

Towards a Phenomenologico-Existential Psychoanalysis: Structure, Illness, Situation, and Periodicity within Logics of Phenomenology

*Hacia un psicoanálisis fenomenológico-existencial:
estructura, enfermedad, situación y periodicidad en la lógica de la fenomenología*

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Abstract

This article constitutes an attempt to articulate productive crossovers between some of the philosophical groundings and theoretical underpinnings on which various schools of phenomenology are based and areas within the practice and theory of psychoanalysis that chime with these. It works ultimately towards establishing a *phenomenologico-existential psychoanalysis* from these researches, out of which key concepts of illness, structure, situation, and periodicity are excavated; and into which they are incorporated.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, phenomenology, illness, structure, experience.

Resumen

Este artículo constituye un intento de articular cruces productivos entre algunos de los fundamentos filosóficos y las bases teóricas en las que se basan varias escuelas de fenomenología y áreas dentro de la práctica y la teoría del psicoanálisis que coinciden con éstas. En última instancia, trabaja para establecer un *psicoanálisis fenomenológico-existencial* a partir de estas investigaciones, a partir de las cuales se excavan conceptos clave de enfermedad, estructura, situación y periodicidad; y a las que se incorporan.

Palabras clave: psicoanálisis, fenomenología, enfermedad, estructura, experiencia.



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1. Introduction

Psychoanalysis begins in division and sustains in fracture. Its ontology, so to speak, is always already split. Sigmund Freud's works are riven with foci on nodal points in which things don't add up, loci at which edges don't come together, jigsaws into which pieces don't neatly fit. Covering over these and uncovering them are concealments by repression and revelations through the lapsus of parapraxes and the compromise-formations of symptoms; as well as attempts at rescue through suture, overlapping, and disjunction. Underflowing such surface phenomena are seas of contradiction, abreaction, antagonism; deeps of the unconscious; unanalysable navels, resistances to interpretation; unbridled libido, jouissances of drives; interravellings of repression, foreclosure, forms of negation, returns of the repressed; and discursive systems of relations between unconscious, preconscious, and conscious; between id, ego, and superego. Jacques Lacan's works are riveted by an at times sprawling and pantomimic demonstration, and at others surgically precise and microscopically concise formalisation, of all of this into not-whole or non-all formations of the unconscious of the subject of psychoanalysis—spanning across the incompleteness of structures that propel and sustain it. Division and friction reign; and yet all such somehow builds into a rigorous and radical means for surveying—and attending to the ills of—psychical existence and situated being.

However; due to these necessitous splits, such a means also finds itself prone to dilution, contamination, inversion, and dispersion; and especially to the very resistances and repression that Freud continually predicted the science would meet: the exorcism of sexuality by the prudish, mystical, or religio-spiritually-minded; the excision of its splits by those who cannot tolerate or stay with division; the erection of a seemly veneer over the seamy undersides it exposes by the faint-hearted, the prim and proper, and the easily-scandalised; the covering-over of the potential of infinite discovery by the reactionary—even if unwitting—extollers of finitude. These counterpositions and their effects are most evident clinically: psychoanalysis' daring is diluted by discourses that disavow any potential dangers; it gets (re)contaminated by overarching paradigms such as those of psychology and psychiatry from which it distinctively broke; it becomes inverted, as a possible alleviation of suffering into an injunction only to be happy, via well-being incentives and initiatives; its deep insights get dispersed and spread so thinly over the psy-complex that they all but disappear. These are the disparate times that psychoanalysis finds itself couched in today; it is a situation that is ever-present and familiar, in some ways, and one which has unique specificities and particular problematics, in others.

Throughout the course of its clinical and theoretical history, psychoanalysis has also borrowed from, inspired, and paired itself with philosophy in all manner of ways, and to all sorts of degrees of workability. Herein, we will focus on one of these strands in particular: the meeting-ground of psychoanalysis and phenomenology, and we will interrogate this within established practices of 'phenomenological psychotherapy'. Despite the antinomies between them, which are both constitutive and maintainative of their particular bearings, this article will not concentrate on dead ends that stifle interproductivity, or deadlocks preventative of



any form of exchange—such as could be foregrounded between consciousness (in its too rigid ‘pure’ form) and the unconscious (as an always—and only—determinative and necessitous actant)—but it instead will attempt to work within these constitutive interstices, and to do so in the spirit of the fruitful interdisciplinary tradition that psychoanalysis has always borne itself on. Furthermore, to methodologically accomplish this, we will accord to the phenomenological and the psychoanalytic their strictly specific and separate spheres; for example, when we talk of consciousness, we will talk of it from the position of phenomenology, and by drawing on its great wealth of perceptions thereon; likewise, from the position of psychoanalysis, and with recourse to its own immense store of insights, when talking of the unconscious.

This article began its own life as the paper submitted for the Pass within my clinical training at the Philadelphia Association, London. The Association was founded by the radical (anti) psychiatrist and preeminent theorist of experience R. D. Laing, and as a training institution it is steeped in phenomenological approaches. Out of it in the late-1960s grew a short-lived Institute for Phenomenological Studies, which organised the Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation in 1967. The remit of the Institute suggests that the term ‘phenomenology’ in this context should be taken not in a restrictive sense of the philosophical tradition derived most obviously from the works of [Edmund] Husserl and certain later philosophers, but in a wider sense. In this wide sense, we seek a maximal clarification of our field of experience aside from those preconceptual schemata that would be imposed on us by certain rigid systems of knowledge (Berke *et al.*, 1966).

Something of this spirit—its hermeneutics of suspicion, perhaps—is no doubt worth retaining, but we will ask two questions of it here, the first political; the second technical:

- (1) How democratic a mission statement is this?

Whilst advocating for a ‘wide sense’ for phenomenology to be taken in—supposedly locatable elsewhere to its philosophical tradition—it can only do so by presupposing (knowledge of) its so-called ‘restrictive sense’. The suggestion of the obviousness of the Husserlian conceptual apparatuses of phenomenology, therefore, can only be taken as at best a disavowal, and one made by students thereof.

There is something paradoxical (and in opposition to ‘maximal clarification’) to retaining the name of this branch of philosophy whilst rejecting the tree from which it has grown (perhaps such might be rather thought of as something like a call for the establishment of an antiphenomenology). As a highly conceptual philosophical system, we will maintain that Husserlian phenomenology is not a ‘common knowledge’, or ‘common sense’. Therefore, in this article, there will be an attempt made to delineate something of phenomenology itself; to grapple with it; and to track its effects on practices of psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis, informed by it (as well as to track the repressions—and returns of the repressed—thereof, which result from such manoeuvres as encapsulated in the above founding act). That is to say; knowledge of the philosophy of phenomenology will not be presupposed—so as to dismiss

it from a position of (disavowed) mastery—but worked through (in however subjective or idiosyncratic a way).

(2) Is such a rejection anathema to phenomenology?

Phenomenology performs what it calls ‘reductions’, in various modes; here we may say that they are in part an operation of cutting away the extraneities of immediate and uninterrogated forms of relation, and that they therefore expose rigid systems of knowledge that get built up within (a) subjective consciousness, through their having remained untouched by forms of phenomenological reflection. So, whilst the ‘setting aside of preconceptual schemata’ is exactly the operation of a reduction, it should nonetheless be obvious that to put the operation of reduction itself—as an element of philosophical phenomenology’s systematic apparatus—into the realm of such suspendable schemata presents something not only contradictory within but anathematic to phenomenology in and of itself, in its paradoxical bracketing off of the process of bracketing-off.

Thus, familiarity enough with Husserl so as to discount him, and this inverse reduction that lets the ‘natural attitude’ (always aimed at by phenomenological eidetics) subsist, are two assumptions that may become conditions for consequences that might result from a form of phenomenological psychotherapy based upon them. It is these potential consequences that we will review in the third section of this article, which will stress how its practice’s possible degradation into an enacted theory of phenomenogenesis—which would only review all phenomena of therapeutic work as always and only emergent (only ever of the here-and-now) and as objective (that is, as only constituted of objects, without a theory of the subject)—may become preventative of getting at and attending to, and working with, the four psychoanalytic constituents we focus on in the last part of the article: those of structure, illness, situation, and periodicity.

Thus, in this article we will be conducting something of a journey through a series of stages. The first of these will be the establishment of a phenomenological architectonic, deriving primarily from the founding methodologies of the eidetic processes, as carried out by Husserl in his key works, especially the (first volume of the) *Ideas* (1913); the embodying of these in the researches made by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945); and their formalisation via category theory in the second part of Alain Badiou’s magisterial *Being and Event* trilogy, *Logics of Worlds* (2006). Whilst this will give us clues as to how to work with (the phenomena of) consciousness psychoanalytically, we will nonetheless outline key tenets within phenomenological psychotherapy, identifying potential problems therewith, and going on to describe how it can—in (re)combination with existentialism—nevertheless come to supplement and complement the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, the discourse of which provides a guiding thread throughout: thus, we will be heading towards establishing something of a phenomenologico-existential psychoanalysis, and theory thereof, exploring it through conceptualisations of structure, illness, situation, and periodicity.



2. Logics of phenomenology: eidetics, category theory, temporality

Let us now try to give something of a brief overview of Phenomenology—for Husserl, the philosophical science founded on the study of the phenomena of consciousness—by traversing some of the key philosophical insights and procedural methodologies within its great lineage, which we will here take to be that which begins with Husserl, moves through Merleau-Ponty, and culminates in its contemporary systematiser, Badiou (that is, we prefer, and privilege, here this intellectual trajectory to those others that get taken up in the hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger, or the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre and his compatriots—amongst whose number was Merleau-Ponty, of course, although in some ways he tied himself more concertedly to phenomenology—as close and interrelated as these philosophical fields are).

Husserl—in the 1931 author’s preface to the English edition of the *Ideas*—introduces phenomenology as pertaining to

an *a priori* science (“eidetic”, directed upon the universal in its original intuitability), which appropriates, though as pure possibility only, the empirical field of fact of transcendental subjectivity with its factual (*faktischen*) experiences, equating these with pure intuitable possibilities that can be modified at will, and sets out as its *a priori* the indissoluble essential structures of transcendental subjectivity, which persist in and through all imaginable modifications. (Husserl, 2012, p. xxxv)

So, after the work of the *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901)—which reviews the *a prioris* of *mathesis universalis*—Husserl takes us ‘behind’ or ‘before’ formal logic, into a hazy, fuzzy sphere, which without the phenomenologist would remain indistinct. Thus, our intrepid traveller constructs this sphere (*qua* sphere) from its own materials, giving to it its regions, and this by putting to work the eidetic reduction that transcendental subjectivity is capable of as locus of intentionality. In the *Cartesian Meditations* (1929), he puts this in very exact words:

A consequentially progressing phenomenology constructs a priori (yet with a strictly *intuited* essential necessity and universality), on the one hand, the *forms* of conceivable worlds and, on the other hand, conceivable worlds themselves, within the limits set by all conceivable forms of being and by their system of levels. But it constructs them “originarily” — that is: in correlation with the constitutional Apriori, the Apriori of the intentional performances that constitute them. (Husserl, 1960, p. 154)

Thus, Husserl’s ‘originarily’ lies in the co-constitutivity of the ‘Apriori’ (*what is the case; the case*, that is, not ‘*in all events*’—as an event is that rare inaugurator of *change* (to previous sets of coordinates), as Badiou has shown—nor simply here as ‘*the world*’, as Ludwig Wittgenstein has it—due to Husserl’s demonstrating the *phenomenological construction of worlds*—but as always already established—necessary, essential, and *constitutional*—within that realm of formal, *intuitable* logic) and the ‘intentional performances’ (the noetico-noematic structures of perception that operate *a priori* and *constitutively*). So much is to say that the combinatory

of the constitutional Apriori and the constituting a priori *at once* takes place via, or within, *temporality*; that is, that its situational bearing is *in time*. In this, if phenomenology constructs worlds, and the conceivability of worlds, through these (spatiotemporal) processes, a world may thus be defined—as Badiou profoundly puts it—‘[a]s never anything other than a machine to localize being’ (Badiou, 2013, p. 182).

Before looking at these worlds, and the properties thereof, themselves, we must first demarcate what it is that sets the limits within which they become conceivable (that is, after their constitution), what Husserl here refers to as the limits of ‘all forms of being and their system of levels’, and which encompasses—in a word—the full scope and scale of the *transcendental*. Thus, the transcendental is constituted by the *entirety of relations* (between objects of which it is made up), the *totality of all possible relationality*. From the *epochē*, and precisely through its processes, determination of what consciousness is—which is always and only a consciousness *of* (something)—is made possible. This intricate interconnectedness is summed up in an extraordinary passage in the *Ideas*:

The reference to the phenomenological reduction, and similarly to the pure sphere of experience as “transcendental”, depends precisely on our finding in this reduction an absolute sphere of materials and noetic forms, to whose interlacings, nicely articulated *in accord with an immanent essential necessity*, belongs this wonderful conscious possession of something definitely or definably given in such and such a way, standing over against consciousness itself as in principle other, unreal, transcendent; and it rests on the recognition that here is the ultimate source for the only conceivable solution of the deepest problems of knowledge affecting the essential nature, and the possibility of objectively valid knowledge of the transcendent. The “transcendental” reduction practises *ἐποχή* [*epochē*] in respect of reality (*Wirklichkeit*); but to the residue thereby left over belong the noemata with the noematic unity which lies in them themselves, and with these the mode in which what is real (*Reales*) is specifically given in consciousness itself, and our consciousness becomes aware of it. The knowledge that it is here throughout a question of *eidetic*, and therefore unconditionally necessary connexions opens a big field of inquiry, that of the essential relations between the noetic and the noematic, between the experience and the correlate of consciousness. But this last-mentioned title for the essence includes the objectivity of consciousness, as such, and at the same time the noematic forms in which anything is intended or given. (Husserl, 2012, pp. 207-208)

Through the transcendental eidetic reduction, then—a reduction that takes us to experience, the noetic, and its correlate in consciousness, the noematic—we thus arrive at consciousness as consciousness’ object; that is, if consciousness is consciousness of, it is even so of consciousness itself (to study consciousness—to perform (a) phenomenology—is to take consciousness as the object of consciousness). Here we see inner and outer as necessitously co-originary and always already comingled. From this great insight of phenomenology, Lacan will later give to such co-constitutivity the name ‘extimacy’ (in which the external—what is



taken to be a distinct realm of objects, and ideas, in the world—proves to be intimately at the heart—constitutive—of subjectivity); and so too can we see here the influence on Lacan’s dichotomisation of ‘reality’ (experience formed out of noesis, for Husserl; or, as psychoanalysis modifies it, that which is formed from fundamental fantasy) and the order of the Real (the noematic residuum that Husserl identifies, which for Lacan lies beyond symbolic or imaginary capture). These phenomenological structurations—the complexities of which Husserl was always returning to and endlessly working out anew—would come to have enormous impact on the structuralist movements that were to arise in its wake, and found and formalise their multifarious disciplines on, within the latter half of the twentieth century. For Merleau-Ponty, the boundedness of ‘materials and noetic forms’—which he finds in the interlacings of bodies and the world—would underscore the dialectical materialism of his existentialist phenomenology, but it is to him that we will return on the question of time, before which we will outline quickly the intervention of category theory within phenomenology.

We will begin at the indications Husserl gives in the *Ideas* that form something of a groundwork for an axiomatics of phenomenology, which Badiou will tighten up within Logics of Worlds, which itself is counterpart to his formal ontology laid out in Being and Event (1988). Husserl states:

All the fundamental distinctions drawn by formal ontology and the theory of categories attached to it—the doctrine concerning the division of the regions of Being and their ontical categories, as also concerning the constitution of the material ontologies that fit them—are [...] the main headings of phenomenological studies. And to these, there necessarily correspond noetic-noematic systems of essences which must permit of being systematically described and determined according to possibilities and necessities (Husserl, 2012, pp. 281-282).

This systematic description and determination is partially given its coordinates by Husserl in the beginnings of the theories of levels and regions that he sets out in the *Ideas*. Of levels, he suggests ‘that the intentionalities in noesis and noema rest on one another in descending levels, or rather dovetail into one another in a peculiar way’ (p. 211). Thus, within the presentation, or appearing, of being-there there is a system of levels, which hierarchises its strata, not as a means of privileging for exploitative ends (although this is always a possible co-optation), but for ordering phenomena in the world, through noetico-noematic apperception thereof. Above these strata (of concreta) come the genera (of essences); in this, Husserl argues that ‘the broadest generalities of essential being [...] delimit “regions” or “categories”’ (p. 11). He goes on to elucidate that:

Region is the highest and most generic unity belonging to a concretum, that is, the essential unitary connexion of the summa genera which belong to the lowest differences within the concretum. The eidetic scope of the Region includes the ideal totality of the concretely unified systems of differences of these genera[.]

Every regional essence determines “synthetic” essential truths[.] The system of synthetic truths which have their ground in the regional essence constitutes the content of the regional ontology. The totality of the fundamental truths among these, of the regional axioms, limits—and defines for us—the system of regional categories. These concepts express not merely, as do concepts generally, specifications of purely logical categories, but are distinguished by this, that by means of regional axioms they express the features peculiar to the regional essence, or express in eidetic generality what must belong “a priori” and “synthetically” to an individual object of the region (p. 31).

We have arrived at the groundwork for a ‘system of regional categories’ through the axioms of which there can be expressed a priori and synthetic properties of objects in relation to one another within a region. It will be worth pausing to say here that just as Badiou has a distinct formal ontology—based in set theory—and phenomenology—based on category theory—so too had Husserl earlier ‘expressly noted that in these connexions between constitutive phenomenologies and the corresponding formal and material ontologies there is no hint of a grounding of the former on the latter. Phenomenology does not judge ontologically when it recognizes an ontological concept or proposition as the indicator of constitutive and essential connexions’ (p. 324); it determines and describes these, rather, phenomenologically.

Now we will turn to the ‘category’ hinted at by Husserl above, and its transposition into—and transformation by—Badiou’s category-theoretic system, for the elucidation of which we will rely on an excellent introduction given to it by the Badiou scholar, William Watkin. According to Watkin’s reading, the concern of categories is:

Action, specifically functional, directional, compossible, associative, dynamic, acts. In category theory, what an object is, in a traditional sense, is irrelevant, it is what it does, specifically what it does to another object under the auspices of a third, the transcendental name of the category as a whole, that defines the essence of the category in terms of relational functions. This makes a categorical being explicit, extrinsic, exposed, perhaps exploitative. A thing that acts on another thing in a manner for all to see[.] Categories are defined by what they do, what they make happen, not by what they are or say. (Watkin, 2020, p. 91)

The *ontic* concern (of what an object *is*) is here replaced by the *noetic* concern (of what it *does*); in their categorisation therefrom, categories thus themselves become transcendental actors, via their enactings of phenomenological processes: description, definition, reduction, *epochē*, assessing levels of strata and modes of relation. (We might begin to see here phenomenological resonances that play over the similar plane of positionality of the psychotherapeutic setup as the two objects and the third of the category may be seen to correspond in some ways to the two subjects and the third of the therapy. What Watkin illustrates further is that the category, whilst a means of description and determination in phenomenology, nonetheless *has effects*, just as—whether intended as *interpretation* or not—what is said by the therapist in any form of psychotherapy *has effects*. That is, words in this practice *do things* and *make things happen*,

rather than just *being so*, or merely *getting said*: speech is not just *constative*, but *performative*. Psychoanalysis, then, in part, is a theory of—its, and any type of therapy’s—*effects*, disavowal of which in a psychotherapeutic setting can lead to conspicuous and unwieldy returns of the repressed force and power of these effects.) Further to this, logics of worlds—and the dialectic of the distinct categories of being and existence (the mode of phenomenologically appearing in a world)—are revealed through Badiou’s own form of transcendental reduction, which is rendered with utmost precision in this passage from *Logics of Worlds*, which may be left to stand by itself as showing the ways in which Husserl’s groundwork for a system of categories gets taken up by the contemporary philosopher:

It is clear, in effect, that the more the relation of self-identity of a being is transcendently elevated, the more this being affirms its belonging to the world in question, and the more it testifies to the force of its being-there-in-this-world. The more, in brief, it exists-in-the-world, which is to say it appears more intensely within it.

Given a world and a function of appearing whose values lie in the transcendental of this world, we will call ‘existence’ of a being *x* which appears in this world the transcendental degree assigned to the self-identity of *x*. Thus defined, existence is not a category of being (of mathematics), it is a category of appearing (of logic). In particular, ‘to exist’ has no meaning in itself. In agreement with one of Sartre’s insights, who borrows it from Heidegger, but also from Kierkegaard or even Pascal, ‘to exist’ can only be said relatively to a world. In effect, existence is nothing but a transcendental degree. It indicates the intensity of appearance of a multiple-being in a determinate world. (Badiou, 2013, p. 208)

The theory of categories, and Badiou’s choice of it to underwrite his phenomenology, Watkin gives a very clarificatory overview of, granting to it its historical grounding and philosophical context:

To think of one thing in terms of another has ever been the task of the philosopher, which is why Badiou’s choice of category theory as the logical/mathematical base for his logics of appearing, his objective phenomenology, and his precondition for the manifestation of that rare beast, the event, is both prescient and historically grounded. For a category is nothing other than the mathematics of meta-structural relation between objects in the same world that, however, solves the logical paradoxes, impasses and aporias attendant on philosophies of the immanence of beings in a world since the Greeks. The real philosophical question, we glean from categories, is not to think of one thing in terms of another as regards properties they share in common in relation to a being that they do not, but rather to think of one thing in terms of how it acts on another, and how this functional relation defines worlds such as they are and differentiates beings not in terms of *what* they are, but what they do to each other.

A category is a transcendental function located in the least largest position above all of its components, these are called diagrams. It oversees the degrees of relationality



between the objects in its line of sight, gifted to it by its position of only just superiority, and is defined solely by being the transcendental least largest position from which all diagrams of a world can be related to by at least two objects: the object in relation to itself and the category the object is included in. Being visible is a function, the archetypal function. It means being held in a functional relation with at least one other object, such that this larger object acts on you with a basic existential operation: as a being, you exist, to some degree of intensity, in this world, relationally speaking. A category structures relations, between the diagrams it oversees, and between itself and all its diagrams, even if, within the world, these varied diagrams do not all relate to each other. (Watkin, 2020, pp. 69-70)

Thus, Husserl's 'levels' become Badiou's 'degrees of intensity' of existence within worlds (as machinic loci of being); his 'regions' the categories that assess these transcendently from the 'least largest position' above the complete 'diagrams' of their components by organising relations between objects therein via formalised categorial phenomenological reductions. Derivable from this eidetics of appearing thereafter is *structure*, as, as Watkin puts it: 'being visible in relation is what a structure actually is' (Watkin, 2020, p. 108). The phenomenology of how things act upon each other (whether phenomena of consciousness; levels of strata, or degrees of intensity, of existence; intentionalities of noetico-noematic structures; objects interrelated in the world; bodies interpolated between objects; subjects interpellated in language)—and its bringing-out through category theory (or regionality)—thus arrives us at a major pole of the coming part of this article: *structure*; to arrive us at the other, *periodicity*, we will end this section on the phenomenological theory of *temporality*.

Structure and temporality, however, are intricately linked; as Merleau-Ponty attests: 'to analyse time is not to follow out the consequences of a pre-established conception of subjectivity, it is to gain access, through time, to its concrete structure. If we succeed in understanding the subject, it will not be in its pure form, but by seeking it at the intersection of its dimensions' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 477). Indeed, it is in time that Husserl locates the structure of subjectivity, specifically in phenomenological time, in contradistinction to cosmical or Objective time, the distinctions between which he insists on in the *Ideas* in warning that 'we must carefully note the difference between [...] *phenomenological time*, this unitary form of all experiences within a *single* stream of experience (that of *one* pure Ego), and "*objective*", i.e., "*cosmic*" time' (Husserl, 2012, p. 165). The contours of this distinction he lays out in lectures given between 1904-1905 and 1910 collected as *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*: 'phenomenologically given are the moments of lived experience which specifically establish apprehensions of time as such[.] But nothing of this is Objective time. One cannot discover the least trace of Objective time through phenomenological analysis' (Husserl, 2019, p. 24). He further describes that 'Objective [*Objektiver*] space, Objective time, and with them the Objective world of real things and events—these are all transcendencies [*Transzendenzen*]. In truth, space and reality are not transcendent in a mystical sense. They are not "things in themselves" but just phenomenal space, phenomenal spatio-



temporal reality, the appearing spatial form, the appearing temporal form' (Husserl, 2019, p. 24). And he describes how the 'nexuses of order which are to be found in lived experiences as true immanences are not to be encountered in the empirical Objective order. They do not fit into this order' (p. 25). Experienced, *lived*, time is separate from cosmical, Objective time; subjective temporality is different to transcendental temporality, as approximative as its *appearing* as such may be.

That is, as Husserl argues in the *Ideas*:

Just as it would be absurd to bring under the same generic essence a sensory phase [...] and the phase of the thing proper which manifests itself perspectively through it, [...] so is it also in respect of the phenomenologically and cosmically temporal. In experience and its different phases, transcendent time can exhibit itself in the form of appearance; but in principle there is no sense either here or elsewhere in setting up between the exhibiting and the exhibited a figurative similarity which *qua* similarity would presuppose oneness of essence. (Husserl, 2012, p. 165)

Whilst these temporalities might share apparent similarities, their generic essence differs, resulting in a dialectic between them that does not conflate them by counting them as one, but maintains, and therefore can interrogate, their separateness. A similar split occurs within (and as a result of the dialectically riven and riveted nature of) phenomenological temporality itself that I have elsewhere given the name *enverneity* to describe how two types of *lived* temporality converge and diverge in producing one's subjective experience of time: those of *individual* and *social* time (Bristow, 2021). We are born into our own temporal duration—it is not predetermined, but gets bookended by our temporal commencement and cessation; that is, our birth and death—and yet our temporal duration takes place within a social temporal continuum, constituted by that which has taken place before, and that which takes place during, our lives (with that which may take place after having the potential to determine our lived memories *in others*). Within this nexus the phasing—and disturbances thereto—of these two types of temporality can bring with it a host of subjective phenomena experienceable in a myriad of subjective manners and as all sorts of out-of-joint temporal phases. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty gives a beautiful disquisition on time that might here be left to further Husserl's temporal distinction between cosmical and phenomenological time and corroborate my own enverneous distinction between individual and social time (in its giving a picture of the immense existential weight that their unificatory-separatoriness confers on the subject):

To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted; in the first case we are acted upon, in the second we are open to an infinite number of possibilities. But this analysis is still abstract, for we exist in both ways *at once*. There is, therefore, never determinism and never absolute choice, I am never a thing and never bare consciousness. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 527)

The phenomena of these temporal considerations we might here collect under the banner of *periodicity*, the immediacies and *longue-durées* of which we will come to look at more closely in reference to the clinic, after a first detour through the psychotherapeutic edifice that has been built out of phenomenology, and through a potential problematics thereof.

3. Problems of genesis within phenomenological psychotherapy

Our critique here will now concern the problem of the question of the *geneses* of psychical phenomena. In the preface to the third edition (1915) of the *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905), Freud states that it is largely the case for psychoanalysis that:

Preference is given to the accidental factors, while disposition is left in the background, and more weight is attached to ontogenesis than to phylogenesis. For it is the accidental factors that play the principal part in analysis: they are almost entirely subject to its influence. The dispositional ones only come to light after them, as something stirred into activity by experience: adequate consideration of them would lead far beyond the sphere of psycho-analysis.

The relation between ontogenesis and phylogenesis is a similar one. Ontogenesis may be regarded as a recapitulation of phylogenesis, in so far as the latter has not been modified by more recent experience. The phylogenetic process can be seen at work behind the ontogenetic experience. But disposition is ultimately the precipitate of earlier experience of the species to which the more recent experience of the individual, as the sum of the accidental factors, is super-added. (Freud, 2001a, p. 131)

In a manner of speaking, how much more phenomenological can psychoanalysis get? Experience stirs disposition into activity just as being-visible-in-relation renders structure; ontogenesis (the arc that forms along the developmental axis from the organism's earliest stages onwards) stands behind phylogenesis (what is taken to be inscribed in the biology of the organism) just as the noetico-noematic takes precedence over the presupposed '*natural*'; accidental factors play the principal role just as category-theoretic determinations of relationality give us a roadmap of what's going on; the worldly situation—made up of the superaddition of recent experience to that of earlier—conveys our materialist grounding just as upon the return from 'an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, [we] find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to the world', as Merleau-Ponty puts it in *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. xii).

Hereafter, Freud goes on to mostly ditch biological notions of genesis, preferring 'psychogenesis' to denote origins of and developments in processes within the sphere of the psychical. Finally, Frantz Fanon delivers us at the necessity of considerations of 'sociogeny'—beyond phylogeny and ontogeny—in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952); that is, of the contribution of socio-political factors—and considerations of race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, etc.—to psychical disturbance (Fanon, 2021, p. xi). Indeed, if we bracket such off,

we run the perpetual risk that Félix Guattari identified the late Laing ultimately running, and that we must avoid at all costs, by maintaining our fidelity to the event of a *politics of compassion* (such as is locatable within the psychosocial therapeutics of Freud's psychoanalysis; the conceptualisation of loving as 'collective' and 'many-rayed' that can be found in Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl, 2012, p. 251); or the historical materialism that is so attentive to *situation* in Merleau-Ponty's existentialism). Guattari asks these searching questions:

Is it possible today when dealing with madness to ignore the contributions of Freud and Lacan? Can one find refuge in a personalistic and mystic wisdom without becoming the unconscious prisoner of ideologies whose mission is to repress desire in all its forms?

Let us hope that Laing, who has distinguished himself in a remarkable way from the traditional role of the psychiatrist, will return to a concrete struggle against the oppression suffered by the mental patients, and that he will bring a more rigorous definition to the conditions of a revolutionary psychiatric practice, that is to say a nonutopian psychiatry which can be taken up in a massive way by the avant-garde of mental health workers and by the patients themselves. (Guattari, 2009, p. 128)

Whilst all notions of genesis demand a critical engagement—certainly if relied upon *in isolation*—we will now focus on the potential problematics of one type alone, which we will derive from the psychotherapeutic take-up of phenomenology, and which we call 'phenomenogenesis'. Therefore, before returning to the trusty Laingian coordinates of *experience* and its situatedness, and reconnecting phenomenology more firmly with existentialism in the concluding section, let us first hazard a worst-case scenario—of this refusal of Freud and Lacan, and refuge taken in personalism and mysticism—within the practice of phenomenological psychotherapy. The phenomenological procedure, as Badiou painstakingly elucidates in *Logics of Worlds*, is that of excavating, evaluating, and enumerating series of relations between modes of appearing (as existence(s)). If this forgets its own grounding in Husserlian systems of levels and regional categories it would present to phenomenological psychotherapy what it could become prone to getting bogged down or caught and wrapped up in; that is, endlessly *categorising experience* and *phenomena*, and thereby courting the risk of turning this mode of working into a *phenomenogenesis*—and form of *objectivisation*—along the way. This is a grave risk as such phenomenogenesis would be anathema to phenomenology proper; in imputing an *origin* in phenomena it would precisely elide *originary* co-constitutivity; that is, the *processive* Apriori of noetico-noematic structures and intentional performances.

Thus, phenomenogenic psychotherapy (which phenomenological psychotherapy runs the perpetual risk of degrading into) would start by locating everything in what it would convince itself is the sphere of the *emergent*, by in fact placing phenomena—and not their constitution—first (these are thus made into *mystical* and *mystificatory* phenomena); its central questions would begin to concern only what is getting created 'in the space of therapy'—as if there were nothing outside the consulting room (and without noticing that it has created this space and then mistaken it for something pre-established)—and what is happening *between*

therapist and therapand, as if no analysis were taking place, via the position of the third (as Other, as Category, etc.; and thus collapsing the openness of the tripartite into the closure of the binaristic *between*, taken as an object in itself); and it would end up describing series of relations as if it were cataloguing dead artefacts of a museum's collection and not working with the substance of *life itself*. (That it is to say, such phenomena risk becoming *fetishised* in a phenomenological psychotherapy that practices this way.) Thereafter, it would dare not bracket these attitudes that it adopts, in order to avoid *getting behind them*; it would become incurious about what might be getting stirred into activity *by experience*; and, in endlessly *categorising* experience—from what it would assume to be the safety of its own sophistry (couched in scepticism and cynicism and their *abdicator*y facilitations)—it would misperceive what it was doing *to* experience, the *effects* it was having *by its* categorial functioning.

Thus, whilst such 'phenomenogenic' concerns as the above do have their use, and may be relevant to explore within the work of therapy, overemphasis on the *spotlighted* (as opposed to what it should be; namely, *bracketed*) 'space' of therapy *itself* runs the risk of precluding what it is that the therapand *themselves* is bringing to it. The therapist is thus at risk of fully *subjectivising* the space, creating it in their own image, and making it *therapistcentric*. No matter how disavowed it is, the interpretation of this space will always (already) fall on the side of the therapist, even if only through their *insistence* on the *between*, which might occupy far less importance, perhaps none, for the therapand, or be experienced *categorically* differently to how the therapist experiences—and unconsciously insists upon—it. (We should perhaps, then, jettison this obsession with space, and replace, or rather offset, it with *time*, and its (spatio)temporal *situations*, once more.)

Thus, if a phenomenogenic psychotherapy claims to disbelieve in the unconscious (which it often does), the question must be raised as to why it might feel the need to constantly create its own 'inner space', that which it endlessly speaks of, and explores, and sees nothing outside of (the all-important 'room', the 'space', the 'between', the therapeutic 'setting', etc.); if it subscribes to 'ethics as first philosophy', why might it not employ an 'ethics as first therapy', in which an other is given the room to articulate themselves, rather than having *the room itself* articulated to them; if its theory is dynamical, responsive, and fluid, as phenomenology's of course is, why might it get stuck in repetitions and self-fulfilling prophecies?

Thus, this is where Lacan's order of the Imaginary is important: its seeming unity is in fact made up of a collocation of disunities consensus on which can at best only be presupposed by one party or another, or both, but not empirically confirmed. The phenomenogenic approach sets out to construct, and operates by constructing, this imaginary, and thus runs the risk of getting stuck in its impasses (the inescapable constitutive gaps that it must disavow) and of forming its own tautological traps. The analytic approach of course works in the other direction: the shared Symbolic is deconstructed on the level of one's own speech and language and its determinations are thus interpreted and worked through by the analysand within the analytic process from which the analyst recedes as much as possible, whilst remaining necessary

as its object-cause-of-desire, or stand-in therefor. It is this direction that in psychoanalysis we might thus label the ‘direction of the treatment’.

In the end, it is none other than Lacan who in Seminar VI insists *that it is phenomenology* that teaches us (contra a weak Kleinianism) that *we are subjects and not objects*, due to the fact of its appreciation of our condition as *speaking beings*:

In the experience that philosophy invites us to consider, people refer, more or less wrongly, to the fact that the subject is faced with an object, an imaginary object, consequently; it should come as no surprise that the *I* turns out to be but one object among others. If, on the contrary, we take up the question at the level of the subject defined as speaking, it takes on a totally different import, as phenomenology shows us. (Lacan, 2019, pp. 31-32)

Having come all this way, it would therefore be recidivism for phenomenological psychotherapy to treat the phenomena of the clinic—its furnishings, soft and hard; its room and nowadays its Zoom; its therapists and its therapands—as it so often does, *as so many objects*.

In the above we have of course been overly, and no doubt unfairly, caricatural in envisioning Guattari’s nightmare scenario, which has resulted in obviating the links that we started with, between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, on which, as we did with the first word, we will give the last to Merleau-Ponty, in his description of what we might thus provisionally entitle a *phenomenologico-existential psychoanalysis*, which takes into its purview the key constituents of *relationality* (over therapistcentricity), *time* (over therapeutic spatio-environmental considerations), *subjectivity* (over objectivisation), and *commitment* (over a *laissez-faire* attitude):

Psychoanalytic treatment does not bring about its cure by producing direct awareness of the past, but in the first place by binding the subject to his doctor through new existential relationships. It is not a matter of giving scientific assent to the psychoanalytical interpretation, and discovering a notional significance for the past; it is a matter of reliving this or that as significant, and this the patient succeeds in doing only by seeing his past in the perspective of his co-existence with his doctor. The complex is not dissolved by a non-instrumental reason, but rather displaced by a new pulsation of time with its own supports and motives. The same applies in all cases of coming to awareness: they are real only if they are sustained by a new commitment. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 528)

Let us commit ourselves to it.



4. Conclusions. Illness, structure, situation, periodicity: towards a phenomenologico-existential psychoanalysis

In making and maintaining a fidelity to such a commitment as this we will now bring Existentialism—the philosophical movement that so energised the radical Laing (and which we have so far somewhat bracketed off)—back into the mix by putting the conceptualisation of *situation* into play with the psychoanalytic theory of *structure*, in our march towards *periodicity*; and let these articulate themselves by looking at the notion of *illness* through their respective and combined prisms.

Firstly, we should ask ourselves: why use so antiquated and loaded a term as ‘illness’? It is for the reason that we will maintain, with Freud, an old-fashioned notion: that *people get ill*, ‘getting ill’ here operating as shorthand, with what it encompasses intended to field the anticipated complaint that ‘people actually only *feel* ill’; i.e., that we cannot say that they are in fact *really* ill. We must crank our critical faculties another notch in response to this, and not forget our Laing, by making the suggestion that people nonetheless *experience* feeling ill—and attest to this, in so many ways, as we know from clinical experience: how many times have we heard, ‘I think I’m ill’; ‘there’s something wrong with me’; ‘something is broken inside of me’; ‘there is an evil lurking in the depths of my being’; and so on and so on?—wherefrom we might label the existential *effects* of this experience ‘being ill’, or, indeed, ‘illness’.

If our current ‘psychological’ climate—and its culture and discourse; or, all of this altogether as what gets referred to as the ‘psy-complex’—is that of the binary opposition of mental health and mental illness, we are therein condemned to one or the other side thereof; and, therefore, condemned to *the binary itself*, for the reason that binaries are always non-dialectical (a case of *one or the other*, but never of *the one in the other* and *the other in the one*). Structure—that is, the schemas of the ‘clinical’, or ‘Freudian’, structures; of neurosis, psychosis, perversion (discounting, as Lacan does, Freud’s rather conservative retention of the category of the ‘normal’ subject)—can offset this binary, by allowing a little more elbowroom in between the clearcut psychological and psychiatric classifications of functioning and pathology, fitness and disease, ability and debility, sanity and madness, etc. *Neurosis*, then, for example, is not a diseased form of existence, but a set of coordinates that constellate a certain mode of being in the world (just as are psychosis and perversion, and all of the ‘dialects’ of these structures). When we get to *periodicity*, we will be able to see how a subject may suffer or undergo a neurosis, a psychosis, etc. (as a structure’s temporal ‘*flare-up*’, or intensification).

Thus, within what will here be our determination of illness as *existentially situated*, we will find some grounding in two alternatives in relation to illnesses (of ourselves and of others) that Susan Sontag lays out in *Illness as Metaphor* (1978). On the one hand, as she puts it: ‘any disease that is treated as a mystery and acutely enough feared will be felt to be morally, if not literally, contagious. Thus, a surprisingly large number of people [...] find themselves shunned by relatives and friends and are the object of practices of decontamination by members of their household’ (Sontag, 2002, p. 6). Thus, this sense of contagion is brought about by the

precipitation of the signifier (and its resonances). On the other hand, to remove any and all classificatory terminology absolutely is simply the inversion of the above overemphasis, and will have an isomorphic effect. Sontag discusses just this in the medical recommendation made by a prominent doctor ‘that physicians generally abandon ‘names’ and ‘labels’ (‘our function is to help these people, not to further afflict them’) – which would mean, in effect, increasing secretiveness and medical paternalism’ (Sontag, 2002, p. 6). This by turns is the stifling *pervasiveness* of the signifier, made present in and by its absence.

Taking heed of this, we must emphasise that the psychoanalytic topologies of structure are not there to *homogenise*, or *stigmatise*, *experience* through condemnatory and damnatory diagnoses (we know all about the neuroticisings and oedipalisings of evangelical psychoanalysts; the fears of psychotic and perverse subjects of superstitious ones; or the surrendering to the wiles of pharmaceuticalisation or the wilds of institutional incarceration of patients by those who demonise them: that is, of the clinical effects of rigidities, mysticisms, and prejudices). So too does structure resist the dogmatic privileging and promotion of scepticism—or of mystical notions of the *uniqueness of the individual* (whether it comes from new-age spiritualism or neoliberal ideology)—to the position of a master discourse that pretends that there are no tendencies in subjects that share similarities with those in others; no *situations* (familial, socio-economic, cultural, political) that may produce similar effects to one another; or that ignores the centuries of practical and theoretical work that has gone into learning from such tendencies, from listening and attending to these structures and their *situations*. (We can see emerge here how the argument that there simply are no structures, which relies on the platitude that ‘people are just people’ doesn’t wash; itself tautological and totalising, and a homogeny of the highest order.) Rather, the clinical structures are there so that we might orient ourselves in the work; they are there to offer *some structure* to it, some direction for it, some technique, in the interest of the analysand.

Thus, we can now ask: how do we reconcile notions of structure with our above critique of theories of genesis? This is where phenomenology complements psychoanalysis: structure is not so much to be sought in the realms of disposition, or of deterministic or mechanistic *genesis*, but is rather to be apprehended as a mode of being in the world and being in relation to others, as the sum of accidental factors that result from these modes of being and the coordinates thereof that constitute subjective (*spatio-environmental*) situation. (To conceptualise *periodicity*—as a subjective (*temporal*) phenomenon—we might here then suggest that the *constant* of this sum structure has within it a proneness to ‘*flaring up*’, or intensifying, in response to *situation*. Let us simply say, then, that the psychotherapeutic theory of periodicity brings up questions of technique in relation to the *immediacy* (the temporal *immanency*) of a situation. To this we will return momentarily.)

We thus turn to phenomenology, and its extensions into existentialism, to ground a clinical theory of what we are calling here—in so many words—*the existential situatedness of illness*. From what we might glean from its allusiveness in what we have said so far, *situation* is not something that comes *before* or *after*, but *in medias res*; right in the mix, entangled, co-

constitutive. Our situation—the materials from which we can sculpt our lives—*awaits us*, in a manner of speaking; awaits our insertion into it. Our situation—familial/socio-economic—may be a contributory factor to our *getting ill*. Our situation may also respond to our *being ill* (often by making us more ill; in others compounding illnesses through their responses to them). In all, we *experience* it, existentially (to put this a little more technically: *experience of it constitutes its existentiality*); we exist within it, are motivated by it, obey it, act on or against it, and condemn ourselves to it, often in our attempts to break free from it. As Marcel Proust wrote in *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927): ‘illness is the most heeded of doctors: to kindness and wisdom we make promises only; pain we obey’ (Proust, 1983, p. 770).

In her explication of Sartre’s conceptualisation of *situation*, Simone de Beauvoir draws out certain resonances—philosophical, political, psychoanalytical—and gives good indication of these very enmeshments: ‘the situation is founded on the given, which “is always discovered as a motive;” the situation envelops a past which is also always given as a motive for our choices; the situation is defined by its relation to the society to which I belong’ (Beauvoir, 2012, p. 216). Arising from its conditions (even, universally: the *existential condition*); tied to the (world-historical and subjective) past; defined by socio-economic factors, it is that due to which—as Laing, at his most existentialist, so beautifully puts it in insisting—‘we must take final responsibility for what we make of what we are made of’ (Laing, 1990, p. 25).

Maud Mannoni—one of antipsychiatry’s great fellow-travellers, and a key Lacanian psychoanalyst—draws together so many strands of the above laying-out of illness, structure, and situation in an incredibly elucidatory passage in *The Child, his ‘Illness’, and the Others* (1967):

The reality of the “illness” is never underestimated in psychoanalysis, but an attempt is made to pinpoint just how the real situation is lived in by the child and his family. It is then that the symbolic value that the subject attaches to the situation, re-echoing a given family history, takes on a meaning. For the child it is the words spoken by those around him about his “illness” that assume importance. These words, or the absence of them, create the dimension of the lived experience in him. (Mannoni, 1973, p. 61)

Situation, then, if impossible to transcend absolutely, is not easy either to alter to any degree: hence the heavy work of psychoanalysis and phenomenological psychotherapy.

We will now look a little into the *temporal* aspect of that work—via a resurrected concept of periodicity—in this our conclusion. Wilhelm Fliess—student of, then friend and confidant to, Freud (who, in letters between them, helped Freud acuminate so much of early psychoanalytic theory)—held to an unshakeable idiosyncratic idea that the human organism’s ‘vital periodicities’ were in effect *biorhythmically constituted* in phases, which differed according to the organism’s sex (cycles of 28 days in women, 23 in men). We can see in Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, for example, his scepticism towards this notion and his rejection of its biologism:

According to [...] Fliess[,] all the phenomena of life exhibited by [an] organism—and also, no doubt, their death—are linked with the completion of fixed periods[.] When we see, however, how easily and extensively the influence of external forces is able to modify the date of the appearance of vital phenomena [...]—to precipitate them or hold them back—doubts must be cast upon the rigidity of Fliess’s formulas or at least upon whether the laws laid down by him are the sole determining factors (Freud, 2001b, p. 45).

Freud nonetheless retained something of *periodicity*—in a *reduced*, and *sublated*, form—alluding to ‘unknown’ or ‘highly debatable’ periodicities in various places throughout his texts and lectures, but nonetheless still searching for them within psychogenic phenomena, demonstrating something of the idea’s unconscious power in the hold it kept over him. Let us now, perhaps, jettison once and for all the peculiar search for the biological determinants of its measurably exact phases, and think of it rather as something *processual*. That is to say that the course an illness follows, or a journey taken in and out of madness (as Laing would have it), are the *processes* that these phenomena go through, sparked by whatever they’re sparked by. Thus, to turn Freud’s own words of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to their opposite use (from disproof to proof), without bending their sense, we might here say—in contradistinction to Fliess’ notions of cyclicity—that periodicity is formed *by* ‘external forces able to modify the date of the appearance of vital phenomena [and] to precipitate them or hold them back’ (Freud, 2001b, p. 45).

People get ill. They go on ‘journeys’, into, and out of, not only madness, but illness: manias, depressions, losses of bearings, losses of mind, despairs, breakdowns, freakouts, nervous exhaustions, acting-out, and so on. If, say, we are *structured* in a *particular way*—and we are so as always already dialectically and co-constitutively commingled in and with our *situation*—through the piquancies of the temporal co-incidences of arrays of intermingled contributory factors (that is, in a word, *periodicities*), our *structure* may well ‘flare up’, or *intensify*, and, so too, this, in a *particular way*; that is to say, *in accord with our structure*: an obsessional may experience an *obsessional neurosis*, a hysteric an *hysterical neurosis*, a psychotic a *psychotic episode*, a perverse subject a *perverse acting-out*. This is what the latent, *phenomenogenic* theory—that there is only ever the *emergent*: as always new and never set; as always different and never repetitious—within phenomenological psychotherapy thus misses.

Beyond *subjective constants of structure* (which are nonetheless not immune from analytic modification, or from certain transmigrations), *periodicities* we might now call—in combining the phenomenologies here studied—*temporal embodiments of increased degrees of intensity of the being-there or existential appearing of structure*. Even if a periodicity is filled with what is taken to be an obvious structurally-mappable, psychically-constellatable symptomatology that a too-keen analyst might want to grab at greedily from the off, in the disorienting *immediacy* and *immanency* of a periodicity (its existential situatedness)—or, indeed, its stretching out into a *longue-durée*—it is *being-there-with* it that takes precedence; and our modes of *being-there-with* have been greatly shaped by the *experiential* insights offered by Laing in his extraordinary

early work and his practice. Thus, in phenomenologico-existential psychoanalysis we may perform an eidetic procedure, beginning with the tough work of bracketing, carried out in being therapeutically attentive and attuned to periodicity and situation and their valences, and therefrom arrive at structure—and work therewith—through the analytic *epochē*.

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