciousness as a mere gateway to things concealed has persisted despite the efforts of psychiatrists, social thinkers, and Continental philosophers who have tried to close it, as well as the more recent efforts of some psychoanalysts (e.g. Atwood and Stolorow, 2014) to incorporate phenomenology in psychoanalysis. Unmoved by these attempts at synthesis, contemporary phenomenologists still struggle to free themselves from the naturalism and empirical science that Freud and most of his followers employed. Thus, in the Cambridge Companion to Husserl (Smith and Smith, 1995), an end-of-the-century retrospective on Husserl’s work, there is not a single reference to Freud or psychoanalysis. Conversely, Husserl’s major preoccupation, the rigors of the phenomenological reduction, are rarely if ever discussed by psychoanalysts. For the most part, psychoanalysis continues to accept the natural world as a given, make empirical claims to validity, and assume biosocial, linguistic, and narrative views of the self and the organism rather than emphasizing the ground of phenomenology as such.

Thus, while there have been a number of efforts to discuss the interplay of Husserl’s and Freud’s ideas, the problematic that remains unresolved is whether and if so, how a philosophy that emphasizes the primacy of
consciousness can be reconciled with a psychology that regards consciousness as the mere tip of an iceberg in which
the mental life is mostly hidden and below the surface. That is the problem I hope to address, recognizing that there
may be other paths to the same goal, as well as significant objections to such point of view in any form. My purpose in
recalling how my ideas took shape is not so much to draw hard and fast conclusions as to stimulate thinking about how
a depth psychology of what might be called the implicit order (a quantum understanding of nature as having an
underlying flow posited by the physicist David Bohm, 1980) may emerge from the Husserlian reduction, which seeks
demonstrates transparency in all phenomena. How does an image, which, after all, is only an appearance, take
on a deeper, concealed meaning? In attempting to answer this question, I take a different tack from Heidegger’s
linguistic-hermeneutical turn from epistemology to ontology, and from Lacan’s emphasis on language and the symbolic
order, rather focusing on pre-reflective thought, which Heidegger (1962) called the “present-at-hand” and which Lacan
relegated to the “imaginary” and “real” components of the signifier-signified relationship. In my view, phenomenology
and psychoanalysis share the common realization that we live in a sea of images, and that language, the life world,
and psychology are ways in which we give these images further sense and meaning in communication and collectivity.

**Dreams, Images, and Art as Phenomena with Depth**

My attention was drawn to the apparent discrepancy between phenomenology and psychoanalytic interpretation by
two experiences. The first was my realization of the difficulties of remembering and reporting dreams. The second was
a conversation with a poet about a poem that initially seemed like an iteration of discrepant images, with a puzzle as to
how to arrive at its underlying meaning. I will tell you a bit about both experiences and how they brought me to this
point.

A patient reported a dream in which he, an architect, was standing in the construction area near a half-
completed building. He was with his pet dog from adolescence, a dog who was his companion during a time of family
upheaval that led to his being forced to leave them against his will to attend a boarding school far away from home. I
had worked with him for several years, and the interpretation came to me quite naturally. I said that the dream spoke to
his feelings of incompleteness and failure for which he sought comfort from me. Aware of counter-transference, I
added that I may have sometimes neglected his need for understanding in this regard. The patient validated my
interpretation with memories of his dog being “therapeutic” and elaborating on his insecurities about his work, further
acknowledging that, yes, he felt more support from his dog than from me.

Sometime later, when I was reflecting on this dream while working on a book (Schermer, 2014) that included a section
on phenomenology, I realized that many details of the dream escaped me: the location of the building, the clothes the
patient was wearing, his posture and facial expression, the appearance and position of the dog, the light and shadows,
and the position, emotions and attitude of the dreamer who dreamed the dream (Grothstein, 2000). In other words, I
lacked an eidetic description of the dream. I didn’t know the dream at all. I only knew it vaguely within the narrative of a
waking individual that was furthermore intersubjectively internalized into my own experience. I only knew the dream as a
projection of myself in dialogue with the dreamer. That was not unimportant for therapy, but the dream as the thing
itself, as phenomenon, remained hidden, a secret.

The truth is that no one has ever interpreted a dream-as-dream. As a private experience occurring during sleep,
details are quickly lost when the dreamer awakens, and once he reports selected elements, they are assimilated into
an intersubjective conversation and narrative, and ultimately into a historical and cultural context. The pure
phenomenology of the dream-as-dream is lost. It can be partly recovered by detailed introspection, immersing oneself
in the dream world in a way that the Romantic philosopher Herder described as “feeling ones way into” a person or
literary work, pursuing the phenomena until they become vivid inside us (Forster, 2007).

Even so, the dream as dreamed is quickly lost in the transition from sleep to wakefulness.

That realization led to the further thought that, while difficult to bring to light, some of the dream’s meanings must
somehow reside in the dream as dreamed, not in projections and introspection based on waking conversation and
analysis. While psychologists have debated whether dreams have meaning, people through the ages have been
drawn to them on the basis of such a belief. I surmised that the dream images must acquire meaning from within their
own organization. In that way, they become imagoes, deep meaningful experiences having significance, depth, and
history embedded within them.

The second occurrence that brought me to a similar place was a discussion I had with a friend 14 about a poem by the
late James Wright, one of the poets of the “deep image” (Haskell, 1979), a phrase used to depict the use of shifting
images as opposed to narrative verse to convey emotions and implications about the human condition. My poet friend
and I were discussing one of Wright’s poems called “The Jewel” (Wright, 1990, p. 122):

> There is this cave in the air behind my body/That nobody is going to touch:/A cloister, a silence/Closing around a
> blossom of fire. When I stand upright in the wind, my bones turn to dark emeralds.

Wright (1975) ironically said his poems were “carefully dreamed”, and this poem is more like a dream, free association,
or stream of consciousness than a real life narrative. As in a dream, the images at first seem randomly chosen: cave,
air, body, cloister, blossom

om, fire, emeralds. Yet there is an undeniable power in these images as combined and spoken by the poet: a private
space in need of protection, defiance, a choice having consequences. Their power gives them intuitive meaningful
presence

14 Michael Graves, poet and literary critic, New York City contained in the images and words as such.

My poet friend, who knew Wright personally and had studied his work with him, gave me insights into the poem
through allusions to other sources and contexts: Plato’s cave, references to blossoms and fire in other of his poems,
connections to Yeats’ preoccupation with the occult, the mythic significance of emeralds, Wright’s alcoholic psychoses.
I thought these were all pertinent and interesting, but I felt that the images themselves and their juxtaposition
possessed depth in and of themselves. I suggested that we just immerse ourselves in the images as what Husserl
called “the things themselves.” We agreed that the images were paradoxical: a cave in the air; a blossom of fire, bones
turning into dark emeralds. Their power seemed to emerge from their ambiguous, contradictory, and disparate nature,
exactly what struck Freud about dreams and symptoms.

These two experiences—with a patient and with a poem—led me to believe that an image, as simply an occurrence,
can by a special intentional act acquire an intuitive depth of meaning prior to any reflection about it. Moreover, the
change in myself and the space, rather than a physical being inside the mother. The former is a phenomenon of pre-

the third living being in the consulting room was known to me phenomenologically as my own bodily experience. If I

affected her sense of self as well as my own perceptions of the room, my own body, and my moods. The presence of

the course of her treatment. In the later stages of her pregnancy, the weight and activity of the little being inside her

phenomenology of the embodied self and its interpenetration with the world. A patient of mine became pregnant during

(1968) called an “interpenetrating harmonious mixup.” In certain respects, psychoanalysis may be seen to be a

connects to Freud’s notion of erogenous zones and, more generally, to Melanie Klein’s statement that “The child is an

inhabit it emerges from and is an extension of our own body. This will bring phenomenology into conjunction with psychoanalysis.

Thus, by my definition, images have no object unless they are assigned one. As in Lacan’s mirror stage, the child’s

image in the mirror has no meaning until he recognizes that it is of himself. (Until then, he lives in a world of images, of

imagination, in which meanings are highly variable and paradoxical, what Freud called the primary process.) Most

often the epoche discloses that an image is assigned an object in the epoche act. (I look at the moon, and it is the

moon, not the image on my retina, that I “see.”) In most cases, when we apply the phenomenological reduction, we

find their noema to be organized objects, whether the color red or an automobile or a unicorn or the number one. They

may or may not represent something in the natural world, but they always have a “thing-ness” about them and a

singular consistent meaning. The ideality of such things (or beings, what Heidegger called the “ontic”) allows us to

reflect on them, think about them. This is what Husserl’s transcendent ego discloses to us. This is his legacy from

Plato, Descartes, and Kant.

The concept from Husserl that via Heidegger caused a tectonic shift in twentieth-century philosophy is his notion of

horizon. Noema have features that are implicit, not evident, like the back of a person who is facing me. Consciousness

intends the whole object and its context without necessarily having prima facie evidence for it. We see a chair, which

includes its unseen back, its familiarity, and its use. The noema includes ever-widening circles or layers, all of which

are aspects of the same bracketed experience. Some of these horizons may be infinite or unknown. Thus, if I see a

chair, it is in a room, which is in a house, which is in a neighborhood. Moreover, it has its use, which is also intended.

These are the horizons of the experience of that particular chair that I see before me. The horizon contains the unseen

and unknown.

Heidegger went further than Husserl and held that at the horizon of all beings is Being. Dasein, thrownness into time,
mortality, Being that cares for its existence. This was the hermeneutical turn: for Heidegger, rigorous phenomenology

disclosed at the horizon the interpretive necessity that permeated all of existence, the historicity and facticity of human

life. This was the ontological bombshell that startled so many of his students and other thinkers of his time. It is a mind-

blowing idea that we still struggle to come to grips with in its fullness and implications. Without in any way diminishing

Heidegger’s epoch-making insights, I wish to take a step back and look at the notion of horizon in a somewhat different way. I do this because I feel that something important was lost in the existential storm, something that takes us closer to Freud and his intentions. It is this: as we pursue the horizon of the noema, the ambiguity and uncertainty of its meaning increases. For example, when I look at this person who faces me, behind him may be a gift or a dagger. And as I am aware of his temporality and historicity, there is increasing ambiguity about their details. So if we start with an image like a dream or perhaps Rembrandt’s “Self- Portrait as the Apostle Paul” (Rembrandt von Rijn, 1662; see reproduction), and move to their horizons, we encounter complex meanings in the

person, place, and action encountered in the beings that are there. As I gaze at Rembrandt’s man with the turban and a manuscript shrouded in darkness except for the illuminated face and the corner of the manuscript, I experience an ambiguity that calls for interpretation and understanding. The image takes me to a place of wanting to know something more about the man and his relationship to the manuscript. The darkness of most of the painting stimulates this pursuit of the unseen and unknown. The “fusion of horizons” of self and other (person, artwork, historical period, etc.) is, according to Gadamer (1997, p. 302), what prompts us to enter into a dialogue with the image and a conversation about it. This is the basis of metaphor and metonymy in language and of dream interpretation. I want to assert that the initial approach to ambiguous meaning is pre-reflective, already present in the horizon. This will bring phenomenology into conjunction with psychoanalysis.

From Phenomenology to Hermeneutics: How Images Constitute Meanings

An essential insight from phenomenology is that most of our lived experience is intuited, known to us well before we

begin to think and reflect upon it in speech and language. It is “already there” and we live within it. Perception, memory,

judgment, and imagination are intentions that constitute a lived experience. Language, science, logic, and the cogito serve to communicate, explain, clarify, and refine our lived experience.

Merleau-Ponty (1976) conceptualized the phenomenology of perception and lived experience in a way that potentially

provides a way to understand what Freud called “unconscious” as constituted phenomenologically and prior to

language and the symbolic order. For Merleau-Ponty, our pre-reflective perception of the world and the people who

inhabit it emerges from and is an extension of our own body. This principle of the embodiment of all experience

connects to Freud’s notion of erogenous zones and, more generally, to Melanie Klein’s statement that “The child is an

intensely embodied person” (Ashbach and Schermer, 1987, p. 37). The phenomenological body is the center of the

life-world, and the two are intertwined. Merleau-Ponty (1968, pp. 130-155) thus argues for the interpenetration of the

embodied self and the world. For example, when we touch an object, we sense both our fingers and the surface it

touches: the two are inseparable. Developmentally, the infant experiences its mind, body, and world as what Balint (1968)
called an “interpenetrating harmonious mixup.” In certain respects, psychoanalysis may be seen to be a

phenomenology of the embodied self and its interpenetration with the world. A patient of mine became pregnant during

the course of her treatment. In the later stages of her pregnancy, the weight and activity of the little being inside her

affected her sense of self as well as my own perceptions of the room, my own body, and my moods. The presence of

the third living being in the consulting room was known to me phenomenologically as my own bodily experience. If I

had bracketed off my knowledge of the natural world in the manner of Husserl’s epoché, I would have described a

change in myself and the space, rather than a physical being inside the mother. The former is a phenomenon of pre-

reflective thought, while the latter is an inference about nature.
Another area of great interest to Merleau-Ponty was the imagination ((Merleau-Ponty 1993, p. 126). He contended that the imagination informs all experience, including our perceptions of self and world. For Merleau-Ponty, dreams, myths, imaginary people and places, are all as much a part of our life world as are our perceptions of the natural world. They are as “real” to us as nature herself, even to be found within nature. Merleau-Ponty called the realm of the imagination the oneiric, linking it directly to dreams as the prototype. Phenomenologically, imagination and the oneiric precede and interpenetrate the natural world. The child lives in a world of imagination which gradually, and based on feedback from its actions (reality testing) and socialization, develops a semblance of a so-called “realistic” perception of a world which it can hopefully navigate successfully. Like the child, we all start out with images, and we weave stories and metaphors about them.

17 The same is surprisingly true of the hard sciences. Newton’s dreams and alchemical interests preceded his discovery of the laws of motion. Kekule discovered the shape of the benzene ring through a dream. Einstein used a series of “thought experiments” to formulate the special theory of relativity. Imagination is the midwife of theory.

Stories and metaphors are important means of establishing mutual understanding (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). They are essential components of hermeneutics and interpretation.

Images, Psychic Depth, and the Unconscious

Images acquire meaning within and through the noesis-noema relationship. They take on “sense” through the intentional act. So I see a chair or the moon, not merely the sensory features that compose them. So my patient dreamt about a familiar dog and a building. The dream images acquire sense. So James Wright wrote about things like caves and blossoms and wind rather than just making utterances absent the things themselves. The relevant questions for psychoanalysis are 1) how do these meanings within the noesis-noema relationship acquire depth? 2) How do they come to be related to the “I,” the self, the patient or poet, and his history? 3) How do they come to be ambiguous, contradictory, and concealed?

With regard to the first question, I have already hinted at an answer. Psychological depth opens up as the horizon expands, in what Heidegger (2008) called alatheia. Being disclosing itself. At that shifting horizon of disclosure is ambiguity. Ambiguity calls for something to generate sense and reference, completeness and transparency of the noema. But since direct apprehension is no longer possible, the noesis-noema relationship is completed through possibility, and this is done is through metaphor, a likeness to what it might be. The horizon and its metaphorical incompleteness create the experience of psychological depth. Thus, in the Wright poem, the image of a cave in the air creates an ambiguous horizon. Somewhere in the horizon of the image of a cave there is a relationship to a metaphorical enclosure in the air rather than the earth. Consciousness begins to stretch the image. The cave shelters, conceals. The air is everywhere. The cave in the air affords shelter and secrecy from omnipresent transparency. As we begin to reflect on the meaning, we might compare the cave that no one is going to touch with Levinas’ (1999) “alterity,” the unknowability of the other; and Winnicott’s (1965, p. 187) “incommunicado core,” the secret aspects of the self. These are meanings generated by reason and understanding, but they require the ambiguous aspect of the image at the horizon to even be considered at all.

With regard to the second question, the psychoanalyst is primarily concerned with the image as it emerges from the patient, from a singular being who is present with him. How does an image become related to the “I,” a subject, the self, if indeed the two can ever be considered separately from one another? For Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, the “I” is the embodied hub or center of the experience of the lifeworld. By contrast, the way images and objects in daily life are typically perceived in a detached manner, not identified with the self. There are objects, and then there are objects that engage the self. People rarely regard dreams, poems, and works of art—at least the ones they appreciate—with detachment. They position themselves in such a way as to find the imagery personally meaningful objects of identification. The curious thing about some symptoms, is that they are experienced in a detached manner as patterns that come from an unknown source. The symptom is understood when the patient discovers its source in his own mental life. Freud’s famous statement, “Where id was, there ego shall be” (“Wo Es war, soll Ich werden”) literally translates as “Where it was, there I shall be” (Freud, 1991, p. 112). The presence of self in its identification with the object transforms the mundane and detached to an experience of depth and implication.

The third question is of singular importance with respect to the unconscious: how do images and their intended objects come to be concealed, hidden, inaccessible to consciousness and discourse? The answer that I propose resides in the nature of pre-reflective perception and imagination. The pre-symbolic infant and child inhabit a sea of images that are a concatenation of perceptions and imagination. The perceptual component acquires three dimensions through the binocular and binaural senses as well as movement within the sea of evolving experience. Such sensory-motor configurations configure the phenomenological world that we are born into. Experiences soon take on the quality of noema, of things themselves. So, for example, the child comes to think of “mother” as an object and (later, a subject) outside of itself. But at the horizons of these noema, there are places in the child’s imagination-infused three-dimensional world that are concealed, hidden from view. Moreover, they are not yet identified by the child as “mind” or “matter,” as cogito versus substance. (Research on “mentalization” (Fonagy, et al., 2002) suggests that the child only gradually develops a concept of mind and of subjects other than itself.) It is through the possibility of concealment within the sea of images that what Freud called the “unconscious” paradoxically becomes part of the phenomenological world.

18 Indeed, the scientific view, at least until recently, is based on the de-subjectivizing of the natural world.

Within its evolving world of experience, the child discovers that there are horizons of things that are hiding places, “cabinet” where it can put things away that it doesn’t like or are disapproved by others. It can put those contents inside something, or behind something, or at a great distance. It can retrieve some of those, but it can also banish them as the evil one in the kingdom is banished forever in fairy tales. As it begins to make hiding places, the child is creating within its phenomenological world regions of the hidden and even the imprisoned or unknown. Its horizons include enclaves of parts of self, relationships, phantasms, dreams, real and fictional characters, all of which become temporarily or permanently inaccessible. There are smaller worlds within worlds that are sequestered, like the private diary of secret thoughts kept by an adolescent. Those that are not encountered for a long period of time are forgotten. But, paradoxically, they are in the phenomenological world, yet a concealed part of it. Slap and Slap-Shelton (1991)
cognizes some of this idea in their concept of “sequestered schema,” whereby the cognitive schemas the child uses to understand its experience can become “sequestered,” inaccessible to the child’s subsequent experience. Slap and Slap are referring to the child’s cognitions as understood by Piaget and Inhelder (1958), while I am talking about phenomenology, implying that sequestering develops before the child can think conceptually and is processing images in a pre-reflective way, which Piaget and Inhelder incorporate in the sensori-motor and pre-operational stages of intellectual development.

While psychoanalysis is still largely framed within a neo-Kantian (cf. Bion, 1962) and/or empirical epistemology, or in existential and Lacanian thought in terms of discourse, one can find echoes of phenomenology there as well. One example that has escaped the net of theorizing, although clinical examples abound, is Melanie Klein’s (1977) depiction of the defense mechanism of projective identification, as a fantasy. She says that the infant has a fantasy of putting the bad parts (pain, frustration, etc.) of its experience into the mother’s breast until, as a result of mother’s care, it feels safe to retrieve them. This is an interesting idea with which even Klein herself could not fully come to grips: that defense “mechanisms” are not the result of “drives,” but the use of imagination for purposes of safety and security: the phenomenology of defense.

Bettleheim’s (1976) *The Use of Enchantment* provides many illustrations of the ways in which the child makes use of fairy tales and imagination to organize his or her inner world. While Bettleheim uses Freudian theory to interpret and explain these stories, it is sufficient for the present purpose to see how the child’s imagination works to make a world that allows it to cope with threat. Bettleheim’s (1983) *Freud and Man’s Soul* makes the further point that, based upon a medical model rather than Freud’s own subjective understanding, many English translations of Freud converted his concepts of self and mind into the mechanistic language of reductionist science. In other words, the subjective and phenomenological aspects of Freud’s theories were lost in translation.

An illustration of how images may be concealed within other images was provided to me by a colleague (Cohen and Schermer, 2004). A woman patient recalled that as a child, she would sometimes read books that incurred her mother’s disapproval. When her mother came into the room, she would put her secret “little book” underneath a “big book” so that her mother would not see what she was reading. The patient said that this was what she sometimes did in therapy, i.e., hide her real feelings under an intellectualizing façade, an insight that furthered her therapeutic progress. My colleague and I considered that at least some coping mechanisms and defenses are aspects of concealment within conscious phenomenological experience. The natural world, discourse, and the imagination afford many opportunities to put things “out of sight, out of mind.”

What I have said so far suggests that if they had engaged in a serious dialogue, Husserl and Freud could have found much common ground for reconciling their points of view, which of course never happened. And there isn’t much documentation to suggest that they had any knowledge of or interest in one another’s ideas. I believe their all too neglected commonalities can be seen in their common interests in images, interpretation and meaning, and how consciousness and ideas constitute themselves. However, each had strong philosophical and theoretical biases which were antithetical to one another. This is an unfortunate reality the consequences of which are still manifest several generations later. My purpose has been to demonstrate a strong commonality between them that is hidden by their opposing assumptions. I conclude my musings about Freud and Husserl with a slightly humorous aside by saying how their respective world views would have made each other’s ideas literal “nightmares” for each other. A rapprochement between their ideas, which is retrospectively quite possible, would have been difficult for them at the time.

**Freud’s Nightmare: Interpretation is Not an Empirical Science**

Here is a fictitious “dream” of the great neuroscientist and psychiatrist Sigmund Freud:

Freud wakes up terrified from a dream in which he is in the medical laboratory of his mentor, Ernst Brucke, who chastises him for his recent paper concluding that hysterical symptoms are psychological rather than chemical in origin. Just then, a flask explodes and the shattering glass blinds him in one eye.

Freud was steeped in the empirical reductionist neuroscience of his day. He made a major departure from the *zeitgeists* of the emerging fields of neuroscience and psychiatry when he wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where he used an interpretive method rather than one that emphasized empirical causes. In Dilthey’s terms, he shifted from causal explanation of natural events to subjective, intersubjective, and existential understanding of human experience (Lessing, Makkreel, and Pozzo, 2011). Freud attempted to unify himself with the hermeneutical by using Aristotle’s notion of representation, holding that conscious ideas represented unconscious processes that had an instinctual, somatic origin. He thus made himself vulnerable to a kind of “mentalism” in which biological necessity and ideas constitute themselves. However, each had strong philosophical and theoretical biases which were antithetical to one another. This is an unfortunate reality the consequences of which are still manifest several generations later. My purpose has been to demonstrate a strong commonality between them that is hidden by their opposing assumptions. I conclude my musings about Freud and Husserl with a slightly humorous aside by saying how their respective world views would have made each other’s ideas literal “nightmares” for each other. A rapprochement between their ideas, which is retrospectively quite possible, would have been difficult for them at the time.

**Husserl’s Nightmare: The Phenomenological Self and World as Ambiguous, Disruptive, and Hidden**

Husserl falls asleep while monitoring a lecture by his student, Heidegger. While dozing off, he has a dream in which he is attempting a phenomenological reduction of his pet cat. As he is writing it down, the cat hisses at him and disappears beneath the sofa. When he wakes up, the whole class is surrounding him, comforting him, asking him if he is all right.

Husserl recognized and probably was put off by the difference between the unpredictable “cat-like” stream of consciousness and the phenomenology of the noesis-noema relationship. I don’t think he was quite able to articulate
how the two are related to one another. His purpose, expressed in the notion of the transcendental ego, was to show how all ideas presuppose and are conditional upon experience that constitutes itself from the intentional relationship between the thinker and the thought. In other words, he sought to demonstrate through bracketing and the reduction that the building blocks of explanation and understanding were not sensations but irreducible phenomena that manifest in consciousness. Husserl, true to the idealist legacy, believed that the phenomenological reduction would reveal an orderly relationship of direct experience to thetic explanation and understanding. In a way, he anticipated Russell’s later idea of a universal science (Korhoven, 2013), although from a point of view different from the analytic philosophers.

In this respect, Husserl was blind to the “falling into death” that Heidegger saw behind all phenomena, and more importantly for the present purpose, the contradictory and troubled nature of human experience as it presents itself in the stream of consciousness. He incorporated some of the complexity and turbulence of the stream in his notion of the life-world, but he always distinguished between the life world and a coherent philosophical and psychological understanding of consciousness. My purpose here has been to suggest that there is no escape, not even through the epoché and phenomenological reduction, from the gaps, deceptions, and complex dynamic and developmental unfolding that informs experience as it constitutes itself in consciousness. In this, I stand with Heidegger, Sartre, and especially Merleau-Ponty. My intention has been to show that Freud as phenomenologist played a major role in deconstructing the idea of a coherent, orderly consciousness, while at the same time uniquely relating his understanding to clinical phenomena and the consulting room. For Husserl, this might have constituted an excursion into some personal Hell. But I think that if Freud and Husserl had both emphasized their discovery of the importance of images in the thought process, they might have found much in common.

References


to follow in constructing a dominant approach to sense impressions. Many post-modern thinkers and schools have Cartesian and Galilean worldviews where “I think therefore I am”, scaffolded later theorists such as Locke and others (therefore ‘dia’ referring to apart or ‘a’ -part), the ability to ‘know’ or to ‘come to know’. A true testament of both Based on early Greek and Latin, the word “diagnosis” has been synonymous with discernment, to distinguish The use of diagnosis: a brief history on the use of classification and taxonomy as thinking. Through ‘Soul-care-as-dialogism’ it may be possible to develop anthropological approaches of what I refer to (2008) as it is deemed important to bridge the contemporary tendency to separate calculative thinking from meditative thinking, Eric Craig’s Dasein-analytic description of Soul, and brought ‘to life’ through various case studies. and meditative thinking, so as to retain mystery and openness to experience. Diagnostic thinking, taxonomy and classification as per se may be more elusive and complex than originally thought. Various theorists such as Thomas Szasz have been vocal about the reification of taxonomy, and its contemporary hegemony could lead to various ethical difficulties evident in post-modern implications on the Other. These implications will be explored through Heidegger’s philosophical thought on calculative and meditative thinking, or even its political agenda. As such, without this awareness it can be argued that psychiatry (or psychology for that matter) merely becomes a complex language and praxis ‘signal’ for the application of pre-existing institutional arrangements, facilitating an estrangement between the scientific/ symbolic/materialist realms and Being/per se. What is needed is not so much knowledge of knowledge and taxonomy, but rather how it is constructed, held (in institutions, in mind), communicated, and carried ‘across’ toward Being/the Other, facilitating an indwelling and meditative thinking so as to retain mystery and openness to experience. Diagnostic thinking, taxonomy and classification as hortus siccus, focusing on Being as cut and dry so to speak, has had immense ‘narrowing’ implications on the Other. These implications will be explored through Heidegger’s philosophical thought on calculative and meditative thinking, Eric Craig’s Dasein-analytic description of Soul, and brought ‘to life’ through various case studies.

Key words: Taxonomy, classification, diagnostic and statistical manual for mental disorders, soul, deficit-correction model, Soul.

Introduction

“To care for people is more important than to care for ideas”

Harry Guntrip

The doctor is the patient’s fate

Karl Jaspers

It is difficult to ignore the reality that the use of diagnosis greatly aids the clinician in organizing an array of symptoms into coherent and communicable structures. Since the work of Hempel (Fulford, Thorton & Graham, 2006) much emphasis has been given to the inherent taxonomy of psychiatric diagnostic systems. Embedded in logical empiricism and the need for “audit trails” (p. 328) (ensuring reliability and validity), psychiatric classification has seen much change over the decades and although seemingly the domain of logical empiricism, empirical import per se may be more elusive and complex than originally thought. Various theorists such as Thomas Szasz have been vocal about the refication of taxonomy, and its contemporary hegemony could lead to various ethical difficulties evident in post-modern theories such as feminism and deconstructionism. It will be the aim in this section to discuss the philosophical-clinical importance of the latter through,

- A brief history of the use of classification and taxonomy—its strengths and weaknesses.
- Its ‘use’ and application and relationship to the Other, and as
- Political tool

The debate will also conclude with case studies and the notion of ‘Soul’, as defined by the Daseinanalyst Eric Craig (2008) as it is deemed important to bridge the contemporary tendency to separate calculative thinking from meditative thinking. Through ‘Soul-care-as-dialogism’ it may be possible to develop anthropological approaches of what I refer to as triangular dialogism.

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Based on early Greek and Latin, the word “diagnosis” has been synonymous with discernment, to distinguish (therefore ‘dia’ referring to apart or ‘a’ -part), the ability to ‘know’ or to ‘come to know’. A true testament of both Cartesian and Galilean worldviews where “I think therefore I am”, scaffolded later theorists such as Locke and others to follow in constructing a dominant approach to sense impressions. Many post-modern thinkers and schools have

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**Fundamentals of Taxonomy**

**Fundamentals of Taxonomy: The Rise of the DSM as a Medical Hortus Siccus and the Need for a Soul in Mental Health**

Loray Daws, PhD

**Abstract**

This essay aims to explore the historical importance of empirical import in the domain of clinical psychiatry. It will be argued that the empirical import, although an achievement in logical construction, has not taken into full account its implications, or even its political agenda. As such, without this awareness it can be argued that psychiatry (or psychology for that matter) merely becomes a complex language and praxis ‘signal’ for the application of pre-existing institutional arrangements, facilitating an estrangement between the scientific/ symbolic/materialist realms and Being/per se. What is needed is not so much knowledge of knowledge and taxonomy, but rather how it is constructed, held (in institutions, in mind), communicated, and carried ‘across’ toward Being/the Other, facilitating an indwelling and meditative thinking so as to retain mystery and openness to experience. Diagnostic thinking, taxonomy and classification as hortus siccus, focusing on Being as cut and dry so to speak, has had immense ‘narrowing’ implications on the Other. These implications will be explored through Heidegger’s philosophical thought on calculative and meditative thinking, Eric Craig’s Dasein-analytic description of Soul, and brought ‘to life’ through various case studies.

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**The use of diagnosis: a brief history on the use of classification and taxonomy**

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To return to diagnosis and its natural ‘offspring’ so to speak, i.e., taxonomy and classification, Kendell (2002) stated that any good classification system has as its aim the grouping together of similar observable phenomena—giving it a common name, a denomination (de-’nominal’-tion), qualifying the group and making it clinical relevant (qualification). In doing so ensures a measure of prediction in terms of ‘its’ course and treatment. This seemed very evident when reading early psychiatric pioneers such as Kraepelin’s inspiring observations of manic depressive psychosis (1921, in Wolperd, 1977, pp. 33-35). A taxonomy should be (a) comprehensive, (b) easy to use, (c) clinical significant², (d) be reliable, and (e) be valid, and in doing so remain ‘true’ or ‘evident’ over many context and culture thereby (e) serving the needs of its ‘users’³. The latter seems of importance—the needs of its users!

1 A beautiful example of such exploration can be found in Lacan’s Ècrits (2006) and Badiou’s ‘Theory of the subject’ (2009).

2 For mental health and especially clinical psychology and psychiatry this would mean it’s a ‘harmful’ ‘dysfunction’ either to the individual or to society.

3 A fascinating need as it implies a shared value system. Clearly, out of the example to follow this was not the case at all. Taxonomy and diagnoses can be used to keep ‘a part’ clients experiencing much mental anguish and society as well as the clinicians treating them.

Before a deeper exploration concerning the epistemology of mental health classification and the needs of the user, I would for a moment return to Fulford’s (in Bloch and Green, 2009, p. 70) good strawberries’ (like ‘bodily disorder’) and ‘good pictures’ (like ‘mental disorder’) description as a simplified way to organize the debate to follow. According to Fulford (in Bloch et al., 2009) there is a clear difference between what constitutes a good strawberry versus what constitutes a good picture, that is, there is a difference between said factual and evaluative meanings of that which we observe. When considering a strawberry it is not difficult to contemplate or describe in detail what constitutes a good strawberry, even a bad strawberry for that matter. Although it may have different shapes, be cultivated in different parts of the world, its color and texture (irrespective of size) usually constitutes it as a ‘good’ strawberry. There is a comfort in the clarity of its ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’. However if one considers a picture, of for example a house, what is perceived as good or bad could be more challenging to ‘frame’. That is, what constitutes a good or bad picture may have physical elements that could be measured—such as its size, the amount of paint used, its dominant or predominant style or school of technique (‘a’ Monet, renaissance art and the like) such as clarity (I am sure a vague picture may lead to uncertainty) for most it remains secondary to what the picture ‘means’ to or for the observer. A good strawberry remains (retains?) a good strawberry even if the observer decides it not so⁴. A picture could be perceived as art/good as it represents for this person a good example of a Monet, for another is good as its reminds them of their childhood home, for another the childhood they never had and the like. Certainly the strawberry could evoke similar associations (the strawberry as a memory of having Sunday lunches with grandma) but for the aim of the current debate suffice it to say that the strawberry lends itself to empirical import easier than a representation (the picture).

4 I have to mention in academic honesty that the more I work with the example the more I am aware that the example does have a naughty logic imbedded, i.e., although the senses I rely on to distinguish factual and evaluative meanings, ocular ad oral meanings may lead to different systems of thought, each with its factual and evaluative meanings per se. I can certainly eat my picture by gobbling it up greedily visually, creating a hunger – a visual pica. Visual pornography has such a state of mind, both factually and evaluative. Also in itself, only since I eat strawberries has it become subject to my factual and evaluative system. It existed in nature before man’s use of it, and although bad for me to eat a bad strawberry- in terms of nature decay is seen as healthy and nurturing (i.e., compost). The latter was debated thoroughly as part of the philosophy of statesman Jan Smuts (Savage, 1998).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factual and Evaluative Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strawberries</strong></td>
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<td>Agreement</td>
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<td>Over what makes a good strawberry (=sweet, clean skinned, etc.)</td>
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<td><strong>Hence</strong></td>
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<td>The term “good strawberry” has acquired the factual meaning “sweet, clean skinned, etc”</td>
<td>The meaning of “good picture” has acquired no consistent factual meaning</td>
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**Parallels**

- Concepts of disorder in physical medicine
- Concepts of disorder in psychiatry

*Figure 4.‘Good strawberries’ (like ‘bodily disorder’) and ‘good pictures’ (like ‘mental disorder’) (in Fulford in Bloch and Green, 2009, p. 70)*

Given the figures as structure it could also be stated that when considering factual realities such as bipolarity, Alzheimer disease and schizophrenia, it would prove difficult in contemporary mental health contexts to ignore both its
A more detailed example, given by the now psychologist Eleanor Longden, may serve as educator. The following excerpt can be found in Ted Talk6 (2013) and introduces a contemporary voice of concern. This is a transcript of her talk:

The day I left home for the first time to go to university was a bright day brimming with hope and optimism. I’d done well at school. Expectations for me were high, and I gleefully entered the student life of lectures, parties and traffic cone theft.

Now appearances, of course, can be deceptive, and to an extent, this feisty, energetic persona of lecture-going and traffic cone stealing was a veneer, albeit a very well-crafted and convincing one. Underneath, I was actually deeply unhappy, insecure and fundamentally frightened — frightened of other people, of the future, of failure and of the emptiness that I felt was within me. But I was skilled at hiding it, and from the outside appeared to be someone with everything to hope for and aspire to. This fantasy of invulnerability was so complete that I even deceived myself, and as the first semester ended and the second began, there was no way that anyone could have predicted what was just about to happen.

I was leaving a seminar when it started, humming to myself, fumbling with my bag just as I’d done a hundred times before, when suddenly I heard a voice calmly observe, "She is leaving the room."

6 http://www.ted.com/talks/eleanor_longden_the Voices_in_my_head/transcript?language=en Eleanor Longden The voices in my head Posted Aug 2013 Permission obtained for both presentation and publication by The Media Requests Team, 15 July 2016

I looked around, and there was no one there, but the clarity and decisiveness of the comment was unmistakable. Shaken, I left my books on the stairs and hurried home, and there it was again. "She is opening the door."

This was the beginning. The voice had arrived. And the voice persisted, days and then weeks of it, on and on, narrating everything I did in the third person.

"She is going to the library."

"She is going to a lecture." It was neutral, impassive and even, after a while, strangely companionable and reassuring, although I did notice that its calm exterior sometimes slipped and that it occasionally mirrored my own unexpressed emotion. So, for example, if I was angry and had to hide it, which I often did, being very adept at concealing how I really felt, then the voice would sound frustrated. Otherwise, it was neither sinister nor disturbing, although even at that point it was clear that it had something to communicate to me about my emotions, particularly emotions which were remote and inaccessible.

Now it was then that I made a fatal mistake, in that I told a friend about the voice, and she was horrified. A subtle conditioning process had begun, the implication that normal people don’t hear voices and the fact that I did meant that something was very seriously wrong. Such fear and mistrust was infectious. Suddenly the voice didn’t seem quite so benign anymore, and when she insisted that I seek medical attention, I duly complied, and which proved to be mistake number two.

I spent some time telling the college G.P. about what I perceived to be the real problem: anxiety, low self-worth, fears about the future, and was met with bored indifference until I mentioned the voice, upon which he dropped his pen, swung round and began to question me with a show of real interest. And to be fair, I was desperate for interest and help, and I began to tell him about my strange commentator. And I always wish, at this point, the voice had said, "She is digging her own grave."

I was referred to a psychiatrist, who likewise took a grim view of the voice’s presence, subsequently interpreting everything I said through a lens of latent insanity. For example, I was part of a student TV station that broadcast news bulletins around the campus, and during an appointment which was running very late, I said, "I’m sorry, doctor, I’ve got to go. I’m reading the news at six." Now it’s down on my medical records that Eleanor has delusions that she’s a television news broadcaster.

It was at this point that events began to rapidly overtake me. A hospital admission followed, the first of many, a diagnosis of schizophrenia came next, and then, worst of all, a toxic, tormenting sense of hopelessness, humiliation
But having been encouraged to see the voice not as an experience but as a symptom, my fear and resistance towards it intensified. Now essentially, this represented taking an aggressive stance towards my own mind, a kind of psychical civil war, and in turn this caused the number of voices to increase and grow progressively hostile and menacing. Helplessly and hopelessly, I began to retreat into this nightmarish way of life in which the voices were destined to become both my persecutors and my only perceived companions. They told me, for example, that if I proved myself worthy of their help, then they could change my life back to how it had been, and a series of increasingly bizarre tasks was set, a kind of labor of Hercules. It started off quite small, for example, pull out three strands of hair, but gradually it grew more extreme, culminating in commands to harm myself, and a particularly dramatic instruction:

“You see that tutor over there? You see that glass of water? Well, you have to go over and pour it over him in front of the other students.”

Which I actually did, and which needless to say did not endear me to the faculty.

In effect, a vicious cycle of fear, avoidance, mistrust and misunderstanding had been established, and this was a battle in which I felt powerless and incapable of establishing any kind of peace or reconciliation.

Two years later, and the deterioration was dramatic. By now, I had the whole frenzied repertoire: terrifying voices, grotesque visions, bizarre, intractable delusions. My mental health status had been a catalyst for discrimination, verbal abuse, and physical and sexual assault, and I’d been told by my psychiatrist, “Eleanor, you’d be better off with cancer, because cancer is easier to cure than schizophrenia.” I’d been diagnosed, drugged and discarded, and was by now so tormented by the voices that I attempted to drill a hole in my head in order to get them out.

Now looking back on the wreckage and despair of those years, it seems to me now as if someone died in that place, and yet, someone else was saved. A broken and haunted person began that journey, but the person who emerged was a survivor and would ultimately grow into the person I was destined to be.

Many people have harmed me in my life, and I remember them all, but the memories grow pale and faint in comparison with the people who’ve helped me. The fellow survivors, the fellow voice-hearers, the comrades and collaborators; the mother who never gave up on me, who knew that one day I would come back to her and was willing to wait for me for as long as it took; the doctor who only worked with me for a brief time but who reinforced his belief that recovery was not only possible but inevitable, and during a devastating period of relapse told my terrified family, “Don’t give up hope. I believe that Eleanor can get through this. Sometimes, you know, it snows as late as May, but summer always comes eventually.”

Fourteen minutes is not enough time to fully credit those good and generous people who fought with me and for me and who waited to welcome me back from that agonized, lonely place. But together, they forged a blend of courage, creativity, integrity, and an unshakeable belief that my shattered self could become healed and whole. I used to say that these people saved me, but what I now know is they did something even more important in that they empowered me to save myself, and crucially, they helped me to understand something which I’d always suspected: that my voices were a meaningful response to traumatic life events, particularly childhood events, and as such were not my enemies but a source of insight into solvable emotional problems.

Now, at first, this was very difficult to believe, not least because the voices appeared so hostile and menacing, so in this respect, a vital first step was learning to separate out a metaphorical meaning from what I’d previously interpreted to be a literal truth. So for example, voices which threatened to attack my home I learned to interpret as my own sense of fear and insecurity in the world, rather than an actual, objective danger.

Now at first, I would have believed them. I remember, for example, sitting up one night on guard outside my parents’ room to protect them from what I thought was a genuine threat from the voices. Because I’d had such a bad problem with self-injury that most of the cutlery in the house had been hidden, so I ended up arming myself with a plastic fork, kind of like picnic ware, and sort of sat outside the room clutching it and waiting to spring into action should anything happen. It was like, “Don’t mess with me. I’ve got a plastic fork, don’t you know?” Strategic.

But a later response, and much more useful, would be to try and deconstruct the message 7 behind the words, so when the voices warned me not to leave the house, then I would thank them for drawing my attention to how unsafe I felt — because if I was aware of it, then I could do something positive about it — but go on to reassure both them and myself that we were safe and didn’t need to feel frightened anymore. I would set boundaries for the voices, and try to interact with them in a way that was assertive yet respectful, establishing a slow process of communication and collaboration in which we could learn to work together and support one another.

7 “There may be modes of thinking to which no known realization has so far been found to approximate. Hallucinosis, hypochondrias and other mental ‘disorders’ may have a corresponding realization, none of which has so far been discovered. They may be difficult to discover because they are obscured by a ‘memory’, or a ‘desire’, or an ‘understanding’, to which they are supposed wrongly to approximate. Unless the obscurity can be circumvented or penetrated it will remain unobserved, as the galactic centre or the origin of the universe remains unobserved.” (W. R. Bion, A Memoir of the Future, 1990, p. ix).

Throughout all of this, what I would ultimately realize was that each voice was closely related to aspects of myself, and that each of them carried overwhelming emotions that I’d never had an opportunity to process or resolve, memories of sexual trauma and abuse, of anger, shame, guilt, low self-worth. The voices took the place of this pain and gave words to it, and possibly one of the greatest revelations was when I realized that the most hostile and aggressive voices were a meaningful response to traumatic life events, particularly childhood events, and as such were not my enemies but a source of insight into solvable emotional problems.

It was armed with this knowledge that ultimately I would gather together my shattered self, each fragment represented by a different voice, gradually withdraw from all my medication, and return to psychiatry, only this time from the other side. Ten years after the voice first came, I finally graduated, this time with the highest degree in psychology the university had ever given, and one year later, the highest masters, which shall we say isn’t bad for a madwoman. In fact, one of the voices actually dictated the answers during the exam, which technically possibly counts as cheating.

And to be honest, sometimes I quite enjoyed their attention as well. As Oscar Wilde has said, the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about. It also makes you very good at eavesdropping, because you can listen to
I worked in mental health services, I spoke at conferences, I published book chapters and academic articles, and I argued, and continue to do so, the relevance of the following concept: that an important question in psychiatry shouldn’t be ‘what’s wrong with you but rather what’s happened to you. And all the while, I listened to my voices, with whom I’d finally learned to live with peace and respect and which in turn reflected a growing sense of compassion, acceptance and respect towards myself. And I remember the most moving and extraordinary moment when supporting another young woman who was terrorized by her voices, and becoming fully aware, for the very first time, that I no longer felt that way myself but was finally able to help someone else who was.

I’m now very proud to be a part of Intervoice, the organizational body of the International Hearing Voices Movement, an initiative inspired by the work of Professor Marius Romme and Dr. Sandra Escher, which locates voice hearing as a survival strategy, a sane reaction to insane circumstances, not as an aberrant symptom of schizophrenia to be endured, but a complex, significant and meaningful experience to be explored. Together, we envisage and enact a society that understands and respects voice hearing, supports the needs of individuals who hear voices, and which values them as full citizens. This type of society is not only possible, it’s already on its way. To paraphrase Chavez, once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.

For me, the achievements of the Hearing Voices Movement are a reminder that empathy, fellowship, justice and respect are more than words; they are convictions and beliefs, and that beliefs can change the world. In the last 20 years, the Hearing Voices Movement has established hearing voices networks in 26 countries across five continents, working together to promote dignity, solidarity and empowerment for individuals in mental distress, to create a new language and practice of hope, which, at its very center, lies an unshakable belief in the power of the individual.

As Peter Levine has said, the human animal is a unique being endowed with an instinctual capacity to heal and the intellectual spirit to harness this innate capacity. In this respect, for members of society, there is no greater honor or privilege than facilitating that process of healing for someone, to bear witness, to reach out a hand, to share the burdens of someone’s suffering, and to hold the hope for their recovery. And likewise, for survivors of distress and adversity, that we remember we don’t have to live our lives forever defined by the damaging things that have happened to us. We are unique. We are irreplaceable. What lies within us can never be truly colonized, contorted, or taken away. The light never goes out.

As a very wonderful doctor once said to me, ‘Don’t tell me what other people have told you about yourself. Tell me about you.’

In short, and similar to various existentialist scholars’ phrase ‘existence precedes essences’ the section is a beautiful reminder of the two realities the therapeutic or mental health couple constantly face. Firstly, the experiences described would easily fall into Kendell’s biological optimism and structures articulated throughout the many ages, i.e., that the symptoms described by the writer would ‘fall’ under the classification of a psychotic disorder, more specifically schizophrenia. It is of importance to note that the ‘schizophrenia- out-there’ (i.e., essentialist approach) forgets that the ‘out there’ is of an active self’s ‘in here’! The latter is current theories of caring (Thomas & Longden, 2013), and argues that the technological approaches to mental health fails to adequately address the meaning and contextual factors of mental illness, even psychosis. Even if the latter is paired with psychological interventions such as CBT they share in principle the basic attitude that mental health difficulty can be ascribed to disordered mechanisms in either physiology or psychology (deficit correction models of mind), that these mechanisms can be accounted for ‘independently of the particular contexts in which they occur’ (Thomas & Longden, 2013), and that technological interventions can be designed and used independently of human relationships, values or ‘narratives’ (p. 20). From the transcript it is of interest to note that what brought about changes per se were not so much technological interventions, but an existential basis for caring where ‘happening’ of could be understood. Through ‘caring’, narrative (a sense of trauma and Being someone that expects of trauma and Being per se). That is, ‘matter’ (materality and ‘objectivity) transformed into ‘it/what matters’ is a matter of urgency and in need of ethical resolve (if not Badiou’s revolts!). What is needed is not so much knowledge of knowledge and taxonomy, rather how it is held, communicated, constructed and carried across in relation to the Other. The latter could also be combined with indwelling and meditative thinking so as to retain mystery and openness to experience—only then is Eigenlichkeit possible (Heidegger, 1959/1966) to the imaginary, the symbolic, and the Real (Lacan, 2006).

8 Although not the most proudest of word choices in illustrating a complex intellectual and ethical process (diagnosis), I have yet to find descriptors able to both respect essentialist traditions and carry such practices and states of mind across into the domain of mental health without running the risk of violence to a sense of self already burdened by illness.

9 I take it this is what Badiou (2009) would refer to philosophically as “an event”.

The sceptic reader may mention that taking individual cases may be an oversimplification, and that medical and mental diagnosis has helped many adapt to complex illnesses. Clients also actively seek diagnostic procedures for their difficulties and feel in control of their illnesses if they have been diagnosed and therefore, meaningful in itself. An example may suffice: a client treated by me had the utmost respect for the Section of psychiatry that something was amiss! At first glance I accepted the notion until spontaneously we started making sense that his search for a diagnosis had multiple meanings.

Being the son of a mother that suffered period psychotic symptoms and a very strict demanding father it came as no surprise, to use the concept of the superego a bit freely, that he was exposed since an early age to immense pressures of perfectionism (‘my world is damaged—I have to be perfect, together, never needy’) and other chaotic superego demands (i.e., ‘be independent- but do as I say’). He was also frequently blamed for his own difficulty and given no sensitive regard or benign parental direction— a true Orphan of the Real (Grotstein in Allen & Collins, 1996). By ‘finding’ a diagnosis (finding ensured also agency!), that seemed to truly fit (an explanation that could tie up), so to speak, his biological self as well as various contextual factors that included making sense of the other’s gaze as congruent and non-judgmental [treatment team], i.e. ‘it now makes sense why they [parents] said I was loud and
aggressive—it is part of my biology, I am not a failure and just difficult!”, separating and protecting a budding psychological self), he could protect his own intuition/perception that he was ‘different’ (vs. ‘bad’), gain an objective if not self-observing understanding in a system (in medicine and psychotherapy) that proved to supply symbolic protection against a brutalizing internal mother and father, and lend an supportive environment full of benign professionals (helpful humans compared to brutalizing parenting) that helped re-interpret his understanding of himself over time. Diagnosis here served as guardian, protector, elucidator, enhancer, clarifier and scaffold of a reconstituted self (“I am rebuilding myself after I not only collapsed but was gutted by what happened in my life”). He even received grants and other support that although at times brought its own complexity did serve him well. The use of medication, as initiated by his own free will can still be viewed as part of eigenlichkeit —it facilitated a releasement toward the world. Philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1959/1966) view releasement towards things, as well as an openness to the mystery of things central to finding a true relationship between nature and man.

Releasement 11 towards things and openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperiled by it. Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery gives us a vision of a new autochthony which someday even might be fit to recapture the old and now rapidly disappearing autochthony in a changed form…(Heidegger, 1959/1966, p. 55)

10 He once mentioned that he would have liked to tell his parents that if all of us as learned people say there is something biological wrong they would know he is not to blame and thus stupid and a disappointment.

11 As opposed to, or in relationship with, comportment and classification.

For Heidegger there are two distinct ways of dwelling in the world—through calculative thinking 12 and meditative thinking. Calculative thinking is central to the natural sciences, to topology and diagnosis. Heidegger does not scorn such a way of thinking but does mention that;

[This] assertion is valid in the sense that the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking (p. 56).

As mentioned earlier the very difficulties facing the mental health practitioner is not calculative thinking per se , but that it is seen and used as the only way to approach a mental health difficulty, i.e., an indifference and rejection of meditative thinking, a total ‘thought’lessness or ‘thinking-less-ness’ to other ways of being in the world, of man’s Soul.

Then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature—that he is a meditative being. Therefore, the issue is saving of man’s essential nature. Therefore, the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive (Heidegger, 1959/1966, p. 56).

12 “There are, then, two kinds of thinking, each justified and needed in its own way: calculative thinking and meditative thinking. This meditative thinking is what we have in mind when we say that contemporary man is in flight-from-thinking. Yet you may protest: mere meditative thinking finds itself floating unaware above reality. It loses touch. It is worthless for dealing with current business. It profits nothing in carrying out practical affairs” (p.46). Calculative thinking computes, it “races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking’s impact on the native self – The Little Prince:

If I’ve told you these details about Asteroid B-612 and if I’ve given you its number, it is on account of the grown-ups. Grown-ups like numbers. When you tell them about a new friend, they never ask questions about what really matters. They never ask: “What does his voice sound like?” “What games does he like best?” “Does he collect butterflies?” They ask: “How old is he?” “How many brothers does he have?” “How much does he weigh?” “How much money does his father make?” Only then do they think they know him. If you tell grown-ups, “I saw a beautiful red brick house, with geraniums at the windows and doves on the roof they won’t be able to imagine such a house. You have to tell them, “I saw a house worth a hundred thousand francs.” Then they exclaim, “What a pretty house!” (de Saint- Exupéry, 1943/2000, p.10)

Meditative thinking: Albert Camus (1955/1983)—The Absurd Walls—

Like great works, deep feelings always mean more than they are conscious of saying. The regularity of an impulse or a repulsion in a soul is encountered again in habits of doing and thinking, is reproduced in consequences of which the soul itself knows nothing. Great feelings have with them their own universe, splendid or abject …It is probably true that a man remains forever unknown to us and that there is in him something irreducible that escapes us. But practically I know men and recognize them by their behaviour, by the totality of their deeds, by the consequences caused in life by their presence. Likewise, all those irrational feelings which offer no purchase to analysis. I can define them practically, appreciate them practically, by gathering together the sum of their consequences in the domain of intelligence, by seizing and noting all their aspects, by outlining their universe. It is certain that apparently, though I have seen the same actor a 100 times, I shall not for that reason know him any better personally. Yet if I add up the heroes he has personified and if I say that I know him a little better at the hundredth character counted off, this will be felt to contain an element of truth… But it is also evident that that method is one of analysis and not of knowledge. For methods imply metaphysics, unconsciously they disclose conclusions that they often claim not to know yet. Similarly, the last pages of a book are already contained in the first pages. Such a link is inevitable. The method defined here acknowledges the feeling that all true knowledge is impossible… (pp. 10-12) (italics added).

To return to Longden, one reads the difference of approach in the essay by Longden’s two experiences with different physicians:
that we remember we don't have to live our lives forever defined by the damaging things that have happened to us. We of someone's suffering, and to hold the hope for their recovery.

Heidegger (1959/1966) augments his opinion in that "[Yet] realeasement towards things and openness to the mystery never happen of themselves. They do not befall us accidentally. Both flourish only through persistent, courageous thinking… if releasement towards things and openness to the mystery awaken within us, then we should arrive at a path that will lead to a new ground for foundation. In that ground the creativity which produces lasting works could strike new roots" (Heidegger, 1959/1966, p. 56-57). Again Longden gives us many examples of an ongoing relationship, an ongoing gathering together, in Winnicottian terms. It should be mentioned that an individual's "gathering" is by no means calculable, an end product in itself; "it is the human being as a whole, no ego, no self, no body, no world alone, but an entire existence that gathers all that it lives through and endures as a whole. " (Graig, 2008, p. 257, Italics mine).

Combined with Soul as one's gathering of lived experience, Craig also emphasizes Soul as one's going on being as "stretching along" and "borders from Donald Winnicott's notion that gathering implies a continuity of being. The gathering of life experience has ontic and ontological significance, and only through disclosure of such world design may the Soul be evident, if at all, as situated. "In saying that the gathering of lived-experience is situated, I mean only that as Da-sein, our gathering of experience is unavoidably contextualized, that is, shaped and structured by the manifold social, historical, existential, genetic, biological, and evolutionary contexts from which each of our existences arise." (p.259). Furthermore:

"The circumstances (a) that we are the kind of being we call human being, a being that has evolved in its own kind of way and not some other way (e.g., not like the way of an insect, bird, cat, dog, dolphin, or gorilla); (b) that we are embodied as we are, not only as a particular species, but as both distinct and gendered individuals; (c) that we are cast into a very particular geological region and climate and not any other; (d) that we each appear at a particular time in history with its own cultural, socio-economic, political, and power dynamics; (e) that we also appear within a certain locally ethnic, economic and linguistic community; and (f) that we are thrown, rather haphazardly I'm afraid, into particular existential situations, that not only manifest the specific worlds of a geography, a particular community, and, especially, a particular family but also manifest all of these contexts in a peculiar, only-once-in cosmic-history manner; all these circumstances, shape our experiences and how we gather them in such pervasive and largely invisible ways we can in no way separate from them what we call ourselves, what we call our very soul" (p 259).

Despite the Soul being situated, i.e., that we are thrown into various situations, situations that may, given it being either good or bad, evoke the most fleeting of thoughts and feelings, existence in the final analysis belongs to the person who lives it, and only that person. The Soul is thus one's very own; existence remains one's own responsibility. Without delving into Dasein analytic technique, or any psychotherapeutic approach, Craig's 'language of Soul does allow some remediation in my view supportive of more 'whole-some' attitudes to mental suffering. It can be said that when faced with mental pain there may be desperate attempts to remake the world, active or inactive approaches to alter lived experience of time, space, body sense, social relationships, a reworking, a re-languaging and envisioning of one's unique world view (word design - the physical world [Umwelt], the social and interpersonal [Mitwelt], and/or personal subjective world [Eigenwelt]). The change may be conscious or unknown, uncanny as it seems foreign or not me experiences. Given the abovementioned concerns, our access to both calculative and meditative thinking one could envision a languaging of another, a dialogue of togetherness wherein both modes of thinking can be used in such a way that diagnostic thinking does not become a deadening objectifying discourse, enacting an experience distant contact in a period of another's life where mutuality, solidarity and non-problematizing is central for the Soul's gathering and stretching forward in hope [stones]. Put another way, could we find a way of dialoguing that ensures a third (triangular dialogism), a looking together at, an I–thou ‘at’, vs. the I–It inherent in empiricism. Mental health triangular dialogism can thus become, (similarly) in the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire a pedagogy of communication, mutuality, solidarity, hope and a thinking heart. Again, as beautifully articulated by Langdon:

As Peter Levine has said, the human animal is a unique being endowed with an instinctual capacity to heal and the intellectual spirit to harness this innate capacity. In this respect, for members of society, there is no greater honor or privilege than facilitating that process of healing for someone, to bear witness, to reach out a hand, to share the burden of someone's suffering, and to hold the hope for their recovery. And likewise, for survivors of distress and adversity, that we remember we don't have to live our lives forever defined by the damaging things that have happened to us. We
are unique. We are irreplaceable. What lies within us can never be truly colonized, contorted, or taken away. The light never goes out.

Conclusion

Man’s empirical and transcendental self, man’s Soul language, invites both calculative and meditative modes of being. Although both are of importance, it seems evident that contemporary culture tends to act, for complex reasons in itself, as if only calculative thinking, and thus the empirical, is of importance in the study and relating to man. It especially becomes an area of concern when the empirical gives rise to technological interventions designed and used independently of human relationships, their values and their own ‘Soul voice (s)’. Soul thinking, or triangular dialogism, may serve as guardian and ensure the development and refinement of our moral imagination, and as such, our deepest level of care towards our fellow human beings. As stated by Martin Buber:

“In certain cases, a therapist is terrified by what he is doing because he begins to suspect that, at least in such cases, but finally, perhaps, in all, something entirely other is demanded of him (or her). Something...dangerously threatening...is demanded of him: that he step forth out of the role of professional superiority, achieved and guaranteed by long training and practice, into the elementary situation between one who calls and one who is called. The abyss does not call to his confidently functioning security of action, but to the abyss, that is to the self of the doctor, that selfhood that is hidden under the structures erected through training and practice, that is itself encompassed by chaos, itself familiar with demons, but is graced with the humble power of wrestling and overcoming, and is ready to wrestle and overcome thus ever anew.” (in Agassi, 1999, pp.18-19)

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Bibliography


Contributors

Author Bios

Loray Daws, PhD

Loray is a Registered Clinical Psychologist with the Health Professions Counsel of South Africa and a Registered Psychologist with the College of Psychologists of British Columbia, Canada. He graduated from the University of Pretoria and served as a full time lecturer from 1998 to 2006. Academically, as well as clinically, Loray’s areas of interest include Mastersonian psychoanalysis and its various research and clinical applications to developmental trauma, philosophy and ethics of mental health and the question of human freedom and agency, and integrating
Letter from the Editor

Kevin Boileau, PhD

This is the 5th issue of our core journal and with it comes retrospect and review. All good things in life come from ideas, choices, and commitment. For example, in 2012, we made final preparations to develop and publish an...
academic and clinical journal in phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and critical theory. Five years later, we are able to look back at our hopes, acknowledge errors, and bask in the realization that we made this journal come to presence. At the outset we contemplated a forum in which both theorists and clinicians would converge, drawing heavily from the complex trialectics involved in integrating three powerful discourses. Presently, we have come to learn how important and valuable our decision was, and still is.

This year we entertained presentations concerning the soul in mental health; a phenomenology of the unconscious; the phenomenology of symbolism and authenticity; the distinction being being and having in Marx and Aquinas; the philosophy of technology and temporality; an ontogenesis of shame; a critical look at the annihilations of terrorism; Adorno’s views about psychoanalysis and the dialectical subject; the psychoanalytic view of Otto Rank; a phenomenology of the technological self; and Lacan’s (psychoanalytic and phenomenological) antecedents. Coupled with year-long seminars involving the Flaubert studies, Lacan’s *Ecrits*, Badiou’s thoughts about being and event, and the early Husserl, it has been a challenging year of study. Being able to memorialize some of the work of some of our members is particularly rewarding, especially as we develop our post-doctoral program, the radio show, and additional seminars and programs. Thus, this year’s journal is a step along our way to an unknown future.

Much of what we seek in our investigation of subjectivity is the transcendence of our heretofore fidelities and other theoretical commitments. In this endeavor, we hope for creative solutions to the aporias and lucanae of our own thinking history, and chances for work that provides us with a more palatable meaning to our existence. This community of thinkers has had the rare chance of meeting regularly, in some cases for several times per year for well over a decade. We know not where this shall lead, but we are already planning the next, and are grateful for this year’s work. As such, it feels appropriate to thank everyone who has contributed to this journal over the past five years. It has been a singular pleasure, a labor of love, and a well-spent investment in the future of this psychoanalytic organization and community.

From the desk of Kevin Boileau

Writing in Missoula

August, 2016

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Relational Psychoanalysis and Epistemology

Toward a Mutually Informing Relational Psychoanalysis and Epistemology: A Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity

Andrew Nutt

In this paper I will define epistemology as an attempt to identify the basis of humanity’s shared knowledge. Epistemology then is ultimately relational because it seeks to uncover the foundational connection points or common ground of knowledge held by humans.

Understanding epistemology in a relational context opens an insightful dialogue with object relations theory and therapist/client relationship. The study of epistemology and therapeutic mutual recognition can be understood as parallel train rails that are interdependent and which support and guide the train of our knowledge and action. The goal of this paper is to show the overlap and shared insights between philosophy and psychology while proposing a dialectical method to view epistemology as mutual recognition. This dialectic will be informed by D.W. Winnicott’s child development stages and the poles of unity/certainty, isolation/uncertainty and intersubjectivity/resolution. The paper will close with a brief application for both philosophers and psychologists.

There are many connection points between continental philosophy and psychoanalytic thought. Within these disciplines I will primarily focus on the sub categories of epistemology and D.W. Winnicott’s mother/infant paradigm and how intersubjectivity links them together. I will work from the assumption that epistemology and psychotherapy are witness of the same human phenomenon (relationships) only from different theoretical perspectives. My thesis is: Understanding epistemology and the therapeutic relationship as mutually informing, results in a richer understanding of both, because both find their source in the intersubjective human experience. Application will be drawn by allowing epistemology and the therapeutic relationship to speak into each other’s discipline.

Subjectivism and Objectivism as Relational Categories

Epistemology is typically thought of as a discipline relegated to the ivory towers of philosophy, but I would like to propose that it is the base upon which all relationships rest. It can be viewed as an attempt to identify the basis of humanity’s shared knowledge. Epistemology then is ultimately relational because it seeks to uncover the foundational connection points or common ground of knowledge held by humans. The subject under study for epistemology is relationships. I would like to expand the definitions of subject and object to hold relational weight. I will construct two extreme poles of knowledge. The first pole is complete objectivity which equates to undifferentiated unity in relationships, the second pole is absolute subjectivism which is relational isolation. Within both extreme poles the sense of self is assumed into or alienated from the Other. The third pole is intersubjectivity which emerges out of...
The infant will rage and cry attempting to exert his omnipotence and change his environment to bring it under his assumption of omnipotent congruence will go unchallenged and he will never experience mutuality (Hoffman, 2011). Unless there is rupture, the infant's false he discovers the subjectivity of his mother. The comfort of psychic unity with his mother is traded for the freedom of his own subjectivity through his mother's acknowledgement and regard. The environmental mother sets the physical space and boundaries for therapy while the object mother creates another life that even politically there is no consensus on whether the unborn infant possesses his own life or is really an extension of the mother’s life and ontology. An infant is born united to its mother physically through an umbilical cord and intrapsychically through an absence of any outside intersubjective encounters (Benjamin, 1988). The newborn infant who has never encountered another subjective entity, perceives he is the center of the universe which leads to a sense of omnipotence (Winnicott, 1962a). The good enough mother understands the infant’s feelings of omnipotence and does not see them as a threat (Benjamin, 1995). The infant believes he is completely united to a mother that thinks and feels the way he does (Winnicott, 1964). Laura Dethiville (2014) says the infant "sees himself as a unit in his mother’s face” (p.82). From the infant’s perspective he and his mother have an enmeshed relationship, neither have an identity outside of each other. The infant and mother share unmediated congruence. “Only gradually does the infant separate out the not-me from the me” (Winnicott, 1959, p.102).

Therapeutic Relationship

This type of deep unity is described by Lewis Aron (1998) to happen during the identification stage of the therapeutic relationship where client and therapist begin to "regulate each other’s behaviors" to the point where both “share a jointly created skin-ego/breathing self” (pp.25-26). Marie Hoffman (2011) expounds on how she engages a client in this category: “I strive to identify with the patient and thus narrate her story back in a way that can make sense and can aid in the growth of the patient’s own capacity for metallization” (p.29). In therapy the analyst becomes a sort of surrogate mother. Winnicott separates this mothering into two categories: environmental mother and object mother (Winnicott, 1963b). The environmental mother sets the physical space and boundaries for therapy while the object mother creates a holding environment for the client. A “good enough mother” (Winnicott, 1960, p.144) is in tune with the infants needs and desires “and so is able to provide almost exactly what the infant needs in the way of holding and in the provision of an environment” (Winnicott, 1964, p.54). The therapist acting like a good enough mother, offers congruency and unity to the client.

Epistemology

How does congruency and unity show up in epistemology? Through objective orientations to truth and knowledge which is the belief that humans possess completely overlapping existential and experiential perspectives of reality. Objectivism, as used in this paper, represents a belief in the complete congruency of perspectives and interpretations between humans. The enlightenment and the celebrated the use of reason to obtain truth serve as two examples of this type of objectivity. Although it begins with the isolated thinking man, Cartesian epistemology is part of pole #1 because it functions under the assumption that there is unity between the isolated thinker and the rest of mankind. The goal of Descartes was to construct a universal epistemological system through the thought experiment of one man (Grenz, 1996). This stance presupposes a hermeneutic that emphasizes the objective or unified nature of reality shared by all people.

The three epistemological poles I will present can be illustrated through the phenomenon of a stop sign. In pole #1 there is a belief that every person sees exactly the same thing through the lens of objectivity. Every person approaches a stop sign the same way and is able to decipher what it means to the same degree and in the same way. In pole #1 the epistemological stance of objectivity mirrors Winnicott’s development stage of undifferentiated unity. Both of these fall short in their respective categories of describing reality which brings us to pole #2.

Pole #2

Rupture in the infant/maternal dyad is a traumatic gift. An infant creates his mother in his own image (fantasy) and then attempts to force her into that mold. When she does not comply his fantasy of omnipotent unity is destroyed and he discovers the subjectivity of his mother. The comfort of psychic unity with his mother is traded for the freedom of his own subjectivity through his mother’s acknowledgement and regard. Unless there is rupture, the infant’s false assumption of omnipotent congruence will go unchallenged and he will never experience mutuality (Hoffman, 2011). The infant will rage and cry attempting to exert his omnipotence and change his environment to bring it under his...
change a person through intersubjectivity. The same way humans are separate, yet they possess a relational ontology. Mutual recognition has the power to maintain its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them. (p.325).

A helpful analogy for intersubjectivity is found in church history. The church fathers used the term perichoresis to directed toward helping a client change their world of experience. In this way, psychotherapy is really about correcting faulty epistemology, while epistemology (implicitly) is the basis for all relationships including psychotherapeutic ones.

Epistemology

Just as congruence is not the full picture of therapy, objectivity is not the full picture of epistemology. Pole #2 of epistemology is isolation, which is represented by radical deconstruction and complete subjectivity. Phenomenologically no one knows exactly what it is like to live another person's life. It is our subjective experience in the world that whispers to our hearts that we are alone. To connect or be known we must meet others through finite things like touch and language. The loss of infant omnipotence and undifferentiated unity has created existential distance between humans which is displayed through hundreds of years of perseverating over what an agreeable epistemology would be.

Going back to the stop sign analogy, pole #2 would emphasize that no two people are seeing the stop sign in the same way. Every person brings their unique senses, histories, cultures, genetic makeup and current existential situation to bear on the stop sign. No consciousness is able to experience the phenomenon of approaching a stop sign in the same way as another consciousness. The unity and objectivity of pole #1 are shown to be as unhelpful as the isolation and subjectivity of pole #2. This directs us to the intersubjectivity of pole #3.

Pole #3 Intersubjectivity

For both philosophy and the therapeutic relationship, the movement between subjectivity/isolation on the one extreme and objectivity/ undifferentiated unity on the other extreme is mediated through the dialogical stance of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is a third pole that emerges from a dialectic between pole #1 and pole #2. It is an emergent state built on the interaction of two subjects that has the properties of a synergism or gestalt.

I use the term intersubjectivity in an ontological or innate sense, as the framework upon which both good and bad relationships rest. Benjamin's (2004) use of intersubjectivity on the other hand, is more along the lines of mutual recognition which is a temporal experience that can be gained or lost. For Benjamin, intersubjectivity requires a volitional choice to surrender and participate in an encounter. I use intersubjectivity to generally describe the capacity to have relationships, while Benjamin uses the term as a description of a specific type of relationship.

Stolorow and Atwood (1992) defines intersubjectivity as: “Any psychological field formed by interacting worlds of experience, at whatever developmental level these worlds may be organized” (p.3). Epistemology is the study of the ways humans connect or more specifically relate. Psychotherapy is simply one of those relationships that is specifically directed toward helping a client change their world of experience. In this way, psychotherapy is really about correcting faulty epistemology, while epistemology (implicitly) is the basis for all relationships including psychotherapeutic ones.

A helpful analogy for intersubjectivity is found in church history. The church fathers used the term perichoresis to speak of how the three persons of Father, Son and Spirit are unique yet are found to be of a singular nature in God (Ttwomby, 2015). Theologian Alister McGrath (2001) explains the tension perichoresis captures:

[It] allows the individuality of the persons to be maintained, while insisting that each person shares in the life of the other two. An image often used to express this idea is that of a ‘community of being,’ in which each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them. (p.325).

The perichoretic fellowship of the Trinity provides helpful language for how to understand intersubjectivity. The individual identities of each member are maintained yet each cannot be found without the others (Zizioulas, 2006). In the same way humans are separate, yet they possess a relational ontology. Mutual recognition has the power to change a person through intersubjectivity.
In Winnicott’s paradigm the infant’s destruction of the fantasy mother is always for the facilitation of genuine relationship with her (Hoffman, 2011). The infant must correctly apprehend the reality that he lacks omnipotence, and worse yet, is alone, before he can encounter his mother as Other (Benjamin, 1995). Interestingly, it is only through this encounter that he is able to come to an understanding of his own identity. Benjamin (1995) elaborates:

Intersubjective theory postulates that the other must be recognized as another subject in order for the self to fully experience his or her subjectivity in the other’s presence. This means that we have a need for recognition and that we have a capacity to recognize others in return. (p.30).

Winnicott presents development stages as chronologically linear in progression as the infant matures (Winnicott, 1963a). I would instead purpose that intersubjectivity is not linear but cyclical with increasing depth as the infant becomes more fully aware of his subjectivity and the subjectivity of his mother.

Therapist client relationship

Intersubjective theory proposes that relationships form a person’s concept of self because it is through relationships that subjectivity is acquired (Hoffman, 2001). If clients’ warped view of themselves come from the destructive relationships they have had, then the cure must heavily involve restoration within the therapeutic relationship. Therapy becomes an “interactive field” where the therapist “as good object can serve to challenge unhealthy relationships” (Clair & Wigren, 2004, p.168).

The task of intersubjective therapy is twofold: The first task is to identify patterns of bondage that keep the client from flourishing and explore the relationships that contributed to these destructive patterns. The second task is to help the client rewrite their relational paradigms by being a good enough mother and weathering the storm of their attempted destruction.

Destruction in the Winnicottian sense is the client’s attempt to force the therapist into a projected mold. This is the opposite of approaching the relationship with openness, allowing the therapist to introduce the unknown of his or her subjectivity. Destruction can take many forms such as: Shame, “you will be repulsed by me;” anxiety, “you will also leave me;” or scorn, “you are unable to help me.” When the therapist does not capitulate, but retains his or her own subjectivity as the good enough mother, the door to mutual recognition will be opened and subsequent new intersubjective modes of being with it (Baraitser, 2009). Change requires rapport (pole #1) and rupture (pole #2) for the intersubjective (pole #3) way a client relates to change.

Epistemology

Another way to understand intersubjectivity is through language. Language conveys human’s highest forms of objectivity through subjective symbolic interpretation. Language is neither completely subjective nor completely objective because it is a product of relationships which are intersubjective.

Linguistic theory and hermeneutics have dominated the study of epistemology in the last century. The transition toward hermeneutical philosophy is known as the linguistic turn (Rorty, 1967). Epistemology done in isolation without taking the Other into account is inherently Cartesian and ultimately self-refuting (Macmurray, 1969). At the core, language is really just currency in the economy of relationships. The idea of a private language is not possible because language is dependent on a community (Wittgenstein, 2001). Language allows the individual to interface with another’s consciousness, despite not being able to completely grasp the other’s experience.

To use language is to presuppose not only a community of shared knowledge (some objectivity) but also a listening, effectible, and learning community (some subjectivity.) To speak is to first believe that there is some shared “objective” ground of syllabic representation. Yet to speak is to also say there is a “subjective” knowledge personally held that the larger community is deprived of. Both poles make dialogue meaningless; subjectivism because no one will understand, and objectivism because everyone already understands. As long as the study of epistemology includes linguistic theory it will be in some part the study of relationships.

The relational connection a counselor has with his client is the substance of epistemological mutuality. As the relationship grows so does the epistemology base which supports the analyst’s judgment concerning pathology. Therapy and attunement are literally the process of rewriting the epistemological foundations for the client’s engagement in the world. A client may begin therapy feeling like he is a failure, filled with debilitating shame, (which is an epistemological issue) and find hope through changing his hermeneutic toward himself.

Pole #3 finishes the stop sign analogy. A police officer using an intersubjective approach would expect everyone to see the stop sign uniquely through their individual senses and paradigm’s but would not allow someone to treat it like a “Go” sign. The sign is not open to any interpretation but neither is it limited to a single interpretation. A theory of epistemology must be able to hold both certainty and wonder, because these constitute the intersubjective world we live in.

Application:

For the Philosopher:
Philosophy has much to learn from the social sciences and in particular psychotherapy because both are often asking the same questions: What is the good life? How do we attain it? Who am I?

Phenomenology is very similar to therapeutic empathy. It is an attempt to understand the unique place and journey a person is

For the Psychoanalyst:

In the intersubjective paradigm, the therapeutic relationship is the center of what is curative not insight. Healing is therefore a co-creation with the

A therapist's personal work is critical in the process of helping a client due to the mutual influencing that happens within intersubjectivity. A therapist can only take someone as far as he or she has

Mental illness should not be framed as people possessing “Abnormal representations of objective reality” but rather as people who have accurate accounts of reality according to their subjective lens (Maung, 2012, p.36). Though their accounts of reality are inappropriate they are not inaccurate which should lead to humility, curiosity, and empathy.

Transference and countertransference are deeply ingrained relational structures brought into the therapeutic dyad from previous relationships. Rather than attempting to eradicate them, they can indicate unexamined areas for the analyst and client to Transference, countertransference and projection are all types of relationship epistemology. The disposition of curiosity, awe, and wonder allows the Other to be encountered as they are unencumbered by categories superimposed on them.

A client (along with every person) projects an “intersubjective” persona that includes things like tone, force, disposition, and physicality which are a result of past and present relationships. A client’s style of relating (Allender, 2008) can provide a large amount of data to the therapist through the phenomenology of the therapeutic relationship. Does the client make me feel small or insignificant? Do I feel like somehow I’m attending a trial and the client is on the stand? Do I feel repulsed or drawn to the client? Why does my body tense when the client walks in? The phenomenology of the intersubjective exchange in a therapeutic relationship can guide the therapist toward significant areas of hurt.

Application for Both Philosopher and Psychoanalyst:

Both the philosopher and the psychoanalyst must approach their world with a Buber (1923) I-Thou stance which is filled awe, wonder and gratitude for the

There is something ontologically enriching when the other is encountered through mutual recognition. Intersubjectivity is happening whether we like it or not, the question is: how will we interact with the subjects we encounter on a daily basis?

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