

Chapter 12

Phenomenology, Mental Illness, and the Intersubjective Constitution of the Lifeworld

Anthony Vincent Fernandez

In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl lists a number of “intentional modifications” of subjectivity that may pose a problem for future phenomenological research—including birth and death, infancy and child development, sexuality, nonhuman animality, and severe mental illness (Husserl 1970, 187–188). Phenomenologists have since taken up these topics, and they continue to make up core areas of phenomenological research. However, in spite of the general interest in these areas, not all of these cases of “intentional modifications” have been considered within the broader Husserlian project of generative phenomenology (i.e., the phenomenological study of cultural variation, normality and abnormality, the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld, and so on).

Steinbock has written on issues of birth and death (Steinbock 1995a; 1995b). Heinämaa has recently written on both infancy and nonhuman animality in relation to the constitution of the lifeworld (Heinämaa 2013; 2014). And Oksala has written on the place of gender and sexuality within Husserl’s generative works (Oksala 2006). In the case of mental illness, however, there is a notable absence. In spite of the growing interest in phenomenological studies of psychopathology (e.g., Fernandez 2014; Fuchs 2013; Sass, Parnas, and Zahavi 2011; Stanghellini and Rosfort 2014; Ratcliffe 2015), there have been no systematic treatments of mental illness within a generative approach.

In this chapter I develop an account of the role of people with severe mental illness (particularly those characterized by psychosis, e.g., hallucinations or delusions) in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld. Husserl claims that people with severe mental illness—much like people with perceptual impairments such as blindness or deafness—either do not play a constitutive role in certain levels of the shared, communal lifeworld or play

a limited role in such constitution. I reevaluate this claim, arguing that while such limitations can occur as the result of severe mental illness, this is not due to some inherent feature of the subjectivity in question. Rather, the alienation of the mentally ill person from the community of co-constitutors stems from the community's interpretation of the subject *as* mentally ill.

I develop this argument in four parts. First, I briefly outline the core elements of Husserl's account of the role of intersubjectivity in the co-constitution of the lifeworld. Second, I discuss the concepts of dissent and abnormality in Husserl's later works—focusing on perceptual impairments, infancy, and nonhuman animality, with the aim of developing a contrastive account with mental illness. Third, I develop a broadly Husserlian account of severe mental illness and argue that this account fails to do justice to the role of these kinds of experiences in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld. Fourth, I modify and supplement the Husserlian account by drawing on the concept of verticality, or vertical experience, employed in recent work on the phenomenology of religious experience. I argue that whether non-intersubjectively verifiable experiences become constitutive of the communal lifeworld depends, in large part, on the community's interpretation and understanding of the condition of the subject in question.

1. INTERSUBJECTIVITY, NORMALITY, AND THE LIFEWORLD

The Husserlian approach to phenomenological inquiry begins with the epoché, or bracketing. This methodological tool puts the natural attitude out of play, allowing the phenomenologist to attend to the world through a phenomenological attitude—one that brings to light the constitutive elements of experience and meaning. The natural attitude is a mode of comportment or understanding in which we simply take for granted what we perceive as given; we take the world as existing, as there for everyone in much the same way. Insofar as Husserl's aim is to make explicit how the world is given or experienced, some of the most important phenomenological questions are concerned with how we, as a community, constitute our shared lifeworld, both as the perceptual world of nature and as the meaningful world of culture.

Two important questions for this area of investigation are (1) "How do we experience the world as available to others?" and (2) "How do we experience the world as objective (i.e. as existing independently of human experience)?" The answers to both questions hinge on Husserl's concept of *transcendence*. As Zahavi explains, there are two kinds of transcendence (Zahavi 2001, 26). One is a subjective or primordial transcendence. The other is a true or proper transcendence. Only the latter kind of transcendence relies upon—and therefore illuminates—the transcendental structure of intersubjectivity.

On Husserl's account, primordial transcendence occurs whenever we intend or experience a temporally persisting object. An experience of temporal persistence is made possible by recollection. Perceiving an object while recollecting a previous experience of it establishes it as transcendent, as something distinct from my immediate act of experiencing or intending. However, as Zahavi points out, establishing the object as distinct from this particular intentional act does not yet establish it as *objective*. The experienced object might be hallucinated or imagined (Zahavi 2001, 31). The object is still transcendent, in the sense of being separate from the particular intentional act in which it is experienced, but it remains immanent to the subjectivity that experiences it (Zahavi 2001, 32).

The constitution of genuine objectivity, on the other hand, requires a transcendence that goes beyond my own actual and possible experience. It has to consist in an experience that is founded in intersubjectivity, and is therefore only made possible by others (Zahavi 2001, 32). According to Husserl, the other is experienced as a foreign I, an *alter ego* who exceeds my sphere of experience. The other shows up to me as having a perspective upon the world that differs from, exceeds, and is ultimately inaccessible to my own subjectivity. As Zahavi says, "Any real transcendence, any actual transgression whereby subjectivity goes beyond itself ... rests upon the experience of an other, an other that—since it transcends that which is essentially proper to me—is the source of all transcendence" (2001, 33). In other words, experiencing something *as* available to others in the shared, intersubjective world is a necessary condition for experiencing it *as* objective. Such an experience need not include an actual, determinate other. It can (and often does) refer only to an indeterminate possibility of the experience of a foreign subject.¹

This basic form of the co-constitution of the world as transcendent establishes the primordial form of the "we," or "we-community" (Miettinen 2014, 154). This community is established as a co-presence of horizons. I experience my own horizon as overlapping with the horizons of other subjects, ultimately establishing a universal horizon of all human subjects. Such a universal horizon, as Miettinen argues, is a condition for establishing the world as objective, as one and the same world available to all experiencing subjects.

However, this primal form of community has not yet established itself as a *norm*. That is, it is established as a universal community, rather than as a particular community of subjects set off against other communities (Miettinen 2014, 154). But in spite of this fundamental universality, we experience ourselves as belonging to particular communities as well. These communities, moreover, establish a collective set of perceptual and cultural norms.

When Husserl refers to the "we" or the "everybody" in the context of a community of co-constitutors, he typically has in mind only those subjects deemed "normal." According to Husserl, this is not some universal norm that

runs through all of humanity, but a cultural-historical norm that pertains to communities at various levels (e.g., I might not be normal with respect to my community at large, but I might be normal with respect to my subcommunity). In addition, the normality that Husserl is concerned with is not a normality of our physical body or of our behavior. It is normality understood as a mode of constitution, or a particular manner of experiencing (Taipale 2014, 123). Our norms, and therefore what counts as “normal,” can of course change over time, with various ways of perceiving and interpreting the world becoming more or less dominant as the result of sociocultural development.

This centrality of normality within Husserl’s phenomenology of intersubjectivity necessarily implies the possibility of “abnormality.” As mentioned above, Husserl is concerned with phenomenology’s capacity to articulate and do justice to the empirical diversity of subjectivity, both human and nonhuman. His account of intersubjectivity and the constitution of the lifeworld is necessarily incomplete if it cannot find a place for perceptual impairments, the experiential capacities of the infant, the hallucinations and delusions of the mentally ill, and even the perceptual differences in nonhuman animals. In the following section I explicate the concepts of *dissent* and *abnormality* within the context of Husserl’s work, establishing the groundwork for an adequate phenomenological study of the role of people with severe mental illness in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld.

2. DISSENT AND ABNORMALITY

According to Husserl, this tacit presumption of sameness and homogeneity within our community of subjects makes up a foundational aspect of our world. It founds our sense of the world as something fundamentally shared and open. But this tacit presumption of everyday experience can be challenged. Husserl acknowledges the possibility of *dissent*.

I might, for instance, feel a piece of fabric as smooth while you feel it as coarse or rough. When such dissent occurs, it rarely shakes our tacit faith in a shared reality. Instead, if we seek an explanation, we typically appeal to differences in embodiment and personal history (e.g., different habituations). Perhaps your hands are more callused than mine. Or perhaps you have felt finer fabrics, so this one seems relatively coarse to your touch.

This kind of dissent can also occur within a single embodied subject. In *Ideas II*, Husserl uses the example of perceiving with a burnt finger or swollen hand (Husserl 1989). As he explains, in palpating the same objects that I have touched before, the previous sensations and perceptions are not reproduced. And if my other hand is unharmed, I can compare the sensations between them. Yet at no point does this dissent challenge my faith in

the world as either shared or objective. The difference is immediately experienced as a difference in *me*, or in my lived body, rather than in the world itself.

In some cases, this dissent can become an abnormality. In order for this to occur, the dissent must conflict with some norm. As Husserl says in *Cartesian Meditations*,

It is implicit in the sense of my successful apperception of others that their world, the world belonging to their appearance-systems, must be experienced forthwith as the same as the world belonging to my appearance-systems; and this involves an identity of our appearance-systems. Now we know very well that there are such things as “*abnormalities*” (for example: in the case of subjects who are blind or deaf); we know that therefore the appearance-systems are by no means always absolutely identical and that whole strata (though not all strata) can differ. But abnormality must first be *constituted* as such; and the constituting of abnormality is possible only on the basis of an intrinsically antecedent normality. (Husserl 1977, 125)

Taipale illustrates this constitution of abnormality with an example of trying to see the timetable at a train station. Noticing that the timetable is blurry, I move closer. This reveals a movement toward optimality, which is itself a kind of normality. There are optimal ways of perceiving things—that is, ways of perceiving that present the object more accurately (at least relative to my particular aims). However, by bringing an additional layer to this example, we can see a different kind of normality, as well as its corresponding abnormality. Suppose that when I move closer to the timetable, bringing it into view, I realize that everyone else viewing the timetable is standing a few feet behind me. They seem to have no trouble making out the time of their train from the position where I just stood. In such a case, while I moved into a personal or individual normality (in the sense of optimality), I simultaneously reveal my own experience as intersubjectively abnormal (and suboptimal with respect to my community). A de-centering occurs here, in which the primary sense of normality is found in an amorphous and indeterminate communal set of norms—a set that in turn determines my own capacities as either normal or abnormal (Taipale 2014, 130–133).

Once my vision has been established as abnormal relative to the community, I play a somewhat less constitutive role in the intersubjective community. When I read a street sign and my friend reads it differently, this is no longer a legitimate dissent that needs to be reconciled. My vision is abnormal, and his claims about what the sign says become constitutive, not only for himself, but also for me and the community at large. Insofar as the normative aspects of experience and perception become relativized to intersubjectivity, they may be established relative to perceptual capacities and norms that I lack

(Taipale 2014, 134). As Taipale says, “Nearsighted persons take part in the intersubjective constitution of the visual world, but in this constitution their perceptions are not *normative* (optimalizing)” (2014, 136).

In addition to these levels of agreement and intersubjectivity, there are also different kinds of abnormality. As mentioned above, Husserl not only considers cases of perceptual impairments, but also addresses cases of infancy and child development, nonhuman animality, and severe mental illness, among others. According to Husserl, each subject, insofar as she is abnormal relative to her own community, fails to play a full role as co-constitutor of the shared, intersubjective lifeworld. However, as Heinämaa has recently argued, not all abnormal subjects fail to be co-constitutors for the same reason, or in the same way (Heinämaa 2013, 88). I here sketch some of Heinämaa’s recent work on the abnormality of infancy and nonhuman animality in order to develop a contrastive case with severe mental illness in the following sections.

In some of Husserl’s works, he characterizes the relative abnormality of non-human animals in a way that parallels cases of perceptual impairments. In *Cartesian Meditations*, he says that “animals are essentially constituted for me as anomalous *variants* of my humanness,” and suggests that they differ primarily in respect to their perceptual capacities (Husserl 1977, 125; quoted in Heinämaa 2014, 136). However, as Heinämaa points out, he also develops a detailed account of the parallel between non-human animality and human infancy in his manuscripts on intersubjectivity (Husserl 1973; Heinämaa 2014, 136). According to Husserl, the role of animals and infants in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld differs in kind from the role of people with perceptual impairments or mental illness. While all of these subjects lack some degree of constitutive power in relation to the *perceived world of nature*, animals and infants also lack constitutive power in relation to the *cultural world*—the world that Husserl considers to exist on a higher level, being the true or genuine world of human life.

What is distinctive about animals and infants is their inability to understand themselves as members of a generation, linked in an open chain of generations that have constituted their cultural and historical milieu. As Heinämaa says, “In this respect, both the animal and the infant differ from subjects with sensory deprivations who, despite their deprivation, consciously belong to generational chains of human subjects and to generations of subjects with identical deprivations” (2014, 137–138). The animal and the infant do, according to Husserl, participate in their community of contemporaries, and in so doing establish some basic norms. However, insofar as they fail to understand that they were born, and that they will die, they necessarily fail to understand themselves as connected to past and future communities consisting of subjects who cannot become present for them (Heinämaa 2014, 138).

On Husserl’s account, mature adults are granted this self-understanding by way of language. It is through language, whether spoken or written, that our

ancestors are able to play a constitutive role in the world we live in today. Their writings, for example, might play a role in constituting proper behavior, what it means to be successful, the role of different genders, what is and is not worth valuing, and so on. In many cases, historical texts (e.g., religious texts) have an even greater power to establish norms than anyone living today. In addition, we can understand our own words, and especially our own writing, as directed toward a nonexistent generation—a group of people who we will never come into contact with, but who will move and live within a set of norms that we ourselves have played a role in constituting.

To summarize, people with perceptual impairments—insofar as their impairments establish them as abnormal within their community—fail to play the role of co-constitutors with respect to their abnormality. As Heinämaa argues, this exclusion from the community of co-constitutors occurs with respect to the perceived world of nature, but not with respect to the cultural-historical lifeworld. Because these subjects possess language, they still play a full role in this regard. Infants and non-human animals, by contrast, cannot play the role of co-constitutors of the cultural-historical lifeworld precisely because of their lack of language—which establishes them as abnormal with respect to the larger human community. These subjects still play some role in the co-constitution of the perceived world of nature, but this role may be diminished in a variety of ways.

With this account of the role of intersubjectivity in the constitution of the lifeworld, as well as the various kinds of dissent and abnormality discussed within Husserl's work, we can proceed onto a phenomenological study of the role of people with severe mental illness in the co-constitution of the lifeworld.

3. MENTAL ILLNESS, INTERSUBJECTIVITY, AND THE PROBLEM OF CONSTITUTION

My aim in this section is not to fully articulate Husserl's account of the role of people with severe mental illness in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld (in any case, he says relatively little on the subject). Rather, my aim is to develop an account of this role within a broadly Husserlian framework, and address how this framework is inadequate in spite of its apparent success in accounting for other forms of abnormality.

In the *Crisis*, Husserl clearly acknowledges that the understanding of “the insane,” as well as of their role in the co-constitution of the lifeworld, will pose a problem for future phenomenological research. However, he does not seem to draw any important distinctions between the role of people with perceptual impairments and the role of people with severe mental illness—although he does acknowledge the distinction between perceptual capacities

and higher capacities such as “valuing, willing, thinking, and reasoning” (Heinämaa 2013, 90). In his intersubjectivity volumes, he says,

But not all are, as transcendently reduced, co-bearers of the world that I have as pre-given as mine and that “we” have as pre-given—“we” understood as the open plurality of co-bearers that together in a community co-constitute the one and the same world (in no way the animals or the insane “humans,” even if they too are experienced by us as related to and directed at the world, the one and same “real” world, in their inner lives). (Husserl 1973, 162, cf. 178; quoted in Heinämaa 2013, 85)

According to Husserl, “normal” subjects experience people with severe mental illness as directed at the same objective world, but even in such an experience there is a lack of equivalence between the normal subjects and the mentally ill. “I find also primitive, animals, insane in my world, but ... I do not experience them as equal to me or ‘equal to us’” (Husserl 1973, 169; quoted in Heinämaa 2013, 88).

If we examine severe mental illness (especially cases characterized by psychosis) within the context of Husserl’s remarks on other abnormal subjects, it seems that the mentally ill subject fails to be a co-constitutor of either the perceived world of nature or the meaningful world of culture—at least in respect to their particular pathological experiences such as hallucinations or delusions. In regard to the perceived world of nature, the subject fails to be a co-constitutor because his experiences cannot be intersubjectively verified—the possibility of which is a necessary condition for establishing the reality of what is experienced. In regard to the meaningful world of culture, the subject fails to be a co-constitutor insofar as the community deems his account of his situation and his linguistic utterances incoherent. In the case of delusions, for example, one might report a situation that is not only bizarre, but perhaps irrational as well (e.g., the person’s beliefs about a state of affairs are not supported by his own reported evidence).

This means that the horizons of people with these kinds of psychopathological experiences do not overlap—at least in certain respects—with the horizon of their community. On Husserl’s account, most abnormalities are understood as an impairment or absence of a capacity that is held by the community at large. The subject fails to be a co-constitutor of the lifeworld with respect to this particular impaired or absent capacity—her horizon of what is given is constrained relative to the norm. In this sense, Husserl might characterize people experiencing hallucinations or delusions as lacking some of the “higher functions,” such as properly functioning reason, and claim that they are therefore excluded from the community of co-constitutors in this respect.

However, there is an alternative way of approaching these experiences that complicates the role of psychotic subjects in the co-constitution of the life-world. While we might focus on what is lacking (e.g., an unimpaired faculty of reason), we can also focus on the hallucinations and delusions themselves as positive experiences. That is, rather than interpreting the experiences as based in a lack of some faculty or capacity that is held by the community of normal subjects, we can interpret the experience as something over and above what is normally given. While there is a sense in which hallucinations and delusions can involve a truncating or constraining of one's horizon, there is also a sense in which one has experiences and beliefs *in addition to* what is given in the normal horizon, relative to both one's personal norm and one's communal norm.

Husserl does acknowledge the possibility of particular subjects having experiential access to the world in a way that others do not (e.g., better than normal vision or hearing) but these cases still differ in important respects from what we find with hallucinations and delusions. In the case of better than normal vision, for example, the subject might claim to see something that others do not. But his claims are still open to intersubjective validation insofar as other subjects can move closer to the object in question, find better lighting, use tools such as binoculars, and so on. In other words, the person with exceptional eyesight has a visual horizon that extends beyond the horizon of other subjects, but these other subjects can actively modify their position (and therefore the zero point of their horizon) in order to change the way that their horizon overlaps with his, thereby validating his experiences.

But there are other cases—in many ways phenomenally indistinguishable from what the psychiatric community labels hallucinations or delusions—where an in principle unverifiable experience nevertheless becomes constitutive of the lifeworld. In some cases such experiences can become constitutive not only of the individual's lifeworld, but of the communal lifeworld as well. In the following section, I show how phenomenologists have accommodated these kinds of experiences, and use these tools to offer a more adequate account of the role of people with severe mental illness in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld.

4. ON THE VERTICALITY OF EXPERIENCE

In order to adequately articulate the role of people with severe mental illness in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld, we will need to turn to a concept from post-Husserlian phenomenology. While Husserl's later work is eminently concerned with the nature of the horizon—or the open, horizontal

plane of experience and meaning—later phenomenologists introduced the concept of vertical experience. Developed in part by figures such as Scheler (1973), Henry (1973), Levinas (1969), and Marion (2012), perhaps the most detailed treatment of this concept in the phenomenological tradition is offered by Steinbock in his work on the phenomenology of religious experience (2007). In this section, I draw on Steinbock's work on the verticality of religious experience in order to rethink the role of people with severe mental illness in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld.

As Steinbock explains, the phenomenological tradition is concerned with givenness, or how objects and our world can show up to us in experience. However, in most phenomenological work, givenness is restricted to a certain type—what Steinbock refers to as the mode of “presentation.” As he says, presented objects are given to us in both “inner” and “outer” experience (i.e., they are available to faculties such as imagination, as well as sense-perception) (Steinbock 2007, 8). Phenomenologists do not actively or explicitly restrict their focus to this sphere of phenomena, but instead assume that presentation is the only legitimate mode of givenness (Steinbock 2007, 9).

One of the primary features of presentation as a mode of givenness is that our understanding and knowledge of the presented object is based in our own efforts. For example, if I see an object at a distance that I cannot quite make out, I can move closer to the object, change the angle of my approach, and so on. In so doing, I achieve—through my own efforts—a more accurate, or optimal, presentation of the object. It shows itself to me in a way that is more illuminating than before. This possibility is available, in large part, for all intersubjectively verifiable features of the lifeworld. Not only can I engage in my own efforts to modify how something is given to me, but others can do the same, and through our combined efforts our horizons of experience and intelligibility overlap.

As Steinbock explains, while presentation is perhaps the most common mode of givenness, it is by no means the only mode. There are certain modes of givenness that are unavailable to either perception or rational thought. These experiences are often described in a paradoxical sense, such as “being accessible *in the mode of* inaccessibility, given *as not being able* to be given, experienced *as not being able* to be experienced,” and so on (Steinbock 2007, 10).

Such experiences are “vertical” because their accessibility is not found within the shared horizon, or the horizontal plane of experience. One of the primary points of differentiation between vertical and horizontal modes of givenness is that in the former we cannot achieve the givenness through our own efforts or have it intersubjectively verified by others. As Steinbock says, “Mystical experiences are not *within anyone's reach* because they are not correlative to our efforts in the first place, as would be the case in the field of

presentations; they are experienced as ‘gifts’” (2007, 26). This does not mean that we cannot try to predispose ourselves to certain kinds of vertical experiences (e.g., through fasting). However, unlike the mode of presentation, there are no actions that guarantee a vertical experience will come about.

In spite of this differentiation between horizontal and vertical modes of givenness, there are still important questions regarding the legitimacy and accuracy of our vertical experiences. Whether one’s experience is a legitimate religious experience or a psychotic experience is often an open question. According to some mystics, there are ways of validating or invalidating the authenticity of one’s experience as religious. St. Teresa, for example, writes about the possibility of melancholic persons having illusions they believe to be religious experiences, and of cases where people develop delusions as the result of penance or keeping vigil. In addition, the mystic must be wary of others, such as religious mentors, causing her to doubt her religious experiences as authentic. As Steinbock says,

Although the poor confessor or mentor may not wish to do ill, he can nevertheless confuse and frighten an individual because he is unsure of himself and fears what is beyond his experience; he finds something to doubt in everything and accuses every experience of being a product of melancholy or the devil. In turn ... the individual can suffer from self-doubt and not understand an experience when it is authentic. (2007, 120–121)

This reference to the role of others in corroborating or validating the evidence for one’s religious experience seems to run against the initial characterization of these experiences as vertical. Such experiences, unlike presentations, are not intersubjectively verifiable. Yet others do play some role in helping the subject determine the nature of her experience. Often the authenticity of these experiences is determined by whether the experiences conform to or conflict with the community’s religious beliefs. Unverifiable experiences that are alien to the community’s beliefs will typically be interpreted as pathological, whereas unverifiable experiences that conform to the community’s beliefs might be interpreted as genuine religious experiences.

Whether vertical experiences become constitutive of the communal life-world does not depend—as in the case of presentation—on whether the *particular* experience is intersubjectively verifiable. Vertical experiences, by definition, cannot be intersubjectively verified (at least not in the typical sense). However, there is still a sense in which the *kind* of experience—rather than the particular instance of it—is intersubjectively verifiable. An example of this mode of verification is found in experiences of members of the Lakota tribe. It is common among members of this tribe to hear the voice of a deceased relative, and such an experience is typically taken as an omen of

one's own impending death. In such cases, only the individual in question hears the voice, but his family understands the import of the experience and helps him prepare for his death (Kleinman et al. 1997; Spiro 2001). Because these *kinds* of experiences are normal, they become constitutive of the community's lifeworld in spite of being individual and private in nature. Their reality or truth is established not on the basis of verification, but on the basis of its congruence with broader cultural norms (Rashed 2010, 197).

If someone in a community with no notion of communication with one's ancestors reported the same experience, it would be interpreted as abnormal, and perhaps even pathological (both by the individual and the community). Insofar as the experience is interpreted as abnormal or pathological it fails to be constitutive of the lifeworld. The reality or truth of the experience is dismissed, and it fails to establish new knowledge and beliefs about the world.

What this reveals is that vertical or private experiences are determined by, and determinative of, the intersubjective community in a way that differs substantially from other cases of abnormality. Insofar as someone is deaf or blind, he necessarily fails to play a constitutive role with respect to these perceptual horizons. The infant and the non-human animal necessarily fail to be constitutive of the cultural lifeworld insofar as they lack language and fail to understand their membership in a chain of generations. Even when these subjects are established as "normal" with respect to their subcommunities, they do not thereby gain the constitutive powers that they lacked. Rather, lacking these constitutive powers is the norm.

In the case of severe mental illness and religious experience, by contrast, the community not only determines whether the subject is normal or abnormal, but also determines whether the condition of the subject constitutes a deprivation or an endowment.² By interpreting the condition as psychosis, the community constitutes it as a deprivation (e.g., loss of rationality, or loss of contact with reality), and the experiences fail to be constitutive of the shared reality—whether of the perceptual world of nature or the meaningful world of culture. On the other hand, by interpreting the subject's condition as a religious experience, the community constitutes it as an endowment (e.g., genuine access to God, or to one's ancestors), and the experiences are therefore constitutive of the shared reality—in some cases granting unique or revelatory insights. Such insight might take the form of prophetic predictions, normative ethical commandments, or knowledge of the mind of God.

What we find here is a dual-level constitution. On the first level, the community constitutes the subject as experiencing psychosis, or as having a religious experience. Insofar as they constitute the subject in the former sense, the subject's experiences fail to become constitutive of the community's lifeworld. However, insofar as they constitute the subject in the latter sense, the subject's experiences become constitutive of the community's lifeworld, and often in profound ways.³

CONCLUSION

While this account clarifies some of the differences between mental illness and other forms of abnormality in the intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld, there remains the pressing question of why Husserl failed to adequately accommodate mental illness (and specifically psychosis) within his framework. In light of the inability to distinguish between religious experiences and psychosis without some reference to the community's interpretation, it seems that mental illness, "insanity," and "madness" refer to a fundamentally different kind of phenomenon from the other abnormalities that Husserl addresses. There is an additional normative layer that Husserl seems to have ignored when he listed "insanity" alongside blindness, deafness, infancy, and nonhuman animality.

When Husserl refers to blindness, for example, this is a descriptive (and not yet normative) characterization of the subject in question. It is precisely this descriptive character that allows him to consider the normative implications of placing this subject within different communities (e.g., communities of sighted people or communities of the blind). By considering the role of the blind subject in these various communities, he was able to articulate how communal norms establish who is normal and abnormal, and how these labels affect their ability to play a constitutive role in a community of subjects.

When he refers to "insanity," however, he is already embedded in a normative framework that labels such experiences as "illness" (or at least symptomatic of an illness).⁴ In order for Husserl to attend to the kinds of experiences that get labeled as "mental illness" in the same way that he attends to blindness, deafness, infancy, and so on, he needs to take a step back and offer a more descriptive—and normatively neutral—account of the mode of experiencing in question. The phenomenological studies of religious experience offer a pointer in this regard, insofar as they clarify the kinds of experiences that get *interpreted as* religious experiences—that is, the broad category of vertical experiences. In other words, Husserl would have been able to make more headway if, instead of referring to "insanity," he referred to experiences that are, in principle, not intersubjectively verifiable. The place of such experiences (and the subjects who have them) is left open in this characterization, and is not predetermined by the normative structures that Husserl—and all phenomenologists—aim to investigate.

NOTES

1. It is important to clarify here that Husserl is not giving an argument for how we can know, or infer, that something is objective or that others exist. In fact, if one wanted to construct such an argument, it would likely go the other way around—that

is, I might claim that something is experienceable by others precisely because it is objective. In much the same light, Husserl does not offer his account as a proof for the existence of other subjects. These kinds of claims stem from metaphysical questions that were suspended in the epoché. Husserl's aim, in contrast, is to offer an account of the structural elements required for certain kinds of experience or givenness. In order to something to be given *as objective*, it necessarily requires a tacit reference to the inherent experienceability of other subjects (Zahavi 2001, 35).

2. There is a parallel here with some of the literature on epistemic injustice (e.g., Dotson 2011; Fricker 2007), although I cannot consider it here. Carel and Kidd, in particular, have examined the place of epistemic injustice in healthcare and somatic medicine (Carel and Kidd 2014; Kidd and Carel forthcoming).

3. The reality is, of course, a bit more complicated. These are not the only possible options for how a community deals with non-intersubjectively verifiable experiences. Alternatively, the subject might be taken as dishonest, or might be understood as having experiences brought on by other kinds of supernatural entities (e.g., the Devil, or spirit possession).

4. There is likely a similar problem in Husserl's discussions of people as "primitive." That is, rather than giving a descriptive account of their experiential capacities and then exploring how these capacities affect their role within various communities of subjects, he gives them a normative label in advance, thereby predetermining (in a profoundly problematic manner) any phenomenological studies of the subjects he has in mind.

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