

CONTRIBUTION OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY TO A PERSON- AND SOCIAL JUSTICE-CENTERED FRAMEWORK IN CRITICAL THEORETICAL PSYCHOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING IN TRAUMATIC LOSS AND PANDEMIC CRISIS CONDITIONS¹

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In this inquiry, the author examines experience of heightened suffering and precarity, in the midst of Anthropocene pandemic crisis conditions, from the perspective of critical theoretical psychology, and discusses the contribution of transcendental phenomenology and its methods to understanding the constitution of suffering and critical consciousness of suffering. A person- and social justice-centered critical theoretical framework within phenomenology is discussed, as well as implications for fostering of resilience and hope in the present, as well as in future disasters and traumatic events.

Keywords: critical theoretical psychology, transcendental phenomenology, suffering, pandemic, social justice, hope

The importance of theoretical and philosophical psychology to the task of advancing knowledge at the margins of the academy, disciplines, and professions calls for much deeper reflection and more robust engagement and dialogue about a coherent and ethical vision for a just world, especially in light of the global environment of heightened precarity, suffering, and violence in which we find ourselves embedded at this moment in history as we live

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through the COVID-19 pandemic. Philosophically informed psychological theory, under a critical theoretical lens, seeks to challenge and question states of affairs, fields of immersion, and limits of present knowledge, in the quest to make sense of complex realities and what it means to be human in relation to a non-anthropocentric cosmology.

The contributions of phenomenology, and more specifically, transcendental phenomenology and its methods, to a broad envisioning of a person- and social justice-centered critical theoretical psychology are starkly relevant to the present COVID-19 crisis conditions, and the impact the pandemic is having on vulnerable persons and populations across the globe. Phenomenology and its philosophic science theory, as developed by social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (Schutz, 1996, 1957/2010; Embree, 2011), are well equipped to do the work of deepening our understanding of contemporary social problems and macro-social structural conditions and conflicts that are shaping individual and collective lived experience of suffering and dehumanization, especially as we face crisis conditions of the pandemic (Hanfling, Altevogt, Viswanathan, & Gostin, 2012). The framing of social problems and conflicts, as such, is itself a very condition of possibility for knowledge generation, change processes, and mitigation or amelioration of suffering for all persons, communities, and societies.

This writing draws primarily on the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), founder of phenomenology, and Husserl's assistant Eugen Fink (1905-1975), Austrian-born social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), contemporary phenomenological philosophers Lester Embree (1938-2017), Michael D. Barber, and John J. Drummond, phenomenological psychologists Amedeo Giorgi and Frederick J. Wertz, and critical theoretical psychologists Thomas Teo and Jeff Sugarman. The theoretical and philosophical frameworks advanced in this writing are intended neither as exhaustive grand theories nor universal structures of experience. Rather, the aims of the present writing are to both: (a) challenge dominant neoliberal paradigms in psychology (Sugarman, 2015; Teo, 2018) and allied disciplines and professions to the extent that they have failed to recognize the significant role and influence of social structures in fostering and sustaining systemic racism and other persistent forms of oppression and restricting personal and collective agency, and (b) invite deeper reflection about how critical theoretical psychology may intervene in, and interrupt, structural patterns of suffering, oppression, and

marginalization. In these contexts, I propose a person- and social justice-centered critical theoretical framework within phenomenology, and discuss implications more broadly for critical theoretical psychology, interdisciplinary science, and the psychological humanities (Teo, 2017), in service to all persons, cultures, and communities.

Global Social Ecology of Suffering: Anthropocene and COVID-19 Crisis Conditions

I invite reflection on the role of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in constituting global social ecology of suffering and violence we are living through in the Anthropocene Period, heightened by the present COVID-19 crisis conditions – an ecology in which we are all embedded. By global social ecology, I mean intersecting ecosystems, contexts, and provinces of meaning and lived experience that have varying salience in the life of suffering persons and communities. I briefly describe the breadth of suffering in the Anthropocene Period, as characterized by multiplying disasters, emergencies, and disruptions, and the phenomenological methods suited for inquiry into such experience.

Anthropocene Period and Impact of Pandemics, Disasters, and Climate Events

A robust body of scientific evidence documents the unprecedented nature of the impact of our human activity on living and non-living systems in the Anthropocene or human age (Pope Francis, 2015; Jennings, 2016; Morrissey, 2018; Morrissey, Lang, & Newman, 2019). In our state of human finitude, it is difficult even to contemplate the magnitude of changes and long-term consequences of traumatic events such as pandemics, disasters, and cataclysmic changes to our climate and worlds, nor to fully imagine the effects of such events on human experience in their full ecological, social, and cultural significance. Study of climate change patterns over many decades has yielded a picture of a future marked by increasingly disruptive and obstructive changes to habitats, homes, and mother earth herself. Such destruction gives rise to concomitant traumatic suffering and displacement of sentient creatures and human beings, such as older persons, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and other oppressed and marginalized persons and populations. We have borne witness to such devastation through graphic examples of climate disasters, migrations, including the horrific experience of immigrants and their families as the result of U.S. policies and practices of

detention and family separation, and most recently, the assault on the fabric of life as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying crisis conditions departing from normal healthcare and other operations (Hanfling et al., 2012). These events in our global history exemplify the diversity and scope of interests and concerns taken up in phenomenological studies of suffering in the twenty-first century.

Schutz's Philosophic Science Theory – Theory of the Cultural Sciences

With this backdrop and problem framing, I elaborate on phenomenology as both a science theory and a rigorous scientific method, and position it within Alfred Schutz's philosophic science theory. As mapped out by phenomenological philosopher Lester Embree (2011), Schutz's theory of the cultural sciences encompasses four progressive structural components:

The bottom level is that of common-sense thinking and on that level, there are the meanings that an action, relation, or situation has for an actor, the partner, and the observer in everyday life.

On the second level is the model constructed on the basis of the common-sense constructs by [the] cultural scientist in what can be called "substantive research."

On the third level is the scientific science theory that includes the disciplinary definition, basic concepts, and methodological procedures of the particular science and these refer to the meanings or constructs of the lower two levels.

And on the fourth level is philosophic science theory, which is theory of science in which more than one discipline is considered. Philosophic science theory is widest in scope but furthest from the concrete phenomena that are basis for the whole. (p. 91)

This fourth level of philosophic science theory, or theory of the cultural sciences, in its interdisciplinary orientation, comprises phenomenology, and according to Embree (2010), its various disciplinary specifications, including psychological phenomenology (Wertz, 2005, 2010, 2016), philosophical phenomenology (Drummond, 2002, 2008a, 2008b; Barber, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), and social work phenomenology (Morrissey, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2015a, 2015b, 2019), as well as other disciplinary specifications.

Consistent with the Schutsonian perspective, Morrissey and Barber (2014) have written:

Phenomenology as formal philosophy and method of science is rooted in a well-developed conceptual framework for understanding and interpreting human agency (the capacity to act and direct one's actions in a way that reveals one is the source and owner of one's intentionalities and actions), action, and decision making and seeks to provide deeper access than conventional natural science or quantitative research methods to qualitative personal and shared experiences and what they mean. The natural sciences, which study the physical world, presuppose the physical thing as their object, and in them the scientist is the only interpreter of experience. By contrast, phenomenology studies the social world as a regional ontology—a distinctive area of being. This sort of study calls for a different methodology from those of the natural sciences. Phenomenology and phenomenological ethics challenge the validity of the third-person perspective of the natural sciences and the physical world that lies at the basis of a medicalized model of health care and objective approaches to measurement of disease symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of illness. Although phenomenology is sometimes viewed as antinaturalistic—that is, concerned with the social world as distinct from the natural world—it is more accurate to describe phenomenology as positively building knowledge through reflection on the structures of experience. This type of reflective knowledge complements the quantitative knowledge generated by the natural sciences, which historically have excluded the experiencing subject or perceiver from defined fields of legitimate scientific inquiry into the material, physical world. (p. 2392)

Thus, phenomenology brings a unique perspective to bear on the development of consciousness, and critical consciousness (Freire, 1989/1970), that helps to make sense of the intentional relation between consciousness and the world, and the role of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in constituting and disclosing the world (Husserl, 1970, 1913/1989; Drummond, 2008a, 2008b; Wertz, 2016; Morrissey, 2018). The full recognition of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in relationship to the world creates fruitful opportunities not only in psychology, but in public health, social work, law, medicine, ethics, and allied disciplines, for the fostering of hope and healing and the building of a more sustainable and just social ecology for all persons.

Theory of Cultural Sciences: Meanings of Moral Experience

An important starting point for discussion of phenomenology and its conceptual framework, or theory of the cultural sciences, is examining the meanings of moral experience and moral or ethical decision-making (the terms “moral” and “ethical” are used interchangeably here) in light of various fields of interest, including moral philosophy, moral phenomenology, moral psychology, and moral philosophy of law (Morrissey, 2017). Examination of the role of moral intuition, reflection, and deliberation in processes of moral reasoning may help illuminate the nature of phenomenology inquiry, such as in the focus of this writing on phenomenological studies of suffering and the knowledge such studies yield about suffering and appropriate interventions to mitigate suffering. The present inquiry is also placed in the larger context of a socially just global ecology, that is, in the service of suffering persons and communities and in recognition of their moral experience. For the purposes of this writing, I have chosen examples of moral experience in later life, migration, and the COVID-19 pandemic, including experience of social isolation, losses, and bereavement, as well as moral distress, for the very reason that such examples offer fertile ground for understanding the constitution of moral experience in suffering and its meanings. They also present deeply contested questions and controversies in current moral and sociopolitical philosophy debates about personhood, the moral and social burdens of pre-pandemic inequities and disparities that disproportionately impact persons of color and other vulnerable persons, and the obligations of a just society to suffering and oppressed persons and communities.

Moral Experience and Moral Phenomenology

The question of what is moral experience, or what are moral judgments, is a foundational one in this inquiry. According to phenomenological philosopher John Drummond (2008a), who provides an account of moral decision making and action without occurrent deliberation, the founding or presentational level of valuing is the descriptive objective sense and properties that belong to the experience and are temporally prior to processes of emotion and valuing, but occur as part of a unified experience.

In Drummond’s (2002) aforesaid account and treatment of moral intuition as evidence, three dimensions of morality emerge as embedded in a moral phenomenology:

- (1) everyday mundane, moral experience;
- (2) critical reflection on moral judgments and actions, both reasoned and intuitive evidence, and normative questions about *moral* agency (italics Drummond);
- (3) critical and phenomenological reflection on moral *agency* with emphasis on agency (italics Drummond).

Drummond (2002) explains the transcendental perspective of Kant and its role in ethics. According to Drummond, in the transcendental domain, a subject of experience encounters moral phenomena and makes sense of, discloses, or constitutes the moral significance of things, situations, actions, and agents. Here, too, the transcendental perspective manifests at different levels: consciousness as passive (i.e., an intentional correlation between consciousness and the value itself seen as independent of consciousness), and consciousness as constituting (i.e., subject as active in constituting values (Drummond, 2002). For the purposes of this writing, I frame consciousness in this latter sense of being constitutive in focusing on the suffering person as moral agent, even in the midst of abject suffering.

The Maternal as Condition of Possibility for Recovered Agency, Resilience, and Generativity: Fashioning a Maternal Cosmos

In adopting an Anthropocene social ecological focus, I seek to advance dialogue and invite deliberation about the suffering of all persons that locates the very conditions of possibility for agency, resilience, and generativity within the primordial beginnings of suffering. Older adults themselves have described the life-historical ground of their suffering as residing within, and indigenous to, maternal dimensions of existence, hereinafter referred to as the “Maternal Ground,” disrupted through the experience of suffering (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a, 2015b). In a re-theorizing, re-symbolizing and de-gendering of the Maternal, I locate the Levinasian (Levinas, 1969, 1981) ethical obligation to the suffering other in a reconstituted Maternal Ground. That Maternal Ground – at the ethical nexus of theorizing and social praxis - serves as both a wellspring for generativity and the foundation of a palliative holding environment (Morrissey, 2015) for suffering persons who re-enact primordial Maternal experiences of welcome, unconditional loving care, and nurture. I call that palliative holding environment a *Maternal Cosmos*, built

upon nurturing Maternal care, and emancipatory care practices (Morrissey & Whitehouse, 2016), that foster openness to diverse fields of experience and opportunities for agency and liberation (Morrissey, 2015; Morrissey & Whitehead, 2016). For purposes of designing care systems that respond to the needs of suffering persons, I, in turn, call such systems *Maternal systems of care*.

Importantly, in a global context, the Maternal telos and praxis, may act as a check on the kinds of human development in our ecological world that result in exploitation, deplete resources, or create intolerable conditions for the other, as suggested by Pope Francis (2015) in *Laudato Si'*. For example, in the current pandemic, the most vulnerable persons and populations in our societies – older persons, persons who are homeless, persons with disabilities, persons incarcerated, immigrants, and Black/African Americans and Latinos, have been the hardest hit by the pandemic. In this sense, the Maternal Cosmos is imbued with justice in its very social constitution. As such, any cultural ethos or social code based on values of consumption or exploitation that do harm to the other conflicts with the Maternal ethos.

Husserlian Phenomenology and Fink's Transcendental Theory of Method

The unique perspective transcendental phenomenology brings to bear on the development of consciousness – with its emphasis on the intentional relation between consciousness and the world and human subjectivity in constituting and disclosing our world – makes it especially relevant to the project of gaining deeper access to experience of suffering (Husserl, 1970, 1913/1989; Drummond, 2008a, 2008b; Wertz, 2016). I focus here on the development of consciousness in the suffering person – particularly the consciousness *of* suffering. By applying the transcendental lens to a suffering person's existential situation, I seek to advance the knowledge of suffering in this twenty-first century – an era marked by environmental degradation, inequities across nations and populations, the threat of self-annihilation as a species, and, as individuals and a global world, an inexorable march toward demise and death. Pope Francis eloquently described the need to care for “our common home” in his 2015 Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*: “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change” (para. 13).

The arguments advanced here about suffering draw on Husserlian phenomenology (Husserl, 1970) and Husserl's notion of the transcendental. To unpack the complexity of Husserl's ideas, I draw on phenomenological philosopher John J. Drummond's (2008b) explication of the ideas of the transcendental in Husserl's work:

This looking backward and forward from the perspective of *The Idea of Phenomenology* yields the more developed sense of the transcendental, which is distinguished from the psychological in a three-fold manner: (1) transcendental reflection is not grounded in a region, but encompasses all regions; (2) transcendental reflection does not consider experiences in their being as real, mental events of an existent, psychological subject but considers them as possible intentional experiences of any possible experiencing agent; and (3) transcendental reflection does not consider objects simpliciter in their worldly, causal relations to other worldly entities, including psychological subjects, but considers them in their significance for us. The first respect is what leads Husserl to speak of transcendental subjectivity in metaphysical terms as an absolute being, but the point...of this language is not so much ontological as phenomenological. Transcendental subjectivity is characterized by a completeness that is lacking in psychological subjectivity, which is merely a region of the world, and it is not "relative" to the world but "prior" to it as the medium of access thereto.

Transcendental phenomenology, then, reflects upon the transcendental subject in its achievement of making sense of the world and clarifies the essential structures of the various ways of making-sense of the world and, thereby, of rationality itself in all its dimensions. It is this distinction between the transcendental and the psychological and this understanding of transcendental philosophy that emerges for the first time in *The Idea of Phenomenology*. (pp. 202-203)

Drummond clarifies further that in working out these ideas about distinctions between immanence and transcendence, psychological and transcendental, Husserl resolved that "the appeal to the transcendental is the response to the problem of transcendence" (2008b, p. 195). This resolution, so to speak, has important implications for the possibility of transcendence for suffering persons.

Eugen Fink, Edmund Husserl's research assistant, developed a theory of transcendental method in the Sixth Cartesian Meditation subtitled, "*The Idea*

of a Transcendental Theory of Method? (1995). In applying a systematic elaboration of transcendental phenomenology, the goal is to explicate how transcendental methods constitute a moment in phenomenological psychological analysis of suffering. Transcendental phenomenology, premised on a pre-existing transcendental subjectivity that Fink described as a constitutive source of the world, views subjectivity as unifying being together with pre-being. In particular, conceptualization of subjectivity requires insight into the process for achieving unity of pre-being and being. In this case, transcendent phenomenology can reveal the constitutive processes of suffering human beings as a subjective transcendental achievement, exploring the processes of:

- (1) constitution of suffering through disruptions or losses of the maternal *eidōs* or essential ground of subjectivity, and
- (2) analogizing transcendental insights about world-constituting subjectivity to the generative character of the Maternal Ground as a transcendental subjectivity that is the very condition of possibility for world constitution.

These constitutive processes involve two types of phenomenology: a static phenomenology or flux of experience, as well as a genetic approach to phenomenology, which examines life as a built-up, sedimented collection of experiences over time that fully manifest in the present (Fink, 1995).

Understanding of Suffering in the Natural Attitude: Calling Attention to Consciousness

The framing of suffering as a problem in phenomenological terms must begin with reflections on what is described in phenomenology as the natural attitude or mundane world we live in, out of which the portal to transcendental subjectivity opens. In the natural attitude, we find the intuitively given, pre-scientific life-world of everyday life, naïve and unreflective, although it does include existential positings. Even when we do reflect in everyday life, whether taking notice of psychological processes or thematizing meaning, the natural attitude remains straightforward. Whatever reflections and psychological intuitions that take place in the natural attitude are neither sustained nor methodically employed in a critical, self reflective, and methodical way. The natural attitude is a communicative, pre-reflective existence that follows the

expressions of others in order to live in the life-world understanding of them as persons.

For the purposes of the natural attitude, the subjectivity of suffering remains unthematized and either unreflective or unsystematically reflective. In the natural attitude, suffering is something that human beings passively undergo, oftentimes in isolation. Similarly, the dominant biomedical approach contends that suffering itself, especially in serious illness and serious mental illness, is an externally imposed affliction or even a disease that a person endures passively, without intentionality, and destructive to the self, identity, and agency. Whereas aspects of this description may comport with dimensions of the lived-through experience of suffering, it paints an incomplete picture. The passive view of suffering does not sufficiently account for the processes that constitute suffering through intentional consciousness or the relationship of suffering to the constituted social and cultural world. We often thematize our own or others' suffering, such as feelings of loss over the death of a loved one, a spouse, an intimate partner, a neighbor, or a resident in a nursing facility. However, the subjective processes, the suffering consciousness, escapes reflection. Here I call attention to consciousness – and, in this case, subjectivity – in suffering.

Phenomenological Inquiry

The phenomenological procedures of the epoché – turning away from the everyday or natural attitude and bracketing or putting aside past knowledge about the phenomenon or object under study, and reduction – withholding positing of the existence of the object, allow a heightened focus on the activity of consciousness in constituting the object being investigated (Giorgi, 2009; Wertz, 2005, 2010), such as in phenomenological investigations of the constitution of the consciousness of suffering of older adults (Morrissey, 2011b, 2011c, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). Studies of suffering among seriously ill older adults, and their findings, build on incomplete knowledge about suffering in the current literature. The purpose of the phenomenological psychological reduction, which is a partial reduction, is to focus on and study subjectivity. Employing a limited epoché of the natural attitude, namely by abstaining from bringing one's own experiences to bear in validating someone else's lived experience, phenomenological methods help to access suffering in all its complexity including the role of subjectivity in suffering.

Studies of suffering (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a, 2015b) suggest that suffering is a developmental process involving a disruption of continuity with the passively synthesized, common-sense world. This disruption or loss has been described (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a, 2015b) as profoundly traumatic to the suffering person. That process is dislocating and alienating in its utter de-worlding, denuding, and de-habitualizing, and fundamentally antithetical to the habitualities of the welcoming home. In these studies of suffering (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a, 2015b), traumatic disruptions were accompanied by irreversible losses of a sense of home and individual agency. These traumatic experiences led older adults to move with intentionality toward a re-enacted maternal holding, care, and nurturance, constructing a new sense of home in what Morrissey has called the “Maternal Ground” (Morrissey 2011b, 2015a, 2015b). The findings reveal the building up of suffering through a series of constitutive – and emancipatory (Morrissey & Whitehouse, 2016), maternal processes and care practices. Essential to suffering are the following constituents:

- (1) receptivity and welcome;
- (2) origin;
- (3) home;
- (4) holding and cradling;
- (5) relational intimacy, generosity, and nurturance;
- (6) empathy;
- (7) unconditional loving care;
- (8) well-being; and
- (9) generativity (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a).

Losses of these maternal dimensions of existence are a core constituent of suffering. Older adults’ descriptions of suffering reveal that the Maternal Ground of life-world existence is a primordial source of meaning for them, and opens up a condition of possibility for spiritual development, recovery of agency, and re-constitution of the life-world and its sense of meaning.

Using imaginative variation – a practice in phenomenology of envisioning all possible conditions for a subject – it is possible to extend the analytic grasp of the Maternal Ground to all possible examples of suffering, and through such process, advance the notion that the Maternal Ground is an eidetic

(Wertz, 2010) – in other words, essential – feature of suffering for all human persons. For example, moving beyond the parameters of empirical research, the essence of suffering – its *eidōs* – may also be captivated in art (Wertz, 2010), such as in Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937). Art transcends the mundane world and the limitations of language in articulating the presence of suffering.

In sum, phenomenological studies of suffering reveal its essence to be a moment of consciousness. Transcendental subjectivity, whether enacted on the part of a suffering person, a person recovering from suffering, or an artist who captures its essence in the art itself, allows a point of entry to understanding suffering.

Explication of Transcendental Phenomenology, Transcendental Subjectivity, and Transcendental Theory of Method: Relationship of Suffering to the Maternal

Phenomenological research findings on suffering among older adults can explicate the transcendental constitution of suffering and the relationship of suffering to the Maternal. The aims here are twofold: to distinguish the mundane from the transcendental while showing the relationship between the transcendental and life-world suffering, and to clarify the whole analytic process of transcendental subjectivity grasped prior to its metaphorizing through its pure expression in the world. In this case, the subject of that inquiry is suffering.

Fink’s (1995) explication of the process of transcendental subjectivity becoming self-aware and his mapping out of the transcendental theory of method to describe this process, as brought to bear in the investigation of suffering experience, helps open up the opaque box of suffering with implications for the suffering of older and other vulnerable persons.³ Fink (1995) frames the transcendental theory of method as the application of phenomenological methods to the activity of phenomenologizing itself. In such a project, Fink identifies three “I’s” or layers in the process of transcendental life’s disclosing itself and becoming self-conscious:

- (1) the naïve human being or “Mundane, Human I” in the Natural Attitude, such as the naïve older person,

³ It is noted that Eugen Fink did not address the subject of suffering in his writing on the transcendental theory of method. The phenomenological analysis of suffering presented in this article is an application of Fink’s elucidation of the method to the study of the experience of suffering.

- (2) the “Transcendental Constituting I” that directs itself to the world in its constituting activity and discloses the world to consciousness, and
- (3) the transcendental or “Phenomenological Onlooker”, reflecting on the “Mundane I” and the “Constituting I,” and who engages in phenomenological activity in the theoretical attitude, raising up out of constituting activity in the transcendental flow of experience.

Phenomenological Onlooker or “I” in Theoretical Attitude

The “Phenomenological Onlooker,” the “I” of reflection, does not participate in the world constitution of suffering, only the constitution or production of scientific knowledge. The Phenomenological Onlooker is for all practical purposes the scientist. Whereas the subject of phenomenological activity and the thematizing conducted by the “Phenomenological Onlooker” is the human person in various moments of everyday constituting life, the Onlooker “I” is placed in the phenomenological reduction and takes up the theoretical attitude and theoretical activity. Fink (1995) is clear, however, that phenomenological activity in the transcendental reduction and its disclosure of constitutive becoming, is not itself constituting. In the transcendental reduction and reflection, the “I” experiences the loss of the world that “captivat[es]” (Fink, 1995, p. 42) and “restrict[s]” (p. 42) the Mundane I, but never loses the unity of transcendental life (and being) and its transcendental ground. The I’s loss of “*captivation by the world*” (p. 42) is nevertheless an essential un-worlding and un-humanizing. According to Fink, it is only through this un-humanizing that phenomenological analysis of the constitution of transcendental life and being becomes possible, permitting a going-back to beginnings without antecedent, nor *a priori*. The Onlooker “I” is in the realm of pre-being, coming before any form of existence or being. This is a paradox in that it is and is not a person. According to Fink, the various “I”s are the same and different in a kind of paradoxical, differentiated identity. In the movement from human being engaged in the world to the phenomenological onlooker, to phenomenologizing activity, the phenomenological onlooker loses his or her positionality in the world.

Primary and Secondary Enworlding

Although the theoretical splitting of the “I” into the non-participant Phenomenological Onlooker and the Constituting I results in antithetically

opposing transcendental movements directionally, Fink explains that these dialectical movements ultimately result in different types of “enworlding” (Fink, 1995):

- (i) the primary “enworlding” or embedding of the constituting subject as the human person – in this case, older person – in the mundane world, along with constituted mundane objects); and (ii) the secondary “enworlding” of the non-participant “Phenomenological Onlooker” or the “I” who is swept back into the world and humanized. (p. 106)

The implications of this secondary enworlding are twofold: the “Phenomenological Onlooker” or “I” returns to the passively synthesized, mundane world in a movement that unifies transcendental life, transforming a self-conscious awareness of the self-constitution of transcendental subjectivity into the human person as mundane world subject; and now engages in the activity of transcending in the mundane world itself, expressing in mundane language the insights gained about the processes of constituting subjectivity and setting the stage to practice phenomenology as a science in the world, engaging with other scholars as a human being among others. The iterative patterns of movement and convergence of the three I’s in the passively synthesized, mundane world chart a circle of beginnings and endings that flow seamlessly into each other.

Several moments in the world-constituting process described by Fink reveal layered dimensions of discontinuity, disruption, and traumatic encounter, and, at the same time, bring about unity and self-clarification. These dialectical movements and moments may be analogized to the experience of the primordial maternal relation, and its temporalizing in birth and human development, as described in the psychological literature (Wertz, 1981), through processes of discontinuity and disruption, and through a double analogy, may be placed in the larger context of the analogizing of transcendental subjectivity to the *eidōs* or essence of the Maternal Ground and its processes of generativity.

Eidetic Analysis: Mundane and Transcendental Levels

Fink (1995) identifies two levels of eidetic analysis in his explication of transcendental subjectivity: the *eidōs* in the mundane, pre-given world, and the transcendental *eidōs*. The mundane type of eidetic knowledge is a thematization and appropriation of an *a priori*, unthematized knowing already

in the possession of the mundane subject that is objectivated through phenomenological activity.

At the mundane level of existence, where we are not in the transcendental reduction but in the phenomenological psychological reduction that reduces only objects, the constitution of the meaning structures of suffering is disclosed. Here, reflection by the phenomenologist and a shift in attitude reveal dimensions of suffering that are not given in the natural attitude. Meanings of suffering as they appear in the world may be pre-reflective and unthematized through sedimentation of past experiences built up in the world. It is exactly through this type of passive synthesis that meanings of the Maternal Ground have emerged in descriptions of suffering experience by study participants in phenomenological studies of suffering (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a), disclosing the Maternal Ground as an essential constituent of suffering.

Suffering and the Intentional Spectrum: Transcendental Eidos

In contrast to the mundane *eidos*, the transcendental *eidos* has no such antecedency in an unthematized knowing of the pre-given world, but rather is first objectivated by an act of ideation in phenomenologizing. The eidetic ideation process of the Phenomenological Onlooker reveals itself in the mode of pre-being. Fink (1995) describes this process as, “ontifying...*onti-[fying]* the “pre-existent” *life-processes of transcendental subjectivity*” (p. 76).

I argue that suffering is necessarily constituted and disclosed through intentional processes, as suffering is a form of being known intuitively in the pre-given world in implicit horizons that go beyond the psychological subject. Turning to phenomenology and its cognitive practices as a science, the transcendental reduction discloses suffering as a unity that is productively constituted, having come to be in the mundane world through processes of constituting subjectivity in what Fink (1995) calls “end-constituted objectiveness” (p. 74). In other words, according to the transcendental theory of subjectivity, what appears in the mundane world is already constituted, the end products as Fink describes them of transcendental subjectivity’s constituting activity. In the transcendental reduction, the world and everything in it is bracketed and the Phenomenological Onlooker is able to reflect systematically in the theoretical attitude on how suffering is constituted through productive processes, going back to its primordial first origin that has no antecedent in any form of being.

Systematic reflections of phenomenological methods in studies of suffering (Morrissey, 2011b, 2015a) disclose that suffering has its beginnings in the constitutive processes of the Maternal Ground, without which suffering would not be possible. In these studies, the Maternal has been interrogated as it has appeared in the context of suffering – *the Maternal* as the “thing itself” (Husserl, 1970; Wertz, 2010) or concrete reality appearing in the temporal horizons of suffering experience as an independent ground of possibility for the world. The contours of the Maternal Ground are mapped out in dialectical movements and horizontal entanglements with suffering experience, from its first constitutive processes through its full disclosure in the mundane world as pre-given. In this mapping-out of the architecture of the Maternal Ground, a clear distinction is made between the Maternal as a general and universal human experience, and what we more commonly describe as “mothering,” meaning the parenting of a child by a biological mother or mother surrogate, although this is not excluded from the general. Study findings draw upon a broader concept of the Maternal that describes a certain pre-given condition of possibility in lived-through ordinary experiences of all people, of all genders, even if they have never been biological mothers, surrogates, or parents. Framed and envisioned as transcendental *eidōs*, the Maternal is a symbol of generativity and pure possibility that is invariant and makes itself manifest in the world in a manifold of appearances.

The concept of the Maternal Ground builds and expands on earlier work in psychoanalysis and developmental psychology (Morrissey, 2011c; Wertz et al., 2011). The Maternal is framed as a pre-given condition of possibility in the lived world not confined to the sphere of influence of the mother figure alone, or to a dyadic, one-on-one relationship, but as belonging to a larger social ecology that extends to animals and non-human things, such as the ground we walk on that supports us, the food we eat that nurtures us, or music that holds us, soothes us, and gives us comfort. This expansion of consciousness of the Maternal as a ground, in the privative, of the intentional structure of suffering manifests itself in re-enactments of the Maternal through Maternal care-seeking behavior. More generally, the structure of the Maternal as articulated forms a ground for re-enactment of a suffering person’s subject-world intentional connection, as situated against changing horizons and contexts. The Maternal provides the conditions of possibility through which one can recover a fuller horizon and life of consciousness and

engagement with the world. As a ground of suffering experience, the Maternal also creates conditions for human dignity and irreducible personhood, from time in the womb to the worlding we experience at birth. It provides the setting for the processes of our becoming from birth to death, and in our undertaking of reflective moral action and creative freedom, as expressed so eloquently by Gabriel Marcel (1949; 1964).

Person- and Social Justice-Centered Implications for Theoretical Psychology, Interdisciplinary Science, and Psychological Humanities

Theorizing about subjectivity in relation to suffering helps illuminate the meaning of suffering, especially as such meanings concern loss of the Maternal dimensions of existence, as we see unfolding during the present pandemic. Persons and communities across the globe are experiencing profound and traumatic losses – of loved ones, of sociality, of meaningful work, of their homes, as well as displacement from their homes during extended hospitalizations, and in some tragic cases, face dying alone in sterile hospital rooms or nursing homes. Family members are also experiencing unknown depths of bereavement in mourning their loved ones. Drawing on Schutz’s philosophic cultural sciences theory and Fink’s transcendental theory of method, an ethical Maternal paradigm of unconditional care and concern emerges as a ground and social and cultural context for suffering persons’ positioning, signifying, and possibilizing of resistance to oppressive structures and reconstitution of power and social practices. Through engagement and enactments that build community and solidarity, the Maternal presents itself as a cosmos, an affordance, and a threshold of openness to experience that can foster a socially just order that is attentive to all persons and communities, creating conditions that enable personal and collective agency, generativity, hope, and dialectical processes of disruption and dialogue – subjects of paramount importance to theoretical psychology, interdisciplinary science and the psychological humanities, and in service to diverse communities during the present global pandemic, as well as in future traumatic disasters and events.

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