

IMPLICIT IMAGINATION IN PATHOLOGY:  
PHENOMENOLOGY IN THE ABNORMAL WORLD

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*“Body and soul cannot be separated for purposes of treatment, for they are one and indivisible. Sick minds must be healed as well as sick bodies.”*

*– Dr. C. Jeff Miller*

## **Preface**

To grapple with the concept of mental illness from both a scientific and philosophical approach is, in effect, an attempt to trap smoke in a vessel. There is both substance and absence, concreteness and abstractness – containing that which can be seen but also losing that which dissipates. It seems, then, that “there can be no all-inclusive theory of mental disorders, [for] the human reality in which mental disorders are found is too complex and unfathomable<sup>1</sup>. Thus what is needed is an approach which attempts to *describe*, but not *define*, mental illness in such a way that we may begin to understand it; to witness but not to ensnare – an observational, rather than an experimental approach. It also seems to be the case that, if we aim to truly describe such phenomena in a holistic way, we must seek not only to illuminate the tangible psychophysiological symptoms associated with these disorders, but also to explicate the more abstract nature of human experience in the disordered as well. In this case, it seems that the field of psychopathology as a science ought to establish a *conceptual* framework for conceiving and grasping the phenomena of experience and behavior, and it is on this point that philosophy may be especially helpful<sup>2</sup>. There must be a drive toward the investigation of our *consciousness* of the world, rather than a mere description of the world *in which* we are conscious. Furthermore, even in making an attempt to describe and classify the ‘pure symptoms’ of mental disorders, such as delusions, hallucinations, obsessions, and self-distortion, a purely scientific psychiatrist cannot avoid relying upon his tacit understanding of the nature of ‘reality’, ‘rationality’, and ‘personal

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Radden, “Hermeneutic Psychopathology and Psychotherapy” in *The Philosophy of Psychiatry : A Companion* (New York: Oxford University press, 2004); 362.

<sup>2</sup> Josef Parnas and Dan Zahavi, “The Link” in *Exploring the Self: Philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin’s Publishing Co., 2000); 4.

identity’; he must constantly make reference to philosophical issues. It is therefore the case that philosophy can be helpful in creating a sophisticated framework for the description of *experience and existence* as they relate to these concepts – a framework stripped from distorting theoretical commitments that can enable the psychiatrist to address concrete psychopathological questions with a deeper understanding of the relevant overarching philosophical issues such as time, space, mind, self, and others<sup>3</sup>.

Specifically, a phenomenological approach can be particularly crucial because many psychopathological disorders relate first and foremost to notions of self, self-identity, agency, ownership, etc. and apparent disorders and dissociations in these domains – notions that all refer to the issue of subjectivity and the first-person perspective. The primary aim of phenomenology is to provide an account of the *lived experience* – of the world as it presents itself in relation to the experiencing self. Because phenomenology is concerned with this self-world relation, “phenomenology...provides access to the unperceivable reality of the patient’s experiential world, and it also shows why this reality admits of manifold alternative interpretations”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, phenomenology serves as an ideal medium for exploration into the murky realm of mental disorders, for its aim is not to account for how a physical world *gives rise* to a first person perspective but rather the obverse: how phenomena, including the objective world, *emerge in the* first person perspective<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore,

unless we begin with the concept of man in relation to other men and from the beginning ‘in’ a world, and unless we realize that man does not exist without ‘his’ world nor can his world exist without him, we are condemned to start our study of [mentally disordered] people with a verbal and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Radden, “Hermeneutic Psychopathology and Psychotherapy,” 362.

<sup>5</sup> Josef Parnas, “The self and intentionality in the pre-psychotic stages of schizophrenia: A phenomenological study” in *Exploring the Self: Philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin’s Publishing Co., 2000); 133.

conceptual splitting that matches the split up of the totality of the [disordered] being-in-the-world.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore it is crucial that we begin at this junction – at the crossroads between subject and world, which we come to know through experience. Using phenomenology, we can seek to illuminate a foundation based on the nature of this experience and being-in-the-world for the so-called ‘normal’ subject *through which* we may begin to examine the phenomena of mental disorders and, more specifically, the subject-world alterations that manifest in those with schizophrenia, which will be the primary example of mental disorder that I discuss in this paper.

After briefly elucidating, in more detail, the nature of phenomenology and its use in providing a description of the ‘normal’ individual’s being-in-the-world, my aims in this project are threefold: (1) To illuminate the need for a phenomenological model as part of a theory for mental illness, (2) To provide an account of the real and the imaginary in order to illustrate the blurring of the two entities in what we have come to term ‘normal existence’, and (3) To provide a phenomenological account of schizophrenia as a disorder of the imagination and to illuminate how schizophrenia may be construed as a philosophical tool. Ultimately I will argue that phenomenology is needed to provide a holistic account of mental illness and the experience of being-in-the-world of the disordered subject. I will also claim that the symptoms of schizophrenia result from a shift in an individual’s state of being-in-the-world, such that their capacity to use imagination to appreciate the ambiguous and fluid nature of what is considered to be ‘real’ is diminished. Finally, I will claim that, because this radical change in the subject’s relation to the world provides a hyper-reflective perspective that the ‘normal’ individual cannot achieve within the constraints of their own subject-world framework, the schizophrenic condition

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<sup>6</sup> R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (New York: Pelican, 1969); 18. Note: Here we can understand Laing’s use of the terms ‘man’ and ‘men’ to refer to humankind (men and women).

may be likened to Husserl' and Merleau-Ponty's description of the full phenomenological reduction.

### **Illuminating Phenomenology and its Utility in Explicating Mental Illness**

Phenomenology is critical to our reflection upon our being-in-the-world and it is here, with our lived experience of being-in-the-world, that we must begin if we have any hope of considering a psychophysiological account of mental disorder in any respect. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “the entire universe of science is constructed upon the lived world and, and if we wish to think science rigorously, to appreciate precisely its sense and its scope, we must first awaken the experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression”<sup>7</sup>. Any scientific expression or explanation will be a description of a world which *I bring into being for myself* but which is also always ‘*already there*’ prior to analysis or reflection; thus, Merleau-Ponty maintains that in order to understand humankind and the world we must ultimately return to and begin from their *facticité*<sup>8</sup>. In doing so, we can come to understand the subject-world relation as one that is mediated through a *lived body*. Merleau-Ponty argues that we are inextricably connected to the world by our bodies – bodies which *are* in and *of* the world. There is a relation between the ‘I’ and the world, for everything that ‘I’ do is acted out in it. Because I fundamentally experience the world through my own lived body, the world which relates to ‘me’ is very different than the world which relates to another ‘I’; the world which relates to ‘me’ would, in a sense, not exist were I not relating to it (were I not existing). It is the body that “[carries] with it the intentional threads that unite it to its surroundings and that, in the end,

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<sup>7</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2012); lxxii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, lxx. *French translation [mine]*: the closest description in English might be ‘contingency’ although it seems that Merleau-Ponty intends something much richer here. The reference might be described as a means of getting at the holistic and fundamental elements of human existence and how the *relation of these parts comprise the whole that is a lived being*.

reveal to us the perceiving subject as well as the perceived world”<sup>9</sup>. Thus, ‘what it is’ to have a lived body both defines our experience and connects us to others and the world:

The embodied person has a sense of being flesh and blood and bones, of being biologically alive and real: he knows himself to be substantial. To the extent that he is thoroughly ‘in’ his body, he is likely to have a sense of personal continuity in time. He will experience himself as subject to the dangers that threaten his body, the dangers of attack, mutilation, disease, decay, and death. He is implicated in bodily desire, and the gratifications and frustrations of the body. The individual thus has as his starting-point an experience of his body as a base from which he can be a person with other human beings.<sup>10</sup>

It is from this starting point, with Merleau-Ponty’s conception of human beings as lived bodies and a careful examination of the way in which the embodied self experiences the world, that we can begin to gain understanding of the fundamental nature of being-in-the-world.

Through our bodies, Merleau-Ponty asserts that we are “in and toward the world, and it is in the world that we know [ourselves]”<sup>11</sup>. To truly get at the sense of what this relationship is – how we can know ourselves – we must attempt to undergo a sort of phenomenological reflection. To do so he claims that we must to try to momentarily look *around* our bond to the world and reflect *in light of it’s being packaged and put aside*. To do so is to set aside the preconceived notions we maintain in everyday life – our so-called ‘natural attitude’. We are surrounded by meanings in the world which we, as lived bodies acting in the world, constitute directly through our relation to the world. To engage in reduction is to attempt to neglect these meanings momentarily. It is not an effort to eliminate the world term all together, but rather to ‘bracket’ it, such that the bond between myself and the world becomes suspended. In this sense,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>10</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, lxxiv.

Reflection does not withdraw from the world toward the unity of consciousness as the foundation of the world; rather, it steps back in order to see transcendences spring forth and it loosens the intentional threads that connect us to the world in order to make them appear<sup>12</sup>.

We must therefore suspend the relational nature of our being-in-the-world for a moment if we wish to ‘catch sight of ourselves’ as being.

To envision this more clearly we can consider a bouquet of roses. We can imagine that in some sense each rose has an essence of ‘roseness’ such that if we were to whittle each one down to its true essence<sup>13</sup> it would be indistinguishable from the others. And we can imagine that the petals of each rose are representative of the convictions, pre-conceived notions, and individual relations resultant of our conception of roses in the natural attitude. Depending on the individual relating to the rose and the myriad perspectives that may come into play we can imagine that some roses in the bouquet will have more petals than others, or will have petals of different sizes, shapes, or colors. To attempt to reflect phenomenologically on each rose, one would need to begin removing petals, one at a time, each time ‘bracketing’ each prior conception – laying each petal aside – until all the petals are removed and we are left with nothing more than the true ‘essence’ of the rose. We can imagine that the outer petals (simpler conceptions) may peel away easily, while the innermost petals (less separable convictions bound to bodily experience and experience *in* and *of* the world) will remain tightly fixed to the centermost part of the rose and difficult if not impossible to remove. However, whereas Husserl will want to claim the true essence as the goal, Merleau-Ponty asserts essences as a means to understanding our being-in-the-world: “the necessity of passing through essences does not signify that philosophy takes them as an object, but rather that our existence is too tightly caught in the world in order to know

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, lxxvii.

<sup>13</sup> Here, in discussing essences [*wesen*] as the goal of reduction I refer primarily to Edmund Husserl.

itself as such at the moment when it is thrown into the world”<sup>14</sup>. We cannot simply unfold the many petals of a rose to find that within its core that is fundamental; rather, it is *in the unfolding itself* and in *those pieces which are unfolded* that we can illuminate the existence of the rose. For Merleau-Ponty, it is the case that we must *return essences back within existence*<sup>15</sup> – we must reconstruct the rose from what we have set aside and, in doing so, can begin to reveal its *facticité*.

Thus Merleau-Ponty asserts that to engage in this phenomenological reduction and reconstruction – to begin to understand our implications and attempt to explicate them – is actually to highlight that which we have bracketed. By setting aside the presuppositions of the natural attitude we inevitably reveal our being-in-the-world; in abstaining, for a moment, from that which we take for granted, we may awaken and make appear what may otherwise go unnoticed<sup>16</sup>, such that our relation to the world becomes strengthened. We are thus able to look upon this relation anew in a moment of wonder and reflection. However, Merleau-Ponty asserts that the phenomenological reduction can never be a full and complete reduction; it can never be the case that the bond between me and the world is broken such that the world is fully bracketed. Each attempt that we make to achieve pure reduction – each reflection upon an object in the world – *occurs itself* in the world. We cannot be a ‘pure gaze’ from nowhere, situated ‘outside’ of the world.

If we were absolute spirit, the reduction would not be problematic. But since, on the contrary, we are in and toward the world, and since even our reflections take place in the temporal flow that they are attempting to capture [*sich einströmen*<sup>17</sup>], there is no thought that encompasses all of our thought.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, lxxviii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, lxx.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, lxxvii.

<sup>17</sup> *German trans*: Flow along therein (Husserl).

<sup>18</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, lxxviii.



Thus the most valiant effort at reduction will still leave the meanest thread remaining, maintaining our relation to the world.

It is therefore the task of existential phenomenology to articulate what the other's 'world' is and his or her way of being in it, which makes this philosophical practice extremely relevant to the discussion of mental phenomena – our minds are fundamentally shaped and made more exquisite by our relation to the world<sup>19</sup>. Specifically, it is when the very nature of this world is turned on its head that this reduction – this relation – becomes particularly compelling. It is here, in the murky realm of altered world-relations, that existential phenomenology can begin to illuminate the complexities of the human mind. Psychiatrists and neuroscientists have attempted to provide a description of this altered state of being, but perpetually fall short when forced to bear the weight of the entirety of existence in a physical model. It seems to be the case that we need the means of understanding our being-in-the-world provided by Merleau-Ponty to supplement these accounts and yield a richer conception of our self-world relation. It is often the case that

Psychology, logic, [and] ethnology are rival dogmatisms that destroy one another; philosophy alone, [and specifically phenomenology], precisely because it aims at the total domain of Being, renders them compatible by relativizing them. The regions of knowledge, left to themselves, are in conflict and in contradiction.<sup>20</sup>

Yet in order to bridge our phenomenological understanding of the normal subject-world relation with the psychological and psychophysiological deficits associated with mental disorders, “phenomenology will have to overcome its phobic tendencies and enter into a critical dialogue

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<sup>19</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Boston: Northwestern University press, 1969); 204. (working notes)

with analytical philosophy, cognitive science, and the behavioral sciences”<sup>21</sup>. It is necessary to find a way in which phenomenology and neuropsychology can illuminate the same phenomena in a symbiotic way.

Based on the nature of mental disorder and the way in which phenomenology aims to explicate existence, this seems wholly possible. Pathological psychoses manifest as disorders of philosophical constructs: patients allude to losses of self-identity, distancing from the embodied self, hyper-reflexive awareness of cognitive states and processes, altered understanding of social norms and relations to others, and feelings of isolation and disconnectedness from feeling alive as a lived being in the world, among other concerns<sup>22</sup>. It is the case that neurology and psychology can describe these symptoms in a manner which may be very medically relevant but which fails to capture the true subjective experience of the patient in such a way that we can begin to understand their disorder on any sort of fundamental experiential level. For example, a patient may be diagnosed with achluophobia<sup>23</sup> and be treated medically with benzodiazepines. The psychiatrist may even connect this so-called ‘irrationality’ to some sort of past trauma manifesting as a severe form of separation anxiety. However, a psychophysiological account will inevitably miss crucial elements which a phenomenological account would scarcely fail to illuminate; in the words of a patient:

My fear of the dark is not simply (and not necessarily) a matter of my having the thought of being afraid, but of a relationship in which I stand towards dark places, and which is expressed as much in my bodily reactions and behavior as in any explicit thoughts I may or may not have.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Josef Parnas and Dan Zahavi, “The Link,” 12.

<sup>22</sup> Symptoms compiled from all primary examples and first-person accounts referenced throughout this work.

<sup>23</sup> Pathological phobia: fear of darkness.

<sup>24</sup> Eric Matthews, *Body-subjects and Disordered Minds: Treating the ‘Whole’ Person in Psychiatry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); 94.

Here the patient describes his condition, not in terms of physical systems and deficits, but in reference to an alteration in his being-in-the-world. There is a way in which he *is* in the world that is integral to his disordered experience. Thus we can see that phenomenology can be crucial to our investigation of mental disorders. This philosophical approach is so vital to understanding, that “psychopathology would be digging its own grave were it not always striving to test its concepts of functions against the phenomenal contents to which these concepts are applied and to enrich and deepen them through the latter”<sup>25</sup>. And because we have now sufficiently established a pull towards phenomenology in providing a holistic account of being-in-the-world, it is necessary to turn to a phenomenological description of the ‘normal world’ so that we might establish a phenomenal foundation upon which we can eventually build an account of the abnormal self-world experience relevant to mental disorders.

## **I. The Waking Mind**

*“On a sudden in the midst of men and day, and while I talked and talked as heretofore, I seemed to move among a world of ghosts, and feel myself the shadow of a dream.”*

– Lord Alfred Tennyson, *The Princess*

## **The Perceived World**

For Merleau-Ponty, perception serves as the background of experience which guides conscious action. Our perception of the world is an embodied self-world interaction which relies on a sort of reciprocal exchange between the self *extending in and towards the world*, and the world *reaching to and flowing through the self*. It is in this tapestry of intentional threads that we come to perceive the world as we experience it and constitute its meaning. Merleau-Ponty refers to the structure of this relation as an ‘intentional arc’ – “a mobile vector, active in all

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<sup>25</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, “The Existential Analysis School of Thought” in *Existence* (New York: Basic Books, 1958); 213.

directions...through which we can orient ourselves towards anything *outside and inside us*, and have an attitude to that object”<sup>26</sup>. In perceiving, then, we construct a perceptual foundation for experience in the same way that we might construct a panoramic photographic collage:

When our gaze travels over what lies before us, at every moment we are forced to adopt a certain point of view and these successive snapshots of any given area of the landscape cannot be superimposed one upon the other<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, rather than superimpose them, we piece together these perceptual experiences and weave simultaneously the perceptual threads of our world in order to build from these fibers a synthesized fabric of what we constitute as our perceptual reality. Furthermore, all of our perceptual experiences are situated within what Husserl and Merleau-Ponty define as our *perceptual horizons*. These horizons serve as a framework which structures our experience and reflection upon our relation to the world:

...he before whom the horizon opens is caught up, included within it. His body and the distances participate in one same corporeity or visibility in general, which reigns between them and it, and even beyond the horizon, beneath his skin, unto the depths of being<sup>28</sup>.

This structure is such that perceptual objects have an inner horizon in consciousness and an outer horizon in the external world<sup>29</sup>. The inner horizon is a gestalt horizon of figures. It frames and structures our perceptions such that we focus on an object and have as its background a horizon of other objects and perceptions; but in the same way that we can shift our gaze and focus on another object before us, so do we shift our horizon such that the previous object of our gaze now becomes a part of it and the bit of horizon that we now focus on ceases to be horizon and

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<sup>26</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 137.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2004); 53.

<sup>28</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 149.

<sup>29</sup> It was Husserl who first defined the horizon of things – “of their exterior horizon, which everybody knows, and of their “interior horizon,” that darkness stuffed with visibility of which their surface is but the limit”. *Ibid*, 148.

has sprung forth as object. But beyond this object horizon structure there is an outer horizon – the *horizon of horizons* which we tempt to reach towards and which stretches to meet our grasp while simultaneously retreating to a further distance. For Merleau-Ponty, “it is the horizon, not humanity, that is being,” and this being is the horizon of horizons. It is this being that is therefore perpetually beyond me, for it is a horizon which retreats with each attempt to focus upon it; but it is also somehow still contained within me, beneath my skin, for it is being and there is precisely a part of me that is also this being<sup>30</sup>. This being is therefore tension and fragility – it is a whirlwind, at its center absolutely still but also perpetually in motion. It is precisely perilous because it is rest but also movement, an abyss whose foundation is always receding, the horizon which is always retreating<sup>31</sup>. And this is the precarious being that envelops our perceptual world.

From here – from *within being* – the most foundational perceptions that we illuminate come to form our framework beliefs. These serve as those fundamental beliefs that we do not question, and which globally constrain our inferences and our interpretation of our experiences<sup>32</sup>. Thus there is always a way in which my perceptual foundation and perceptual horizons constitute a natural world which serves as an irreducible background for my experience. It is here that we can also connect Merleau-Ponty’s claim that we can never achieve a full phenomenological reduction: there is always a way in which my reflection, upon any part of my perceptual horizon, will occur *in* and *of* the world that I constitute and which constitutes me. It is the case that

My total perception is not built out of...analytical perceptions, but it can always dissolve into them; my body, which assures my insertion within the human world through my habitus, only in fact does so by first projecting me into a natural world that always shines through from beneath the others – just

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 237. (working notes)

<sup>31</sup> Florentien Verhage, personal correspondence.

<sup>32</sup> Naomi Eilan, “On Understanding Schizophrenia” in *Exploring the Self: Philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin’s Publishing Co., 2000); 108.

as the canvas shines through from beneath the painting – and gives the human world an air of fragility<sup>33</sup>.

It is this *intrinsic fragility* of the world that becomes particularly interesting for my overall project. There is something which is inherently delicate in our relation to the world that we both constitute and become complicit with. We, in the normal world, have found fluidity in the fragile and precarious nature of reality. Therefore it seems that relevant to our ability to constitute a world upon this fragile foundation is the nature of consciousness itself. Here, constituting a dynamic and consistent reality seems to require the capacity of an imaginative consciousness to fill in what may appear to be the ‘perceptual gaps’ in our everyday experience.

### **Imagination**

It seems that we cannot offer a phenomenological account of the relation between the normal body-subject and the world without addressing the faculty of imagination. We perceive as embodied subjects in the world, relying on the perceptual faith that what we see is, in fact, the state of things as they are; it is the taken-for-granted justification for our understanding of our most fundamental framework beliefs. Imagination lies at the basis of our perceptual faith in reality, even in our own existence. As Samuel Beckett suggests through a brief exchange in *Waiting for Godot*:

*Estragon*: We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression that we exist?

*Vladimir*: Yes, yes, we’re magicians. But let us persevere in what we have resolved, before we forget<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 307.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Beckett, *En Attendant Godot* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1952); 116-117.

That *something* that we find, that *magical fluidity* through which we convince ourselves of our perceptual certainties, I argue is, in fact, our capacity to weave the imaginary into the fabric of the real.

We must understand imagination as an integral facet of the inner workings of the human mind. Entering into imaginative thought seems, at least in a general sense, to parallel our perception of the real world and relate to the fundamental framework of human experience. And so, rather than catalogue imagination with the often closely-linked concepts of memory and phantasy, it is essential to recognize that the phenomenological constructs of imagination are significant in their own right. In his extensive writings on the phenomenon of imagination, Husserl grants imagination mutual if not equal status with perception<sup>35</sup>. To understand his argument for the primacy of imagination we ought to consider imagination as productive, rather than reproductive – that is, as a faculty which can generate a ‘product’ in absence of perception rather than merely recall what has already been perceived. In this sense, we are immediately separating imagination from memory as an independent faculty.

According to Husserl, imagination is akin to perception – it is *as-if* perception<sup>36</sup>. The objects of our imagination are as immediate and direct as our perceptions. There is a sensory quality to our imaginings which explains why our imaginary experiences are often described using sensory terms – as if we were living through them in the real world. For this reason the imagination is *subjective* because we imagine as we would perceive: as lived bodies with our own way of relating to objects and the world. Because we ‘perceive’ the objects of our imagination in this way, *as-if* we were facing them in reality, we can broaden the concept of experience to include classical perceptions as well as *as-if* perceptions. Thus, in a relativistic

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<sup>35</sup> Brian Elliott, *Phenomenology and Imagination in Husserl and Heidegger* (New York: Routledge, 2005); 77.

<sup>36</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898-1925)* [*Husserliana*, vol. XXIII] (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005); 103.

sense, the moments and relations that are made evident in imagination can also be taken to be applicable for perception, or for experience in general<sup>37</sup>.

At a certain point however, we have to consider the fact that imagination is not essentially the same as perception. Whereas our perception of the world is generally concerned with ‘real objects,’ imagination is not concerned with the reality of a thing. Instead, imagination constitutes *absolute possibility*; we can imagine not only what is real, but whatever we can perceive as being possible (or can possibly perceive). This does not mean that we have to construe an image as being ‘possible’ in the sense that one might stumble across it in real life perception. Here, what is possible is essentially what can possibly be imagined – all that can be mentally created and constructed. This frees us from the limits of actual perception in that we can entertain possibilities purely for their own sake. Thus what can be seen as an *as-if* appearance of an *actual* object (imagination-perception of a real world perceived object) is also an *actual* appearance of a *possible object* (true perception of an imaginary object)<sup>38</sup>. In this realm of possibility we can imagine real world objects or complex imaginative objects that are wholly unreal (e.g. a Chimera or a Jabberwocky). This is because “to imagine an object is not to commit oneself in thought to its unreality; it is to be wholly indifferent to its reality”<sup>39</sup>. However, despite our ability to imagine such an object we cannot say that we actually perceive it. While a real object as subject of the imagination can be perceived in a separate context in the real world, an unreal object can never be perceived at any time unless the framework of the world is shifted and such objects come into actual existence. Unreal objects can only be *as-if* perceived through the imagination.

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<sup>37</sup> Julia Jansen, “Phenomenology, Imagination, and Interdisciplinary Research” in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (New York: Springer, 2009); 123.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Casey, “Imagination: Imagining and the Image” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol. 31, no. 4 (1971); 478.



It is also the case that this ‘perception’ goes hand-in-hand with a certain sense of agency. Imagination has classically been discussed in terms of agency and creation; imagination is a willed experience in need of active participation. This centers about the idea that ‘*I create, I generate, I perceive in my own mind*’. Philosopher Douglas Rabb details a sort of phenomenological ‘reflexive awareness’ that seems to be applicable and illuminating with regards to imagination. In a state of reflexive awareness, each experience becomes reflexive – what is implicit is made explicit – and consciousness is turned back upon itself so that one is not observing another object, but is hyper-aware of perception itself in the moment of perceiving<sup>40</sup>. Thus I become reflexively aware of perceiving – I am not only aware of the object X that I perceive, but I am also aware of my perceiving X as an agent. In slipping into this state in the moment of imagination we come to realize that the imagining consciousness is *intentional* – it must be a consciousness *of* something, and we come to be aware of this consciousness as a sort of agency. I, as a consciousness, perceive X. For Husserl it is the idea that “‘Consciousness’ consists of consciousness through and through, and even sensations as well as imaginary constructions are ‘consciousness’”<sup>41</sup>.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty utilizes this Husserlian framework of imagination as analogous to consciousness, perception, and our relation to the world to make what are perhaps the most crucial assertions to our discussion of imagination. As we have already suggested, the foremost proposition of the primacy of perception for Merleau-Ponty favors neither the interior psychological self nor the external physical world; rather it treats as paramount the ‘relation’

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<sup>40</sup> Douglas Rabb, “Prolegomenon to a Phenomenology of Imagination” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol. 36, no. 1 (1975); 75.

<sup>41</sup> Husserl, *Husserliana* vol. XXIII, 249.

between the perceiving self and the perceived world<sup>42</sup>. It is not my direct action as an agent that is most important, but rather the relation between myself as agent and the world as agent. The existence of the world is inseparable from human experience and thus it does not make sense to say that perception favors either the self *or* the world. There is no one-sided preference. Thus the preoccupation with agency becomes less significant. Instead, we contemplate the perspective of each self in-and-of the world as a relation in which there is a continuous exchange between self and world in a particular context. All experiences exist in the framework of a focal theme whose comprehensibility emerges from the background that encloses it – what we have come to know as Merleau-Ponty’s structure of perceptual horizons.

As I have previously detailed, these horizons frame our perceptual field which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is always already meaningfully organized for us so that every observed phenomenon has meaning for us already at the moment of its emergence<sup>43</sup>. This becomes particularly significant at this juncture because Merleau-Ponty claims that all forms of perception are intricately coupled to our horizons. Thus if we consider imagination to be a faculty of perception – an *as-if* relation – we can come to understand that the imaginary is already woven into the very texture of the perceptual world. It is “the ability to entertain in consciousness that which is not currently present”<sup>44</sup>. It serves as a foundation which becomes the background for our perceptions of the world and which shapes and structures our experiences. In this way, imagination plays a significant role in everyday perception. Even the most complex subject–world or subject–subject interactions contain fibers of imagination:

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<sup>42</sup> James Morley, “The Texture of the Real: Merleau-Ponty on Imagination and Psychopathology” in *Imagination and Its Pathologies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); 94.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

<sup>44</sup> John Russon, *Human Experience: Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003); 13.

A conversation with a colleague over dinner, the passing of the workday, the recognition of my friend's familiar footsteps on the stairs, the ability to drive a car – steer, accelerate, shift gears, turn off the windshield wipers, watch the road, read the signs, listen to the radio, smoke, talk with my passenger, stop and go with the traffic light – these are so many synthetic experiences, experiences dependent on our power of imagination, integrated experiences of a unified sense being manifested through a complex and temporally varied diversity<sup>45</sup>.

It is the *synthesis* that imagination provides which knits together our perceptual experiences and provides fluidity to our being-in-the-world. Moreover, we can extend this to our relations with others, in which imagination can be seen to play a role<sup>46</sup>. Each individual exchange with the other is ultimately the product of many intentional threads which are looped, knotted, and woven together to construct a relational tapestry with the other comprised of my past experiences with the other, my present perceptions, and my projected expectations. Through imagination we come to believe in others as we experience them, just as we understand the world as we perceive it. The world *is* just as it is, and this is how we perceive others – imagining that what we see and believe to be true is, in fact, the actual state of affairs of the world.

Here imagination seems to oppose the classical constraints of agency. Imagination is not accompanied by a strong sense of creation, nor is it the conscious willing *I* that is reflectively directing, generating, or unfolding. The power we are familiar with in our self-conscious daydreaming is rather a luxurious use of this most basic power we have to hold together – to synthesize – what is present with what is not present, the power that underlies all of our experience<sup>47</sup>. Thus the imaginary is a dimension of the spectrum of experience – that which we come to know through a relational exchange. There is an element of our experience that unfolds

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<sup>45</sup> Russon, *Human Experience*, 13-14.

<sup>46</sup> Dieter Lohmar, "On the Function of Weak Phantasmata in Perception: Phenomenological, Psychological and Neurological Clues for the Transcendental Function of Imagination in Perception" in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (New York: Springer, 2009); 159.

<sup>47</sup> Russon, *Human Experience*, 14.

before us, that we do not consciously create, and imagination can do this as well. We can see this in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the cube:

It is true that the cube itself, with six equal faces, is only for an unsituated gaze, for an *operation* or inspection of the mind seating itself at the center of the cube, for a field of *Being*—And everything one can say about the perspectives on the cube do not concern it. But the cube itself *by opposition* to the perspectives – is a negative determination. Here Being is what excludes all non-being, all appearance; the in-itself is what is not simply *percipi* [consciously perceived]. The mind as bearer of this Being is what is nowhere, what envelops every *where*<sup>48</sup>.

The idea in this rather beautiful description of the cube is that the cube in-itself has an element of *operationality* such that it must be seen from many angles in order to be fully perceived as an entity that can, in essence, constitute the whole of the cube; thus the cube *intends towards*, not a 'stagnant gaze' but rather, an 'unsituated gaze' which must constantly move about in order to capture that which cannot be seen from each perspective individually. And because of this, in every perspective *alone*, in every glimpse of *just one* phase of the cube, there is inherent non-being which calls to every alternate angle of the cube which cannot be seen but is still contained within it. It is *through imagination in the perceptual world* that we may come to understand this intrinsic negative determination of the cube – how we may understand and place perceptual faith in that which cannot be seen from all angles in a single instance. We come to understand the cube as a six-faced, three-dimensional entity, not because we continuously move about it, but because we rely on a tacit understanding of the perceptual framework that we have constituted, despite its imaginary character. We may still claim that "imagination is not considered 'real' [in the sense that what is real can be directly perceived], yet few would deny that it is the very

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<sup>48</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 202. (working notes)

driving psychic force behind human motives – for better or worse” for it is always present in the background of our experience, whether self-motivated or in relation to the other<sup>49</sup>.

Furthermore, the faculty of imagination can be construed as an entity that is not only tightly woven in amongst the real, but as one that may become blurred or even fused with the fragile fabric of reality. To elucidate this point, it is helpful to consider the phenomena of imagination as it manifests in dreams. Dreams seem to encompass two opposing states of consciousness which do not, in actually, seem to oppose much if at all. When we dream, perception and imagination are interwoven in our experiences just as in the waking state. It is a “dream starting from the body... understand[ing] the imaginary sphere through the imaginary sphere of the body” as we would understand the lived world through our lived body<sup>50</sup>. In the waking world, the neural system inhibits the activation of the vividness of memories via serotonic neurons, such that we do not mistake the perception of memories for real world perceptions. In our deep dream states, these inhibitory neurons are *themselves inhibited*, which allows dreams to appear real, while preventing competition from other perceptual processes<sup>51</sup>. It is in this way that dreams can be mistaken for reality. To the functional system of neural activity that creates our world, there is no difference between dreaming a perception and an action, and the actual waking perception and action<sup>52</sup>. This seems to address the problem of how

...we can be under the illusion of seeing what we do not see, how the rags of the dream can, before the dreamer, be worth the close-woven fabric of the true world, how the unconsciousness of not having observed can, in the fascinated man, take the place of the consciousness of having observed<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> James Morley, “Introduction: Phenomenology of Imagination” in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (New York: Springer, 2009); 117.

<sup>50</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 262. (working notes)

<sup>51</sup> Parnas et. al. “Lifetime DSM-III-R diagnostic outcomes in the offspring of schizophrenic mothers. Results from Copenhagen high-risk study. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 50: 704-707.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 712.

<sup>53</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 5-6.

In this revelation we may also realize that our phenomenological perceptual faith in ‘dream reality’ during moments of dreaming is *as strong* as that in our waking state when we are experiencing ‘waking reality’. We find that perceptual faith can be certain of a truth in one state that is false in another, so long as we are experiencing it separately in a different framework of perception (i.e. dreams vs. waking state). Thus,

If one says that the void of the imaginary remains forever what it is, is never equivalent to the plenum of the perceived and never gives rise to the *same* certitude, that it is *not taken to be worth* the perceived, that the sleeping man has lost every reference mark, every model, every canon of the clear and the articulate, and that one sole particle of the perceived world introduced in it would instantaneously dissipate the enchantment, the fact remains that if we can lose our reference marks *unbeknown to ourselves* we are never sure of *having* them when we think we have them; if we can withdraw from the world of perception without knowing it, nothing proves to us that we are ever in it, nor that the observable is ever entirely observable, nor that it is made of another fabric than the dream<sup>54</sup>.

Here I do not wish to claim Merleau-Ponty as a skeptic of the reality of things, for he will ultimately claim that, “insofar as I have hands, feet, a body, and a world, I sustain intentions around myself that are not decided upon and that affect my surroundings in ways I do not choose”<sup>55</sup>. Thus there are implicit valuations in the sensible world that presuppose my reflection; they are ways in which the world relates to me and I relate to the world – facts that do not change despite will or intention. However it seems to be the case that we are only able to understand these relations, take them to be convincing, and find lucidity in the world, by accepting reality as a woven fabric of real and imaginary – a mixture of both faith and fact. Eventually, for the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 465.

normal individual, the reality of the world becomes a sort of habit which, like most opinions, we come to take for granted<sup>56</sup>.

## **Hallucination**

Now that we have established a phenomenological framework for the imaginary as inherent within the normal perceived world we can begin to consider scenarios in which the fragile nature of reality yields misguided beliefs about the external world. We can imagine that, if “the world haunts us even in sleep” and “we dream about the world”, hallucination similarly “gravitates around the world...morbid fantasies still make use of the structures of being-in-the-world in order to do so, and borrow from the world just what is required of being in order to negate it”<sup>57</sup>. It certainly seems that this is the case; hallucinations manifest as mentally generated images that seem as real, vivid, and externally perceived as objects in the world. They present themselves directly as perceptions and it is often difficult to discern hallucination from reality.

For Husserl,

The appearances are indeed ‘the same’ in both cases, except that in the one case it is precisely perception that we have and in the other case it is phantasy. What is responsible for the difference?...For one who does not recognize, say, differences in apprehension-characteristics as phenomenological differences, any basis of possible clarification is lost and embarrassment and confusion ensue.<sup>58</sup>

These phantasms have sensory qualities such that hallucinating subjects will describe their experiences in sensory terms, much like one might describe an imaginary object that has suddenly appeared in the real perceived world. It is the precarious nature of the real in-itself that makes possible this invading illusion; it is therefore the case that, if the myth, the dream, and the

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<sup>56</sup> James Morley, “Texture of the Real,” 102.

<sup>57</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 306.

<sup>58</sup> Husserl, *Husserliana vol. XXIII*, 10.

illusion are to be possible, then the apparent and the real must remain ambiguous in the subject as well as in the object<sup>59</sup>.

The question then arises: if the nature of the real is precarious such that it allows for the possibility of illusion, how can we distinguish true perception from false perception – the ambiguous imaginary character of the real from the hallucinatory experience? When addressing this question it is important to consider what we actually want to determine; what I seek to prove in this project is not a question of *the possibility* of distinguishing the imaginary from the hallucinatory – phenomenologically, (as I will detail in the subsequent passages) it seems that these two constructs are actually markedly similar. Rather, it is a question of how we find any perceptual footing in our self-world relation. If imagination is, as we have suggested, woven into the fabric of the real, and hallucination is, as I will subsequently suggest, phenomenologically indistinct in most respects from imagination, then we are left with the conclusion that *there is an element of the non-real fundamentally woven into the fabric of reality*. It is therefore not a matter of how we determine whether or not we *are* faced with ambiguity, but rather, how we deal with it in our daily encounters as lived bodies in the world.

Before we grapple with this question it is first necessary to lay down a foundation for the phenomenological comparison between imagination and hallucination. In doing so I find it particularly helpful to address the assertions of philosopher Edward Casey, whom I believe has mistakenly attributed what he claims to be ‘exclusive conditions’ for hallucination. His conditions delineate what might be a very precisely articulated account of both the scientific and common-sense view of what ‘defines’ hallucinations. My refutation of these propositions will, I believe, give greater merit to my later claims about the altered state of being-in-the-world associated with the hallucinating consciousness and the schizophrenic.

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<sup>59</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 308.



Casey qualifies hallucination as having 5 distinct and necessary properties: (i) paranormality, (ii) sensory vivacity, (iii) projectedness, (iv) involuntariness, and (v) belief. Here it is helpful to elaborate on each of these claims in order to determine if this phenomenologically exclusive description is valid. In my critique of these criteria I will suggest either that (1) the quality *does not apply* to hallucination in the stringent sense that Casey wishes to assert, or (2) the quality *is not exclusive* to hallucination, and thus may be shared with imagination.

(i) *Paranormality*<sup>60</sup>

Casey asserts that hallucinations depart radically from the usual course of perceiving to generate obviously abnormal perceptions. He maintains that hallucinatory experiences characteristically arise alongside normal perceptions or replace them momentarily by diverting one's attention away from the 'normal' experience. The argument is that, unlike hallucination, we can imagine and perceive concurrently. Thus imagination, which does not seem to manifest as true perception in the real world, neither rivals nor replicates perception – this quality is exclusive to hallucination.

In a large portion of the first section of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty illustrates that there is not an exact correspondence between sensory data and perception. We are often fooled by illusion: we take a shadow to be another person in what is truly an empty room, or a leaf rustling across the cobblestones to be a wayward mouse. We learn over time to sort out the misconceptions from the 'real' insofar as we learn that we have the capacity for (and even tendency toward) error. We therefore rely on habit to teach us to favor familiarity in perception. Habitual perceptions become privileged appearances which provide a standard of correctness for

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<sup>60</sup> Edward Casey, "Comparative Phenomenology of Mental Activity: Memory, Hallucination, and Fantasy Contrasted with Imagination" in *Research in Phenomenology* vol. 6 (1976); 11-12.

perception<sup>61</sup>. Thus a correct perception will be one that is *consistent with the privileged appearances*, whilst an incorrect perception will be one that is inconsistent<sup>62</sup>. For the perceiving individual, “perception is an interpretation of primitive intuition, an interpretation seemingly immediate, but in reality acquired by habit and corrected by the power of reasoning”<sup>63</sup>. Thus there is no ‘absolute truth’ concerning what is real or unreal; the fragile reality of the perceived world, treated as knowledge by the naïve everyday ‘natural’ person, is actually no more than a matter of what Merleau-Ponty might call ‘opinion’<sup>64</sup>. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty knew that even the most skilled phenomenologist enveloped in the disengagement and alienation of the subject in phenomenological reflection does not necessarily possess a certain route to reality or truth, for these orientations are, in fact, as capable of distorting the nature of human experience as of revealing it<sup>65</sup>. Thus in taking into account the ambiguity of reality and human experience we cannot conclude that what is in competition with what is ‘real’ must be hallucination exclusively. Here we cannot distinguish between hallucination and imagination based on an assumption that what may be ‘real’ and what may oppose it are wholly separate.

(ii) *Sensory Vivacity*<sup>66</sup>

Because hallucinations occur *as-if* perceptions, Casey claims that they must be more vivid and sharp than the mere musings of our imagination. We can therefore imagine a sort of sensory ‘intensity threshold’ which, unless reached, will not allow an evoked hallucinatory response for the subject –

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<sup>61</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 153.

<sup>62</sup> K. Romdenh-Romluc, “Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination” in *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 17 (2009); 82.

<sup>63</sup> Jules Lagneau qtd. in Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 505n27.

<sup>64</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Louis Sass, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia: Three Classic Approaches.” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* vol.8, no. 4 (2002); 267.

<sup>66</sup> Casey, “Comparative Phenomenology of Mental Activity,” 12-13.

there simply will not be sufficient sensory input to compete with what is occurring in the real world. The primary assertion is then that hallucinations must have the sensory qualities of true perceptions – that is, they must always appear and possess qualities of space, time, direction, distance, obtrusiveness, mine-ness, motion, measurability, and objectivity. This is not a demand of imaginings, which do not compete with the real world.

Merleau-Ponty claims that hallucinatory presence is not robust enough to be real, nor is the representation of senses involved in hallucination clear and distinct. There is no true ‘sensoriness’, only whatever simulacrum an embodied consciousness can generate<sup>67</sup>. The hallucinatory object,

...is not, like the real thing, a deep being that contracts a *thickness of duration* in itself; the hallucination is not, like perception, my *concrete hold upon time* within a living present. Rather, *the hallucination slides across time*, just as it slides across the world.<sup>68</sup>

This seems to suggest that there are elements of true perceptions that hallucination does not and cannot mimic. Here we specifically see that *temporality* can distinguish the true perception from the hallucination, for the real object has *concreteness* in time that the hallucination merely slips past in its motion across our perceptual gaze. Thus there is a characteristic of ‘sensoriness’ that is not captured by hallucination – mainly, the ability to belong to chronological time.

Imagination, in the way that it is always present as a background for our perceptual experiences, similarly sweeps between moments, filling in perceptual gaps and enriching our experiences in such a way that we can never point to it, halt it in its syntheses of our perceptual world, and gaze

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<sup>67</sup> Amadeo Giorgi, “A Phenomenological Psychological Approach to Research on Hallucination” in *Imagination and Its Pathologies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); 217.

<sup>68</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 355. (emphasis mine)

upon it as an absolute entity in time and space. Thus imagination can also be seen to lack a temporal structure.

(iii) *Projectedness*<sup>69</sup>

As opposed to imagination, contents of hallucination are said to be experienced as external to the observer, experienced as ‘outside’ of oneself (rather than as internal constructs, ‘within’ me, in the mind). The object of hallucination is then a projected presence existing external to the hallucinating consciousness. Imagined possibilities are instead internally generated but projected into ‘spatio-temporal limbo’<sup>70</sup>. Thus the objects of imagination are considered neither external nor internal to the imaginer.

In our discussion of imagination we have seen that we cannot fully separate imagination from perception. What is imagined is woven into the real to form a sort of interplay between the two where imagination serves as an integral foundation for our experience of being-in-the-world. As lived bodies we certainly cannot say that this being in the world can be fully internalized. Returning to John Russon, we can consider the synthesizing faculty of imagination for everyday perceptions such that

All our experiences carry on something like this melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic flow whereby one moment seems to grow out of the last and to melt into the next in a way that [perpetuates perceptual movement], while developing it into a new richness<sup>71</sup>.

As an element engrained within our perceptual experiences of the real world we cannot claim that imagination is projected exclusively ‘inside’ me. Furthermore, if it is the case that our

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<sup>69</sup> Casey, “Comparative Phenomenology of Mental Activity,” 13-14.

<sup>70</sup> Casey’s articulation of the idea that imaginary objects are not perceived in the real world.

<sup>71</sup> Russon, *Human Experience*, 13.

relation to the other can also be supplemented by imagination in this way, it would seem strange to suggest that the other or any element of my relation to the other is only internalized and not also experienced ‘out there’ in the world. To say that my relation to another mind is solely internal would be to neglect the significance of the other – the fact that the other is, indeed, outside of me and distinct from me. Thus it may be plausible to say that hallucination is projected ‘out there,’ as external to me, but it does not follow that this projectedness is exclusive to hallucination. Rather, we see that imagination also contains an element of projectedness, at least to the extent that imagination plays a role in our everyday relations to the world and the other.

(iv) *Involuntariness*<sup>72</sup>

With the exception of hallucinatory drug usage, subjects often enter into hallucinations without express consent or expectation. Casey describes this as a violent attack on subjectivity whereas imagining only incurs ‘mild surprise’. He also claims that, while we can pull ourselves from our imaginings at any moment, we have limited control over the termination of hallucinations.

The concept of involuntariness seems to hold true for hallucination, but only to a certain extent. It is often the case that the hallucinating subject enters into hallucination without want or choice. But it is also the case that elements of the real may be forced upon the subject in such a way that there is “something like a natural self who does not leave behind its terrestrial situation and who continuously sketches out absolute valuations”<sup>73</sup>. It is in this sense that the relational nature between myself and things may always, to a certain extent, be constructed in a manner outside of

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<sup>72</sup> Casey, “Comparative Phenomenology of Mental Activity,” 14-15.

<sup>73</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 464.

my control. For it is the case that if I gaze at the mountains and wish to think them small and insignificant, there is nothing that I may do to convince myself that the vast majesty contained within them is mine, nor that the minute nature of my body in contrast can be posited on them<sup>74</sup>. It is precisely these elements of our subject-world relation – these ‘facts’ – which are given to me and which I engage in without will or consent. Furthermore, imagination, even as a creative and constructive faculty, can also begin involuntarily. Merleau-Ponty claims that imagination in the form of painting is both passive and active, such that imagination will never be ‘pure’ voluntary creation<sup>75</sup>. The painter is inspired by opening herself to the world such that her surroundings speak to her, influence her, and the painting unfolds before her as a creation not entirely of her own doing. It is such that “there really is inspiration and expiration of Being, breathing in Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between what sees and what is seen, what paints and what is painted”<sup>76</sup>. Thus imagination can also be seen to have a sense of ‘involuntariness’.

(v) *Belief*<sup>77</sup>

Casey’s necessary condition of having vivid sensory quality for hallucination (which we have at this point concluded to be incorrect) relates to the assertion that hallucinations must be believed as perceptions of the real. Whereas imaginations are understood to be independent and indifferent to reality, hallucinations are presented as an object which supplants the

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<sup>74</sup> This example is inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s claim that a reading of Voltaire’s *Micromégas*, which gives an account of a being witnessing earth and its geography from an alternate planetary perspective, cannot change the certain unalterable details contained in our relation to the world.

<sup>75</sup> Florentien Verhage, “The Vision of the Artist/Mother: The Strange Creativity of Painting and Pregnancy” in *Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*, ed. Sarah LaChance Adams and Caroline Lundquist (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 309.

<sup>76</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1964); 167-8.

<sup>77</sup> Casey, “Comparative Phenomenology of Mental Activity,” 15-16.

accepted normal. Thus in hallucinations we place credence in the existence of some presently appearing object or event; we do not suspend committed belief and entertain pure possibilities as in imagination.

It is a common misconception that most hallucinating agents truly believe their perceived hallucinations. Voltaire claimed that ‘hallucinating is not seeing in imagination: it is seeing in reality,’ however for most cases of hallucination this is not actually true. Many hallucinating subjects are able to distinguish between perception and hallucination. Merleau-Ponty provides examples of a man who hallucinates that he is grasping a guinea pig when shaking the hand of his physician, or that of a woman who hallucinates that there is a man standing just a bit beyond her in her garden<sup>78</sup>. In both cases when confronted with the real-life correlate of each hallucination, the subject is able to identify the presence of the real guinea pig and the presence of an actual man in the garden. The hallucinations have a different structure in being:

The hallucinatory phenomenon is not part of the world, that is, it is not *accessible*, there is no definite road that leads from this phenomenon to all the other experiences of the hallucinating subject, or to the experience of healthy subjects...Hallucinations play out on a different stage than that of the perceived world; it is as if they are superimposed.<sup>79</sup>

The resultant confusion then typically stems from lack of confidence in these perceptions. There is a sort of ambiguity associated with the hallucinated and the real in the sense that both are distinctly different but neither appeal to the subject as obviously ‘correct’ or ‘valid’. It is certainly possible that, as Casey suggests, some hallucinations may be so vivid that they become truly believable, but because this is often not the case, it seems that belief cannot be an exclusive characteristic of hallucination; belief is not *necessary* for hallucination.

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<sup>78</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 350.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 354-355.

Taking all of these arguments together we can conclude that Casey is misguided in his classification of hallucination and we can therefore begin to see that imagination and hallucination are much more similar than one might initially have suspected. However, though we have started to get at what hallucination is, precisely by detailing *what it is not*, it is helpful to offer a phenomenological account of how we ought to consider hallucinatory perceptions. Merleau-Ponty suggests that hallucination occurs as a result of the malfunctioning of two properties of perception: first, what Romdenh-Romluc has termed the ‘power of summoning’ and second, what Merleau-Ponty himself has named ‘perceptual faith’. The concept of ‘perceptual summoning’ refers to the way in which the subject perceives the world as having immediate bodily significance and value based on personal capacity and motricity<sup>80</sup>; things appear as in relation to the subject such that “my own body is the primordial habit, the one that conditions all others and by which they can be understood”<sup>81</sup>. Thus there is a certain character to our subject-world relations that compels us to constantly relate objects in the world to our bodies: a jar placed on a shelf will inevitably be *too high for me* to reach, or a glass will be *just within my grasp*. We perceive in this relational way because *our bodies summon the world* as such. And because the lived subject and the world are in constant interplay, the subject is also summoned by the world *to perceive it* in a certain way. Merleau-Ponty asserts that this power functions normally when it is exercised in response to the promptings of the world; for example:

The workbench, the scissors, and the pieces of leather are presented to the subject as poles of action; they define, through their combined value, a particular situation that remains open, that calls for a certain mode of resolution, a certain labor<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Romdenh-Romluc, “Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination,” 78-79.

<sup>81</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 108-109.



Here we are summoned by the world through our bodies which compel us to *work* with the leather – to construct and create. There is a way in which this labor is *called forth within being*, such that we are not compelled to eat the leather, to sit upon it, or to take up action with it in any other sort of way. There is something *already contained within it* which *presupposes and brings forth* the relation between it and me. Hallucinations then can be seen to result from the ‘running wild of this power’ such that “appearances and values are summoned in the absence of the appropriate worldly cues [so that] the initiative comes from the subject and has no external counterpart”<sup>83</sup>. Hallucination can therefore be construed as a response to the world generated in the absence of any worldly prompt. In contrast with the ‘normal individual’,

The world no longer exists for these patients [suffering from hallucinations] except as a *ready-made* or *fixed world*, whereas the normal person’s projects *polarize the world*, causing a thousand signposts to appear there, as if by magic, that guide action, as signs in a museum guide the visitor. This function of ‘projection’ or ‘conjuring up’ [*évocation*<sup>84</sup>] (in the sense in which the medium conjures up and makes the dead person appear) is also what makes abstract movement<sup>85</sup> possible...human productivity must appear through the thickness of being<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>84</sup> A note on the French translation: Here Donald Landis (trans.) translates *évocation* as ‘conjuring up’, which I prefer to translate as a *summoning* between the subject and the world. Here the concept of ‘conjuring’ seems to imply the bringing forth of an appearance which is not present whereas ‘summoning’ would imply the calling forth of that which is already present but merely hidden. To conjure is thus to make appear out of nothing – while to summon is to bring forth that which is already, in some sense, in being. For this project then I choose to translate *évocation* as ‘summoning’, for the French synonyms for *évocation* support this definition: while we can directly take the verb form as ‘to evoke’, we can also say that it is ‘to call forth from memory, recall’ [*rappel*], or to *recover* something, which incidentally is also the verb ‘to paint’ [*peinture*], which implies a sense of both bringing back into the present as well as a new *creation* of meaning. There is, in all of these words, a sense of *bringing back* as well as *bringing forth* – which I find can only be captured by reference to *summoning* rather than *conjuring*.

<sup>85</sup> Here Merleau-Ponty’s mention of ‘abstract movement’ references movement for which “the background is immanent in the movement, [and] it animates and guides it along at each moment” such that “the perception and the movement form a system that is modified as a whole” (Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 112-113). It is the ability to generate movement which is not concrete and which illustrates clearly the possession of space or of spatial existence that is the primordial condition of every *living perception*. Pathological patients often have difficulty with this type of movement because it is not founded on a background of the given world.

<sup>86</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 115. (emphasis mine)

Thus in a fixed *static world* which has no flow in and through the subject, the subject-world relation cannot function in its normal capacity. So called perceptual ‘sign posts’ may appear, but their directionality will not be guided by any sort of relational intention summoned in the subject by the world. Thus the subject may be lead into a winding maze of inconsistencies and inappropriate actions.

Insofar as the hallucinating subject is misguided in action, Merleau-Ponty will claim that he or she is also devoid of the perceptual faith needed to have any conviction in his or her impressions of the world. We have touched upon the concept of perceptual faith already in our discussion of the precarious and fragile nature of the ‘real’ world as connected to imagination. Perceptual faith is the idea that all perceiving requires a degree of faith because we take things to be as we experience them, despite the fact that there is always an element of the invisible contained within the visible – that which we cannot see but through which we still find understanding in what is situated before us<sup>87</sup>. Thus, just as we have faith that what we perceive from one side is, in actuality, an entire three-dimensional cube, so too do we have faith that the world is as we perceive it. We utilize the faculty of imagination to fill in our perceptual gaps – to supplement the visible. It is therefore perceptual faith *through imagination* that maintains the fluidity of our perception of the world. And despite the untenable nature of this relation, Merleau-Ponty maintains that still the only sensible notion of things is that of ‘things-as-experienced’ – we can only trust things as they appear because we can never separate our perceptual experiences from the world we perceive. In this faith-perception structure

...we see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher – the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute “opinions” implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 146.

into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this *we*, what *seeing* is, and what *thing* or *world* is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions.<sup>88</sup>

Thus even for the non-hallucinating consciousness it is difficult to make a determination about the real. We put our faith in the ‘opinions’ of the world that we generate and which seem to fit best into our perceptual framework, which, as we have previously argued, is generated by our perceptual habits and faculty of imagination. This framework is further structured by our perceptual horizons which frame and guide our relation to the world. We can therefore consider perceptual faith in its normal capacity as a sort of tolerance for the ambiguity of the ‘real’ – a fundamentally pre-conceptual acceptance of a world that can never be absolutely divided between the imaginary and non-imaginary, the hallucinatory and the ‘real’.

As we have noted, the power of summoning also ties into this relation, such that, prior to perception, there is ‘a vague beckoning’ from the world. Hence, “perceived things come into being when the perceiver responds to this vague beckoning by summoning the appropriate appearances”<sup>89</sup>. Therefore hallucination in general may occur when the subject is misguided in his or her relation to the world (loss of the power of summoning), and also if the subject loses the ability to be complicit with the fragile ambiguity of the world (loss of perceptual faith). In both of these scenarios we can see that hallucination suffers a loss of the full horizontal structure of perceptual experience. If the subject is no longer able to relate to the world in a fluid way, and the subject loses the capacity to fill in perceptual gaps using imagination (due to a loss of perceptual faith in the world *as it appears*), then the foundation of perceptual experience that is needed to find conviction in a world of precarious reality falls away. Thus what was once a

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<sup>88</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Romdenh-Romluc, “Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination,” 82.

readily accepted and natural understanding between subject and world becomes a source of confusion for the subject that may ultimately result in pathologic behavior.

## II. The Disordered Mind

*'Things fall apart, the center cannot hold,  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.'*

*-W.B. Yeats*

Pathology results when an individual loses the ability to be complicit with the fragility of the 'real' and the subject-world framework is altered to the point that an individual may lose complete fluidity in his or her existence in the world. In this altered relation,

...there is no steadiness...its stream of life does not flow quietly along, but everything occurs by jerks and starts, from the simplest gestures and movements to the formulation of lingual expression and the performance of thinking and volitional decisions<sup>90</sup>.

This pieced together form of existence, as we have previously established, is often resultant of a loss of Merleau-Ponty's 'power of summoning' and 'perceptual faith', which, at a base level, rely on our capacity to supplement our perceptual experiences with the synthesizing faculty of imagination. Thus, pathologic behavior can be construed as a disorder of imagination – the unraveling of a precarious foundation that is no longer held together by the intentional imaginative threads of reality. This type of deficit can be seen in patients with schizophrenia, which is a disorder classically characterized by a loss of the distinction between what a subject imagines and what he or she believes or experiences<sup>91</sup>. Schizophrenia is particularly interesting to contemplate in the context of phenomenology because the disorder is rife with complexities

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<sup>90</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, "The Existential Analysis School of Thought" in *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1958); 207.

<sup>91</sup> Gregory Currie, "Imagination, Delusion, and Hallucinations" in *Mind and Language* vol. 15, no. 1 (2000); 174.

and a wide range of bizarre subject-world relational alterations that parallel elements of the idealized phenomenological gaze. In the fairly uncharitable words of philosopher psychiatrist R.D. Laing, “the cracked mind of the schizophrenic may *let in* light which does not enter the intact minds of many sane people whose minds are closed”<sup>92</sup>. Thus, a careful phenomenological analysis of the disorder can not only help us to achieve an enriched understanding of the schizophrenic experience, but can also provide a case for the claim that the schizophrenic can achieve a privileged philosophical perspective as a result of his or her altered perceptual experience of the world.

However, before we begin to elucidate the phenomenological implications of the schizophrenic experience it is important that we pay homage to the neuroscientific and neurological models of the disorder, which provide a base foundation upon which we can build an accurate account of schizophrenia. As I suggested at the start of this project, there is a necessity for both the psychophysiological account and phenomenological explication if we wish to gain a truly holistic understanding of schizophrenia. We must describe the physical and neurological symptoms of the schizophrenic, but then “penetrate beneath the level of symptoms in order to seize their underlying organizing structure”<sup>93</sup>. Therefore we begin our discussion of schizophrenia with a description of the disorder as a medical illness. Schizophrenia is most commonly considered to be a disease, or a collection of diseases, and has been subjected to the usual research methods for studying diseases<sup>94</sup>. Schizophrenia is therefore characterized as a biological disorder in the ICD-10<sup>95</sup>:

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<sup>92</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 27.

<sup>93</sup> Eugene Minikowski, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia: Three Classic Approaches” in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* vol.8, no. 4 (2002); 281.

<sup>94</sup> Albert Wong and Hubert Van Tol, “Schizophrenia: from phenomenology to neurobiology” in *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* vol. 27 (2003); 292.

<sup>95</sup> International Classification of Diseases, edition 10 (most current).

The schizophrenic disorders are characterized in general by fundamental and characteristic distortions of thinking and perception, and affects that are inappropriate or blunted. The most important psychopathological phenomena include thought echo; thought insertion or withdrawal; thought broadcasting; delusional perception and delusions of control; influence or passivity; hallucinatory voices commenting or discussing the patient in the third person; thought disorders and negative symptoms.

In addition to these criteria, individuals with schizophrenia have difficulty performing normal everyday tasks. Research indicates that, although schizophrenics can often do surprisingly well on many intellectual tasks requiring abstract or logical thought, they have particular difficulties with more practical or common-sense problems, perhaps especially when these relate to the social world<sup>96</sup>.

We could further elaborate on this scientific account by emphasizing the neurobiology and biochemistry involved in the schizophrenic experience (to the extent that we have sufficient research to support it), however it seems that we can imagine what an account of this nature might entail without having to elaborate in full detail. In general the scientific account of schizophrenia, even if offered in very specific physical detail, offers a description of the deficits associated with schizophrenia as they relate to biological functions; however, we are given very little description of how these deficits affect the schizophrenic's *actual experience of being-in-the world*. Although we may gain a general sense of the disorder from this description, we have no knowledge of *what it is like* to be schizophrenic or how, as a *lived body*, the perceptual experiences shape one's relation to others, the world, and the self. The scientific description is fairly devoid of empathy and understanding and seems to be lacking in the fundamental elements of what comprises intersubjective experience – especially because the schizophrenic, in describing his or her own experience, will most often emphasize alterations in self-world

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<sup>96</sup> J. Cutting and D. Murphy, "Schizophrenic thought disorder: a psychological and organic interpretation." In *British Journal of Psychiatry* vol. 152 (1988): 317.

experiences, rather than psychophysiological deficits. Hence the need for a phenomenological account:

The term schizoid refers to an individual the *totality of whose experience is split* in two main ways: in the first place, there is a *rent in his relation with his world* and, in the second, there is a *disruption of his relation with himself*. Such a person is not able to experience himself ‘together with’ others, or ‘at home in’ the world but, on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation; moreover, he does not experience himself as a complete person but rather as ‘split’ in various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves, and so on<sup>97</sup>.

This account puts emphasis on the relational experiences between the self and the world and the self and the other which, as we have previously emphasized, serve as the medium for our perceptual experiences. From another phenomenological account:

Schizophrenia is a particular distortion of the relationship between the subject and his ambient world. There is a weakening of the dynamic, flexible, malleable aspects of this relationship, with a corresponding predominance of the fixed, static, and rational elements of the spatial order. This can also be described as a lack of *attunement* to the inner and to the ambient world and a characteristic *arrest of existential temporality*<sup>98</sup>.

We see in these two accounts references to alterations in the fundamental nature of human experience, which seem to be crucial to our understanding of schizophrenia and which are entirely absent in a purely scientific account. The crucial first step in dealing with a psychiatric disorder is to recreate its experiential dimension – “without a proper description of the central features of the disorder any subsequent attempt at explaining it, i.e. giving a causal account, will be doomed to failure”<sup>99</sup>. For this reason, and because I have already provided a brief account of the scientific basis of schizophrenia which is not subject to interpretation, I will from this point

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<sup>97</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 15. (emphasis mine). We can understand the masculine pronouns used here to refer to the universal male/female subject.

<sup>98</sup> Minikowski, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia,” 283.

<sup>99</sup> Josef Parnas and Dan Zahavi, “The Link,” 11.

on focus on the phenomenological account of schizophrenia in an attempt to provide a description of the schizophrenic's being-in-the-world and to draw a novel parallel between the disordered gaze of the schizophrenic and the contemplative gaze of the philosopher and the phenomenologist engaging in phenomenological reduction.

The characteristically schizophrenic abnormalities of experience seem to defy any simple quantitative description and demand a richer and more qualitative set of concepts. The key to providing a phenomenological account of schizophrenia is attempting to find a means of empathizing with and understanding the disorder. In our everyday lives as 'normal' individuals, we embrace and persist in beliefs that we would never seriously imagine giving up and with which we emotionally identify; "they are beliefs so heavy, that we cannot pick them up and move them"<sup>100</sup>. Thus it is extremely difficult to try to empathize with the state of mind of the schizophrenic individual who perpetually experiences a sense of groundlessness and alienation;

The reason we find normal empathy psychologically impossible is not (only) the cognitive distance from everyday beliefs, but, rather, our very deep resistance to allowing ourselves to engage fully, by simulation, with the kinds of world- and self-losing emotions embodied in these states<sup>101</sup>.

Thus we not only have to try very hard to get at a description of the schizophrenic experience that can be communicated and accessible to the 'normal' individual, but we also need be willing to reach towards a complex and perplexing state of being. In attempting to elucidate the experience of the schizophrenic it is important to understand that "no one *has* schizophrenia, like

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<sup>100</sup> Jonathan Glover, "Towards Humanism in Psychiatry" in *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Princeton University, 2003. 12-14 February.

<sup>101</sup> Naomi Eilan, "On Understanding Schizophrenia," 113.



having a cold. The patient has not ‘got’ schizophrenia. He is schizophrenic. The schizophrenic has to be known without being destroyed. He will have to discover that this is possible”<sup>102</sup>.

Thus in order to understand the phenomenological implications of the disease, it is essential to examine the schizophrenic perspective of what I will term the ‘abnormal lived world’ – we must attempt to “penetrate through [and beyond] isolated symptoms to the *living person* to seize, in a single effort, of knowing his [or her] whole way of being,” just as we can only perceive and gain true understanding of a dream while asleep<sup>103</sup>; we must attempt to examine the schizophrenic perspective through a perceptual framework different from that which is habitual to us. This involves a stepping outside of the usual mode of living and a replacement of the naïve natural attitude by a hyper-reflexivity, as schizophrenia is essentially a bracketing of belief in objective reality. If we can achieve this feat, schizophrenia may be able to reveal aspects of experience that would normally go unnoticed<sup>104</sup>.

Schizophrenia can be seen in the context of Merleau-Ponty as a disorder of his so-called ‘intentional arc,’ which we described earlier to be a “mobile vector” through which we orient ourselves towards the world and perceive within the framework of our perceptual horizons. The intentional arc “endows experience with its degree of vitality and fruitfulness” and serves as a very general feature of consciousness which, at the most fundamental level, always involves a relatively passive, automatic, or unreflective dimension of operation<sup>105</sup>. There is a way in which we orient ourselves to the world which we do not reflect upon but which allows us to reach out towards the world and allows the world to reach back and flow through me. This tacit dimension

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<sup>102</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 35.

<sup>103</sup> Minkowski, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia,” 254. (emphasis mine)

<sup>104</sup> Sass, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia,” 267.

<sup>105</sup> Louis Sass, “Schizophrenia, Self-Experience, and the So-called ‘Negative Symptoms’” in *Exploring the Self: philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin’s Publishing Co., 2000); 153.

of experience is inextricably linked with the synthesizing nature of imagination, which helps to direct my perceptions and fill in the perceptual gaps in my experiences.

As we have suggested previously, it is the horizontal framework of the intentional arc which tacitly guides our reflective experiences. In the schizophrenic condition, the individual suffers a loss in this overarching horizontal structure of perception such that he or she no longer glides smoothly through the world of perception. The sudden loss of this framework – a sudden awareness of a horizon which no longer exists as *being* for me in the same sense that it does for the being-in-the-world of others – can generate bizarre experiences of “hyper-reflexivity, exaggerated self-consciousness, diminished self-affection, and a loss of the sense of existing as a self-possessed subject of awareness or activity”<sup>106</sup>. Hyper-reflexivity, as Sass defines it, refers to an excessive tendency to take the self as an object of awareness, and can generate ruminations on meaning and metaphysical occupations<sup>107</sup>. For Antonin Artaud, a French playwright and schizophrenic, hyper-reflexivity became most apparent when writing. He described the sensation as akin to having the impression of being a man working at an art while at the same time watching himself work at it through a mirror<sup>108</sup>. A patient of Parnas et. al described that he was

...troubled by a strange, quite pervasive and very distressing feeling of not being really *present*, or fully alive, of not participating in interaction with his surroundings. He was never entirely *involved in the world*, in the sense of engaged absorption in daily activities and daily life. This experience of disengagement, isolation, or ineffable distance from the world, was accompanied by a tendency to observe or monitor his inner life...He so to speak *witnessed his own sensory processes rather than living them*...He *experienced his own experiencing*...He also claimed that, perhaps due to such experiences, he was

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<sup>106</sup> Sass, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia,” 253.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 254.

<sup>108</sup> Artaud, A. *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (New York:Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976); 22.

sometimes brought for fleeting moments face-to-face with other, non-physical, and normally *hidden dimensions* of reality<sup>109</sup>.

In both experiences it is as if the schizophrenic has tried to *overcompensate* for a “primary slippery sense of self and feelings of unnaturalness and perplexity” by adopting a hyper-reflexive state of being<sup>110</sup>. This compensation, in a sense, serves as a way of holding on to the self – of wrapping it tightly in one’s grasp in order to preserve what seems to *slide over the world* in a sudden loss of temporality and concreteness; the patient seems to be “afraid of letting anything of himself ‘go’, of coming out of himself, of losing himself in any experience, etc., because he will be depleted, exhausted, emptied, robbed, and sucked dry”<sup>111</sup>. But in this move towards hyper-reflexivity the schizophrenic, in effect, reaches further and further away from the perceptual realm of the ‘normal’ individual. As the schizophrenic delves deeper into perplexity it becomes more and more difficult for him or her to communicate with the normal world. Eventually hyper-reflexivity may lead to “increasing experiential dissolution and a centrifuging of the self [such that] mental contents become progressively externalized, spatialized, and endowed with autonomy”<sup>112</sup>. In the case of a schizophrenic patient of Louis Sass, he claims:

My downfall was insight. Too much insight can be very dangerous, because you can tear your mind apart. Look at the word ‘analysis’. That means to break apart. When it turns in upon itself, the mind would rip itself apart. Once I started destroying [my mind], I couldn’t stop<sup>113</sup>.

Thus without an escape from hyper-reflexivity, the self seems to inevitably turn upon itself and cause its own destruction. It is this tension and this push away from the world in an effort to grasp at the remaining residues of the self that ultimately make the hyper-reflexive state

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<sup>109</sup> Parnas et al., “Lefetime DSM-III-R,” 708. (emphasis mine)

<sup>110</sup> Parnas, “Self and Intentionality,” 134.

<sup>111</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 88. We can understand thus use of ‘he’ as the universal subject.

<sup>112</sup> Parnas, “Self and Intentionality,” 134.

<sup>113</sup> Sass, “Schizophrenia, Self, Negative Symptoms,” 171.

detrimental and force the schizophrenic to adopt pathological behaviors in an attempt to escape the difficulty and ambiguity in being.

We can further look at schizophrenia as a radical disruption of the *lived body schema* as detailed by Merleau-Ponty. In the normal individual, Merleau-Ponty maintains that, while the body image is a representation of one's own body that is or could be an *object* of awareness, "the notion of corporeal subject refers to the body as a sensorimotor agent and witness that encounters and in some sense actually constitutes the world of our awareness as well as our most basic sense of self"<sup>114</sup>. Thus a loss of the relation to one's own body, if even possible, would constitute a loss of the most fundamental element of one's relation to the world – for it is the relation to the world *through one's lived body* that allows him or her both to summon and to be summoned, to recognize the other, and to generate any semblance of subjective experience. For schizophrenia, Merleau-Ponty claims that, "the body of the person suffering from hallucinations has lost its insertion in the system of appearances. Every hallucination is first a hallucination of one's own body"<sup>115</sup>. Thus in the schizophrenic patient, it is as if the normally implicit, fleeting, yet grounding experiences of the lived body have lost their natural, taken-for-granted status as part of the background or medium of awareness. According to the experience of Artaud:

Not merely the thought, but the personality, the life, is afflicted...[It is a] dispossession of my vital substance, a fundamental absence of mental fire, a lack of circulation of life...[There is the] feeling of being abandoned by my body, abandoned by every possible human feeling<sup>116</sup>.

For the less eloquent schizophrenic, a primordial shift of this magnitude can be difficult to communicate. A schizophrenic may say that she is made of glass – "of such transparency and

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<sup>114</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 87-92.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 355.

<sup>116</sup> Artaud, *Artaud: Selected Writings*, 143.

fragility that a look directed at [her] splinters [her] to bits and penetrates straight through [her]”<sup>117</sup>. These sorts of claims are common but are difficult to fully comprehend; we can only suppose that this is the closest means of describing the way in which the patient experiences herself. The loss of bodily intersubjectivity is perhaps the most violent abstraction experienced by the schizophrenic. It is as if the patient “has been stripped of all that is becoming to a man except his abstract humanity, which, like his skeleton, never is quite becoming to a man”<sup>118</sup>.

Similar to the loss of relation to the body, Blankenburg describes the schizophrenic perspective as a “loss of natural self-evidentness” which, in the simplest terms, refers to a loss of the usual common-sense orientation to reality – “of the unquestioned sense of obviousness and of the unproblematic background quality that normally enables a person to take for granted so many of the elements of the social and practical world”<sup>119</sup>. These elements are not entirely foreign to us;

In a sense, [some of these] now emergent phenomena are merely the normal bodily sensations that are always present, even though we do not usually attend to them; but, of course, this very attending actually constitutes a radical mutation of the experiential world...such phenomena represent the perfectly *normal* phenomena of ordinary human experience, but lived in the perfectly *abnormal* condition of hyper-reflexive awareness and diminished self-affection<sup>120</sup>.

There is thus a radical shift in one’s experience of the world: the tacit dimensions of perception become explicit, and can no longer perform the grounding, orienting, and, in effect, *constituting* role that only what belongs in the background of perception can play. Subjects may

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<sup>117</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 38.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 41. Here we can also understand ‘his’ and ‘man’ to apply to the universal subject.

<sup>119</sup> Sass, “Schizophrenia, Self, Negative Symptoms,” 156.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 162.

be perfectly aware of the “more objective aspects of reality, yet though they ‘register and know’ they do not ‘feel’ the reality of what they experience”<sup>121</sup>. For one patient,

The complaint he made all along was that he could not become a ‘person’. He had ‘no self’. Though he knew he was alive he felt that he was becoming more and more ‘a mythical person’. He felt he had no weight, no substance of his own. ‘I am only a cork floating on the ocean’<sup>122</sup>.

In addition the base subject-world framework falls away or at least become severely blurred. The subject feels utterly alienated,

there is a sense of being outside the usual customs and concerns of the shared social world, detached from the usual taken for granted background of assumptions and practices and somehow dislodged from the usual sense of being rooted in one’s own being<sup>123</sup>.

Herein seems to be an additional source of what some may refer to as the ‘madness’ associated with schizophrenia. We have seen how the resultant hyper-reflexivity of the disease becomes a make-shift solution to the sudden subjective change in the relation to the world, and now, in this new experience, “the self alters itself, transforming into a not-self and is only secondarily projected into exterior space”<sup>124</sup>. There is a sudden whirlwind of change in subjective experience and the very nature of the world. This change in structure is difficult to deal with and so, for the schizophrenic,

a paranoid delusional system is preferable to the ambiguity of not having absolute possession of his/her thoughts; the delusion of persecution eliminates the ambiguity at the heart of intersubjectivity and makes life more livable for the

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<sup>121</sup> Minkowski, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia,” 255.

<sup>122</sup> Laing, *The Divided Self*, 50.

<sup>123</sup> Wolfgang Blankenburg, *La perte de l’évidence naturelle*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 89. (My translation)

<sup>124</sup> Bin Kimura, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia: Three Classic Approaches” in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* vol.8, no. 4 (2002); 265.

paranoid; an unambiguously threatening world is safer than the open-endedness of the social world – which is one of vulnerability and trust.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, the loss of bodily possession, the change in structure of the subjective world, and the disintegration of the synthesizing faculty of imagination result in an ambiguity of perception and understanding in the world that lies at root of what is perceived by most as psychotic behavior. As we have detailed in our description of the perceived world, the ‘normal’ individual has developed a tolerance for ambiguity through imagination. He or she has fluency across varying levels of reality between imaginary and real and can effortlessly flow through the world from moment to moment (relative to the pathological). There is an ability to be complicit with the ambiguous and precarious nature of the world. Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of child development in relation to learned objects seems to further stress this point. A growing child will eventually come to learn that an object removed from view has not fallen into non-existence but has merely been placed in a new perspective – one that he/she does not access in the given moment but knows to be possible. The child learns to imagine that the object still maintains a presence, despite what the child can immediately perceive. Thus socialization has taught us to suspend our doubts as we move on to continually recommit ourselves to the perceptual world and our relations with one another.

The schizophrenic perplexity involves a self-aware, anguishing, and inexplicable sense of being unable to maintain a consistent grasp on reality, to empathize with others, or to cope with normal situational demands<sup>126</sup>. There is a strange turning upon oneself that seems to bring to mind an experience akin to Sartre’s *Nausea*, in which only a living world of pure matter, devoid

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<sup>125</sup> Morley, “The Texture of the Real,” 99-100.

<sup>126</sup> Sass, “Schizophrenia, Self, Negative Symptoms,” 157.

of all human meaning or purpose, looms forth as the only realm of possibility<sup>127</sup>. There is a sense of anxiety that the world, in all its component parts, is no longer open to me. In this sense hallucination and schizophrenic psychosis can be seen as a way of transforming the world in much the same way that Sartre suggests that we escape the world through emotion:

When the paths before us become too difficult, or when we cannot see our way, we can no longer put up with such an enacting and difficult world...We try to change the world; that is, to live it as though the relations between things and their potentialities were not governed by deterministic processes but by magic...We are cornered, and we fling ourselves into this new attitude with all the force at our command<sup>128</sup>.

The schizophrenic, having realized him/herself in the ambiguous world, finds an escape in what we have come to know as the ‘abnormal world’. The hallucinatory consciousness posits an abnormal world to fit ambiguous perception. Such deviations can be understood, not merely negatively as abnormalities, but as representing a new norm, a new *form* of being-in-the-world<sup>129</sup>. In this new way of being-in-the-world, “consciousness does not limit itself to the projection of affective meanings upon the world around it; it *lives* the new world it has thereby constituted – lives it directly, commits itself to it, and suffers the qualities that the concomitant behavior has outlined”<sup>130</sup>.

This change in self-world relation of the schizophrenic is particularly interesting because, though there is a distinct sense of discomfort and resultant psychosis, the schizophrenic perspective in the abnormal world can be likened to the wonder achieved by a phenomenological philosopher who engages in bracketing of Husserl’s epoché. As first person accounts have illustrated, the detached awareness and “querying of normally unnoticed frameworks or social

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<sup>127</sup> Louis Sass and Josef Parnas, “Explaining Schizophrenia: The Relevance of Phenomenology” in *Reconceiving Schizophrenia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); 79.

<sup>128</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (New York: Routledge, 2003); 30-40.

<sup>129</sup> Binswanger, “The Existential Analysis School of Thought,” 201.

<sup>130</sup> Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of Emotions*, 51.



conventions” of schizophrenia often results in a ‘hyper-abstract’ or seemingly philosophical quality in the thought and speech of many schizophrenic individuals<sup>131</sup>. Schizophrenia can then perhaps be construed as a sort of ‘consciousness of self as consciousness’ that is difficult for the normal but non-phenomenologist individual to achieve. The schizophrenic often has a sense of amazement before that which would seem to be *most* self-evident – a reaction which can be compared to the wonder sought by a phenomenological philosopher who suspends normal assumptions in order to bring them to light. Thus, “while the schizophrenic individual undergoes or suffers this negation of self-evidence, the phenomenologist carries it out deliberately”<sup>132</sup>. The very nature of the schizophrenic pathology is such that at least some elements of the schizophrenic condition allow individuals to have heightened awareness of the intricacies of human subjectivity and its relationship to the world; there is a feeling that one is privy to a kind of insight more profound than is available to people more fully engaged with the concerns of normal life<sup>133</sup>. As a normal individual,

I can only remain within the absurd if I suspend every affirmation, if, like Montaigne or like the schizophrenic, I restrict myself to an interrogation that must not even be formulated (for in formulating it I would turn it into a question that, like every determinate question, would envelop a response), or if, in short, I oppose to truth not the negation of truth, but rather a simple state of non-truth or of equivocation, that is, the actual opacity of my existence. In the same way, I can only remain within absolute evidentness if I hold back every affirmation, if nothing is for me evident in itself, and if, as Husserl suggests, I stand in wonder before the world and cease to be complicit with it in order to reveal the flow of motivations that carry me into it, in order to awaken my life and to make it entirely explicit<sup>134</sup>.

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<sup>131</sup> Blankenburg, *La perte de l'évidence naturelle*, 53. (My translation)

<sup>132</sup> A. Kraus, “Phenomenological-Anthropological Psychiatry” in *Contemporary Psychiatry* (New York: Springer, 2001); 345.

<sup>133</sup> Kimura, “The Phenomenology of Schizophrenia,” 264.

<sup>134</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 309.

Here Merleau-Ponty himself compares the phenomenological gaze to the experience of the schizophrenic, and the description of this philosophic process very closely mirrors an adoption of a very schizophrenic state of being. Thus the schizophrenic seems to have a capacity for philosophic thought that rivals the contemplation of even the most diligent of philosophers. In this respect, it seems that the schizophrenic may ultimately have a phenomenological advantage over the 'normal' individual. Finally, beyond this intriguing conclusion it may also be the case that our understanding of the schizophrenic subject in relation to the phenomenological reduction may provide further insight into schizophrenia in general: phenomenology may ultimately be the common ground that we have been searching for in our attempt to empathize with, relate to, and find understanding of the disordered mind.

### **III. The Divided Mind: Conclusions**

*I am a forest, and a night of dark trees: but he who is not afraid of my darkness, will find banks full of roses under my cypresses.*

*-Friedrich Nietzsche*

Over the course of this project I have provided an account of phenomenology that illustrates the fragile reality of the world and emphasizes the importance of imagination as a means of synthesizing and supplementing our perceptual experiences in the lived world. I have further argued that imagination and hallucination are fundamentally similar and both play a role in constituting our perceived reality. Furthermore, because of the significant role phenomenology assumes in describing the intricate interwoven nature of imagination and hallucination in the real world, I have also provided an argument for a turn to phenomenology when attempting to provide a philosophical explication of mental illness. Specifically, I have argued the need for a phenomenological account to supplement the neuroscientific model of schizophrenia. Finally, I

have provided a phenomenological explication of schizophrenia as a disorder of the imagination and have illuminated parallels between the nature of schizophrenic psychosis and complex philosophical thought that make the examination of schizophrenia a particularly compelling philosophical project. Ultimately, it seems to be the case that the philosophical implications of schizophrenia can provide a richness and route to understanding the affected subject of what has primarily been constructed as a debilitating pathology. Thus, in utilizing both a scientific and phenomenological framework to explicate the disorder I have shown that we may take what has been, up to this point, considered a divided mind on the subject, and instead construct a holistic, philosophically interesting and therapeutically useful understanding of schizophrenia that offers a novel approach to examining and working with the disorder.

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