ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOKS

The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism

Edited by Kevin Aho, Megan Altman, and Hans Pedersen

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY EXISTENTIALISM

Of the philosophical movements of the twentieth century existentialism is one of the most powerful and thought-provoking. Its engagement with the themes of authenticity, freedom, bad faith, nihilism, and the death of God captured the imagination of millions. However, in the twenty-first century existentialism is grappling with fresh questions and debates that move far beyond traditional existential preoccupations, ranging from the lived experience of the embodied self, intersectionality, and feminist theory to comparative philosophy, digital existentialism, disability studies, and philosophy of race.

The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism explores these topics and more, connecting the ideas and insights of existentialism with some of the most urgent debates and challenges in philosophy today. Eight clear sections explore the following topics:

- methodology and technology
- social and political perspectives
- environment and place
- affectivity and emotion
- death and freedom
- value
- existentialism and Asian philosophy
- aging and disability.

As well as chapters on key figures such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and Beauvoir, the Handbook includes chapters on topics as diverse as Chicana feminism, ecophilosophy and the environment, Latina existentialism, Black nihilism, the Kyoto school and southeast Asian existentialism, and the experiences of aging, disability, and death.

Essential reading for students and researchers in the areas of existentialism and phenomenology, *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism* will also be of interest to those studying ethics, philosophy and gender, philosophy of race, the emotions and philosophical issues in health and illness as well as related disciplines such as Literature, Sociology, and Political Theory.

Kevin Aho is Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Department of Communication and Philosophy at Florida Gulf Coast University, USA.

Megan Altman is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Cornell College, USA.

Hans Pedersen is Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA.

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOKS IN PHILOSOPHY

Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy are state-of-the-art surveys of emerging, newly refreshed, and important fields in philosophy, providing accessible yet thorough assessments of key problems, themes, thinkers, and recent developments in research.

All chapters for each volume are specially commissioned, and written by leading scholars in the field. Carefully edited and organized, *Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy* provide indispensable reference tools for students and researchers seeking a comprehensive overview of new and exciting topics in philosophy. They are also valuable teaching resources as accompaniments to textbooks, anthologies, and research-orientated publications.

Also available:

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF PHILOSOPHY OF RESPONSIBILITY
Edited by Maximilian Kiener

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF WOMEN AND ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY
Edited by Sara Brill and Catherine McKeen

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF PROPERTIES
Edited by A.R.J. Fisher and Anna-Sofia Maurin

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF EVIDENCE
Edited by Maria Lasonen-Aarnio and Clayton Littlejohn

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF PHENOMENOLOGY OF MINDFULNESS
Edited by Susi Ferrarello and Christos Hadjioannou

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY EXISTENTIALISM
Edited by Kevin Aho, Megan Altman, and Hans Pedersen

For more information about this series, please visit: https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Handbooks-in-Philosophy/book-series/RHP

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY EXISTENTIALISM

Edited by Kevin Aho, Megan Altman, and Hans Pedersen

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Cover image: © Getty Images

First published 2024
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2024 selection and editorial matter Kevin Aho, Megan Altman, and Hans Pedersen; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Kevin Aho, Megan Altman, and Hans Pedersen to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-16258-4 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-16263-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-24779-1 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003247791

Typeset in Sabon
by codeMantra

In loving memory of Charles Guignon

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xii
Notes on Contributors xiii

Introduction 1

PART 1
Methodology and Technology **11**

1 Existential Phenomenology and Concepts: Thinking with Heidegger 13
Lawrence J. Hatab

2 Existential Phenomenology and Qualitative Research 24
Anthony Vincent Fernandez

3 Existentialism and Artificial Intelligence in the 21st Century: Thoughts on the Control Problem 36
Hans Pedersen

4 Existentialism and Death in a Digital Age 46
Patrick Stokes

5 Being in Digital Worlds 57
Rebecca A. Longtin

PART 2
Social and Political Perspectives **69**

6 Existence Theory and Contemporary Culture 71
Patrick Baert, Marcus Morgan and Rin Ushiyama

7 Sartre and the Politics of the Far-Right 81
William L. Remley

8 Existentialism and Political Transformation: Sartre and the Ambiguities of Freedom and *Praxis* 93
Laura McMahon

9 Hannah Arendt's Political Existentialism 106
Niall Keane

10 Four Reasons for Rebellion: On the Existentialist Revolt against the Crowd 118
Antony Aumann

11 Self-Creation in Chicana Feminism 129
Lori Gallegos and Emma Velez

PART 3
Environment and Place **143**

12 Place, Dwelling, Existence 145
Janet Donohoe

13 Existentialism and Place: Reflections on the Significance of Place through Goldsworthy, Heidegger, and Nietzsche 154
Gerard Kuperus

14 An Eco-Existentialist Analysis of the Lived Experience of Climate Change and Its Denial 168
Ruth Rebecca Tietjen

15 Latina Existentialism and the Multiplicitous Self: Being-Between-Worlds and Not Being-at-Ease 179
Mariana Ortega

16 Mexican Existentialism 194
Carlos Alberto Sánchez

PART 4
Affectivity and Emotion **203**

17 Faces of Finitude: Death, Loss, and Trauma 205
Robert D. Stolorow

18 Revisiting Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair 211
Emily Hughes

19 Shame 220
Luna Dolezal

20 Beauvoir on Non-Monogamy in Loving Relationships 228
Ellie Anderson

PART 5
Death and Freedom **239**

21 Death Is an Injustice: Dispelling a Common Myth about Existentialism and Mortality 241
Adam Buben

22 We Are Our Possibilities: From Sartre to Beauvoir to Løgstrup 250
Matthew Ratcliffe

23 Existential Choice Revisited 262
Richard Polt

24 Existentialism in Frederick Douglass 274
James B. Haile, III

PART 6
Value **287**

25 Black Nihilism 289
Devon R. Johnson

26 Nothing Matters: Heidegger on Nietzsche on Nihilism 302
Lee Braver

27 Ideal Value and Exemplary Experience 315
Irene McMullin

28 Existential Crises 327
Katherine Withy

29 Existential Normativity and Secular Faith 339
Steven Crowell

30 Kierkegaard on Evading Moral Evasions 352
Gordon Marino

PART 7
Existentialism and Asian Philosophy 357

31 Recuperating from Existential Emptiness Sickness: Nishitani after Sartre 359
Jason M. Wirth

32 Nothingness and Love in Nietzsche and the Kyoto School 368
Rick Anthony Furtak

33 Buddhism and Existentialism: *Saṃvega* as Existential Dread of the Human Condition 376
Stephen Harris

34 Self-Awareness and Nothingness: Wang Yangming, Wang Ji, and Existential Confucianism 387
Eric S. Nelson

PART 8
Approaches to Aging and Disability 403

35 The Phenomenology of Frailty: Existentialism and Old-Age Vulnerability 405
Fredrik Svenaeus

36 Shifting Horizons in Ageing and the Call for a Spiralic Understanding of the Future 416
Kirsten Jacobson

37 Authenticity and Aging 428
John Russon

38 Useless Mouths or Useful Labour? Applying Simone de Beauvoir's Philosophy of Old Age to Gray Labour Force Exploitation 438
Shannon M. Mussett

39 Nostalgia and Well-Being: An Existentialist Analysis 451
Dylan Trigg

40 Possibilities of Which I Am: Disability, Existentialism, and Embodiment 464
Joel Michael Reynolds

Index *475*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism is truly a collaborative effort inspired not just by the figures and core ideas of existentialism but also by the work of the scholars who have contributed to this volume. We are especially thankful to the excellent editorial and production team at Routledge, most notably Senior Publisher Tony Bruce for his enthusiasm in backing this project and to Adam Johnson for his behind-the-scenes administrative skill. Kevin Aho would like to acknowledge the generosity and support of his colleagues at Florida Gulf Coast University, including Clay Motley, Carolyn Culbertson, Landon Frim, Miles Hentrup, Eli Portella, Rebecca Totaro, Jo Muller, and Glenn Whitehouse. He is also indebted to his wife and partner Jane Kayser who has been a steady source of love, encouragement, and intellectual stimulation during this years-long project. Megan Altman would like to express gratitude to her home institution, Cornell College, and her colleagues, Genevieve Migely, Katie Sagal, Ajit Chavan, Jonathon Dreeze, Michael Mosier, Tori Barnes-Brus, and Lynne Ikach for their steady support and encouragement in the making of this book. She is also indebted to students in her Existentialism, Phenomenology, and Continental Philosophy courses for their stimulating conversations and earnest interest in this material. She owes a special debt of gratitude to Colin Anderson for his regular help and generous friendship. Finally, and most of all, she must thank Adam Buben for his immeasurable patience and guidance throughout the process of this project. Hans Pedersen would like to acknowledge his institution, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, for granting him a sabbatical to work on this volume and his colleagues, Mary MacLeod, Eric Rubenstein, Brad Rives, and Leo Yan, for shouldering an extra load while he was off for a semester. He would also like to thank his wife, Faye, and his daughter, Sophia, for their patience and understanding as he worked on this project.

We would also like to thank SUNY Press for their permission to reprint a portion of Mariana Ortega's book, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, Rowman and Littlefield for their permission to reprint a portion of Devon Johnson's book, *Black Nihilism and Antiblack Racism*, and Taylor and Francis for their permission to reprint Robert Stolorow's paper, 'Faces of Finitude: Death, Loss, and Trauma,' originally published in *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* Vol. 42, 2022: 135–40.

CONTRIBUTORS

Kevin Aho is Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Dept. of Communication and Philosophy at Florida Gulf Coast University. He has published widely in the areas of existentialism, existential phenomenology, and existential psychotherapy. His books include *Existentialism: An Introduction* (2nd Edn., Cambridge: Polity, 2020) and *One Beat More: Existentialism and the Gift of Mortality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022). He is also editor of *Existential Medicine: Essays on Health and Illness* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018) and author of the latest 'Existentialism' entry for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Megan Altman is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Cornell College. She is co-editor (with Hans Pedersen) of *Horizons of Authenticity in Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Moral Psychology* (Springer, 2015), and a contributor to numerous edited collections that focus on various existentialist figures. Her work on existentialism and phenomenology has appeared in *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual*, *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, and *Concrescence: The Australasian Journal of Process Thought*. She is also the Book Reviews Editor for *Human Studies*.

Ellie Anderson is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Pomona College. She has published in journals such as *Hypatia* and *Continental Philosophy Review* on existentialism, phenomenology, and feminist theory, including numerous articles on the work of Simone de Beauvoir. She also works in public philosophy as the co-host of *Overthink*.

Antony Aumann is Professor of Philosophy at Northern Michigan University. His research focuses on existentialism and philosophy of art, and his work has appeared in journals such as *Synthese*, the *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, and *Continental Philosophy Review*. Aumann is also the author of *Art and Selfhood: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Lexington Books, 2019) and co-editor of the book series New Kierkegaard Research.

Patrick Baert is Professor of Social Theory at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Selwyn College. Among his publications are *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (with Carreira da Silva) and *The Existentialist Moment; The Rise of Sartre as a Public*

Intellectual, as well as recent articles in *Theory and Society*, *Cultural Sociology*, and the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*.

Lee Braver is Professor of Philosophy at the University of South Florida. He is the author of *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Northwestern, 2007), *Heidegger's Later Writings: A Reader's Guide* (Bloomsbury, 2009), *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (MIT, 2012), and *Heidegger: Thinking of Being* (Polity, 2014), as well as editor of *Division III of Being and Time: Heidegger's Unanswered Question of Being* (MIT, 2015).

Adam Buben is a Universitair Docent 1 in philosophy at Leiden University in the Netherlands. He has authored two books: *Existentialism and the Desirability of Immortality* (Routledge, 2022) and *Meaning and Mortality in Kierkegaard and Heidegger* (Northwestern UP, 2016). He is a series co-editor for Lexington Books' New Kierkegaard Research.

Steven Crowell is Joseph and Joanna Nazro Mullen Professor of Humanities (Emeritus) and Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus) at Rice University. He has written many articles on phenomenology and existentialism, including the recently archived article, 'Existentialism,' in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Crowell is the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (2012) and author of *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning* (2001) and *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (2013).

Luna Dolezal is Associate Professor in Philosophy and Medical Humanities at the University of Exeter. She is the author of *The Body and Shame: Phenomenology, Feminism and the Socially Shaped Body* (Lexington 2015), and co-author of *Covid-19 and Shame: Political Emotions and Public Health in the UK* (Bloomsbury, 2023).

Janet Donohoe is Professor of Philosophy at the University of West Georgia. She is the author of several articles about place and the environment from a hermeneutic and phenomenological perspective. She edited a volume *Place and Phenomenology* (Rowman & Littlefield, Int., 2017), and published *Remembering Places* (Lexington, July 2014). She is currently working on a monograph addressing our relationship(s) to the loss of place and places of loss.

Anthony Vincent Fernandez is Assistant Professor of Applied Philosophy at the Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics and Fellow of the Danish Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Southern Denmark. His research focuses on phenomenology's applications outside of philosophy, especially in health care fields such as psychiatry and nursing.

Rick Anthony Furtak is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Colorado College and past President of the Søren Kierkegaard Society (for calendar years 2013–2014). He has published two books and over twenty essays on Kierkegaard's work, including *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity* (2005) and *Kierkegaard's 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript': A Critical Guide* (2010). He is an Editorial Board Member for *New Kierkegaard Research* (Lexington) and founding Series Co-Editor for *Bloomsbury Studies in Philosophy and Poetry*. His newest book, published by Oxford in 2023, is entitled *Love, Subjectivity, and Truth*.

Lori Gallegos is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Texas State University. She works in the areas of moral psychology, philosophy of emotion, feminist philosophy, and Latin American philosophy. She is the editor of *APA Studies on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*.

James B. Haile is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Rhode Island. Haile has held a joint appointment in the department of English and is currently jointly appointed in the department of Women and Gender Studies. His first book, *The Buck, the Black, and the Existential Hero* was published with Northwestern University Press in 2020. In addition to numerous articles on Kendrick Lamar, Ralph Ellison, and Ta-Nehisi Coates (to name a few), Haile recently completed a collection of black speculative short stories.

Stephen Harris is Assistant Professor (Universitair Docent) at Leiden University's Institute for Philosophy. He specializes in Cross-Cultural and Indian philosophy, with a particular interest in Buddhist ethical texts. He has published articles in a number of academic journals, including *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, *Philosophy East and West*, and *Sophia*.

Lawrence J. Hatab is Louis I. Jaffe Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Old Dominion University. He has published several books and scores of articles on the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger. His latest work is a two-volume study of language inspired by Heidegger's phenomenology: *Dwelling Speech* (Rowman & Littlefield).

Emily Hughes is a postdoctoral research associate in philosophy at the University of York working on the AHRC-funded project 'Grief: A Study of Human Emotional Experience.' She completed her PhD at the University of New South Wales. Her research is situated in the intersection between existential phenomenology and the philosophy of psychiatry and psychology, with a particular focus on phenomenological interpretations of affect and the way in which emotions modify temporal and spatial experience.

Kirsten Jacobson (University of Maine) specializes in Continental Philosophy and the philosophy of art. Her research focuses on using phenomenology to investigate spatiality, dwelling, psychological, and physiological illnesses, and issues of "existential health." She is co-editor of Perception and its Development in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology (University of Toronto Press, 2017).

Devon R. Johnson is Assistant Teaching Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tampa. He is the author of *Nihilism and Antiblack Racism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022). Johnson's focus is on questions of Africana philosophy as they relate to the existential phenomena of pessimism, nihilism, and anti-black racism. His research combines interests in black nihilism with studies of black youth, hip-hop, maturity, and investigations into what it means to develop as an existentially healthy adult in anti-black racist societies.

Niall Keane is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of the West of England, Bristol. He has published widely in the areas of phenomenology and hermeneutics and is co-author of *The Gadamer Dictionary* (Continuum, 2012) and co-editor of *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016). In addition to his publications on Husserl, Heidegger,

Gadamer, Michel Henry, and Hannah Arendt, he is Treasurer of the Irish Phenomenological Circle (IPC) and executive member of the editorial board at the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (JBSP).

Gerard Kuperus is Researcher in Integral Ecology at Radboud University and Professor in Philosophy at the University of San Francisco. He is the author of *Ecopolitics: Redefining the Polis* (SUNY, 2023), co-editor (with Josh Hayes and Brian Treanor) of *Philosophy in the American West* (Routledge, 2020), co-editor (with Marjolein Oele) of *Ontologies of Nature* (Springer, 2017), and author of *Ecopolitical Homelessness* (Routledge, 2016).

Rebecca A. Longtin is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York at New Paltz, where she teaches classes in phenomenology, existentialism, aesthetics, and philosophy of technology. Her research examines how art and technology transform our understanding of the world and ourselves.

Gordon Marino is Professor Emeritus at St. Olaf College. Marino was the curator of the Hong Kierkegaard Library for twenty-seven years. His published works include *The Existentialist Survival Guide* (Harper One), *The Quotable Kierkegaard* (Princeton University Press), and he is co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*. Marino is currently Advanced Research Scholar at the Hong Kierkegaard Library.

Laura McMahon is Associate Professor in the Departments of History & Philosophy and Women's & Gender Studies at Eastern Michigan University. Her research focuses on the phenomenological interpretation of liberatory personal and political transformation. She has published articles in a number of academic journals, including *Sartre Studies International, Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology, The Southern Journal of Philosophy,* and *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. She also has chapters published in edited volumes including *Hannah Arendt and the History of Thought* (Bloomsbury) and *Transforming Politics with Merleau-Ponty* (Rowman & Littlefield).

Irene McMullin is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Essex. She is the author of *Existential Flourishing: A Phenomenology of the Virtues* (Cambridge UP, 2019) and *Time and the Shared World: Heidegger on Social Relations* (Northwestern UP, 2013). She works on phenomenological approaches to personhood, agency, and ethics, along with virtue ethics and Kantian ethics.

Marcus Morgan is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bristol. He is co-editor of the BSA journal *Cultural Sociology*, and a Faculty Fellow at Yale University's *Center for Cultural Sociology*. His research focuses on the cultural factors (narrative, coding, symbolization, myth, ritual, performance, etc.) that shape political life, and he is currently on a Leverhulme Fellowship writing a book on social performance and power.

Shannon M. Mussett is Professor of Philosophy at Utah Valley University. She is author of *Entropic Philosophy: Chaos, Breakdown, and Creation* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), and co-editor of *Beauvoir and the History of Philosophy from Plato to Butler* (SUNY Press, 2012) and *The Contradictions of Freedom: Philosophical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir's 'Les Mandarins'* (SUNY Press, 2006).

Eric S. Nelson is Professor of Philosophy at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He is the author of *Heidegger and Dao: Things, Nothingness, Freedom* (Bloomsbury, 2023), *Daoism and Environmental Philosophy* (Routledge, 2020), *Levinas, Adorno, and the Ethics of the Material Other* (SUNY Press, 2020), and *Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought* (Bloomsbury, 2017). He has published numerous articles, book chapters, and edited volumes on Chinese, German, Jewish, and intercultural philosophy.

Mariana Ortega is Associate Professor of Philosophy; Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies; and Latino/a Studies at Penn State University. She works on Latina/x Feminisms, Phenomenology, Critical Philosophy of Race, and Aesthetics. She is the author of *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (SUNY, 2016). She is co-editor with Andrea Pitts and José Medina of *Theories of the Flesh: Latinx and Latin American Feminisms, Transformation and Resistance* (Oxford University Press 2020); and co-editor with Linda Martín-Alcoff of *Constructing the Nation: A Race and Nationalism Reader* (SUNY, 2009). She is the founder and director of the Latina/x Feminisms Roundtable.

Hans Pedersen is Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His research has mostly focused on issues surrounding agency in the works of existentialist and phenomenological thinkers, but he is currently thinking more about issues in the areas of philosophy of technology and artificial intelligence. He is the author of *Agency, Freedom, and Responsibility in the Early Heidegger* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020) and the co-editor (with Megan Altman) of *Horizons of Authenticity in Phenomenology, Existentialism and Moral Psychology* (Springer, 2014).

Richard Polt is Professor of Philosophy at Xavier University in Cincinnati. His work on Heidegger includes *Heidegger: An Introduction*, *The Emergency of Being*, and *Time and Trauma*. His other books include *The Typewriter Revolution* and *The Task of Philosophy in the Anthropocene* (edited with Jon Wittrock).

Matthew Ratcliffe is Professor of Philosophy at the University of York, UK. His work addresses issues in phenomenology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of psychiatry. He is author of the books *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2008), *Experiences of Depression: A Study in Phenomenology* (Oxford University Press, 2015), *Real Hallucinations: Psychiatric Illness, Intentionality, and the Interpersonal World* (MIT Press, 2017), and *Grief Worlds: A Study of Emotional Experience* (MIT Press, 2022).

William L. Remley is a Lecturer of Philosophy at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, New Jersey. His research interests include contemporary social, cultural, and political thought, especially as it intersects with the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. He has written numerous articles concerning Sartre's social and political thought and is the author of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Anarchist Philosophy* and *The Philosophical Foundation of Alt-Right Politics and Ressentiment*.

Joel Michael Reynolds is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Disability Studies at Georgetown University, Senior Research Scholar in the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Senior Bioethics Advisor to and Fellow of The Hastings Center, Faculty Scholar of The Greenwall

Foundation, and Faculty Fellow of Georgetown's Center for Social Justice Research. They are the founder of *The Journal of Philosophy of Disability* and co-founder of the Oxford Studies in Disability, Ethics, and Society book series. Dr. Reynolds is the author or co-author of over fifty journal articles, book chapters, and scholarly commentaries and author or co-editor of six books, including *The Life Worth Living: Disability, Pain, and Morality* (University of Minnesota Press), *The Disability Bioethics Reader* (Routledge), *The Meaning of Disability* (Oxford University Press), and *Philosophy of Disability: An Introduction* (Polity).

John Russon is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Guelph and the Director of the Toronto Summer Seminar in Philosophy. He is the author of four books of existentialist philosophy: *Human Experience* (SUNY Press), *Bearing Witness to Epiphany*, *Sites of Exposure* (Indiana University Press), and *Adult Life* (SUNY Press).

Carlos Alberto Sánchez is a Professor of Philosophy at San José State University where he has taught since 2006. He is the author, co-author, or editor of a number of books on Mexican philosophy and its history, including *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy* (SUNY Press 2006) and co-editor of *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century: Essential Readings* (Oxford 2017).

Patrick Stokes is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. He works on topics including personal identity, philosophy of death, moral psychology, and Kierkegaard. He is the author of *Kierkegaard's Mirrors* (Palgrave, 2010), *The Naked Self* (Oxford, 2015), and *Digital Souls* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

Robert D. Stolorow, PhD, is a Founding Faculty Member at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles, and at the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity, New York. Absorbed for more than five decades in the project of rethinking psychoanalysis as a form of phenomenological inquiry, he is the author of *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2011) and *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections* (Routledge, 2007), and coauthor of nine other books, including most recently, *The Power of Phenomenology* (Routledge, 2018). He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Harvard in 1970 and his PhD in Philosophy from the University of California at Riverside in 2007.

Fredrik Svenaeus is Professor of Philosophy at the Centre for Studies in Practical Knowledge, Södertörn University, Sweden. His main research areas are philosophy of medicine, bioethics, medical humanities, and philosophical anthropology. He has published widely in these fields, his most recent book is *The Hermeneutics of Medicine and the Phenomenology of Health: Steps Towards a Philosophy of Medical Practice, Second Revised Edition* (2022, Springer).

Ruth Rebecca Tietjen is Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy at Tilburg University. As a political philosopher and passionate existentialist, she engages with contemporary political challenges, including fanaticism, populism, misogyny, and climate change; investigates existential phenomena such as anxiety, loneliness, and melancholia; and explores the edges of the language.

Dylan Trigg is FWF Senior Researcher at the University of Vienna, Department of Philosophy. He is the author of several books including *Topophobia: A Phenomenology of Anxiety* (2017); *The Thing: A Phenomenology of Horror* (2014); and *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (2012). His research interests include phenomenology, embodiment, and aesthetics.

Rin Ushiyama is Lecturer in Sociology at Queen's University Belfast. He is co-Editor of the *BSA Journal of Cultural Sociology*. His research investigates competitive processes surrounding collective memory, commemoration of mass violence, and public representations of the past. His publications have appeared in journals including the *British Journal of Sociology*, *Theory and Society*, and *Memory Studies*. He is the author of *Aum Shinrikyo and Religious Terrorism in Japanese Collective Memory*, published by Oxford University Press.

Emma Velez (she/they) is Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Velez has co-edited special issues on the topic of decolonial feminisms in *Hypatia* and *Critical Philosophy of Race* and is currently working on a book manuscript titled, *Orienting Historias: Unraveling the Coloniality of Gender through Las Tres Madres*.

Jason M. Wirth is professor and chair of philosophy at Seattle University and works and teaches in the areas of Continental Philosophy, Buddhist Philosophy, Aesthetics (especially film, painting, poetry, and the novel), and Environmental Philosophy. His recent books include *Nietzsche and Other Buddhas: Philosophy after Comparative Philosophy* (Indiana 2019), *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis* (SUNY 2017), a monograph on Milan Kundera (*Commiserating with Devastated Things*, Fordham 2015), *Schelling's Practice of the Wild* (SUNY 2015), and the co-edited volume (with Bret Davis and Brian Schroeder), *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* (Indiana 2011). He is the associate editor and book review editor of the journal, *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*. He is currently completing a manuscript on the cinema of Terrence Malick as well as a work of ecological philosophy called *Turtle Island Anarchy*.

Katherine Withy is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University in Washington DC. She is the author of *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* (2022) and *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* (2015). Withy's research centers on Heidegger's conception of us as finite, including our experiences of existential crisis and world collapse.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

INTRODUCTION

'The Present Age' Revisited

In an 1846 literary review entitled 'The Present Age' (*den nuværende tidsalder*), Søren Kierkegaard offers a scathing indictment of modern Western culture. He refers to its shallow conformism, its obsession with meaningless gossip and trivial distractions promulgated by the press, and most of all, the emergent boredom of mass society born out of a lack of self-defining commitment or 'passion' (*lidenskab*), what Kierkegaard calls 'earnestness' (*alvor*), a way of living that faces up to the unsettling freedom, contingency, and finitude of the human condition. According to Kierkegaard (1946: 67),

> This indolent mass understands nothing and does nothing itself, this gallery, is on the look-out for distraction and soon abandons itself to the idea that everything that anyone does is done in order to give (the public) something to gossip about.

Kierkegaard's account of the existing individual and his critical diagnosis of modernity would be echoed and amplified a generation later in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. And, by the early 1920s, it would find its way into the lecture halls of the University of Freiburg, where a young Martin Heidegger would begin influencing a generation of prominent students with his penetrating analyses of human existence (or Dasein), an existence that is always making or fashioning itself against the backdrop of a world that it did not choose but has nonetheless been 'thrown' (*geworfen*) into and that moves irrevocably towards its own death.[1] These figures, among many others in the late nineteenth and early 20th century, set the stage for the explosion of a cultural and political movement in the 1940s and 1950s that came to be known as 'existentialism' with its epicentre in the Fifth arrondissement of Paris, the Latin Quarter, the oldest district of the city around the Sorbonne and its intellectual and artist-filled cafes, bookshops, and cinemas. It was here that Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, along with literary and philosophical compatriots such as Albert Camus, Jean Wahl, Gabriel Marcel, André Gide, Jean Genet, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty addressed and popularized the questions of *la condition humaine*, exploring what it means to be 'engaged' (*engagé*) in the concrete social and political realities of the day, and creating one of the most important movements in the intellectual history of the West.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003247791-1

But where does this movement, rooted in principles of commitment, authenticity, and freedom find itself in our own present age? Many scholars, even those trained in contemporary European philosophy, see it as a largely moribund moment whose heyday in mid-20th-century France has long passed. Even the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), the second largest philosophical organization in North America is sometimes jokingly dismissed as the Society for the Prevention of Existential Philosophy.[2] Jean Baudrillard (2001: 3) sums up the situation when he writes, 'We have thrown off that old existential garb … Who cares about freedom, bad faith, and authenticity today?' It is certainly true that existentialism as a cultural and political force has faded; its influential figures are no longer winning Nobel Prizes in Literature—as Sartre and Camus both did—nor are they appearing in the pages of *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Atlantic*, as they regularly did in the 1950s and 1960s. It is also true that existentialism has generally been marginalized and neglected in mainstream Anglophone philosophy departments, criticized for its jargon and for failing to meet the standards of rigor and clarity characteristic of so-called 'analytic philosophy.' But the aim of the *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism* is to show that the methods and insights of existentialism are not only alive and well but are thriving in disciplines across the humanities and social sciences and are even shaping current debates in the ecological and environmental sciences as well as the allied health professions. But, as we will see, the use of the word 'contemporary' in the title of this volume is more than just a reference to existentialism's current cross-disciplinary relevance, but also to original and timely interpretations of classic issues in existentialism and of its major figures, including reinterpretations of the free-will vs. determinism debate, the meaning of existential rebellion, authenticity, and human flourishing, and even clarifying the meaning of the word 'existentialism' itself.

This latter point is especially important for readers. What, exactly, does the 'ism' in 'existentialism' refer to?[3] It certainly does not refer to a coherent system, ideology, or a unified school of thought, such as we might associate with contemporaneous philosophies of rationalism, empiricism, or idealism. Kierkegaard (1941: 173), for example, is well-known for trashing the German idealist G.W.F. Hegel for his panoptic metaphysical system because 'it makes the subject accidental and transforms existence into something indifferent, something vanishing.' Nietzsche (1997: 9) will make this point even more forcefully, writing: 'I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is lack of integrity.' Indeed, none of the major figures self-identified as existentialists primarily because they didn't want to be associated with promoting an ideology or a system. Even Sartre and Beauvoir, the movement's two most famous popularizers, initially rejected the label. 'My philosophy,' as Sartre writes, 'is a philosophy of existence. I don't even know what Existentialism is.' Beauvoir (1992: 38) confirms the point in her memoirs, arguing that her work was taking shape well 'before I had ever encountered the term Existentialist; my inspiration came from my own experience, not from a system.'[4] And it is here, in Beauvoir's words, that the core idea of existentialism begins to emerge. Existentialism refers to an examination or analysis what it means to be human, and it begins not from a dispassionate, theoretically detached 'view from nowhere,' but from within the situated, flesh-and-blood particulars of one's own lived and embodied experience. Heidegger (2021: 37), writing to one of his students in his early Freiburg years, will describe this methodological starting point in the following way:

> I work by proceeding concretely and factically from out of my "*I am*"—from out of my spiritual and altogether factical background/milieu/life context. I work from out of that which is accessible to me as the lived experience in which I live.

And what comes out of this analysis of one's own existence, of the concrete 'I am,' is a set of overlapping ideas that hold this disjointed and anti-systematic movement together.

First, existentialists reject the notion that there is some pre-given nature, being, or 'essence' that makes us who we are. They promote the idea that 'existence precedes essence,' which means our essence is not given to us in advance.[5] We are burdened with the responsibility to make or create ourselves through our own moment-to-moment choices and actions. *Second*, existentialists forward the idea that, unlike other beings, we are self-conscious and exist *for ourselves*. This means that, given the limitations of our embodiment and the sociopolitical constraints of our time and place, we are ultimately free and responsible for who we are and how we respond to, make sense of, and give meaning to our situation. *Third*, existentialists are critical of the all-too-human tendency to conform to the routinized norms, practices, and institutions of mass society and encourage a way of living that resists social convention so as to be authentic or true to oneself. To this end, authenticity, rebellion, and revolt are common themes in existentialist philosophy and literature. *Fourth*, existentialists generally agree that freedom is the source of all value, but because existence is always being-in-the-world, one's own freedom is invariably bound up with the freedom of others.[6] Freedom, then, is not an isolated or individual affair. It involves an ethical obligation, where we have a moral and political responsibility to help others realize their freedom so that we can realize ours. This means the existentialist, in Sartre's (2001: 306) words, 'wants freedom for freedom's sake and in every particular circumstance. [But] in wanting freedom we discover it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that freedom of others depends on ours.'

Taken together, these existentialist themes have transformed the landscape of contemporary philosophy and social science. They have, for example, challenged foundational assumptions in cognitive science by dismantling the so-called 'Cartesian' account of the mind as a disembodied, atomistic substance and pioneering the now widely accepted notion of embedded, enactive, embodied, and extended (4E) cognition; existentialism's critique of methodological detachment and its focus on the concrete particulars of everyday life provide access to the situated and oppressive nuances of lived-experience, laying the conceptual groundwork for current approaches to feminist theory, aging, disability, and LGBTQIA+ studies, Latinx philosophy, and critical race theory; its dismantling of traditional philosophical dualisms (mind/body, subject/object, realism/idealism, etc.) has also opened up fresh paths for interpreting our relationship to the natural world and has illuminated moral and ontological affinities with Indigenous and East Asian philosophies; and its engagement with the ultimate questions of nihilism, death, and the meaning of life has shed light on ways to cope in the age of anthropogenic climate change, species extinction, artificial intelligence (AI), and global pandemics. And beyond the academy, we see existentialism leaving a lasting mark on the allied health professions. To combat the growing trend of biomedicalizing the human condition, there is, for example, renewed interest in existential approaches to psychotherapy and psychopathology.[7] And there is a deepening recognition of how existentialism can inform our understanding of aging, illness, and disability by demonstrating how bodily dysfunctions are not separate and distinct from the person who lives and experiences them.

Overview of the Volume

The *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism* consists of 40 chapters that are organized into eight sections. The chapters not only offer original interpretations and re-evaluations of classic questions and topics in the canon of existentialism; they also explore different ways existentialism has been decolonialized, diversified, and pluralized, eclipsing its

Eurocentric roots, and expanding its global reach and the landscape of philosophy and the social sciences in general.

Part 1: Methodology and Technology

Chapters in Part 1 address core methodological questions in existentialism and the role existentialism plays in understanding ourselves in an increasingly technological and digitalized world. Lawrence Hatab starts off the volume with a chapter that problematizes existentialism's methodological starting point, that 'existence' precedes 'essence,' by showing how existentialism rejects essentialism but still deploys essential concepts. But, drawing on Heidegger's notion of 'formal indication,' Hatab demonstrates how existentialism's deployment of such concepts can be performed in ways that are non-essentialist. In the next chapter, Anthony Vincent Fernandez explores how existential phenomenology—with its focus on the essential structures of subjectivity—has had an enormous impact on qualitative research methods across a range of different disciplines and how it has fostered an increase in interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration. Hans Pedersen follows by surveying the relationship between existentialism and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), focusing specifically on the so-called 'control problem,' that is, the prospect of human beings losing control over the very AI they created. Patrick Stokes' chapter examines ways we can rethink death in the digital age, the possibility of 'digital immortality,' and the problems that such a possibility poses to the question of human existence. Rebecca Longtin's paper concludes the section by drawing on Heidegger's pioneering critique of modern technology and exploring the existential risk that emerges as we increasingly blur the distinction between life-online and life-offline.

Part 2: Social and Political Perspectives

Chapters in Part 2 focus on the impact of existentialism from social and political perspectives. Patrick Baert, Marcus Morgan, and Rin Ushiyama set the stage by highlighting the interdisciplinary relevance of existentialism, exploring the importance of 'existence theory' in contemporary sociology. The authors highlight core concepts of existence theory, situate these concepts within the context of modern Western culture, and examine the application of these ideas to intersectional issues of race, class, and gender. William Remley follows by drawing on Sartre's later philosophy to help us understand the group psychology of extreme, far-right political thought and action and the role that social media plays in dispersing this ideology. Laura McMahon expands on Sartre's later engagement with politics, examining his idea of 'hot groups' that challenge an oppressive status quo. McMahon draws on the Occupy Wall Street movement to illustrate the internal tensions of these groups and how these tensions relate to the question of individual and communal freedom. Niall Keane follows by exploring how Hannah Arendt's conception of the human as a political being is deeply informed by existential motifs but simultaneously challenges the overly subjectivist tendencies of existentialism. Antony Aumann's chapter draws on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and others to engage different justifications for revolt or rebellion against conformism to the 'public' in the existentialist tradition and the moral, social, and political implications of these acts of resistance. The final chapter of this section, co-authored by Lori Gallegos and Emma Velez, examines the existentialist conception of self-creation from the perspective of Chicana feminisms and how Chicana forms of self-creation serve as an act of resistance against racism and sexism, offering a unique liberatory function for women of colour and for future generations.

Part 3: Environment and Place

Chapters in Part 3 address existentialism's impact on understanding our relationship to place and to the natural world. Janet Donohoe begins by drawing on Albert Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus* to explore a fundamental tension of the human condition between dwelling on this earth and the uncanny feeling of being placeless, that to be human is to neither dwell fully nor to be utterly emplaced; it is, like Sisyphus, to forever occupy a liminal space of the 'in-between.' Gerard Kuperus follows with a paper that reflects on the meaning of place in the work of Heidegger and Nietzsche. Drawing on the landscape sculpture of Andy Goldsworthy as a point of departure, Kuperus examines the relationships between place and temporality, its role in conceptions of authenticity, and the vital part that art plays in our understanding of place and truth as unconcealment. Ruth Rebeca Tietjen's chapter explores how existentialism's recognition of our own finitude opens us up to a deeper understanding of our ecological crisis, of the finitude of the earth itself, and the opportunities and risks of living with the 'climate emotion' of eco-anxiety. Mariana Ortega's paper engages the intersection of existentialism and Latina feminist theory to examine the experience of *mestizaje*, the condition of being of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry as well as mixed intellectual traditions, resulting in 'multiplicitous selves' that live in a state of 'being-between-worlds,' never feeling at home or at ease in the world. And Carlos Alberto Sánchez concludes this section with an introduction to Mexican existentialism (or 'Mexistentialism') and examines how, unlike European existentialism, the struggle of Mexican existence is uniquely situated in a post-colonial, geographically determined place, and historically determined time.

Part 4: Affectivity and Emotion

Chapters in Part 4 explore different ways existentialism has shaped our understanding of affectivity and emotion. Robert Stolorow opens the section with a personal reflection on trauma and the existential interconnections between love, loss, and the experience of finitude. Emily Hughes follows with an analysis of Kierkegaard's conceptions of anxiety and despair and how these conceptions can help psychiatrists and psychologists gain insight into the comorbidity of anxiety and depression in clinical practice. Luna Dolezal draws on Beauvoir and Frantz Fanon to reflect on the affectivity of shame. Dolezal problematizes Sartre's pioneering conception of shame by showing how the experience is invariably bound up in unique power relations and one's relative social position. Ellie Anderson rounds out the essays in this section by drawing on Beauvoir's account of love in non-monogamous relationships. Anderson highlights the nuance and complexity of Beauvoir's account and her controversial critique of monogamy, demonstrating that love is not just a feeling-state but an act of valuing that fosters a reciprocal recognition of the fundamental contingency and ambiguity that lies at the heart of all relationships.

Part 5: Death and Freedom

Chapters in Part 5 offer original interpretations of the givens of death and freedom in the existentialist tradition. Adam Buben begins with a heterodox reading of death, suggesting that the embrace of mortality is not a necessary component of a meaningful life. Turning to the work of Miguel de Unamuno and Camus, Buben forwards the possibility that some existentialists are, in fact, quite hostile to the idea of death, and the desire for personal immortality may be consistent with some core existentialist tenets. Matthew Ratcliffe follows with a

phenomenology of freedom. Integrating the ideas of Sartre, Beauvoir, and Knud Ejler Løgstrup, Ratcliffe shows how one's own possibilities are irrevocably bound up in the possibilities of others and the extent to which freedom necessarily entails a basic form of interpersonal trust. Richard Polt's chapter asks whether, in the 21st century, we have outgrown the notion of existential choice. Distinguishing existential choice from other forms of choice, Polt defends the existentialist position and argues that freedom, truth, and meaning are inseparable. James Haile III concludes this section with a novel interpretation of the writings of Fredrik Douglass, a formerly enslaved man writing about subjectivity and freedom. Haile shows that Douglass is also concerned about the construction of one's origin or, more specifically, how does one write about origins if one has been refused an origin?

Part 6: Value

Chapters in Part 6 challenge the idea that existentialism, rooted as it is in the Nietzschean idea of God's death, is a fundamentally negative and amoral philosophy with little to offer regarding questions of value and normativity. Devon Johnson begins the section with an analysis of Black nihilism, contrasting it with European nihilism and its relation to anti-Black racism. Drawing on Fanon and key figures in contemporary Africana and Black existentialism, Johnson explores possible responses to Black nihilism and the elements that constitute Black pessimism and Black optimism. Lee Braver's and Irene McMullin's chapters continue the engagement with the question of nihilism. Braver's chapter offers a novel reading of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's accounts, highlighting the significance of the polysemy of the question in light of the priority that both thinkers give to language. McMullin's addresses the affective, life-orienting power of values. She challenges Sartre's overly negative conception of value, rooted as it is in structures of dyadic conflict and hostility, by turning to different kinds of positive values, such as beauty, where self and world are experienced as existing in harmony rather than conflict. Katherine Withy engages the significance of 'existential crises' in the existentialist tradition, exploring their different incarnations and identifying their common root in the vulnerability of values and meaning in the wake of the death of God. Withy suggests the flipside of this vulnerability is our ability to choose our values—which we are especially called to do now, given the existential crises threatened by the impending climate catastrophe. Steven Crowell follows by addressing the criticism that existentialism's account of authenticity—as indicative of a valuable or praiseworthy life—is grounded in a pernicious 'decisionism' that is empty of any moral content. Focusing on Heidegger's account, Crowell argues that a proper understanding of the existential norm of authenticity will show that it is invariably bound up in a shared world, which entails that we have a moral responsibility towards those who share this world with us. Gordon Marino concludes the section with a chapter arguing that Kierkegaard can perhaps best be understood as a moral phenomenologist who powerfully illuminates the myriad ways in which we live in states of self-deception, avoiding, and turning away from the possibility of a righteous life.

Part 7: Existentialism and Asian Philosophy

Chapters in Part 7 examine the ontological, affective, and moral affinities between existentialism and East Asian philosophy. Jason Wirth starts things off with a comparative analysis of the problem of nothing in Sartre and Nishitani Keiji. Wirth demonstrates how Nishitani exposes Sartre's reluctance to give up on the idea of the ego and shows how genuine liberation

requires what Nishitani and Zen call the 'Great Death' of the ego-self which can transform our relationship to nothingness and emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Rick Anthony Furtak draws on affinities between Nietzsche's concerns with nihilism and the Kyoto School of Buddhist philosophy. Arguing, like Nietzsche, against pessimistic nihilism, Furtak argues that the Kyoto School illuminates how the background of nothingness that undergirds the existence of all things can be accessed through the affective power of love, where the Godhead of absolute nothingness can be called 'nothingness-*qua*-love.' Stephen Harris turns to the Indian Buddhist tradition to engage the core existentialist themes of finitude and death-anxiety. Drawing on three different presentations of the Buddhist notion of *saṃvega*, the existential dread that can shake us out of complacency, bringing us to a realization and acceptance of the inevitability of death, Harris demonstrates how *saṃvega* is transformative both in terms of our self-understanding and of our capacities for compassion. Eric S. Nelson concludes this section with an analysis of existential Confucianism, notably the 'heart-mind' teachings of Wang Yangming and his student Wang Ji. Nelson shows how these figures—offering a conception of relational individualism, the continuity of awareness and action, and world in the incipient moment—challenge the themes of forlornness and alienation so common to European existentialism.

Part 8: Aging and Disability

Chapters in Part 8 explore the enormous contribution existential philosophy has made to our understanding and acceptance of aging and disability as essential to the human condition. Fredrik Svenaeus starts things off with an essay on the phenomenology of frailty in old age, examining the extent to which the phenomenon has been largely avoided or neglected in existentialism, and arguing for why the experiential study of frailty is so important in making the lives of older persons and their care takers more bearable. Kirsten Jacobson continues the analysis of old age, focusing on the temporal dimension of the future for aging adults and how we can reframe the experience through practices of, what Jacobson calls, 'spiralic' storytelling that serves to model existentially healthy approaches to growing old. John Russon expands on the temporal theme of aging with an examination of the significance of the 'midlife crisis,' discerning what it reveals about the meaning of living our lives and perhaps opening us up to the possibility of authentically embracing our own mortality. Shannon Mussett's chapter draws on Beauvoir's path breaking reflections on aging and the dehumanizing working conditions of capitalism. Mussett argues, contra Beauvoir, that in the late-stage capitalism of the United States the elderly are not simply silenced and rendered useless but continually exploited and brutalized deep into old age. Dylan Trigg follows by presenting an argument that problematizes the idea in empirical psychology that nostalgia is a positive emotion, suggesting that nostalgia, especially in old age, can result in a 'chronophobic' relationship to the present that is not necessarily conducive to health or well-being. Joel Michael Reynolds concludes the section and the volume by drawing on the pioneering work of S. Kay Toombs and her experience of multiple sclerosis. Reynolds explores how disability can disrupt the meaning-structures of existence and highlights the need for a more equitably habitable world, especially when it comes to issues of accessibility.

Conclusion

Because of their enormous philosophical and cultural impact and their contemporary significance, this volume engages extensively with the work of the 'big five' (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Beauvoir, and Sartre). But the critical trends in existentialism today have

been largely decolonialized and informed by a much larger, non-Eurocentric cast, including those from East Asia, the Caribbean, and the Global South. For this reason, the influence of a diverse range of figures such as Frantz Fanon, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Keiji Nishitani among others loom large in this collection. The *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Existentialism* casts a wide net, offering an inclusive and nuanced analysis of what it means to be human and the myriad ways in which existence is mediated, constrained, and often oppressed by the embodied, geographical, social, and political situation we have been thrown into. Thus, in addition to offering a comprehensive overview of current research in existentialism by world-renowned and emerging scholars in the field and providing a valuable resource for students, the *Handbook* demonstrates existentialism's enduring relevance by focusing on concrete life *as it is lived* and engaging with the most pressing social, political, and ethical concerns of the day.

Kevin Aho
Megan Altman
Hans Pedersen (eds.)

Notes

1 The generation of Heidegger's students at Freiburg and later at the University of Marburg include such 20th-century luminaries as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, Alfred Schutz, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Strauss, Günther Anders, Gerhard Krüger, Jacob Klein, and Jan Patočka.
2 We first heard this joking reference at the University of South Florida from our own teacher, the late Charles Guignon, a leading Anglophone existentialist who refused to attend the annual SPEP conference because, in his mind, there was no existentialism being done at the conference.
3 Although there were earlier incarnations of existentialism, in Nietzsche's conception of 'life philosophy' (*Lebensphilosophie*), for instance, in Karl Jaspers' 'philosophy of existence' (*Existenzphilosophie*), and in Heidegger's own 'existential analytic' or 'analytic of Dasein' (*Daseinsanalytik*), the word 'existentialism' was not officially introduced until 1943, when Marcel used it to describe the work of Sartre and Beauvoir.
4 Sartre's line is cited in Beauvoir's memoir (1992: 38). Even though they initially rejected the label, Sartre and Beauvoir later came to embrace the term existentialism and used it for their own ends. 'Our protests were in vain,' writes Beauvoir. 'In the end, we took the epithet that everyone used for us and used it for our own purposes' (Beauvoir 1992: 38).
5 Sartre is often cited for introducing the one-liner, 'existence precedes essence,' in a 1945 public lecture entitled 'Existentialism is a Humanism.' But the idea was introduced much earlier in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), when he writes (1962: 42), 'The 'essence of Dasein lies in its existence.' And Heidegger's account is informed by Kierkegaard's (1941: 170) who, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) writes, 'existence is a process of becoming, and that therefore the notion of the truth as identity of thought and being is a chimera of abstraction […] the knower is an existing individual for whom the truth cannot be such an identity as long as he lives in time.'
6 Of all the major figures, Nietzsche stands alone among the so-called existentialists in rejecting the idea of free-will and moral responsibility because he sees them as being largely bound up with unhealthy Christian values of guilt, sin, and ressentiment.
7 Scholars working in science and technology studies (STS) are deeply indebted to existential and phenomenological critiques of biomedicine, where it is generally agreed that beginning in the mid-1980s, a paradigm shift occurred from *medicalisation* (where, after the Second World War, medicine began to expand its jurisdiction into areas that used to be viewed as moral, social, or legal problems) to *biomedicalisation* (where technoscientific changes to the organization, maintenance and constitution of health care are delivered through overlapping and diffused technological infrastructures and commercial interests) (Clark et al. 2010). This intensifies, what Michel Foucault (1980), called 'biopower,' a force that is transforming vast swaths of the aging, ill, and disabled into so-called 'docile bodies.'

References

Baudrillard, J. (2001) *Impossible exchange*, C. Turner (trans), London: Verso Books.
Beauvoir, S. (1992) *After the war: The force of circumstance, volume 1, 1944–1952*, R. Howard (trans), New York: Paragon House.
Clark, A., Shim, J., Mamo, L., Fosket, J., and Fishman, J. (2010) *Biomedicalization: Technoscience, health, and illness in the U.S.*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*, C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, and K. Soper (trans), New York: Pantheon Books.
Heidegger, M. (2021) *Martin Heidegger and Karl Löwith, correspondence: 1919–1973*, J. Goesser Assaiante and S. Montgomery Ewegen (trans), London: Rowman and Littlefield.
Kierkegaard, S. (1941) *Concluding unscientific postscript*, D. Swenson (trans), Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Kierkegaard, S. (1946) 'The present age,' A. Dru (trans.), in R. Bretall (ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 260–269.
Nietzsche, F. (1997) *Twilight of the idols,* R. Polt (trans), Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Press.
Sartre, J- P. (2001) 'Existentialism is a humanism,' B. Frechtman (trans), in C. Guignon and D. Pereboom (eds), *Existentialism: Basic writings*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Press, 290–308.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

PART 1

Methodology and Technology

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

1

EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

Thinking with Heidegger

Lawrence J. Hatab

The standard meaning of existentialism can be spotlighted by way of the traditional notions of 'essence' and 'existence,' which are a Latinized inheritance of the Greek distinction between 'what' something is, its fundamental nature, and 'that' something is, its mere presence as a perceived entity. With Plato's epistemology, for example, the simple claim 'that is a horse' is actually a complex correlation of the particular creature at hand and the general idea of 'horse' that defines it and governs any particular cases one might experience. For Plato, without the universal form (horseness), any encounter with individual cases would lack what-knowledge to explain immediate that-perceptions—in other words, mere existence is unintelligible without some grounding essence. A core example in this vein would be Aristotle's claim that human beings have an essence as 'rational animals'—their capacity to grasp cognitive grounds, which exceeds the contingencies of physical existence and the capacities of nonhuman animals.

As portrayed in the writings of Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre, existentialism can be understood as reversing traditional essentialism by stressing the priority of existence, because generalized essences pass over and conceal the uniqueness of concrete lived experience, especially where human existence is concerned. Sartre's classic dictum that 'existence precedes essence' captures the reversal: 'what' a human being may be is not preordained or grounded in a divine mind because only the particular decisions of existing individuals bring about those aspects of our lives that mark who we are and how we exist. In general terms, existentialism aims to rescue becoming and time from the principle of 'being' (Nietzsche), individual subjectivity from objective universals (Kierkegaard), and the freedom of consciousness from fixed determinations (Sartre).

Herein lies a problem facing existentialism as a *philosophical* venture. In the tradition, essential knowledge has been associated with 'concepts,' as illustrated by Plato's doctrine of eternal forms, which offer secure knowledge of a changing world by way of stable principles that unify and govern the vicissitudes of experience. Since Plato, such grounding concepts have been variously depicted as definitions, necessary and sufficient conditions, prototypes, Fregean abstractions, superordinate universals, and tracking capacities. Following the Cartesian subject-object divide, the received view in modern philosophy has been that concepts are mental representations that play a causal or mediational role linking the thinking subject

DOI: 10.4324/9781003247791-3

with objective knowledge of reality. Moreover, a common supposition has been that such mental concepts supersede the vagaries of natural language; yet such ideas are communicable between subjects by verbal conveyances that can trigger conceptual understanding. Here is the problem that has not always been adequately addressed: existentialism cannot rest simply with immediate existence if it is to provide a philosophy *of* existence, which is meant to deliver broadened horizons and deepened insights exceeding the course of everyday life. As such, it has to be a conceptual endeavour—after all, the notion of 'existing individual' is a concept, not a biography.

To be sure, human language needs proto-conceptual aspects if it is to provide bearings beyond one-off experiences, some word usage that is expansive, inclusive, and communicable, that can gather experience into forms of repeatable sense, which is evident in ordinary words that track perceptible or practical patterns. Indeed, even a young child understands 'Pick up your toys' without being able to answer the question 'What is a toy?' But that is why traditional essentialism presumed that everyday natural language is not rational enough and cannot rise to the level of secured conceptual knowledge. But with the reversal stroke of existentialism, we must ask: if it is to be philosophical, can there be 'existential concepts' that are not of the essentialist kind, that can offer reflective bearings on pre-reflective experience without distorting or losing altogether the vibrancy of concrete existence? In many cases, existentialism has simply deployed its own concepts without confronting the problem of *how* and *in what way* philosophical concepts can be different from both everyday and essentialist versions. One thinker who tackled this question head-on was Martin Heidegger. Even though he resisted the label of existentialism, his early phenomenology engaged the problem of existential concepts in a profound and penetrating manner with his notion of formal indication (*formale Anzeigen*).

Formally Indicative Concepts

In his masterwork *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not offer any explicit or technical discussion of formal indication, yet the importance of this notion for his phenomenology has been made clear with the release of lecture courses surrounding the publication of *Being and Time* (see Hatab 2016). For Heidegger (1995: 293), all philosophical concepts are formal indications: 'formal' in gathering the focal sense of human experience (Dasein), and 'indications' in pointing to (*an-zeigen*) engaged circumstances and meaning-laden activities that cannot be fully captured in formal concepts. Philosophical concepts themselves arise out of 'factical life experience' (pre-reflective embeddedness in meaningful practices) and then point back to tasks of enactment (Heidegger 1999: 7, 43, 62–63). Formal indications aim to mirror the temporal/historical contingencies of facticity; so, they are not exact and secured but rather 'vacillating, vague, manifold, and fluctuating' (Heidegger 1999: 3). As indications of finite existence, philosophical concepts cannot be construed as a priori, necessary structures or fixed universals that can ground thinking for demonstrative techniques (Heidegger 2004: 62).

Heidegger specifically distinguishes formalization from generalization because formal concepts are not objective classifications by way of collection and division; they gather the meaningfulness (*Bedeutsamkeit*) of factical concerns and *how* such concerns are engaged and enacted (Heidegger 1999: 9, 39–45). A formal indication is a verbal experiment in sense-making that simply *shows* a region of existence, in a manner unlike traditional conceptual criteria that are presumed to govern thinking (such as necessary and sufficient conditions). Rather than giving sense to otherwise unintelligible experience, formal indications gather the *already*

implicit sense of factical life concerns. The 'already' is analogous to the standard epistemological criterion of *a priori* concepts, but not in terms of their supposed 'pure' condition detached from temporal, historical, and situated contexts.

Although factical existence is both the origin and destination of philosophical thinking, Heidegger (1999: 11) concedes that everyday tendencies present obstacles to the emergence of philosophy. Ordinary understanding is given in moods and practical familiarity, and here things are known by acquaintance (*bekannt*) but unrecognized (*unerkannt*) in their 'being' because we *lack* concepts (Heidegger 1997: 159). Everyday familiarity blocks philosophical insights because of its pervasiveness, constancy, and unquestionable character (Heidegger 1997: 160). Philosophy amounts to an illuminating disruption of factical life by inquiring into its underlying meaning, and such questioning does not arise by logical argument but by its own disposition of primal moods such as anxiety and wonder (Heidegger 1998). Such moods present a disorientation that nevertheless prepares the possibility of a reorientation through the formation of concepts that articulate the implicit significance of human existence; yet they retain elements of finitude shown in factical life and the interrogative openness of philosophy's own inception (in *seeking* insight). In summation, philosophical concepts (*Begriffe*) are 'comprehensive notions' (*In-begriffe*) that comprehend (*begreifen*)—at once—both something 'whole' and the very impulse of a 'philosophising existence,' which comes from being 'gripped' (*ergriffen*) by the import of philosophical questions in primal moods (Heidegger 1995: 7–9).

When Heidegger works with formally indicative concepts, he often uses the phrase 'as a whole' (*im Ganzen*) to express the reach of conceptual understanding. Wholeness here is not a fixed boundary of classification; rather, it offers a philosophical version of the minimal function of proto-concepts mentioned earlier: an expansive, communicative, repeatable gathering of meaning. Conceptual wholes are variable in extension and flexible in shifting contexts (Heidegger 1995: 348), and they include human participation in different degrees of possibility and purpose (Heidegger 1995: 353, 363). Most importantly, conceptual wholeness involves the correlational scope of multiple concepts intertwined in their use: 'formally indicative concepts ... can in an exemplary sense *never* be taken *in isolation*' (Heidegger 1995: 298). Such scope is often implicit, but nevertheless articulable as an 'expanse' of relevance and significance (Heidegger 2010: 83–87).[1] The most comprehensive scope is found in Heidegger's threefold conception of 'world,' understood as contexts of meaningfulness. Beginning with the 1919/1920 lecture course, Heidegger (2013: 27) delineates a self-world (*Selbstwelt*), a with-world (*Mitwelt*), and an environing-world (*Umwelt*). The first two are named later in *Being and Time* as *Jemeinigkeit*, or mineness (the personal relevance of existence) and *Mitsein*, the social condition of being-with-others (Heidegger 2010: 41–42). These are not three separate worlds but one world with three dimensions, each one interlaced with the others (Heidegger 1999: 79). The upshot is that Dasein is not a separate interior self; it is extended *out* to its engagement with other Daseins in natural and cultural environments.

Heidegger's early phenomenology insists upon both the necessity and the limitations of philosophical concept formation. For him, 'philosophy is something living only where it comes to language and expresses itself,' and the language of concepts is the 'essence and power' of philosophy (Heidegger 1995: 291). Yet once expressed, concepts are prone to a fundamental misunderstanding. Because of the reflective 'idleness' of philosophy, concepts can be taken as ascertainable entities in themselves (with a life of their own in philosophical sentences), rather than formal gatherings of a 'specifically determined and directed questioning' having to do with a 'transformation of human Dasein' (Heidegger 1995: 292, 294). Heidegger (1995: 293)

clearly states that 'formal characterization does not give us the essence,' because concepts are indications of the *task* of philosophy that can only be exhibited and played out in life. But notice that Heidegger (1999: 43) wants to find in concepts an 'existential' modification of what 'essence' can mean in philosophy, the traditional approach to which can be diagnosed as fixing on the formal features of concepts apart from their indicative character.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2010: 42) pointedly claims that 'the "essence" (*Wesen*) of Dasein lies in its existence.' Rather than simply reversing essence and existence in a Sartrean manner, Heidegger (2010: 117) wants to coordinate them, which highlights how formal concepts are *intrinsically* tied to indications of factical existence. Such concepts are termed 'existentials,' to distinguish them from standard essentialist 'categories' that mark objective conditions of extant entities (Heidegger 2010: 44–45). That is why the question of 'being,' for Heidegger (2010: 6–8), cannot be reduced simply to the nature of 'beings;' and so the ontological 'difference' between being and beings requires 'its own conceptualization' (Heidegger 2010: 6), which will first be articulated in the 'already available' sense of Dasein's everyday life (Heidegger 2010: 8). Indeed, the roots of an existential analysis must be found in the 'existentiell' (factical) comportment of individual Daseins (Heidegger 2010: 13). In this way, Heidegger does fit in with existentialism because philosophy must be pitched from and towards personal existence—but not in a subjectivistic or individualistic manner because Da-sein is the site for the disclosure of *being* and is always situated in an environing *world*. Moreover, Dasein is essentially finite, which is indicated in the very phenomenology of philosophy: its *questioning* spirit (Heidegger 2010: 7) shows that 'being' human cannot be reduced to any actual or fixed condition (whether subjective or objective); it is rather a temporal/historical *open* tendency 'to be' (Heidegger 2010: 42), which must *matter* to Dasein as concern for its own being and possibilities (Heidegger 2010: 12).

Because phenomenology, for Heidegger, draws from what is already meaningful in factical life and bestowed by historical influences, philosophy cannot assume some pure presuppositionless starting point; it involves a circular 'interpretation' of what is in play beforehand in a pre-reflective manner. And such indicative reflection cannot be reduced to determinative 'arguments' that dictate thought with logical schematics. Yet such a hermeneutics of facticity is not a 'vicious' circle because it can have disclosive force if it *lets* phenomena 'show themselves' in an appropriate manner (Heidegger 2010: 7, 28–31)—which unfolds as a kind of self-manifestation rather than demonstrative 'proof.' At one point in *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2010: 314–15) explicitly concedes the circularity of his own hermeneutic phenomenology, but he alludes to its philosophical *efficacy* in a reader-response manner: The interpretation of Dasein's being has the character of a formal 'sketching out' (*Entwerfens*) that will 'let that which is to be interpreted *only now itself come into words*.' Dasein is the being (*Seiende*) that is to be interpreted, and when exposed to the words of the interpretation, it 'can decide from out of itself *(von sich aus)* whether as this being *(Seiende)* it has the constitution of being *(Seinsverfassung)* that has been disclosed in the sketch in a formal-indicative *(formalanzeigend)* manner' (Heidegger 2010: 315; translation modified).

In the end, formal indication in philosophy cannot simply be a matter of intellectual comprehension; its indicative character gathers a meaning that *initiates* a launch into concrete enactment guided by its formal sense (Heidegger 2001: 27). As opposed to Husserl's emphasis on intentional consciousness (consciousness-*of* essences), concepts indicate a 'behavioural engagement' (*Verhalten*), namely comportment-*towards* situated contexts, their import, and *how* they are enacted (Heidegger 2001: 40–41). The proper comportment towards a factical situation is not simply a matter of cognition but 'savouring' (*auskosten*) its significance (Heidegger 2001: 26).

The Concept of Care

To flesh out my analysis, I will illustrate how formal indication works by taking up the central concept of care (*Sorge*) in *Being and Time*. To begin, there are significant ways in which Heidegger's use of concepts differs from typical philosophical rubrics. There *is* an 'argument' in *Being and Time*, but it has its own factical atmosphere that requires existential 'participation' in its course (Heidegger 2013: 192), rather than a detached display of premises and inferential procedures. Most important is what I call a 'presumption of immanence,' which means that philosophy must draw *from* immediate conditions of existence, which calls for 'absolute sympathy' towards pre-philosophical life (Heidegger 2000: 92)—rather than a remedial treatment of flaws or obstacles that need correction (common sense, emotions, practical activity, ordinary affairs) or standard philosophical questions that dictate the terms of investigation in an abstract manner (What is knowledge?). The 'creative' aspect of concept formation will involve experiments with language that can elicit philosophical insight (drawn from a reader's own factical experience), as in Heidegger's selection of care in response to the question of being, of what it means 'to be,' a selection that does not load the investigation up front with standard cognitive assumptions. Accordingly, *initiating* philosophical discourse in factical life is a *dispositional* orientation; yet, if one accepts that orientation, the conceptual course of analysis can be *confirmed* in a way that is not simply dispositional.

The concept of care is the pivotal element in both the structure and content of *Being and Time*—pivotal in the sense of its central importance and the way in which Heidegger's text 'pivots' around this concept. Care shows how the initial phenomenological analysis of Dasein's being-in-the-world can be grasped and organized as a 'whole,' but the concept also points ahead to the broader question of the meaning of being, specifically with respect to temporality and finitude. An analysis of care, therefore, provides a telling focus for appreciating the rigor and power of Heidegger's conceptual project.

Heidegger's (2010: 60) general strategy is to undermine modern philosophy's division of self and world into subject and object, a reflective consciousness over against an external world. Dasein in its everyday existence is for the most part immersed in non-reflective practices, involvements, and social relationships, which are not perceived as a transaction between mental representations and exterior conditions. Dasein is 'in' its world in the manner of inhabitation, or 'dwelling' (Heidegger 2010: 54). Dasein's being is the *meaning* of a world that *matters* to Dasein in the range and import of its possibilities, tasks, and future projects, which are launched by present concerns enabled by an inherited past. So, Dasein's being is not that of a discrete entity (understood objectively or subjectively); it is rather a temporal movement *extended out* amidst its natural, cultural, and social environments.

Dasein's factical world of everyday engagements takes priority over the reflective and theoretical projects of traditional philosophy. That priority is shown in the analysis of *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit*, respectively (in loose terms) practical engagement and objectified presence (Heidegger 2010: 66–76). *Zuhanden* dealings are a 'blended' condition of self and circumstance, where something like riding a bike has an automatic efficacy and flow. The analysis of such engagements is specifically correlated with a coming critique of a subject-object ontology (Heidegger 2010: 66, 88), to show how and why that ontology is a second-order *derivation* from *Zuhandenheit*—when an interruption or breakdown in a practice (a flat tire, for instance) prompts 'objective' attention to things and properties, along with 'subjective' awareness of an interest now put on hold. A disturbed reaction to an interruption shows two key elements of Heidegger's phenomenology: (1) the intrinsic meaningfulness of the practice that was implicit *in* the blended engagement, not a value transported 'to' the practice 'from' an

intention of reflective consciousness; and (2) the temporal structure of an 'aim' set in motion 'earlier' that is 'now' blocked. We also find here something basic to Heideggerian ontology: a 'positive' disclosure of meaning stems from a 'negative' disruption (Heidegger 2010: 74–75)—which embodies the ever-occurring contingency of existence, its being 'otherwise' to human expectations and interests (Heidegger 1999: 76–77).

Care and Wholeness

Section 39 of *Being and Time* begins by reiterating the 'manifold' elements of Dasein's everyday being-in-the-world and introduces the task of gathering these elements as a 'whole.' This is where the concept of care allows a unified articulation of Dasein's existence. Often Heidegger's use of formal indication draws not only from factical existence in general terms, but also from what can be called factical language, that which precedes the formal, technical, and systematic language of rational disciplines. Heidegger will frequently prepare the deployment of concepts by citing pre-technical meanings, not to repair these meanings in the direction of rational precision but to show the *indicative* relation between philosophical concepts and familiar usage. However, the 'wholeness' of concepts does not simply reiterate customary usage; rather, it articulates certain meanings that are only *implicit* in factical language (Heidegger 2009: 15–19). This is particularly true regarding care (*Sorge*) in relation to the verbs *sorgen* and *besorgen*. In German, *Sorge* relates to several meanings: anxious worry (as in the cares of life), need, carefulness, caring for, taking care of, and caring about. Heidegger (2010: 191–200) wants to draw out all these meanings in the concept of care. Indeed, in recognizing a basic 'double meaning' of care (anxiousness and concerned devotedness), Heidegger (2010: 199) insists that it is a *single* phenomenon with a twofold structure. This is how care can serve as an organizing pivot in the text, pointing back to the earlier analysis of being-in-the-world and forward to anxiety, being-towards-death, and the possibility of authenticity.

As a unifying whole, care is not simply a nominal term, nor is it simply a 'collection' of different elements, but rather a concept that looks back to and explicates the existential force and reach implicit in all elements of being-in-the-world previously analysed (Heidegger 2010: 181). Care will provide a way to 'hold together' (*zusammenfassen*) the different structures of Dasein's being that are *already* a unitary phenomenon in the double meaning of care, which now only needs to be explicated (Heidegger 2010: 182). The 'positive' strand of care indicates the full range of Dasein's dwelling in the world and is specifically called the ontological basis for the two basic forms of Dasein's dwelling: concernful dealings with one's environment (*Besorgen*) and other Daseins (*Fürsorge*) (Heidegger 2010: 192–93). Care in its 'negative' strand points towards the coming analysis that will push Dasein's being to its limit and prepare the question of fundamental ontology (Heidegger 2010: 183), where the meaning of being is understood as radically finite and temporal.

The unity of care as Dasein's 'wholeness' is opened up by the basic mood of anxiety (Heidegger 2010: 182). Mood had already been established as essential to Dasein's disclosiveness (Heidegger 2010: §§29–30), and anxiety serves as a mood that reaches farther than any particular mood, especially in its link with death. Being 'thrown' into the world at birth and towards the finale of death are primal facts that mark the 'whole story' of life. All living things die, but Dasein can be aware of the meaning of death *in* life, that all meaning will be lost in death, and such awareness can shake a sense of meaning in the face of a pending 'nothing,' or meaninglessness (Heidegger 2010: 187), and thus a condition of non-being, since being is identified with meaning (Heidegger 2010: 188–89). What rounds out Dasein as a 'whole,' therefore, is not some completed state or generalized content, but the existential disclosure

that *all* meaning, Dasein's being as a whole, is permeated by a looming absence of meaning. Yet Heidegger's analysis does not portend nihilism or pessimism, nor does it dwell on an experience of despair that marks some versions of existentialism. For Heidegger, the recession of meaning in anxiety *retains* a structural relation to conditions of meaning. That is why it is crucial to stress the *unity* of care in its twofold structure of positive and negative strands.

Dasein's attachment to life now gets clarified as *fleeing* from the primal force of anxiety (Heidegger 2010: 186–89). Yet such absorption in the world is not a deficiency that anxiety is meant to diagnose, but rather a positive, disclosive condition of meaning that now can be *understood* as a movement propelled by a lack. In other words, we care about the world *because* we are radically finite: all instances of caring-about, caring-for, and being-careful are what they are by virtue of being linked with a looming negativity. The care structure, therefore, is a 'double movement' of meaning in the midst of its absence. In this way, being-toward-death is constitutive of the 'meaning of life,' just as a brush with death can sharply open up the value of things in ways quite different from ordinary comportments. Death, therefore, 'illuminates the essence of life' (Heidegger 1995: 387). What is ingenious about Heidegger's analysis is that an absence of meaning is not the opposite of meaning but a possibility that is intrinsic to the very unfolding of meaning. A standard feature in the traditional model of concepts is that they should have clear and distinct boundaries that cannot be infected by otherness or contrariety, as in the classic principle of noncontradiction. But for Heidegger, a *phenomenology* of the concepts 'being' and 'non-being' shows their *reciprocity* in a non-contradictory manner, which stems from a visceral affective disposition, not mere logic, not even a dialectical logic. A concept works by gathering comprehension, and even if it radiates to multiple, even contrary uses, it persists *as* that radiating term. All told, the concept of care is a formal indication that is *extended* into complex correlations and counter-relations, which exceeds typical requirements that concepts be uniform, stable, and clearly marked off from each other.

Care and Authenticity

I conclude this account of care by noting a problem in understanding Heidegger's phenomenology. Dasein's world-disclosive environment is early on characterized as 'fallen' and 'inauthentic' (Heidegger 2010: 129, 175), which is easily misconstrued if Heidegger's text is not read carefully. Fallenness and inauthenticity do not indicate any deficient condition of Dasein that must be transformed or superseded; it is simply the original, everyday immersion in world concerns, which Heidegger (2010: 129, 179) calls a primordial and essential condition of Dasein's being. Yet inauthenticity harbours a concealment of Dasein's radical finitude by way of immersion in the realm of beings and a confinement to common, familiar forms of understanding. Heidegger's descriptions of inauthenticity at times do seem akin to a Kierkegaardian or Nietzschean assessment of ordinary life as a diminishment of existence that needs to be overcome, wherein authenticity would involve a counter-social individuality and creative escape from conformity. To be sure, in broaching being-toward-death, Heidegger (2010: 188) does speak of its radical individuation, a *solus ipse*. Yet such individuation is *confined* to death as radically *mine*, as shareable with no one. In authentic existence, the three-fold concept of world is not lost or renounced because being-toward-death brings Dasein right back to its occasions of concernful *Zuhandenheit* and pushes it towards 'caring relations with others' (*fürsorgende Mitsein mit der Anderen*) and its engagement with factical possibilities (Heidegger 2010: 298–99).

In the context of this analysis, authentic existence can be understood in two registers: (1) In anxiety Dasein understands its authentic 'self' not as some particular being but as the

finite throw of care and being-toward-death. Authentic care amounts to understanding Dasein's comportment towards beings *as* finite, as possibility rather than full actuality, wherein Dasein 'exists finitely' (Heidegger 2010: 330). (2) In a more personal sense, authenticity can allow individual Daseins to discover their own particular and richer modes of care, because inauthentic commonalities and conformities (*das Man*) have been disrupted by anxiety, which opens room for new possibilities of personal discovery. In general terms, authenticity is a 'modification' of inauthenticity (Heidegger 2010: 130), in that the disruption of meaning permits a more sharpened, care-ful attention to meanings that can be care-lessly weakened by familiarity and comfort. So being-toward-death can bring fresh meaning *to* life by overcoming stale conditions of everydayness.

Despite Heidegger's occasional warnings against taking inauthenticity as a deficiency, a muting of normal involvements is one of the shortcomings of *Being and Time*, in my view. The 'de-worlding' character of anxiety that allows a turn to 'fundamental ontology'—the path towards an original dimension of 'being as such'—is, I submit, what *alone* drives the rhetoric of 'inauthentic fallenness,' as something that 'falls short' of being itself by concealing its full meaning (the being-nothing correlation). But it seems to me that so-called fallen inauthenticity could have been effectively rendered in a more neutral manner (as we will see), without any implication of deficiency. As it stands, however, Heidegger's chosen form of demarcation deflects too much from factical being-in-the-world, which can conceal or diminish many philosophical implications intrinsic to the early stages of Heidegger's analysis, something that my notion of 'proto-phenomenology' has tried to emphasize and explore.

Proto-Phenomenology

In my work I have fashioned a new vocabulary and focus drawn from Division I of *Being and Time*—emphasizing language and extending to questions of child development and the difference between speech and writing (Hatab 2017, 2020). The notion of proto-phenomenology is meant to capture Heidegger's distinctive analysis of Dasein's *first* world of factical existence, that is, the sense of the lived world *before* philosophical reflection takes hold with its typical agenda of rational ordination. My approach gives more sustained attention to everyday phenomena and their implications, especially regarding Heidegger's treatment of *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit*, which too often is framed in terms of practical and theoretical 'entities' (tool use and disengaged objects). What is underplayed is the dynamic process of *how* engaged practices are experienced and modified by reflective objectification. Heidegger offers the phrase 'concernful absorption' (*besorgenden Aufgehen*)—here is a more neutral term than fallen inauthenticity—to name the blended 'field' character of non-reflective performance, which is then altered by focused attention to practical environments and purposes by force of some disturbance. That dynamic is not restricted to instrumental usage because concernful absorption is reiterated in a wide range of Dasein's comportments: in the general meaning of being-in-the-world, in *Mitsein*, circumspection, care, and temporality.[2] *Zuhandenheit* pertains to the whole milieu of concernful dealings and environments, including disclosive speech.[3] And *Vorhandenheit* applies to a broad scope of 'objective' references, from everyday things and their aspects to abstract concepts and scientific constructs.[4] To capture such a far-reaching dynamic, I employ the indicative concepts of immersion, contravention, and exposition, which can apply to any mode of absorbed dealings, any kind of disruption or privation, and any kind of 'reified' reference—including 'subjective' phenomena such as 'intentions.' Along with its connotation of articulation, ex-position captures the

'positioning apart' of self and world that generates the subject-object divide.[5] What I offer, then, is a conceptual revision of the first stages of Heidegger's phenomenology in *Being and Time* (see Hatab 2018). My account emphasizes the positive disclosive character of everyday being-in-the-world, to counter the distraction that can follow from designating it as 'fallen' and 'inauthentic.'

I add to this analysis the *bi-directionality* of immersion and exposition. A contravened practice prompts expositional attention to descriptive, motivational, and evaluative factors that are implicit in the activity but not consciously articulated or overtly operational in the facility of immersion. Learning a new practice, however, is a contravention of familiarity, and so it does involve expositional attention to descriptions, intentions, and inferences (for instance, learning a foreign language). But the learning process itself relies on an immersive background of comprehensions and capacities that enable the process (reading skills, for instance) and that are not foregrounded with expositional attention. Moreover, when a learned practice has been mastered, it settles into the immersion of second-nature facility that no longer requires reflective guidance. Immersion and exposition can also coexist in a practice, with relative degrees of emphasis for each depending on circumstances. In addition, immersion applies to a wide array of non-reflective dispositions, settled habits, and comprehensions that need not be overt or brought to awareness. So, immersion can be *attentive* in a current practice and non-attentively *recessed* in a background of readiness. Recessed immersion is still 'in being' as *potentiality* and when *enabling* attentive immersion. It should be evident that even authentic existence cannot be understood apart from immersive experiences—in everything from ordinary habits to refined skills that do not require reflective governance.

Exposition is no less real than immersion in its disclosive function; indeed, immersion can involve deficiencies that exposition can repair. One can be immersed in ways of living and thinking in a manner that can be an impediment to improved or advanced understanding: in other words, unexamined biases or habits that block new possibilities at all levels of life; also superficial or simplistic beliefs that conceal the richness and complexity of natural or cultural phenomena. Contravening disturbance to immersed conditions can prompt expositional interrogation and examination, which can open new horizons (and the possibilities of authentic existence). Of course, such problematic elements of immersion have driven the traditional philosophical preference for reflective thinking—which, however, generated the epistemological and ontological constructs that phenomenology puts in question. The virtue of reflective exposition in opening up what immersion can conceal does not alter the phenomenological priority of factical immersion that philosophy has concealed.

In my research, the phenomenological priority of immersion is fortified by tracing adult life back to childhood, where we first get acclimated to factical horizons in absorbed conditions of joint attention, imitation, and habituation—an acclimation that from the start is a field-dynamic of embodied enactment in social, practical, and material environments. That preparatory period is not left behind in a linear progression because early developments are sustained in a nested, assimilating manner through to maturation (Hatab 2020: Chs. 2–3).

Drawing from Heidegger's threefold conception of world, I work with the notion of dwelling in a personal-social-environing-world, and I bring language into this account by advancing a non-representational concept of 'dwelling in speech.' With the priority of face-to-face conversations about concernful dealings in the world, factical speech is disclosive in an immersed, presentational manner, not a 'signification' relation between words and the world. Moreover, factical talking and listening is presumed to be a 'co-minded' venture, not a transfer

of representational beliefs joined to verbal signs that are externally delivered and internally processed by an interlocutor. Indeed, early language acquisition is thoroughly embedded in performative, embodied, interactive, and social *environments*—and so *extended out* into the world of engagements, not a processing or computation of mental states.[6] When children first come to speak, words are not signs or representations or conveyors of semantic meaning but rather *ways* of *being-in-the-world*. As words first come forth, caregivers react with excitement and encouragement, and there the child senses the meaningful camaraderie of dwelling in speech. Moreover, as children develop and mature, disclosive occasions in an immersive speech-world blend into memory and shape meaningful experiences that need not be articulated after habituation. My study argues that non-vocalized human 'experience' and 'thought' are the result of language-informed effects becoming *recessed* into the background and *internalized* as silent traces of speech (Hatab 2020: Ch. 3). Here developmental questions help explain how we *come to* experience a meaningful world and how that experience is informed by language from the start.

Another feature of my research involves the comparison of orality and literacy, and how philosophical constructs and methods have been made possible by the technology of writing, which is derived from a more original speech-world. The expositional picture of language in philosophy and linguistics—words, sentences, propositions, signification, grammatical structure, as well as representational relations between 'concepts' and 'objects'—stems from the temporal, aural flow of speech being *converted* into stable visible objects, and their subsequent *perceived* relations and permutations being *isolated* from factical settings and studied in a new virtual space of their own (Hatab 2020: Chs. 4–5). All of this is surely disclosive in its own way—indeed it has shaped the Western intellectual tradition—but it is subsequent to, and cannot be foundational for, the primal condition of dwelling in speech.

All things considered, concepts should not be restricted to their 'sentential' life in written texts that by nature are detached from *sentient* life, which includes what moves people to write in the first place. Concepts, then, are not 'in mind' but *in use*: the 'taskscapes' of conversing, reading, writing, and even inquiring into the meaning of a concept—all in particular occasions and specific contexts of use. As such, concepts are not fixed or settled constructs but rather focal *possibilities* for speaking and thinking *at work* in the world, which from everyday talk to the most refined scientific work is nothing settled or complete or beyond question. The *openness* of a concept 'at work,' its *becoming*, is its very *being*.

Proto-phenomenology is itself an expositional endeavour that yet attends to the priority of pre-reflective existence. The concepts of immersion, contravention, and exposition are not constructs that bring intelligibility to a confused world. Rather, as indications they *show* meaningful processes that are evident in life, and that 'build' expositional possibilities out of a factical base. And the role of contravention in disclosure shows a finitude that cannot be repaired by full actuality. Moreover, the imprecise complexity of natural language shows that concepts—from the everyday to the philosophical—should not be measured by 'frames' of abstract purity. Rather, like headwords in a dictionary reference, they radiate to an ambiguous array of meanings and fluctuations.

Finally, following Heidegger's hermeneutical pluralism, a concept-word can track different as-indicators that span a wide range of uses: for instance, 'tree' taken *as* a physical object, a living thing, a resource, an obstacle for a road builder, a shady spot, a home for birds, a thing of beauty, the cherry tree in our yard—all easily tracked by a single word with different meanings, each fully real in their uses and reducible to none, except perhaps phenomenologically as 'something' rather than 'nothing.'

Notes

1 Citations of *Being and Time* will note the original German pagination, which all translations deploy in the margins.
2 See Heidegger (2010: 54–57, 125, 129, 211, 223, 225, 354).
3 See Heidegger (2010: 68, 70, 82, 161, 224).
4 See especially Heidegger (2010: § 69b).
5 Such a positioning-apart can be drawn from Heidegger's (2000: 84–85) early use of *hinstellen* and *herausstellen*.
6 In current cognitive science, a deliberate departure from interiority is found in so-called 4E cognition: knowledge that is extended, embedded, embodied, and enacted. A phenomenology of immersion—where one's attention is more *there* in an environment than launched from an internal 'mental' domain—provides experiential evidence for an extra-subjective, extra-cranial mode of comprehension.

References

Hatab, L. (2020) *Proto-phenomenology, language acquisition, orality, and literacy: Dwelling speech II*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hatab, L. (2018) 'Redescribing the *zuhamden-vorhanden* relation,' *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual*, 8: 21–35.

Hatab, L. (2017) *Proto-phenomenology and the nature of language: Dwelling speech I*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hatab, L. (2016) 'The point of language in Heidegger's thinking: A call for the revival of formal indication,' *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual*, 6: 1–22.

Heidegger, M. (2013) *Basic problems of phenomenology*, S. Campbell (trans), New York: Bloomsbury.

Heidegger, M. (2010) *Being and time*, revised ed. J. Stambaugh (trans), Albany: SUNY Press.

Heidegger, M. (2009) *Basic concepts of Aristotelian philosophy*, R. D. Metcalf and M. B. Tanzer (trans), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2004) *The phenomenology of religious life*, M. Fritsch (trans), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2001) *Phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle*, R. Rojcewicz (trans), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2000) *Towards the definition of philosophy*, T. Sadler (trans), New York: Athlone Press.

Heidegger, M. (1999) *Ontology: The hermeneutics of facticity*, J. van Buren (trans), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1998) 'What is metaphysics?' in W. McNeill (ed.), *Pathmarks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 83–96.

Heidegger, M. (1997) *Kant and the problem of metaphysics*, R. Taft (trans), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1995) *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: World, finitude, solitude*, W. McNeill and N. Walker (trans), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

2

EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Anthony Vincent Fernandez

Despite being founded as a philosophical research programme, phenomenology had an almost immediate influence on a range of empirical disciplines. Today, we find phenomenological subfields across the social, health, educational, and psychological sciences, as well as in art and design. Philosophers are familiar with at least a few of these fields, such as phenomenological psychopathology, phenomenological sociology, and phenomenological applications in the cognitive sciences. But phenomenology has also had a significant influence on the development of qualitative research methods in psychology, nursing, anthropology, education, and sport science, among several other disciplines. Owing in part to debates between philosophers and qualitative methodologists over the proper interpretation and application of Husserl's epoché, many philosophers are now familiar with Husserl's influence on qualitative research (Giorgi 2010, 2011; Smith 2010, 2018; van Manen 2018, 2019; Morley 2019; Zahavi 2019, 2021; Zahavi and Martiny 2019; Barber 2021). This chapter, by contrast, considers how existential phenomenology has influenced qualitative research.

While there may not be an agreed upon definition of existential phenomenology, I use the term to refer to phenomenological approaches explicitly concerned with human existence, or the human condition—including the work of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, among others. Of these, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty have arguably had the most significant influence on qualitative research methods. Moreover, while qualitative studies often explore broadly existential themes—such as freedom, responsibility, authenticity, or death—I here focus on a more specific way that existential phenomenology has informed qualitative research. Some qualitative researchers draw directly on what the existential phenomenologists call 'existential structures' or, simply, 'existentials.' There's no exhaustive list of existentials—but they include structures such as selfhood, temporality, spatiality, affectivity, and embodiment, among other features of experience and subjectivity. Phenomenologists typically consider these structures to be essential or universal features of human existence. Heidegger (1962: 38), when introducing his 'analytic of Dasein,' or analysis of human existence, explains that he aims to exhibit 'not just any accidental structures, but essential ones which, in every kind of Being that factical Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its Being.' Put simply, if these structures constitute the essential features of human existence, they should be constitutive of any experience that we might consider. Every experience includes some sense of selfhood, some affective attunement,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003247791-4

some temporal flow, and so on. Whereas the existential phenomenologists articulated these structures themselves, qualitative researchers have found them to be useful guides for studying a range of human experiences.

To explain how existentials are used in qualitative research, the chapter proceeds in three sections. First, it briefly introduces the basics of qualitative research. Second, it motivates why philosophical phenomenologists should be interested in qualitative studies, providing examples of how such studies are already influencing philosophy. And, third, it shows how qualitative researchers have drawn on phenomenological accounts of existentials to inform their approaches to both data analysis and study design.

What Is Qualitative Research?

It's difficult to determine a precise moment that qualitative research methods emerged. One might argue that it goes back over two centuries, originating with the field of hermeneutics, understood as a method of textual interpretation. However, qualitative research methods—at least when understood as involving the generation of new empirical data—were developed over the course of the 20th century, initially in the fields of anthropology and sociology. From the 1970s, many of these methods were formalized, and qualitative research spread well beyond the social sciences (Brinkmann, Jacobsen and Kristiansen 2014). Today, any discipline concerned broadly with human experience or culture is likely to employ qualitative methods to study beliefs, concepts, social norms, or cultural practices, among many other aspects of human life.

In contrast with quantitative approaches, qualitative research involves the generation and analysis of non-numerical data. Often, this data takes the form of interview transcripts, observational notes, open-ended surveys, or other texts, such as diary entries. Some qualitative approaches even analyse non-textual objects, such as human artefacts, images, or artworks. The data can be analysed in various ways, although most approaches involve some kind of coding, where words or phrases are labelled so that they can be grouped or organized into common categories. Moreover, an analysis can be conducted inductively or deductively. An inductive approach is bottom-up: Data are analysed on their own terms, without bringing in outside concepts or theories to facilitate interpretation. A deductive approach is, by contrast, top-down: Data are analysed with outside concepts or theories, which frame or guide the researcher's interpretation.

In some disciplines, such as psychology and nursing, approaches to data generation and analysis tend to be quite systematic—in some cases, even formulaic. Methodological textbooks provide explicit guidance on which kinds of questions should be asked, how an interview should be conducted, and how transcripts should be analysed. In other disciplines, such as anthropology, methodologies tend not to be so formalized. Ethnographic methods, for instance, often involve long- or short-term fieldwork, where the researcher both participates in and observes a range of activities and practices. Interviews might be brief and informal. And the interview transcripts and observational notes are often analysed in a more holistic way.

It's difficult—if not impossible—to provide an overall characterization that accurately represents all approaches to qualitative research. Methods can differ considerably across disciplines, and even within disciplines. This diversity is also reflected in how qualitative researchers take up and apply insights from existential phenomenology. There's not one 'existential' approach to qualitative research. Rather, in most cases, insights from existential phenomenology are incorporated into the broader methodological norms of the respective discipline, adding a new layer of depth, nuance, and sensitivity to existing approaches.

Why Should Philosophers be Interested in Qualitative Research?

On the face of it, the aims of philosophers and the aims of qualitative researchers move in opposite directions. Whereas philosophers have traditionally been concerned with essential and universal truths, qualitative researchers tend to be concerned with contingent and particular aspects of human life. For example, when a philosopher asks questions such as 'What is beauty?,' a good philosophical answer is one that is true in all times and all places. If their account turned out to be true only of some cases of beauty, then it wouldn't be a good philosophical answer. By contrast, when an anthropologist studies beauty, they're more likely to ask, 'What does this particular cultural group find beautiful?' or 'How does this community conceptualize beauty?' They're interested not in some universal conception of beauty, but in how beauty is experienced and understood within specific cultural contexts.

These two kinds of inquiry may move in opposite directions. But this doesn't mean that they're necessarily in conflict. In some cases, they can be mutually informative. An anthropologist might rely on a philosophical concept of beauty to determine whether the experiences someone describes should be classified as experiences of beauty in the first place or might be better classified as some other kind of aesthetic experience. And a philosopher might test their concept of beauty by considering whether it adequately captures how beauty is understood across various cultures.

While qualitative researchers have always appealed to philosophical and theoretical literature as foundational for their methodologies, philosophers haven't always shown as much interest in qualitative research. Among the existential phenomenologists, engagement with qualitative research has been quite mixed. Heidegger (see, e.g. 2001), despite making concerted efforts to spread his ideas in the field of psychiatry, paid relatively little attention to the results of psychiatric research and didn't seem to consider how—or even whether—phenomenological accounts of mental illness might inform his own philosophical thought. Merleau-Ponty (see, e.g. 1964, 2010), by contrast, developed his philosophical work in critical dialogue with the sciences, including with studies in the psychological, social, and health sciences. While much of this engagement was with experimental research, he also drew upon individual case studies from psychiatry and neurology, which often included qualitative descriptions of experience and behaviour.

Today, philosophers have become even more interested in drawing upon and critically engaging with scientific research, including qualitative studies. This is motivated, in part, by a growing concern with contingent and particular aspects of human life. For example, rather than inquire into the nature of shame as a universal human experience, feminist philosophers explore the distinctive features of feminine shame (Bartky 1990; Mann 2018). And rather than develop an account of the essential structures of embodiment, philosophers of race consider the distinctive bodily experiences of racial minorities (Alcoff 2006).

When philosophers inquire into the experiences of particular groups or populations, rather than into the nature of experience as such, they tread into a domain that has traditionally belonged to qualitative researchers. But most philosophers haven't been trained to conduct their own empirical studies. Instead, many philosophers simply draw upon and generalize from their own first-person experiences without engaging with relevant work on qualitative research methods, such as the extensive literature on autoethnography (e.g. Chang 2016). When philosophers do rely on the experiences of others, they often draw on texts such as memoirs or diaries, which are not typically produced with the primary aim of providing detailed descriptions of experience. In some cases, these methodological differences might be justified by the

differing aims of philosophers and qualitative researchers. In other cases, philosophers might do well to incorporate qualitative methods into their work.

Over the last few years, we can see the start of a 'qualitative turn' in philosophical phenomenology, evidenced by more explicit engagement with qualitative research methods. Today, some philosophical phenomenologists not only draw upon and engage with the results of qualitative studies, but also conduct their own qualitative studies—usually in collaboration with researchers from other disciplines. These kinds of collaborations take various forms: Sometimes philosophers collaborate on the initial design of the study, helping to formulate research and interview questions that might inform philosophical discussions. In other cases, they contribute to a later phase of a study, collaborating on data analysis or on writing up the results and explaining how they contribute to philosophical and theoretical debates.

How do these studies contribute to more traditional forms of philosophical inquiry? And what do philosophers gain from qualitative research? At the very least, these studies have the potential to add a degree of concreteness or nuance to philosophers' more generic or abstract analyses. Consider, for instance, Jenny Slatman and her colleagues' study of how women experience scars after undergoing surgery for breast cancer. By interviewing women who had this procedure and analysing the interview transcripts with a combination of qualitative and philosophical methods, they were able to identify a range of bodily experiences that a traditional philosophical study might not have anticipated or adequately characterized. For example, immediately after the surgery, some women adopted a clinical or biomedical perspective, appreciating the skilful suturing of their own body (Slatman, Halsema and Meershoek 2016: 1618). And, when it came to concealing their bodily asymmetry, women reported quite different experiences of using a prosthesis. One woman explained that she didn't wear the prosthesis to restore her original appearance for herself, but to ensure that her appearance didn't bother others (Slatman, Halsema and Meershoek 2016: 1619). Without concrete empirical examples, philosophical descriptions of these kinds of experiences might come off as merely speculative or lacking in nuance. Empirical material can make philosophical accounts of the dynamics of embodied experience more concrete, fleshing out the often-oversimplified examples that we find in philosophical texts.

But qualitative studies aren't limited to fleshing out philosophers' more generic and abstract accounts of human experience and subjectivity. The results of empirical qualitative research can also challenge philosophical concepts, motivating philosophers to clarify or even revise their accounts of human existence. Susanne Ravn and Simon Høffding (2017; Ravn 2021) exemplify this kind of contribution through their studies of expert dancers and musicians. Ravn, drawing on her studies of elite sports dancers, argues that they can experience their bodies as simultaneously individuated and extended, such that the feeling of togetherness they experience with their dance partner doesn't override or supersede their sense of individuation (Ravn and Høffding 2017: 63). Høffding, drawing on the experiences of expert musicians, argues that they don't necessarily fall into a pure flow state, or what Hubert Dreyfus (2005, 2007) calls skilful coping. Rather, the musicians are often quite reflective and self-conscious, even while expertly performing. This suggests that skilful coping and reflective thinking are not polar opposite experiences, but often occur simultaneously (Ravn and Høffding 2017: 64).

Whether an individual qualitative study will help to flesh out or even challenge phenomenological concepts and theories is often difficult to anticipate. We can't know in advance precisely what we're going to observe, or how our informants are going to describe their experiences. However, when qualitative researchers explicitly incorporate phenomenological concepts, such as existentials, into their data analysis or even the design of their study, it's often easier to determine whether and how their findings relate to the broader philosophical literature.

Influences of Existential Phenomenology on Qualitative Research

Existential phenomenology has informed qualitative research in various ways, and to varying degrees—from general inspiration to specific methodological guidance. Some Heideggerian approaches, for example, highlight the impossibility of extricating oneself from personal and theoretical presuppositions, thus shaping how the researcher orients herself towards her own biases when conducting a qualitative study (McConnell-Henry, Chapman and Francis 2009). Rather than attempt to bracket or suspend their biases (as sometimes attempted in Husserlian approaches to qualitative research), the researcher instead attempts to make them explicit, cultivating an awareness of how their biases might problematically shape the interview questions or the data analysis.

In contrast to qualitative approaches that draw upon phenomenological methods, approaches that draw on existentials tend to produce knowledge that's more closely aligned with philosophical research and, thus, may be of more interest and value to philosophers. In this section, I provide an overview of how existentials have been used in qualitative research, including in both data analysis and study design.

Existential Approaches to the Analysis of Qualitative Data

Qualitative researchers most often draw upon existentials when analysing data, such as interview transcripts or observational notes. Why do they incorporate existentials at this late phase of their study? Qualitative research is often (but not always) conducted with an open or exploratory attitude. The researcher may have a general topic of interest or a broad research question. But they don't usually stipulate an explicit hypothesis about what they expect to discover. Whereas natural scientists try to avoid bias by formulating a hypothesis in advance, qualitative researchers often try to mitigate the effects of bias in the opposite way—by not presuming too much about their potential findings. Many phenomenological approaches to qualitative research attempt to mitigate the effects of bias by bracketing, suspending, or bridling their presuppositions—often attributing this practice to the Husserlian epoché (e.g., Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nystrom 2008; Giorgi 2009; van Manen 2016). However, even those methodologists who are strongly committed to bracketing theoretical presuppositions have still found ways to reincorporate specific philosophical concepts in later phases of their study, including in data analysis.

Two qualitative methodologists who propose this kind of approach to data analysis are Max van Manen and Peter Ashworth. Van Manen (2016) allows for various approaches to analysing qualitative data, but suggests that, in some cases, it can be helpful to analyse qualitative data through what he calls 'guided existential inquiry.' Originally, van Manen (1990: 101) suggested only four existentials: '*lived space* (spatiality), *lived body* (corporeality), *lived time* (temporality), and *lived human relations* (relationality or communality).' In more recent work, he introduces other existentials, such as 'lived things and technology (materiality)' as well as 'death (dying), language, and mood' (van Manen 2016: 302–3). His list of existentials is meant to be illustrative rather than comprehensive or exhaustive, and can in principle include any 'universal themes of life' (van Manen 2016: 302).

When analysing a personal narrative or description of experience from the perspective of relationality, for instance, the researcher might ask how the person experiences themselves in relation to others, how they experience their community, or how their relation with others changes when interacting in online spaces. When analysing this same material from the perspective of the lived body, by contrast, the researcher might ask how the person

attended to their own body, whether they became explicitly aware of their body, and how they experienced their own body in contrast to the bodies of others. Van Manen presents existentials as useful guides for analysing qualitative data, but also for structuring and presenting a study's findings in publications. The use of existentials is not, however, essential to van Manen's (2016) methodology—he offers this as just one possible way of analysing and presenting one's findings.

Ashworth (2003: 147) presents a similar, but more formalized, approach to using existentials in data analysis—although he refers to them as 'fractions' or 'fragments' of the lifeworld, emphasizing their essential interrelatedness. He lists eight concepts: selfhood; sociality; embodiment; temporality; spatiality; project; discourse; and moodedness. Like van Manen, Ashworth does not consider his list to be exhaustive. Each fraction constitutes an essential feature of experience, such that any experience one investigates necessarily involves every fraction—every experience includes some element of selfhood, some temporal flow, some kind of affective attunement, and so on. Using this list of fractions as a heuristic, the researcher can remind herself to consider the experience in question from each perspective, piecing together a holistic account.

Ann and Peter Ashworth (2003) demonstrate this in their study of the lifeworld of a person living with Alzheimer's disease. They don't prioritize any individual aspect of the experience from the start. Rather, they consider the experience of Alzheimer's from each perspective, in turn, examining elements of selfhood, sociality, embodiment, and so on, until they've pieced together a holistic view of this person's experience.

In addition to Ashworth, several other phenomenological psychologists have incorporated existentials into their approaches to data analysis, including many psychologists often associated with Giorgi's more Husserlian approach, such as Scott Churchill (2022; Churchill and Fisher-Smith 2021), Clark Moustakas (1994), James Morley (2024), and Frederick Wertz (2023). The division between Husserlian and existential approaches to qualitative research is not as strict as it's sometimes portrayed to be. In most cases, phenomenological qualitative researchers are quite eclectic, drawing on a wide range of philosophical and theoretical resources that help them make sense of the often complex and multifaceted experiences that they investigate.

In addition to psychologists, anthropologists also use existentials to analyse and make sense of their qualitative data, including both interview transcripts and observational notes. But their use of existentials is usually less systematic than in the above approaches. In general, anthropologists tend not to use the more formalized methods of data analysis found in many other disciplines. From a philosophical perspective, this less formalized or systematic approach may be seen as a positive feature of anthropological inquiry: Anthropologists tend to engage with phenomenological concepts in rich and nuanced ways, and their approaches to analysing data and presenting findings are akin to at least some styles of philosophical writing and argumentation. Perhaps the most well-known figure in existential anthropology is Michael Jackson (2012; Jackson and Piette 2015), who draws widely on existential, phenomenological, and pragmatist approaches. To illustrate how existentials can be used in anthropological research, however, I turn to the work of Thomas Csordas, who draws on Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment to understand a variety of complex behaviours, experiences, and social situations, such as religious practices around ritual healing.

Csordas (1990: 5) uses embodiment as a 'paradigm,' which he defines as 'a consistent methodological perspective that encourages reanalyses of existing data and suggests new questions for empirical research.' In his own example, he draws on concepts of embodiment from Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu to reanalyse practices of faith healing in North American

Charismatic Christianity. The practices involve complex interactions among religious leaders and followers. One element of these practices proved especially challenging to understand: glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. When Csordas (1990: 24) conducted his study in the 1980s, Pentecostal glossolalia was typically understood in one of three ways: 'as a phenomenon of trance or altered state of consciousness (Goodman 1972), as a mechanism of commitment to a fringe religious movement (Gerlach and Hine 1970), or as a ritual speech act within a religious speech community (Samarin 1972).' Csordas (1990: 24), however, was not interested in the social function of glossolalia or its accompanying mental states. Rather, he asked, 'what can the ritual use of glossolalia tell us about language, culture, the self, and the sacred[?]'

How did Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment help him answer this question? Csordas points out that glossolalia is perceived as gibberish by outsiders, yet its meaning is immediately apparent to those within the respective religious community. He argues that glossolalia therefore challenges conventional accounts of speech as straightforward representations of thought. With this in mind, he sought out alternative theories of speech and language, including in the work of Merleau-Ponty. As Csordas (1990: 25) interprets him, Merleau-Ponty understands speech not as the external expression of some internal thought, but as 'a verbal gesture with immanent meaning,' as 'an act or phonetic gesture in which one takes up an existential position in the world.' When conceptualized in this way, glossolalia can be seen as a kind of speech that, rather than expressing an internal thought, expresses the speaker's habitation in a sacred space where they have received a gift from the divine and are brought closer to God. Csordas (1990: 26) argues that the absence of the semantic element is precisely how glossolalia 'reveals the gestural meaning of language, such that the sacred becomes concrete in embodied experience.'

In addition to Csordas, several other anthropologists—such as Robert Desjarlais, Tim Ingold, Bernhard Leistle, Kalpana Ram, Jason Throop, and Jarrett Zigon—have incorporated existentials into their work. They draw upon a range of concepts—including embodiment, mood, emotion, empathy, understanding, intersubjectivity, and responsivity—to make sense of diverse cultural practices and experiences. Examples of similar kinds of existentially informed qualitative inquiry can be found across a variety of disciplines, including nursing (Klinke, Thorsteinsson and Jónsdóttir 2014; Klinke et al. 2015), psychiatry (Pienkos, Silverstein and Sass 2017; Feyaerts et al. 2021), and dance studies (Legrand and Ravn 2009), to name just a few.

Existential Approaches to the Design of Qualitative Studies

While existentials are most often used when analysing qualitative data, it's also possible to incorporate them into the design of empirical qualitative studies. In most cases, this is done implicitly. Once qualitative researchers become familiar with existential phenomenology, this familiarity often influences how they formulate their research and interview questions, or even what they attend to and notice when conducting observations. In this section, however, I focus on an approach that explicitly incorporates existentials into the design of qualitative studies: Phenomenologically Grounded Qualitative Research, or PGQR (Klinke and Fernandez 2023; Køster and Fernandez 2023).

PGQR is inspired by the success of 'frontloaded' phenomenology in the cognitive sciences, which uses phenomenological concepts in the design of experimental studies (Gallagher 2003). This contrasts with a 'retrospective' approach to phenomenology, which involves the critical reinterpretation of existing studies (Gallagher 2003: 88–91). For instance, when

Merleau-Ponty critically engages with experimental research in *Phenomenology of Perception*, he takes a retrospective approach, critically reinterpreting the results of psychological and neurological studies from a phenomenological perspective. Gallagher argues that these kinds of reinterpretations should not be seen as definitive conclusions, but as speculative hypotheses that should be confirmed by experimental testing. To design experiments that can test a phenomenological hypothesis, we typically need to frontload phenomenological concepts into the design of the study—otherwise it's not clear whether the study investigates the relevant aspects of experience.

Gallagher provides an example of frontloading phenomenological concepts in an experimental study of the neural correlates of various senses of selfhood. Typically, when performing everyday activities, I have a simultaneous experience of agency and ownership—I feel not only that I am the one bringing about my own actions, but also that the body performing these actions is mine. Once we draw this conceptual distinction, however, we can also come up with cases where I might experience one sense of selfhood without the other. If I'm pushed by someone else, for instance, I'll have a sense of ownership (it's my body being pushed) without a sense of agency (someone else pushed me). With this distinction in hand, the cognitive scientists were able to design a study that could identify some of the neural signals associated with a sense of agency, since they could create situations where one's sense of agency would be disrupted (Gallagher 2003: 94). Only by using the right phenomenological concepts were the scientists able to isolate the relevant aspect of experience.

Qualitative research is not typically conducted in an experimental setting. However, it's still possible to frontload phenomenological concepts into the design of interview-based or observational studies. But why should we want to frontload phenomenological concepts in qualitative research? For the same reason that we might frontload in the cognitive sciences: It focuses the study on a specific aspect of subjectivity or experience, allowing the researcher to inquire into this experience in considerably more depth than they might otherwise be able to. This can be preferable to more exploratory approaches for at least two reasons: First, if the researcher is already an expert on the particular topic of the study, they may be in a good position to identify key gaps in current knowledge and would therefore benefit from using an approach that allows them to investigate a specific aspect of experience that we don't currently have a good understanding of. Second, because many aspects of experience are pre-reflective (i.e. we don't typically reflect upon them, but they can in principle be brought to reflective awareness) the researcher may need to guide the informant's attention towards aspects of their experience that they wouldn't normally attend to—and a more focused study can better facilitate this kind of reflection.

Allan Køster's (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022) study of long-term grief following early parental bereavement provides a clear example of this approach. Based on his knowledge of the psychological literature on grief, he knew that we have well-established accounts of the emotional aspects of grief (i.e. grief involves a feeling oriented towards the lost loved one, which often comes in waves). However, by reviewing memoirs and other first-person narratives, he found that some people referred to a different kind of affective alteration—something more subtle, more difficult to put into words, but also more pervasive (see, e.g. Barthes 2010). Those who reported this experience didn't describe it in much detail, but they seemed to refer to shifts in their affective disposition that continued years after the loss of their loved one. Køster suspected that they were describing shifts in what phenomenologists refer to as ground moods or existential feelings (Guignon 2003; Ratcliffe 2008), typically understood as pre-reflective, non-intentional affective states (i.e. affective states that are not directed towards or about anything, but instead constitute the affective background within which we have other kinds of