

*Désordre du Cœur*  
**Theoretical Foundations and Clinical Conceptualizations  
of Axiological Psychopathology**

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*Eritis sicut deus, scientes bonum et malum.*  
*(You will be like God, knowing good and evil)*

– Mose 3,5

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## Author's Note

Some sections of this work are based on material previously published elsewhere. Other sections of this work are based on materials that are intended for publication. This is indicated again in the footnotes to the titles of the respective sections.

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## Acquiring an Axiological Intuition

I will start with an anecdote that I have sometimes used in my classes. It is an anecdote that illustrates the phenomenon of *valueception*.

The scene takes place during a seminar at the University. The seminar has been going for about thirty minutes when the classroom door swings open. Another student is arriving too late. Most seats are taken, and since the desks are organized in a U-shape, the newcomer has to make his way behind your seated classmates. Chairs are squeaking as people make space. Mid-sentence, the lecturer stops talking and observes the scene, waiting for quiet. Two-thirds across the room, the latecomer stumbles and falls face-first to the ground. First there is a loud noise, then a murmur goes through the rows. Pause here.

This is the moment where things get interesting. Suppose we would know what goes on inside each of the seminar's participants. More specifically, suppose we would know what the participants are feeling as the student stumbles and falls. The following picture ensues, differentiating three perspectives: Besides the physical pain of falling, the latecomer feels embarrassed. Making his way in the tight space behind the desks was uncomfortable already, plus he hates coming late. It was not even his fault, but the tram had to stop for a person on the rails. Lying nose-down on the floor, he is ashamed and fears that his reputation is dented at least for the rest of the semester. "I just hope that Cassy (his crush) is not in today." The classmates, on the other hand, pity the latecomer. Anybody came in late at some point, so they hardly paid attention at first. Sure, the lecture was captivating up to this point, but nobody minds a breather. The fall was so loud that some of them cringed in their seats when they saw him go down. "I just hope that he is not hurt," one worries, while the other wonders "Does he need help? Why is he not getting up?" For the curios, suppose that Cassy was typing on the phone and has yet to realize what exactly happened. Lastly, from the perspective of the lecturer, disturbances due

to latecomers always are a nuisance. She was just getting in the flow and then some half-asleep “punk” breaks it. Should that not be enough, he snatches the attention of the other students, which counts among the rarest resources to any teacher. Suppose further that the lecturer is not perfectly well adjusted—as most of us, let us be honest—and even grins when her student falters. Satisfied with *schadenfreude* she thinks to herself “Serves you right.”

This should suffice for the anecdote. At this point, a note on the term *valueception* will prove useful. *Valueception* (German: “Wertnehmung”) is a neologism derived from the analogy to perception (German: “Wahrnehmung”). Its purpose is to capture the perception-like apprehension of values and disvalues through feeling. In phenomenological terminology, *valueception* is an intentional feeling, i.e. an act of experience that is directed at an object, in which is in this case a value or disvalue (the more accurate term of *disvalueception* for the apprehension of disvalues is hardly ever used and usually subsumed under *valueception*). Allow me to apply this to the anecdote and to carve out some key axiological concepts from material value ethics—the perspective that I will be engaging the most in my investigation.

As implied by the terminology, a first understanding of *valueception* can be provided in analogy to sensory perception, visual perception works best. Similar to how visual perception apprehends a real physical object under normal conditions, so too *valueception* apprehends a real value/disvalue under normal conditions. Furthermore, just like the perceiver’s perspective binds visual perception, so too *valueception* is perspectival. In broad strokes, the anecdote comprises three acts of *valueception* that correspond to the three perspectives outlined: the latecomer’s, the classmates’, and the lecturer’s perspectives. The axiologically relevant event in the anecdote is the latecomer’s fall, i.e., the *valueceived* phenomenon (the intentional object of the feeling act). While each of the three parties in the anecdote experiences specific and readily distinguishable feelings—the latecomer feels embarrassment, the classmates feel pity, and the lecturer feels glee— each feeling is clearly directed to the latecomer’s toppling. The clue is that these intentional feelings, albeit qualitatively *toto coelo* different, are best

understood as affective perspectives on one and the same axiologically relevant event, each disclosing one of its aspects.

From the vantage point of material value ethics, the latecomer's fall can be described as a disvalue realization composed of the physical pain of falling down, the psychological displeasure from embarrassment and pity, and the perverted psychic pleasure of *schadenfreude*. This amounts to an affectively stratified conception of the axiologically relevant event. Subverting the positivistic fact-value dichotomy, this event of disvalue realization is termed the value-fact ("Werttatsache") or, less common yet more precise, a disvalue-fact ("Unwerttatsache"). In this picture, the disvalue realization constitutes a real fact that is partly apprehended by the perspective-bound, intentional feelings. In turn, this implies feelings disclose (value-)facts, entailing a concept of *cognitive affectivity*. A common concern when discussing values, disvalues, and feelings is that these are merely subjective, relative, and—as affective—blind. The phenomenological analysis, however, leads to an altogether different conclusion. Values and Disvalues are real, therefore perspective-bound, whereas feelings fulfil a cognitive function; they are intentional acts: *feeling is not blind but sees*.

Returning to the analogy with visual perception, each feeling apprehends the axiological event from a different angle. Just like the physical sides of an object are perceptible only from specific perspectives, so too certain sides of the disvalue are disvalueceptible only from specific perspectives. One can imagine taking photographs of a, say, a chair from different angles. The frontal perspective, the birds-eye perspective, and the side perspective each lead to a different picture of the chair. Notably, some of its features can only be inferred from comparing and combining the pictures—e.g., the fact that the chair has four legs cannot be observed in any single picture from these perspectives (under ideal conditions). The case of visual perception is similar to photography in a crucial respect, namely that even while three or four of the chair's legs might be visible, the chair's backside is not. Nevertheless, the chair or any object of visual perception is not experienced as a mere surface (i.e., what is perceptible from a fixed

perspective), but as an extended object with depth. In phenomenological terminology, the immediately given visual aspect of the chair is complemented with the horizon consciousness of the chair as an object of perception, encompassing all possible further acts of perception of that chair—the possibility of viewing it from another angle, of touching it, and so forth.

The case for valueception is structurally analogous to perception in several, but not all respects. The most obvious disanalogy is that while there exists an organ for visual perception (the eyes), no corresponding organ for valueception can be identified. Rather, feeling is a holistic phenomenon and might be best described in terms of an affective being-in-the-world of the person. Furthermore, the illustration appealing to photography brackets out the dimension of time, i.e., the dynamic and active character of perception and movement. Similarly, the disvalue realization in the anecdote unfolds temporally and is situational.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the analogy persists in the fact that the feelings of the latecomer, the classmates, and the lecturer can be compared to the photographs taken from different angles.

Just like the frontal, birds-eye, and side perspectives revealed separate aspects of the physical object ‘chair’, so the sensual pain, the embarrassment, the pity, and the glee each capture an axiological picture of the disvalue object in the anecdote. Admittedly, it is more difficult to denote the disvalue object than the physical object, but that is a separate issue. Referring to the axiological characteristic of the situational type ‘falling in public’ works as a proxy for the time being. Furthermore, similar to how the fact that the chair has four legs could not be observed from any single photograph, so certain features of the disvalue-fact are proprietary to the perspectives. This means, for instance, that the sensual pain of falling down is felt only by the latecomer. One might argue that the classmates cringing in their seats as they see him fall is a physical response as well, and that activation of the mirror neuron system implies that they too experience sensual pain, e.g., an isomorphic copy of his pain. This might be true, however, such

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<sup>1</sup> I elaborate on both issues throughout the course of the investigation.

a case of emotional contagion retains the phenomenological difference that the sensual pain of the latecomer is primary and the cringing derivative from it. In phenomenological terminology, the latecomer's sensual pain is originally given, whereas the classmates' cringing is non-originarily given.

So far, this concerned the stratum of sensual feelings of the disvalue realization in the anecdote. Addressing the psychic stratum, further details can be fleshed out. The classmates' pity corresponds to the latecomer's embarrassment. These psychic feelings are symmetrical in the sense that they both exhibit a negative affective valence. They are both unpleasant, albeit in qualitatively different fashions. Embarrassment and pity are in tune with each other in another respect as well, since both feelings express an evaluative stance towards the relevant event. If the anecdote continued, the pity might have elicited a value-response ("Wertantwort") in one or more of the classmates, prompting them to get up and help the latecomer—again, the less common but more accurate term would be disvalue-response ("Unwertantwort"). In a similar way, the latecomer's embarrassment might be the reason why the latecomer would not have told his friends about the mishap afterwards.

Concerning the lecturer's glee, her psychic feeling is complementary rather than symmetrical, because glee exhibits a positive affective valence. For her, it is a pleasant feeling even though it corresponds to the latecomer's humiliation. This is best expressed in the Germanism *schadenfreude*, literally translating to "the joy taken from another's harm." In light of this reversal of the affective valence—the latecomer's psychic pain corresponds to the lecturer's psychic joy—*schadenfreude* is a perverted feeling. The notion of perverted feeling is used here in the literal sense, from Latin "per-" for "away", "wrongly" and "-versio" for "turning" or "change", usually translated as "distortion", "corruption", or "reversal."<sup>2</sup> Again, glee entails an

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<sup>2</sup> Perverted feelings can be contrasted with inverted feelings, for feelings that turn into their opposite (from Latin "in-versio"), and converted feelings, for feelings that become another feeling altogether (from Latin "con-versio"). Although such emotional dynamics have been studied by psychoanalysis, their root traces back to scholastic accounts of ethics and emotionality. I will address this from an axiological perspective in the chapter on *Axiodynamics*.

evaluative stance and might be considered the reason for the lecturer refraining from helping the latecomer, subtly grinning with malicious satisfaction instead.

The notion of affective perversion brings me back to the analogy with visual perception one last time. Another way to phrase that perspective binds visual perception is to refer to a simplified characterisation of perspective in terms of the position of an observer in space and time. This implies an interchangeability of observers. Under idealized circumstances, for instance, two identical cameras will take two identical pictures of a chair, except for the timestamp. However, if camera<sub>1</sub> was used to take the second shot and camera<sub>2</sub> for the first shot, they would have produced identical pictures again and, therefore, are interchangeable. For visual perception, a similar assumption underlies innumerable applications, such as positioning a night watch for military purposes or when devising perspective-sensitive psychological paradigms, e.g., Piaget's mountains for children or Hare's competitive food paradigm for chimpanzees.

However, visual perception is not readily conceived under idealized conditions, and there are serious reasons for doubting the assumption that there exists anything like pure observation (or pure measurement, for that matter). This, in turn, casts doubt on the assumption of the interchangeability of the observer. Consider the examples of birdwatching or looking through a measurement instrument, such as a telescope or a microscope. These examples make clear that visual perception is imbued by the individual's learning history and sensitive to the current subjective state. In all three examples, an expert can observe a myriad of phenomena, whereas the novice might fail to notice anything at all. The interchangeability of the observer is an implausible assumption for these concerns, and it is implausible too with respect to, e.g., a fatigued and a fresh observer or an observer missing one eye with one who has both. This means that referring to the observer's position in space and time is not sufficient to characterize perspective in visual perception, but the observing subject plays a constitutive role as well.

The same insight holds and is even amplified for the case of valueception. In fact, valueception can only be understood in light of the valueceiver's personality, interests, and present mental state and situation. Tying this back to the analogy with visual perception, these factors would be analogous to the visual perceiver's position in space and time, mental state, condition of the organs, and so forth. While visual perception is bound by the position in space and time, valueception is bound by the person's preference structure. Before this backdrop and appealing to its roots in Blaise Pascal's philosophy, material value ethics has been conceived as a *topology of the heart*. Within material value ethics, preference structure is the axiological notion of personality, which accordingly is termed the *ordo amoris* or *ordre du cœur*. The preference structure is the totality of a person's acts of preference, e.g., preferring tulips to roses (and for what occasion), preferring Hellenistic art to expressionistic art, etc. This means that the preference structure entails a person's stance as to which values/disvalues are higher/lower compared to others. To paraphrase Max Scheler's definition: to know the preference structure of a person is to know the person entirely; it is the essence of personal being. Since intentional feeling apprehends values/disvalues, it can be said to be grounded in the person's preference structure. In the phenomenological constitutional order, preference structure is foundational for intentional feeling. This implies that if valueception axiologically depends on a person's personality, their interests, and the current situation, then assuming the interchangeability of the observer loses its credibility for the most part.

Interest, in turn, can be understood as the selective function entailed in acts of valueception, i.e., picking up on certain features of the axiologically relevant situation but not others. Within the visual analogy, interest could be linked to a tinted lens, making some features of the environment pop out through contrast in colour while others fade into the background—as is utilized in green shades designed to make the red indicators of an airplane's measurement gears pop out while dimming out sunlight. Similarly, a person's interest axiologically "colour" their valueception, making certain qualities of the value-fact more salient while blurring others, as is

typically observed with regards to so-called natural selfishness (i.e., almost automatically appraising a situation in terms of self-interest).

The case of interest further strengthens the dependency of valueception on the person's individuality. Compare, for instance, the classmates' pity with the lecturer's glee. A classmate might feel a strong bond with the classmates of her semester, holding solidarity amongst peers in high esteem. She feels that it is her responsibility to help one of her comrades, painfully aware that anybody could have had the same fate. Attending the latecomer's situation clearly beats out continuing with the lecture as if nothing had happened—she shares a common altruistic preference in this given situation with most of the other classmates. For the lecturer, the situation is different. She was just getting in the flow, and her dominant motive in this instance was to carry on and deliver her message in the strongest form possible (albeit her gleeful grin might lead to the opposite for any student noticing it, i.e., questioning her integrity). Adding that nobody is perfect, her self-interest trumped her altruistic concern, at least temporarily making her insensitive to the situational dimension that it was one of her own students who fell, and that her behaviour in the context is exemplary given her professional role. It is not as simple as saying: in this situation, a good person feels pity, a bad person feels glee; or even, a good person should feel pity, a bad person is expected to feel glee but should feel remorse. Rather, preference structure and interest help explain how acts of valueception make sense of the situation in the anecdote. Practically anyone will be able to recall familiar situations, e.g., being insensitive to a beggar's suffering when rushing for a plane. In phenomenological terms, they explain the spontaneous constitution of meaningful experience through the emotional apprehension of values and disvalue.

Another dimension of the anecdote concerns the latecomer having a crush on one of the classmates, Cassy. In material value ethics, love and hate are the ultimate foundation of emotional life. Contrasted with interest and valueception, their *axiological function is neither selective nor apprehensive but expansive*. This means that love and hate discover values and

disvalues, thereby expanding a person's axiological horizon. More specifically, in these basic emotional acts, the person discovers the fundamental quality of values/disvalues, namely that they are higher/lower in various, qualitatively different ways. *Love, therefore, is not blind but sees*. Rather, he who does not love is blind—precisely to the realm of values, its order, and ultimately the meaning of life. What is often overlooked is that the same holds for hate: *hate, too, is not blind but sees*. She who cannot hate is blind—to the realm of disvalues and, *mutatis mutandis*, everything this entails.

Most of what we know about the realms of values and disvalues points to a not entirely symmetrical structure, but rather to proper laws and orders for each realm. This does not mean that they would be unrelated, co-illuminate each other or at times even intersect. Nicolai Hartmann (1949) demonstrated this for Aristotle's *mesotes* theory, showing how one virtue (special value) can be inferred from two complementary vices (special disvalues).<sup>3</sup> Without going into further detail, it is important to note that in material value ethics, the notions of love and hate are used terminologically to describe spontaneous emotional cognition of values and disvalues.

What could this mean for the anecdote? Having a crush on someone is not the same as love. But it can be a start. So allow me to add to the narrative. For this purpose, let us call the latecomer John.

Cassy was on the phone when John fell, and she missed half of it. That was not by chance, but because Cassy felt intimidated by the lecturer, Karen, and wanted to escape her gaze. "It feels as if she would stare at me. I do not know why she keeps looking over. Is there something wrong with me?" Cassy did not notice John up to this point, but when he fell, he got her attention. She felt for him. "I would be so ashamed if that happened to me. I would bury my head in the sand."

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<sup>3</sup> The relationship between love and hate has been subject of debate. In broad strokes, three camps can be dissociated: love first theories that assert the primacy of love (or value or the good), e.g., *privatio amoris* theories or some readings of Scheler's ethics, hate first theories that assert the primacy of hate (or disvalue or evil), e.g., Schopenhauer's philosophy, and dualistic theories that assert an equiprimordiality of love and hate (or value/disvalue or good/evil), e.g., Manichean cosmology or Schelling's philosophy.

Then things settled down, and Karen went on with her lecture. When she paused with that enigmatic look on her face, everybody knew that she was going to ask one of those questions again that seem rhetoric at first, only to turn out as trick questions afterwards. “For Kant, what is the opposite of ‘empirical’?”, Karen asks—supposing that it was an introductory course in philosophy. Silence ensues. “Theoretical?”, Cassy thinks at first, and probably most of her classmates thought the same. “That cannot be it... Ah, I remember, with Kant it is always about the ‘transcendental’.” Even though Cassy is now quite sure that she got the correct answer, she hesitates. “Karen is just going to follow up with more questions, and then I am going to look stupid if I do not know the answers.” Just when it seemed that nobody dared to respond, John raised his hand and gave the correct answer. As expected, Karen countered, “The categories... The starry skies above... The white lie...” John held his ground but eventually had to concede. At this point, Cassy was amazed. Not because John’s performance, but because of his bravery. He dared to speak up after what had happened earlier during the session. In the aftermath, Cassy should talk to John for the first time after class, and in the ensuing years, they should become lovers. When looking back and telling their story, Cassy never fails to mention that she was inspired by John that day. “He was not afraid to make a fool of himself. I admire that about him. Since that day, I have made a point of speaking up. Knowing John has not only made me so much more secure in myself, but what I love about him is that he knows that ‘in order to learn, you have to be willing to fail’.”

Loving John, Cassy discovered the values he embodied from her point of view: bravery and a learner’s attitude. Opening her heart for John allowed Cassy to see these values and consequently to become more secure in herself, to dare, to speak up, ultimately to change, and to realize these values for herself as well. Love, in this way, transformed her preference structure; she grew, and—touched by another—her personality matured.

## **Outlining the Proposal of an Axiological Approach to Psychopathology**

What does all of this have to do with psychopathology? The proposal of an axiological approach conceives of mental disorders as pathological modifications of the way persons relate to values or disvalues. This comprises pathological modifications of valueception, preference structure, value and disvalue realization and prevention, pattern of feeling states, love and hate, and so forth.

Within the anecdote, Karen's glee was harmless. Experiencing *schadenfreude* once in a while is perfectly normal, perfectly neurotic. If she felt this way regularly, perhaps every time somebody got hurt, humiliated, or scanted, it would be a different story. Such a pattern of taking joy from the misfortune of others can be described as sadistic. Natural pleasure-seeking tendencies might then predispose her to search out or even create situations in which others suffer. The pattern of feeling states thus acquires a symbolic function: they are symptomatic from the axiological perspective. Another example could be if one of the other classmates observed John's fall but was left completely unaffected by it. If seated accordingly, so that he had even seen John's face contort to a grimace, then staying cold would be a bit off. If such a lack of feelings were the rule rather than the exception for a significant period, then this could speak for a depressive phase. From the axiological perspective, the depressive feeling of not-feeling can be redescribed as an inhibition of intentional feeling, resulting in a difficulties to resonante with value/disvalue realization.

The point of these illustrations is to provide a preliminary, heuristic understanding of the connection between mental disorder and axiological change. Before this backdrop, it is paramount to address a moralistic misconception from the outset. Axiological concepts are readily misused for the moral condemnation of mental disorder or the glorification of certain ways of life conduct. Such misuse is not merely a theoretical possibility, but a historical fact (Eigner, 2010; Foth, 2013; Graumann, 1985; Kolnai, 2017). For this reason, axiological

psychopathology must *expressis verbis* be delineated from such moralistic, ideological, and ultimately life-hostile interpretations. While the axiological perspective figures amongst the first approaches to the phenomenon of mental disorder and psychopathology, its conceptualization under the conditions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires correction and reform.

Axiology, the study of values and disvalues, comes with a megalomaniac promise. This is best illustrated with reference to the myth of the Garden and the words of the snake to man, full of temptation: *Eritis sicut deus, scientes bonum et malum. You will be like God, knowing good and evil*. The quest for knowledge of good and evil has been universal throughout the history of mankind. In pre-scientific medicine, the moral character of man, his health and self-realization have been linked conceptually, as have moral defect, sickness and failure. This is attested in the old terminology for disorders involving mental faculties, such as the *morbus sacer* (the holy disease, i.e., epilepsy) or moral insanity (psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder). The scientific approach to medicine and psychopathology has overthrown such ideological perspectives only over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This still ongoing process revealed the all-too-linear associations morality-health and immorality-disorder as untenable. The groundbreaking developments in the clinical field that occurred at the verge of the last century have cast a new light on this old phenomenon: Freud's psychoanalysis has demonstrated that neuroses subvert human autonomy, obscuring and limiting the capacity for freedom of choice and therefore moral responsibility. Revising Freud, Frankl's logotherapy showed that humans intrinsically strive for a meaningful life and that they fall ill when they become desperate (noogenic neurosis). Numerous further examples will follow. While mental health is part of the good life, mental disorders can (but must not) hinder human flourishing. Still, vulnerability and (mental) disorder are an inevitable part of the human condition, and maturity is about coming to terms with this existential situation rather than imagining a life free of suffering.

Can this complex picture be integrated into a unifying perspective? I will propose an affirmative answer to this question. The unifying perspective is that of *axiological psychopathology*. As

indicated by the term, this entails an axiological approach to psychopathology. Etymologically, axiology derives from Greek ἀξία, “axia” for “value” or “worth” (timology and value theory can be used synonymously). Accordingly, axiology is concerned with the study of values and disvalues. In broad strokes and following Cohn’s (1932) terminology, axiology can be divided into the fields of *axiotics*, i.e., the study of the ontological status of values and disvalues, *systematics*, i.e., the study of the relations obtaining between values and disvalues, and *ergetics*, i.e., the study of the conditions under which values and disvalues are realized or prevented. Applying the axiological perspective to psychopathology means viewing mental disorders as altered patterns of relating to values. Generalizing the axiological perspective for the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry recasts their more encompassing conceptual repertoire in value-theoretical terminology, including notions such as health or vulnerability. In this way, the historical associations morality-health and immorality-disorder can be overcome and reframed, albeit without losing their original insight. Its principled mistake is to focus too narrowly on the row of moral values and disvalues and to conflate a person’s fate with causal consequences stemming from their environment, either physical, societal, or familial. Besides that, the deep-seated intuition that mental health and disorder are closely tied to and, in fact, essentially depend upon an individual’s manner of relating to values and disvalues can be justified and explained through philosophy, science, and practice within the axiological framework. This means that the patient’s relation to values and disvalues is the subject matter of axiological psychopathology (object-level of science, statements of fact), which is strictly delineated from formulating moral judgments about patients or their disorders (object-level of morals, value judgements). To that end, the central notion of disorder of value (“Wertstörung”) must be developed theoretically, and the sub-class of clinically relevant disorders of value dissociated and assessed within psychopathology. This implies that the domain, e.g., of moral or aesthetic value-deficiency falls outside the scope of this investigation, which is concerned only with pathogenic and pathological modifications of value-relations.

In the following, I will approach this task mostly from the angle of the phenomenological philosophy of values, specifically material value ethics. This approach was originally developed by Max Scheler (1913), who rejuvenated the emotionalist tradition spanning from St. Augustine to Blaise Pascal and put forward a phenomenological investigation into the core concepts of axiology. The first systematic application of material value ethics to the field of psychopathology was put forward by Kurt Schneider (1920)—when he derived his nowadays canonical distinction between endogenous and reactive depressions from an in-depth engagement with Scheler’s theory of the stratification of emotional life. Even though Schneider continued with his value-oriented clinical investigations (Schneider, 1921, 1932, 1946), Viktor Frankl’s logotherapy (1946; Frankl, von Gebattel & Schulz 1957) must be seen as the first fully developed axiological approach to psychopathology based on Schelerian phenomenological value theory and level ontology. Frankl’s influence played a significant role in the dissemination of ideas from phenomenological ethics in the clinical field, in particular, humanistic and personalistic psychotherapy. Since then, research in psychopathology as well as material value ethics has made significant strides. In this vein, Guido Cusinato (2018a) has called for a stronger integration of phenomenological ethics and psychopathology by advancing a modern take on the axiological approach in his psychopathology of the *ordo amoris*. Albeit a significant part of my contribution consists in recovering the complexity and heterogeneity of the discourse of axiological psychopathology, the works of Scheler, Schneider, Frankl, and Cusinato figure as four load-bearing columns in my theoretical foundations and have originally provided me with orientation throughout my studies: two philosophers, two physicians.

Anecdotally, another motivation for my investigation was to imagine what might have been the contents of Scheler’s treatise on the *ordo amoris*, that remains a fragment to this day due to the loss of a substantial part of the manuscript (Frings, 1966, 1972). The original title of the manuscript was supposed to be “On the ‘Order of Love’ and its Aberrations”, but the parts on the main theme of the investigation, “Aberrations of the Ordo Amoris, Arranged according to

certain Types, with their Origins explained”, were lost. Reconstructive efforts in the literature have linked the theme of the aberrations of the *ordo amoris* with other elements of Scheler’s philosophy, first and foremost resentment and the idols of self-knowledge. Cusinato’s (2017, 2018a, 2019) programme of the psychopathology of the *ordo amoris* can be read as a continuation of this approach, elaborating on Scheler’s aberrations. These pioneering contributions provided an important guide but remained mostly philosophical in their interest and outlook. My motivation, in contrast, lies less in reconstructing and continuing Schelerian philosophy alone, but also to extend it to the clinical field and engage in mutual dialogue with psychopathological research and psychotherapeutic practise.

I will now proceed to outline my contribution in more detail. My agenda is to establish axiology as a foundational discourse for psychopathology. I operate from a perspective of *maximalism*, meaning that I envision a framework that bridges between philosophy, science, and practice. An axiological foundation for psychopathology promises to address philosophical questions of ultimate justification and ontological categories, scientific concerns of exact measurement and causal explanation, as well as the practical issue of guiding action in diverse clinical situations. Tackling the challenge of re-actualizing and applying phenomenological value ethics, the axiological perspective is modified and corrected according to the critiques offered by competing approaches to ethics, mostly existentialism and the philosophy of alterity. Within the domain of axiological research, the systematic consideration of disvalues and disorder can be considered a trademark of my approach and contrasted with the field’s common bias towards values and order.

The general thrust of my contribution is to conceive of basic psychopathological notions in axiological terms. Adding to the well-established connection between value realization and the experience of meaning (Frankl, 2015; Maslow, 1961), this mainly encompasses developing an axiological concept of mental disorder—both in terms of recasting established nosological categories and defining novel nosological categories in axiological terminology. Since value-

orientation is usually invoked along the lines of a critique of psychopathology's deficiency orientation, focusing on the axiological notion of disorder must be considered not only a disruptive but an innovative impulse that fills a gap in the field.

Drawing on the notion of intentional feelings from phenomenological ethics (without being limited to it), I specify the more encompassing concept of valued disturbance ("Wertstörung") by introducing the concept of *disorders of valueception* ("Wertnehmungsstörung"). Homing in on the intersection between ethics and psychopathology, disorders of valueception are modelled as pathologically altered manners of apprehending values and disvalues. This concept can be distinguished from Frankl's *noogenic neuroses* that emerge from a lack of meaning by employing a broader notion of value and disvalue that includes sensual, vital, psychic, and personal/spiritual spheres. Logotherapy, by contrast, is prone to focus one-sidedly on the highest, personal/spiritual sphere.

Accordingly, the concept of disorders of valueception is placed within the broader context of an axiological theory of personality. This implies two additional levels of disorder: at the more superficial personological level of conscious stance-taking, behaviour and pattern of affective states, there are disorders in value-attitudes ("Fehlhaltung" or "Werthaltungsstörung"), and at the deeper personological level of personality, there are disorders of preference structure ("Präferenzstrukturverwirrung"). Disorders of preference structure, to a certain degree, correspond to the psychopathology of the *ordo amoris*, even though I employ the term in a more specific way for pathological modifications in the acts of preference. Furthermore, the notion of axiological vulnerability is introduced to identify the conditions of possibility for value and disvalue realization and prevention in the structure of personal being ("Person-Sein" or "personales Sein"). Addressing the dynamics between the personological layers, the concept of axiodynamics is developed as a generalization of the concepts of psychodynamics (psychoanalysis) and noodynamics (logotherapy), thereby establishing the meta-perspective of axiological psychopathology and providing an integrative framework.

In the axiological tradition, emotionality is not viewed as the chaotic and irrational counterpart of rationality, but as following its own proper laws and exhibiting its own forms of rationality, logic, and order. In the literature, this is referred to as the order of the heart, *ordre du cœur*, in Pascal's terms. Adapting this central notion of emotionalism, I propose to refer to the pathological modification or even breakdown of the ordered structure of emotionality in terms of a disorder of the heart—*désordre du cœur*.

### **Overview and Discussion of the Relevant Research**

I will now review and discuss the relevant research for an axiological approach to psychopathology. In broad strokes, I will structure this chapter along the lines provided by the relevant disciplines of philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, also touching adjacent fields when necessary. More specifically, I will address the philosophical discourse on material value ethics and specifically its dialogue with psychiatry and psychopathology. Concerning philosophy, I will spotlight the promising theories and concepts for the theoretical foundations for psychopathology, which are present in the classics of the field. In psychiatry and psychopathology, I trace clinical investigations of axiological concepts, especially regarding influential applications of material value ethics in clinical psychopathology and logotherapy. Consequently, I will turn to the axiological contributions from psychotherapy and clinical psychology, reconstructing the field from indirect influences of material value ethics through pioneering works from psychiatry. Afterwards, I use moral psychology as a thematic guide for navigating relevant contributions from developmental, differential, and social psychology—dedicating special interest to the psychometric discourse and the application of value measures on clinical populations. Whenever appropriate, I comment on the scattered contributions to material value ethics, highlighting yet unharvested philosophical potentials for psychopathological application, relevant controversies (both historical and contemporary),

axiological interpretations of classical psychological paradigms such as attitudes, cognitive dissonance, affordances, or social learning. Lastly, I point out connections to adjacent fields of coaching, pedagogy, pastoral care, and theology.

### **Philosophy and especially Phenomenology**

From a historical point of view, the axiological discourse is so rich that it can hardly be synthesized into a simple narrative (Hirose & Olson, 2015; Kraus, 1937). While the subject matter of axiology can be traced back at least to the beginnings of philosophy in ancient times, the axiology approach in a more narrow sense reached its height during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, practically all major philosophies have engaged at length with the issue of values and disvalues—hence scholastic, romanticist, neo-Kantian, phenomenological, existentialist, language-philosophical, positivistic, etc. positions and the controversies that have emerged between them must be distinguished. Since my aim is to outline the philosophical discourse on material value ethics from the phenomenological line of thought, I will limit the scope of my following elaborations accordingly.

Originally developed within economics, the notion of value was introduced into the pre-phenomenological philosophy through Hermann Lotze (1858, 1868), who contrasted the being of things with the validity of values. Lotze argued for the objectivity of value and value cognition and against their conception in terms of subjective appraisal. The thrust of Lotze's argumentation has been critically picked up by the pioneers of phenomenology, such as Franz Brentano (1874; 1889) or Rudolf Eucken (1888, 1893). In spite of their differences, the common denominator between Brentano and Eucken is their rejection of Lotze's metaphysical approach in favour of an active perspective on the realization of values and disvalues in conscious life. In the narrow sense, material value ethics emerged with the philosophy of Max Scheler (1913, 1923, 1928a) and his critique of Kant's formalistic conception of the a priori and the moral law on the grounds of the phenomenological method (Husserl, 1901). Since its inception, material

value ethics has been further developed by the likes of Edmund Husserl (1988), Dietrich von Hildebrand (1922; 1954, 1967), William Stern (1924), Eduard Spranger (1922), Nicolai Hartmann (1949), Paul Ricœur (1950; 1960), Roman Ingarden (1964), Robert S. Hartman (1967), Hans Reiner (1974), Manfred Frings (1969, 1996), Guido Cusinato (1999, 2014) and Roberta de Monticelli (2022).

Phenomenological ethics and material value ethics are sophisticated discourses that comprise complex positions and controversies. Accordingly, even listing only the main theses of the contributions of the authors quoted above would be an extremely laborious task. Instead, I will provide a condensed and narratively structured synopsis of the outlook of material value ethics. In an additional step, I will sketch the least common denominator of many of the authors by outlining basic tenets of the field.

Systematically, axiology is usually introduced as belonging to the discourse of meta-ethics (Schroeder, 2025), because the notions of value and disvalue can be used to compare and evaluate ethical positions such as utilitarianism (focus on the value of utility) or deontology (focus on virtues in terms of the values of character). The underlying distinctions concern morals, ethics and meta-ethics: morals articulate value judgements and concrete codices (you should do that, you should not do this), ethics systematically reflect and theorize about morals (what is the justification for the moral claim ‘you should do that?’), and meta-ethics is the birds-eye perspective that systematically reflects and theorizes about the ethical systems (how does this ethical justification work and how does it differ from another justification from a different ethical perspective?). As revealed by the term, phenomenological axiology addresses the meta-ethical perspective from the vantage point of phenomenological philosophy, meaning that the structures and correlates of consciousness are sought as the ultimate basis of enquiry, i.e., the structures and correlates in value/disvalue experience.

This is where Scheler (1913) enters the stage, because he founded the field of material value ethics in his *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value: A New Attempt Towards the*

*Foundations of an Ethical Personalism*. Scheler criticized the formalism of Kantian ethics for being unjustifiable on phenomenological grounds. Instead, Scheler conceived of value being as a primitive ontological category, i.e., there are three basic facts: essence (“So-Sein”), existence (“Dasein”), and value (“Wert-Sein”) (Scheler, 1926a, p. 242). Replacing Kant’s formal conception of the a priori with a material (i.e., empirical) account of the a priori (Cusinato, 1996; Henckmann, 1987; Khorkov, 2015; Zhang, 2011), value being is apprehended in a perception-like manner through intentional feelings. Furthermore, the a priori emotional cognition of values and disvalues reveals a hierarchical order among the four strata of sensual, vital, psychic, and spiritual/personal values. The hierarchy of values/disvalues is developed according to criteria such as higher persistence of higher values (the nutritional value of an apple vanishes once eaten, whereas the aesthetic value of a painting persists the gaze of the beholder), greater divisibility of lower values (cutting an apple in half does not diminish its nutritional value, while doing the same to a painting would destroy its aesthetic value) and higher forms of satisfaction for higher values (the pleasure of taste and the alleviation of hunger after eating an apple, contrasting with the elevation of participating in beauty of artistic expression). The experience of values and disvalues being higher and lower in a qualitatively different manner for each of the value strata is given in acts of preference (Cusinato, 1997; Scheler, 1913), which are in turn founded in the acts of love and hate that constitute the ultimate basis of emotional life and fulfil a value/disvalue-discovering function (Scheler, 1913, 1921, 1923; Wendt, 2021). This total structure of emotionality is addressed as the *ordo amoris* or the *heart* (Bermes et al., 2000; Mulligan, 2012). Values and disvalues are conceived as real being, entailing among other things that valueception in intentional feeling is perspective-bound, fallible, dependent on the valueceiver’s personality, etc. (as illustrated in the anecdote from the introduction). This contrasts not only the neo-Kantian view of value in terms of validity that is apprehended by reason (which is viewed in opposition to emotion), but also other conceptions within the discourse on material value ethics. For instance, Nicolai Hartmann (1949) conceives

of values/disvalues as ideal being, akin to Platonic ideas, which are nevertheless apprehended emotionally. This attests to the complexity inherent in the discourse on phenomenological value theory.

In Scheler's thought, material value ethics is not only systematically interlinked with the phenomenology of emotionality, but also with the theory of other-experience and philosophical anthropology. In the *Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler (1923, 2008) develops a phenomenological theory of other-experience in terms of unmediated expression-perception ("unmittelbare Ausdruckswahrnehmung"). Even though the contemporary debate shifted terminologically from sympathy to empathy and from unmediated expression-perception to direct perception (Wendler, 2023, forthcoming), the basic phenomena dissociated by Scheler are recognized to this day (Breyer, 2015; Zahavi, 2001): Feeling-as-one or emotional fusion ("Einsfühlen") the ego and the alter ego are completely identified, encompassing an idiopathic (the alter ego is absorbed in the ego) and an heteropathic form (the ego is absorbed in the alter ego)—e.g., in hypnosis, religious experiences or sexual ecstasy. In emotional contagion ("Gefühlsansteckung"), foreign emotions or emotions elicited by objective features of the environment are lived through by the ego—e.g., when entering a bar and being affected by the positive mood. In feeling-with ("Mitfühlen"), an emotional experience is shared by two or more subjects, such as when a father and a mother mourn at the grave of their lost child. Lastly, feeling-after ("Nachfühlen") concerns the emotional apprehension of another's feelings, most closely resembling contemporary concepts of empathy in mental simulation (Goldman, 2006) or inference to unobservable mental states (Gopnik, 2009). These concepts have played a critical role in the recent debate between the so-called theory theory, simulation theory and perception theory of empathy (Wendler, 2023; Zahavi, 2011). Scheler's theory of sympathy can be read in continuity with his material value ethics, further developing the material a priori as an emotional a priori (Khorkov, 2015). Akin to valueception, subtypes of sympathy comprise intentional feeling, whereas all forms are variations of emotional cognition (Cusinato, 1996;

Henckmann, 1987). Furthermore, love and hate are invoked as the ultimate emotional basis also for the acts of sympathy, providing a common conceptual foundation (McGill, 1942). The theory of sympathy is embedded into the philosophy of nature and man, therefore exhibiting an additional commonality in the stratification of emotional life and level ontology (Schloßberger, 2005).

The last contention already points to philosophical anthropology. This concept is associated with Scheler's (1928a) *The Human Place in Cosmos*, but penetrates his thought throughout (Fischer, 2008; Frings, 1996). In his later writings, Scheler envisaged philosophical anthropology as the *prima philosophia*, i.e., an even more foundational framework than phenomenology or metaphysics. He develops the distinction between several forms of drive along the lines of his account of level ontology within the psychic-vital sphere (urge, instinct, associative memory, and practical intelligence). Drive is the constitutive force for the moment of reality in experiences of resistance, therefore acquiring crucial methodological significance for Scheler's revision of the phenomenological epoché and reduction within realistic phenomenology (Cusinato, 1998; Janssen, 1994; Scheler, 1979c).<sup>4</sup> Scheler's anthropology is dualistic in the sense that drive is opposed by the equiprimordial principle of spirit (Cusinato, 1995), even though the conceptualization of the vivification of spirit and the spiritualization of life complicate the picture (Denninger, 1961; Henckmann, 2011). The concepts of the impotence of spirit ("Ohnmacht des Geistes") and the spirit as naysayer ("Neinsager" or "Neinsagenkönner") are crucial, describing how the spirit guides and inhibits drive energy through ideas even though the spirit would causally ineffective in his own right—akin to guiding a horse by holding a carrot in front of it (Wendler & Wendt, 2023). The human place in cosmos is special, because drive and spirit converge in man and only in man amongst all real beings. Picking up on an old axiological motive (found also in Lotze, for instance), Scheler

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<sup>4</sup> I will discuss this at length in the chapter on *Methodological Reductionism in Realistic Phenomenology*.

interprets the metaphysical structure of man in terms of a microcosm-macrocosm correspondence, making human experience a mirror of universal knowledge and further consolidating philosophical anthropology as the first philosophy (Dzwiza-Ohlsen & Speer, 2021; Kutlu, 2015; Lenk, 1958). Recent research has shown that Scheler's anthropology is a crucial source for his account of embodiment, systematically interconnected with the theory of values within biosemiotics (Cusinato, 2020a; Davis, 2015). In this vein, the notion of man/the human being was identified as the phenomenological origin of normativity (Schloßberger, 2019; Wendler, 2021). Since the relationship between drive and spirit lies at the core of Scheler's concept of sublimation, this concept too has been picked up within cultural theory and psychopathology (Sepp, 2015).

After elaborating a few of the basic contentions of Scheler's material value ethics, I now turn to contextualizing it within the discourse of phenomenological ethics. Following N. Hartmann (1949), the promise of Scheler's approach to value ethics was to provide a new synthesis between Kantian a priori knowledge in ethics and Nietzschean historical pluralism of evaluations. Differently put, material value ethics was perceived by some as the new synthesis in ethics since the Enlightenment period (Hartmann, 1949; Kraus, 1937). Scheler's pioneering work thus inspired a tidal wave of research into the phenomenological foundations of ethics. A number of theorists criticized Scheler for focusing one-sidedly on love and value, thereby neglecting hate, disvalues and the dark side of emotionality in general. For this reason, thinkers such as Hartmann (1949), Kolnai (2007) or Reiner (1974) investigated whether there are proper laws governing the realm of disvalues, considered the possibility that the realms of values and disvalues are not structured symmetrically and researched means to illuminate one realm with reference to the other. Furthermore, the relationship to Kantian ethics has since troubled value ethicists, leading to various attempts to reconcile the old and the new approach to ethics (Hartmann, 1949; Reiner, 1974). Relatedly, some authors were puzzled by the lack of a treatment of the issue of freedom of will in Scheler's ethics, proposing to complement

phenomenological value ethics accordingly (Hartmann, 1949; Ricoeur, 1950)—reintroducing Socrates’ puzzle whether the will is free to act in contradiction with knowledge of the good (Buchheim, 2000; Cusinato, 2012). In a similar vein, von Hildebrand (1922; 1954) reconsidered a question from the context of deontological ethics in ancient Greece, namely whether moral character development (moral maturity) is a prerequisite for value apprehension, and, conversely, whether character flaws in the moral domain obscure value feeling, entailing value-blindness. Relatedly, von Hildebrand (1967) elaborated the notion of *heart* from a Catholic perspective, connecting to the microcosm-macrocosm and microtheos-macrotheos correspondence typical for the anthropologically informed interpretation of material value ethics.

Concerning the Catholic origins of Scheler’s early philosophy, Spranger (1922) attempted to develop value ethics on the grounds of the Protestant worldview. On the other hand, within the Catholic community, Scheler’s philosophy is closely tied with the movement of personalism (von Hildebrand, 1967; Ingarden, 1964; Wojtyla, 1969, 2023) that evolves around personal being as a metaphysical connection between God and man and places the notion of love at the centre of philosophy and faith. The significance of material value ethics is best illustrated with reference to Karol Wojtyla’s (pope Johannes Paul II) works *Person and Act* (cf. Reifenrath, 1983; Wojtyla, 1969) and *Primacy of Spirit* (cf. Reifenrath, 1981; Wojtyla, 1980)—as, for instance, the latter sets out to investigate “[t]he possibility to develop a Christian ethics with reference to Max Scheler” (Wojtyla, 1980, p. 36). Another example is von Hildebrand’s influence on the Vatican’s position, specifically his personalistic interpretation of the ultimate end of marriage being love (instead of procreation), of marriage leading to an objective ontological transformation of the spouses personal being (therefore being indissoluble) and of the contradiction between contraceptives and the understanding of spousal love as self-gift (i.e., a prohibitive stance on contraception because of its counter-intentionality) (Farley, 2006; Giordano, 2018; von Hildebrand, 1933; 1984; A. von Hildebrand, 2000).

Outside the religious context, a personalistic orientation also pervaded the scientific study of man, particularly in the guise of Stern's critical personalism (Lamiell, 2003; Stern, 1924, 1950; Wertz, 2023). The opposite tendency exists as well. Robert Hartman (1967a, 1967b) pleaded for a stronger formalization of axiology, establishing it as a foundational science for meaning comparable to mathematics and natural science, culminating in the concept of a value calculus. Concerning the issue of providing a list of values and disvalues, the debate can be divided into two camps: on the one hand, there are those abstaining from defining a list, believing that this is a matter for the empirical sciences—for instance, Scheler (1913) holds phenomenology provides a priori knowledge of the value strata (not the values and disvalues themselves), but that every value or disvalue that could possibly be discovered would fall within one of the strata. On the other hand, some approach the issue of listing values and disvalues historically, e.g., by tracing value change throughout history (Bollnow, 1958; Joas, 1999; cf. Sauer, 2023), or by comparing the value preferences held in the epochs, i.e., in ancient Greece, in Christianity, in modernity, and in the present day (Hartmann, 1949). Others have normatively argued for a specific value system, e.g. Christian values (von Hildebrand, 1933) or proposed a set of basic/universal values (Bollnow, 1962; von Hildebrand, 1954; Spaemann, 1999).

The last point raises the contentious issue of whether phenomenological value ethics is equipped to describe the post-modern age, typically characterized by fragmentation, relativism, irony, relentless innovation, and technocracy (de Monticelli, 2022; Fuchs, 2020; Hackett, 2018; Schloßberger, 2019). This leads to Inga Römer's (2018) reading of the history of ethics, raising the point that material value ethics, since its conception, faced serious resistance both from without and within the phenomenological movement—ultimately leading to the downfall of the supposed breakthrough in ethics. Focusing on the latter, one strand of critique stemming from existentialism casts doubt on value realism and value objectivism, instead stressing the need for self-realization and the individual's constructive role in evaluation (Heidegger, 1927; Sartre, 1952). Notably, others have tried to synthesize existentialism and phenomenological axiology

(Baeva, 2012; Frings, 1969; Spaemann, 2000). The other line of critique stems from the philosophy of alterity, holding that material value ethics is incapable of accounting for the otherness of the other, rather subsuming the other person under predefined notions of values and their hierarchy (Levinas, 1961; Rosenzweig, 1954). Similarly, contemporary axiologists have attempted to integrate this criticism, e.g., in Cusinato's (2014, 2020) concept of the maieutic testimony in exemplarity. Cusinato's basic contention is that the encounter with an exemplar inspires the individual to live their life according to the values exemplified by the other, i.e., value cognition is enabled and amplified on grounds of the experience of alterity. Others have stressed that Scheler's theory of sympathy was in fact the first phenomenological theory of alterity (Liebsch, 2015; Scheler, 1923), tracing the first conceptual use 'the other as other' or the 'otherness of the other' to Scheler's theory of other-experience. Developing axiological perspectives under contemporary conditions requires recognizing and incorporating these critiques, if the notions of value and disvalue are to be reclaimed. Axiological psychopathology, too, has to account for the critiques of existentialism, the philosophy of alterity, and other comparable perspectives.

There exist various attempts to apply material value ethics to psychopathology from a philosophical perspective (for an overview, see Arndt, 2001). Since I will elaborate on this in detail throughout my investigation, I will limit myself here to outlining some notable contributions. The co-illuminating relationship between phenomenological ethics and psychopathology was recognized from the outset. Consider that Scheler published on the phenomenon of hysteria after pension ("Rentenhysterie") (Scheler, 1915d), his volumes on self-deception and the idols of self-knowledge (Scheler, 1915b), and on resentment (Scheler, 1915a) in Wilhelm Specht's *Journal for Pathopsychology*, thereby addressing a medically oriented audience. Amongst other things, the former treatise introduces the distinction between a surgical and a Socratic approach to psychotherapy, where the surgical approach is concerned with the isolation of mental events and a causal intervention into their succession,

while the Socratic approach strives to accompany and assist the patient's quest for self-knowledge. Furthermore, the connection between psychopathology and self-deception is elaborated throughout and placed within Scheler's philosophical taxonomy. Neuroses and other psychopathologies become a paradigm for demonstrating that inner perception, first-person-perspective, and intuition are not infallible, but in fact subject to a myriad of possible deceptions, and that the phenomenological structure of consciousness even genetically contributes to these deceptions—psychopathological modification is epistemologically valuable, because otherwise transparent (and therefore invisible) structures of experience become opaque and available for study. The latter treatise involves a critique and re-interpretation of Nietzsche's notion of resentment in terms of a tendency to falsely devalue those values which one is incapable of realizing, leading to a profound poisoning of the character that can be pathological or render vulnerable to psychopathology. In this way, resentment's role not only in the genesis of morals and culture but also in the genesis of psychopathology comes into view (Scheler, 1915a).

Picking up the theme of resentment and combining the perspectives of cultural critique and psychopathology, Manfred Frings (2005) proposed the dynamic of resentment to be at the root of the psychopathology of extreme acts of violence in terrorism. Frings poses the question whether certain forms of resentment are best understood in terms of an own-standing nosological category. Furthermore, Frings (1966, 1972) investigated the relationship between resentment and the *ordo amoris* in Scheler's thought. He demonstrated resentment's central role in bringing about the disorders of the heart, *inordinatio amoris*, and argued for a symptomatic interpretation of the pattern of feeling states that have usually been neglected within material value ethics in favour of intentional feelings. Resentment's usefulness for carving up the intersection between moral value disorders and psychopathologies has also been recognized by Dietrich von Hildebrand (1922; 1954) in his taxonomy of moral and pathological forms of value-blindness, identifying emotional blunting through repeated exposure or

cognitive deficits, e.g., in the subsumption of a given situation to the relevant class as factors contributing to value-blindness and hampering personal growth (cf. Hosle, 2026). The psychopathological significance of resentment has since been recognized by phenomenological psychopathologists and psychiatrists as well as psychoanalysts (Bormuth, 2009; Wurmser, 2009).

In a similar vein, Guido Cusinato (2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019) also develops a philosophical approach that homes in on an axiological characterization of personality disorder in the sense of a psychopathology of the *ordo amoris*. The intentional arc of personality (Cusinato, 2025) can be disturbed in two directions, either being weakened to the point of failing to connect the person with the expressive sphere of life, as in depression, or being hyperactive to the point of an overproduction of sense-making and self-reference, as in schizophrenia. Furthermore, Cusinato (2012, 2014) holds that self-realization in terms of becoming a person requires overcoming the attachment to the (vital-psychic) ego and sketches a way through an moral upswing and the cultivation of desire. The human being has an inner hunger to be born (Cusinato, 2015, 2020b)—akin to Frankl’s will to meaning. Being unable to still that hunger entails pathogenic development, the psychopathology of the *ordo amoris*.

When Cusinato (2021) identifies *amathia* (false pretence of knowledge in the sense of seemingly being in possession of knowledge when true knowledge in fact is lacking) and *philautia* (excessive love of the self) as the twofold origin of evil in his reading of Plato, he proposes a structurally similar self-referential structure for moral value disturbance as for pathological value disturbance. Although Cusinato does not develop the connection explicitly, this puts him in proximity to von Hildebrand’s investigations into the borderline of moral and pathological value disturbances. For von Hildebrand differentiates two principled sources of value-blindness: first, the lulling through the pleasant as an obscuring factor that clouds value-sightedness in which higher values are dimmed out (fade out) and lower values are flashed (fade in), e.g., in seduction; second, the value-hostile (“wertfeindlich”) tendency in which the gaze is

averted from the realm of values and turned towards the self, e.g., in pride. Whereas the second, value-hostile tendency of pride bears a striking phenomenological semblance with the notion of excessive self-reference, its potential for the psychopathology of the *ordo amoris* has yet to be unlocked.

Furthermore, from the vantage point of phenomenological axiology, Roberta Guccinelli (2022b) put forward a Schelerian analysis of Henrikus Rümke's happiness syndrome, aligning it with the perspective of the psychopathology of the *ordo amoris*. Studying trauma and disordered relationship functions, Guccinelli (2022a) connects Scheler's axiology, Waldenfels' responsive phenomenology, and Freud's associationism. In her attempt to reconstruct Scheler's philosophy of psychopathology, Guccinelli (2022c) focuses on issues such as disorders of drive and the lived-body (in her terminology: pulse-tendential pathologies), psychosis, self-deception, hedonism, and emotional blindness.

In sum, there exists a variety of philosophical contributions to the field of psychopathology from the perspective of material value ethics, connecting to the theory of sympathy and philosophical anthropology. In fact, material value ethics can be said to have been developed in close dialogue with psychopathology from the outset, employing practically all its central theoretical concepts in the study of pathological modifications of relating to values and disvalues. The true potential of this interdisciplinary endeavour, however, is only unlocked once the psychiatric and psychological approaches are added to the picture.

### **Psychiatry and Psychopathology**

I will first turn to psychiatry. Psychiatry and clinical psychopathology are the disciplines within which "applied phenomenology" (Zahavi, 2021) has been developed the farthest. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenological and anthropological psychiatry and psychopathology was considered the predominant approach to the field (Andreasen, 2007; Ellenberger, 1958; Passie, 1995; Schott & Tölle, 2006). Numerous own-standing accounts of phenomenological

psychiatry and psychopathology can be distinguished that exerted intellectual influence and even sedimented in institutions, e.g., Daseinsanalysis (Binswanger, 1962; Boss, 1975; Holzhey-Kunz, 2014; Kuhn, 1963) or anthropological psychiatry (Straus, 1960; von Gebattel, 1954; von Weizsäcker, 1926, 1940; Zutt, 1963). Considering the history of psychiatry from the vantage point of material value ethics allows to identify the axiological approach as a movement of the same order as these better-known phenomenological approaches that developed alongside them. In fact, the axiological approach is akin to the phenomenological one with regard to two decisive concerns: first, on the meta-level, both provide a philosophical foundation and ultimate epistemological justification for psychiatry and psychopathology, including the clarification of their scientific status. Second, on the object-level, both allow to delineate and define nosological categories as well as clinical concepts and practices, offering an own-standing orientation within the field as well as testable hypotheses. Before this backdrop, material value ethics (phenomenological axiology) can claim its special status for psychopathology.

I will now reconstruct the history of axiological psychopathology within the medical field. From a historical perspective and after Karl Jaspers's inception of the field of psychopathology (which occurred before he was influenced by phenomenological philosophy), Kurt Schneider's (1920) *Die Schichtung des emotionalen Lebens und der Aufbau der Depressionszustände* (*The stratification of emotional life and the structure of depressive states* (Schneider, 2012)) is reconstructed in the literature as the very first application of phenomenology to the clinical domain (Arndt, 2001; Cutting et al., 2016)—in this investigation, Schneider derived his nowadays canonical distinction between endogenous and reactive depressions from an in-depth engagement with Scheler's theory of the stratification of emotional life. Since then, the dialogue between material value ethics and psychopathology has taken place primarily in the approaches of anthropological psychiatry and logotherapy. Mediated through influential authors of these fields, concepts from material value ethics were also disseminated into humanistic

psychotherapy as well as psychoanalysis. I will focus on these approaches accordingly. Besides Schneider (1921, 1932, 1946) this includes the works of authors such as Arthur Kronfeld (1920, 1927), Eugene Minkowski (1927, 1933), Viktor Frankl (1946, 1994), Albrecht Bettermann (1951), Viktor E. F. von Gebsattel (1954, 1972), Carl Rogers (1951), Igor Caruso (1952), Heinz Häfner (1956), Eckart Wiesenhütter (1969), Charlotte Bühler (1962), Abraham Maslow (1968), John Cutting (2009), Giovanni Stanghellini and Milena Mancini (2017), Sanneke de Haan (2020), and Rolf Glazinski (2020).

Without being able to cover the whole wealth of the discourse, I will spotlight a few selected contributions that are particularly relevant for axiological psychopathology. As stated before, Schneider put forward the first clinical investigations on concepts from material value ethics. The historical background is that Scheler was Schneider's supervisor during his doctorate in philosophy (Cutting et al., 2016; Glazinski, 2020; Krahl & Schifferdecker, 1998). In this vein, Schneider (1920, 2012) developed the distinction between endogenous, reactive, and complex forms of depression on the basis of Scheler's stratified account of emotional life. I will lay out Schneider's basic thought in order to illustrate how he utilized material value ethics for psychopathology.

According to Schneider, endogenous depression is a disturbance of vital feelings, entailing restricted access to vital values, which is accompanied by an unmotivated, quasi-somatic feeling of sickness, reduced drive, and the so-called feeling of not feeling ("Gefühl der Gefühllosigkeit"). In contrast, reactive depression is a disturbance of psychic feelings, entailing both restricted access to psychic values and a bias towards psychic disvalues, accompanied by understandable yet intense feelings of psychic suffering. As John Cutting (2018) notes, the presupposition of a stratification of emotional life in Schneider's conception is necessary to account for the feeling of not feeling, because not only is the depressed person capable of experiencing feelings from other strata (e.g., if they poke their finger with a needle, they

experience sensual pain) but the feeling of not feeling is experienced itself as absence (cf. Ratcliffe, 2015).

Beyond depression, Schneider (1932) also developed the psychopathology of drive and will. Appealing to the philosophies of Scheler, Ludwig Klages, and Nicolai Hartmann, Schneider distinguishes the universal drive inherent in all experience, vital drives, and psychic drives—homing in on their psychopathological modifications. For instance, a person with a hyperthymic personality can be described in terms of a quantitative increase in general drive, while sexual inhibition or reduced appetite are described as disturbances of vital drives, and increased need for recognition for self-worth stabilisation is conceived as a disturbance in psychic drives. Relatedly, Schneider (1921) developed a clinical taxonomy of the disorders of love and empathy. These include cases in which love and empathy are inhibited (either habitually, developmentally or processual), cases in which the person is alienated from them, cases in which excessive self-reference hampers understanding others and relating emotionally to them and cases in which a basic depressive condition leads to an increase in pity (“Mitleid”) and a decrease in shared joy (“Mitfreude”).

The level ontological perspective of material value ethics also pervades Schneider’s (1947) thought concerning the definition of mental disorders in general, when he rejects the possibility of applying the category of sickness (“Krankheit”) to the psychic stratum, thereby restricting it to the vital stratum—this concerns Schneider’s critique of the German terms of “seelische Krankheit”, literally translated as “psychic sickness” or “Geisteskrankheit”, literally translated as “spiritual sickness”. The distinction between the vital and the psychic strata is drawn from level ontology and philosophical anthropology (Hartmann, 1940; Scheler, 1928a). Referring to the first edition of Scheler’s treatise on the *Nature of Sympathy* (which was then entitled *On the Phenomenology and Theory of Feelings of Sympathy and of Love and Hate*), Schneider clearly states his estimation of the significance of material value ethics for psychopathology: “The work that interests us here the most and that seems to be most suited as the foundation for

psychopathological research is that of Scheler” (Schneider, 1921, 113). This evaluation is also evident in Schneider’s (1946) canonical treatise *Clinical Psychopathology*, which contains revised versions of the discussed contributions. Besides Jaspers’ *General Psychopathology*, Schneider’s *Clinical Psychopathology* is regarded by many as one of ‘the two classical books in the field’—supporting my case for axiological psychopathology.

The next hallmark for my historical reconstruction of axiological psychopathology is logotherapy. The influence of material value ethics and philosophical anthropology on Frankl’s inception and development of logotherapy is well researched (Batthyány & Zsok, 2005; Gritschneider, 2005). In his autobiography, Frankl states that—after being introduced to Scheler’s philosophy by Rudolf Allers, who developed a personalistic theory of character and education—he carried Scheler’s book (the *Formalism*) with him “like a bible” (Frankl, 1995, p. 42). This philosophical foundation of logotherapy is also preserved and recognized in contemporary logotherapy, as is evident in Alfred Längle’s statement “Logotherapy and existential analysis are largely based on Scheler’s phenomenology, philosophy, and anthropology” (A. Längle, 2001, p. 289).

Frankl (1946) set out to oppose and complement Freud’s *depth psychology* with his own *height psychology*, which considers human existence not only from the depths of drives but also from the heights of spirit and value. Albeit the term height psychology has since taken on a life of its own and is usually attributed to Frankl (A. Längle, 1995; Lukas, 1983, 1992, 2011), Scheler already coined the term in a fragment that was only published posthumously, and after Frankl used the term already, making a convergent discovery most likely. “Depth psychology calls for a height psychology (noetics) that likewise goes beyond consciousness” (Scheler, 1987b, p. 109). Closely related, Frankl (2015) conceived of man to possess a will to meaning, contrasting the mere will to survival. He demonstrated that even though material wealth rose in the West, people suffered from a lack of meaning in their lives, ultimately making them sick. Frankl (1972) called the culturally widespread experience of meaninglessness a challenge to

psychotherapy and coined the term of noogenic neurosis to account for the phenomenon (Frankl, 1961). Frankl's engagement with the theory of neuroses measured a large extent, best exemplified with reference to the handbook series he edited together with Viktor E. F. von Gebattel and Johannes H. Schulz (1957). Noogenic neuroses are an extension of the psychodynamic concept of neuroses and result from spiritual causes, i.e., aetiologically they refer to the spiritual stratum of meaning and not the vital-psychic sphere of drive. Further correcting depth psychology, Frankl (1946) proposed the concept of noodynamics to complement psychodynamics, i.e., the dynamics that arise from value affordances (should and ought). Frankl (1946) embeds these views into what he terms dimensional ontology, referring to the stratified conception of man developed by N. Hartmann (1940) and Scheler (1928a). From the vantage point of axiological energetics, Frankl's value triad is regarded as one of his primary philosophical contributions, distinguishing creative values realized in action, experiential values realized in conscious experience, and attitudinal values realized in existential stance-taking.

Since its inception, logotherapy has been further developed regarding its didactical and clinical applications, as well as on theoretical grounds. A. Längle's (1995, 2000d, 2016) personal existential analysis attempts to integrate logotherapy more closely with existential analysis, focusing, on the one hand, on the emotional life and the world-disclosing function of feelings while, on the other hand, understanding man and the therapeutic encounter along the lines of basic motivations. Before the backdrop of increasing interest in manualised treatment and empirical validation (S. Längle, 2001; S. Längle & Klaassen, 2019; Wiesmeyr, 2022), others have opted for a psychometric approach, resulting, e.g., in the purpose in life test (Harlow et al., 1987; Martinez Ortiz et al., 2012) and the meaningful life questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). Concerning clinical interventions, Frankl—besides his paradoxical intentions (Frankl, 1960, 1975b)—was reluctant to explicitly define logotherapeutic techniques. This prompted consequent attempts to fill this gap, e.g., in general terms, the value-pragmatical method that

aims to explicate implicitly (unconsciously) held value-attitudes (Fetz & Graebner, 2005) or the meaning-apprehension method as a tool for assisting in finding meaning (A. Längle & S. Längle, 2000). More specialized interventions have also been devised, such as the will-strengthening method for logotherapeutic addiction therapy and other forms of akrasia (A. Längle, 2000a) or the method for personal positioning for supporting patients with feelings of passivity in anxiety or depression (A. Längle, 1997, 2000c).

A related personalistic approach to psychiatry can be found in Heinz Häfner's personal depth psychology. Häfner wrote his dissertation in philosophy on Scheler's and Gehlen's philosophical anthropology (Häfner, 1951), marking the beginning of ten productive years for personal depth psychology. Roughly up until 1961, Häfner was dedicated to developing an approach of anthropological psychiatry that builds on the philosophy of Scheler and bridges over to psychoanalysis—structurally akin to Frankl's vision. Subsequently, Häfner dropped the subject and reoriented to epidemics and social psychiatry, co-leading the *Psychiatry Enquête* in Germany, and founded the *Zentralinstitut für Seelische Gesundheit (Central Institute for Mental Health)* (Häfner, 2015, 2016; Häfner & Martini, 2011).

Crucially, Häfner (1961a) addressed the question of whether material value ethics can provide a philosophical foundation for the clinical theory of neuroses, differentiating the domains of a general theory of neuroses and a special theory of neuroses. Concerning the general theory, Häfner defines neurosis in terms of a limitation of the possibilities for value realization, resulting in a shrinking of the possibilities for sense-making and an encapsulation within one's own frame of reference. This account concurs with Igor Caruso's (1952) conception of the from the value-hierarchy in neurosis, effected by absolutizing relative values (of the self). Since this definition of general neurosis aligns with the interpretation of neurosis with reference to Protagoras dictum of *man making himself the measure of things*, there exists a continuity not only with the conception of Frankl's (1975a) and Caruso (1952) but also Cusinato (2018a, 2021) or even Karen Horney (1950).

Connecting to Allier's personalistic characterology and Spranger's life-forms, Häfner argues that personal growth and maturity are inhibited if the individual law of value preference ("individuelles Wertvorzugsgesetz") is biased towards certain classes of values and thereby limited relative to the totality of the realm of values, as in neurosis. For Häfner (1961a) the difference between the subjective value-construal ("subjektiver Wertentwurf") and the objective hierarchy of values ("objektive Wertehierarchie")/the personal value-construal ("persöner Wertentwurf") then becomes a measure of the severity of neurotic disturbance. This introduces the central role of conscience and guilt, because the neurotic experiences guilt over the subjective value-construal and is called back to the his or her possibilities of his or her personal value-construal, including the trans-individual existential values (Häfner, 1956, 1959). Concerning the noodynamics of neurosis, Häfner holds that the confrontation with the heights of the personal value-construal frightens the individual (anxiety barrier), thus clinging to the limitations of the subjective value-construal and thereby relieving the ego ("Ich-Entlastung"). The farther the distance between subjective and personal value-construal, the higher grows the anxiety barrier separating the neurotic individual from its authentic or real self, and the more the subjective value-construal hardens into a rigid housing ("Gehäuse"), a closed off system of defences (Häfner, 1961a, p. 619).

The task of personal depth psychological treatment, accordingly, is defined in terms of widening the subjective value-construal by reawakening and strengthening the neurotic's capacities for love (as Scheler conceives it: the ultimate emotional source of value-discovery) and, hence, corroding the rigid housing and enabling growth and becoming. Anticipating later developments of intersubjective theory, Häfner (1955) extended this idea and offered a value analysis of the therapeutic encounter, arguing that therapeutic efficacy consists in creating a relationship between therapist and patient that allows one to let go of partial-values ("Partialwerte") and defensive clinging to ego-relieving limitations in the subjective value-construal, i.e., to dare higher values within the therapeutic situation. Before the backdrop that

Häfner evaluates psychoanalytic research that aims at uncovering infantile traumata and pre-oedipal or pre-verbal experience to rest on a faulty interpretation, he holds that “[b]ehind them stands the subjective value-structure of the encounter, which is—for the most part—formed from the communication with the parents” (Häfner, 1955, p. 414). In this vein, personal depth psychology anticipates relational accounts of value.

Regarding the special theory of neuroses, the state of research warrants only a more tentative outline from the vantage point of personal depth psychology. The special theory of neuroses is concerned with defining the nosological forms in which the possibilities for value-realization can be limited (general neurosis), their course of development, and their genetic conditions. Häfner (1954) conceives of an overreliance on possibilities for value-realization external to the person in terms of his concept of existential depression, a serious crisis that ensues as a consequence of the breakdown of the subjective value-construal, leading to a temporarily insurmountable melancholic mood. Furthermore, Häfner highlights several potential venues for future research in the special theory of neuroses: first, resignation occurs before the background of a partial breakdown of the subjective value-construal (in contrast to the total breakdown in existential depression) and in response to multiple failed attempts to restore the personal value-construal. Second, while value-sightedness is preserved in resignation, it is lost in resentment, where once intended values are devalued, and the subjective value-construal is absolutized, leading to an inhibition of becoming (“Werdenshemmung”). Third, in legitimizing evaluation (“Legitimationswertung”), deeds condemned by the person’s conscience are legitimized by appealing to a pseudo-value or pretend-value (“Scheinwert”). Albeit legitimizing evaluation is related to sublimation (the partial fulfillment of a striving through a replacement value (“Ersatzwert”)), its primary function is to stabilize the inauthentic self (analogous to Horney’s ideal self of the neurotic).

Earlier contributions to the special theory of neuroses stem from Albrecht Bettermann (1951). Bettermann defines an aesthetic form of value-alienation (“Wertentfremdung”) that absolutizes

the aesthetic row of values, consequently limits itself to them, and thereby loses not only the other rows of value but also the proper character of the aesthetic row as well. Similarly, in the intellectualistic-critical form of value-alienation, doubts corrode everything once held in esteem, leaving no foothold for the neurotic. Third, there is the humorous form of value-alienation, where wit and humour are used to distance oneself from everything that might get emotionally too close, achieving a seemingly untouchable state but actually only hiding insecurity. Bettermann also treats hysterical neurosis, where the relationship with the pretend-value becomes excessive, especially within relationships where pretend-closeness inhibits the hysteric's authenticity.

Furthermore, von Gebattel's (1954, 1972) approach of medical anthropology aligns with Häfner's definition of psychiatry's task, differentiating between removing disordered value-attitudes ("Abbau von Fehlhaltungen") and building correct value-attitudes ("Aufbau korrekter Haltungen") (cf. Herwig, 2009; 1972). In this vein, von Gebattel's disorders of value-attitudes add to the special theory of neuroses, comprising, first, the anankastic value-attitude with its rigidity, excessive orientation on norms, shoulds, and ideals, describing a moral tightening of lived experience or a moral corset for the person. Second, the hysterical value-attitude as a dramatic and affectively impulsive destabilisation of the value-hierarchy by being too invested in situational values and too far from higher, more persistent values. Third, the depressive value-attitude that is characterized by a loss of meaning, hopelessness, and blocked future. Since the theory of perversions exceeds the scope of the theory of neurosis, I will refrain from elaborating von Gebattel's axiological contributions to this field. Albeit von Gebattel is often remembered today for his psychopathology of time (Borck, 2021), his conception of time is intimately tied to the analysis of drive and striving and thus too bears the unmistakable semblance of material value ethics and attests to Scheler's influence on medical anthropology. In the contemporary debate, these motives are continued in, for instance, in Gerhard Danzer's (2011, 2021) personal medicine.

Ever since its early days, the treatment of schizophrenia and psychosis has puzzled phenomenological psychopathology. I discuss a selection of contributions relevant to axiological psychopathology and highlight the controversies to which they connect. The possibility of an axiological descriptions of both sides of one of the most general nosological distinctions, neurosis and psychosis, further supports the claim of an axiological foundation to psychopathology. Analogous arguments have been raised for the psychopathology of time and are today debated for neurobiological approaches (Fuchs, 2013c; Insel & Quirion, 2005; Kaplan-Solms & Solms, 2018). Before this backdrop, the axiological and predominant (neuro-)biological paradigms must not be seen as conflicting. Rather, the axiological approach to analyses (neuro-)biological occurrences within the vital-psychic value-sphere. This entails the promise of an integrative framework, connecting sub-personal and personal levels of analysis.<sup>5</sup> In this vein, empirical investigations found that loosened and tightened relationships between values, feelings, and behaviours can be used as a criterion to dissociate neurotics and personality disorders (tightened) from schizophrenics (loosening) (Leitner, 1981). Relatedly, Stanghellini and Ballerini (2007) investigated the construction and pathological modification of value systems in schizophrenia and schizotypal disorder and found that patients' value systems are characterized by what they term *antagonomia*, i.e., an eccentric stance that contrasts with common sense, and *idionomia*, i.e., the feeling of radical uniqueness regarding common sense. This links the issue of value systems to the Jaspers-Binswanger controversy (Basso, 2016; Passie, 1995; Schmitt, 2018) concerning the breakdown of empathy ("Uneinfühlbarkeit"), because antagonomic and idiomatic value system construction can be identified as the genetic principle underlying empathic failure. To borrow Erich Wulff's (1992, 2003) term, pathologically altered valueception can be identified as the acts of paradoxicalization (Wendler & Fuchs, 2023). A similar contention underlies Häfner's analyses of existential depression

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<sup>5</sup> The meaning of this will become clear over the course of my investigation.

(Häfner, 1954) and psychopathy (Häfner, 1961b), i.e., the view that reconstructing a patient's value system and acts of valueception is to reconstruct the manner in which the patient is in-the-world.

Many of the phenomenological authors studying empathy in psychopathology based their research on Scheler's theory of sympathy and direct expression-perception ("unmittelbare Ausdruckswahrnehmung"). Besides the discourse on the breakdown of empathy, this is particularly evident in the controversy on diagnostic intuition (Buonarroti et al., 2022; Pallagrosi et al., 2018), particularly surrounding Rümke's (1941) praecox feeling (Gozé et al., 2019; Gozé & Naudin, 2017; Grube, 2006). In this vein, concepts such as empathic listening (Jaspers, 1913), the empathic index (Southard, 1918), diagnosis by feeling (Binswanger, 1924), diagnosis by penetration (Minkowski, 1927), diagnostic intuition (Wyrsh, 1946), or failed encounter (Callieri, 1999) are indebted to Scheler's philosophy and material value ethics.

Another relevant debate in contemporary psychopathology exists between objectivism and evaluativism (Nielsen & Ward, 2020; Sadler, 2013; Thornton, 2008; Zachar & Kendler, 2007). Objectivism (or often synonymously descriptivism) holds that mental disorders are conceivable as matters of fact and can be explained through the so-called hard sciences—a position associated with the rise of evidence-based medicine in psychiatry, usually combined with an appeal to neuroscience as the foundational discipline for psychiatry (Cuthbert & Insel, 2013; Insel & Cuthbert, 2015; Insel & Quirion, 2005; Insel & Wang, 2010; Stier, 2013). This so-called values-out position is contrasted by the values-in account of evaluativism that holds that mental disorders inevitably refer to value-laden judgement and cannot be satisfactorily conceived without reference to axiological concepts. Accordingly, some have argued that evidence-based medicine is complemented with so-called value-based medicine (Fulford, 2004, 2011; Fulford et al., 2013; Sadler, 2003, 2005).

Albeit situated within analytical theory of value, the quest within the philosophy of psychiatry to identify the values relevant to psychiatry and especially psychopathological nosology led the

debate to overcome the one-sided focus on the row of personal/spiritual values and the row of moral values still evident in logotherapy. In this vein, John Sadler (2013) structures the debate between evaluativism and objectivism along the lines of several dimensions of value that were relevant to the construction of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM)—aesthetic values, epistemic values, ethical values, ontological values, and pragmatic values. Since values-based psychiatry builds on ordinary language philosophy from the analytic tradition, it is often contrasted with value-based approaches that build on phenomenological contributions mostly from the continental tradition (Stanghellini et al., 2019; Stanghellini & Mancini, 2017). Recently, Alessandro Guardascione (2025) compared both outlooks, identifying commonalities and divergences, pledging for an integrative framework. Relatedly, proposals from 4E-cognition stress that the descriptive and evaluative dimensions of mental disorders can be integrated, for instance by reinterpreting supposedly value-free biological functions in terms of sense-making and biosemiotics, i.e., by tracing the continuous development of normativity throughout nature (de Haan, 2017, 2020; de Haan et al., 2013; Fuchs, 2008, 2019, 2023; Maiese, 2022; Nielsen, 2023; Nielsen & Ward, 2020; Vogeley, 2016; Vogeley & Newen, 2011). Even though the debate between objectivism and evaluativism illustrates the wealth of axiological research in psychopathology, other contributions have just recently been rediscovered— such as Antoni Kępiński’s (2002, 2012) values-based psychiatry (Moskalewicz et al., 2024) or Bim Kimura’s (1991, 2005a, 2005b) psychopathology of *aida* (間, Japanese for “while,” “during,” “in-between”) (Cusinato, 2019; Francesetti & Griffero, 2019).

In sum, the axiological approach counts among the earliest applications of phenomenology by psychiatrists and within psychopathology. Writing the history of axiological psychopathology, therefore, claims its place alongside other approaches such as anthropological psychiatry or the psychopathology of time. Albeit mostly lacking an integrative framework, several own-standing axiological proposals can be distinguished, ranging from logotherapy, to personal

depth psychology to anthropological medicine—utilizing practically all major concepts of material value ethics. Axiological description of basic nosological categories (neurosis, psychosis) as well as the axiological definition of novel psychopathological categories (ressentiment, resignation, disorders of value-attitude, etc.) has proven possible. Beyond that, several approaches intersect with axiological psychopathology, such as enactivist conceptions of disorders of sense-making. Relatedly, the controversies on the breakdown of empathy, diagnostic intuition, and evaluativism/objectivism concern issues central to axiological psychopathology.

### **Psychology and Adjacent Fields**

Moving on to contributions from the field of psychology, I will focus on the disciplines of psychotherapy and clinical psychology, especially psychometric methodology. In general, material value ethics did not exert a comparable influence on these disciplines when compared to psychiatry and, in particular, psychopathology, where most phenomenologically oriented practitioners and researchers were active. Nevertheless, following Eugène Carp (1959), a personalistic orientation within psychotherapy can be identified. Concerning depth psychology and psychoanalysis, for instance, Igor Caruso's approach was interpreted in terms of a personalistic depth psychology (Nowak, 1988) and Häfner (1956) denominated his approach personal depth psychology. Furthermore, analyses have been put forward that link Szondi's (1996) fate analysis ("Schicksalsanalyse") with the concept of fate in personalistic psychotherapy (Friedemann, 1958). Super-ego development has been interpreted in terms of value transmission and the successive construction of an individual value system (Kernberg, 2016; Nass, 1966). Hendrikus Stoker (1925) has provided an in-depth study of conscience, integrating psychoanalytic, phenomenological, evolutionary, and Christian perspectives (amongst others). Direct engagements with material value ethics from psychoanalysts is rare, but are often concerned with libido theory and the concept of sublimation (Hitschmann, 1914).

Nevertheless, Axel Honneth (2007) has proposed to interpret Aurel Kolnai's (2007) phenomenology of hostile emotionality—hatred, disgust, pride—as reading material value ethics through the psychoanalytic lens with the agenda of complementing the thus far neglected side of disvalues and negative emotions. Another discursive reference is the so-called intersubjective approach to psychoanalysis, which is known as psychoanalytic phenomenology (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014; Stolorow & Atwood, 1984). Whereas these approaches draw heavily on hermeneutic and enactive phenomenology, other syntheses attempt to derive a phenomenological foundation for psychoanalysis from Husserl's philosophy (Lohmar & Brudzinska, 2011).

Indirect influences of material value ethics in the psychotherapeutic literature can be identified throughout. Within the approach of cognitive behavioural therapy, for instance, acceptance and commitment therapy (McHugh, 2011), rational emotive therapy (Ellis, 2013; Ellis & Grieger, 1986), dignity therapy (Chochinov & McKeen, 2011), behavioural activation (Cuijpers et al., 2007; Kanter et al., 2010) rely on axiological concepts as key-terms for their theories—in these approaches, Frankl's influence looms large. Existential psychotherapy (Wertz, 2026; Yalom, 2015) critically refers to material value ethics, mostly objecting to the contention of value realism (which is regularly conflated with value objectivism in this literature) and contrasting it with an existentialist interpretation of value constructivism through the individual. Contemporary accounts sometimes try to bridge the gap between logotherapy and existential psychotherapy by proposing a synthesis of their core principles (A. Längle, 2000b, 2016). From an anthropological perspective, value-attitudes have been investigated cross-culturally in the search for universals in answering the basic questions ingrained in the *conditio humana*, employing a variety of methods ranging from qualitative interview analysis to literature analysis (Khajavian et al., 2023; C. Kluckhohn, 1936, 1951; F. Kluckhohn, 1960; Steinert, 2023).

An attempt at a conceptual framework for such axiological approaches to psychotherapy was provided by the humanistic approach to psychology. Humanistic psychotherapy evolved as a

phenomenological and experience-centered alternative to both behaviorism and classical psychoanalysis, emphasizing subjective meaning, intentionality, and the organism's inherent striving toward growth. The humanistic approach comprises a broad movement (Greenberg & Rice, 1997; Kriz, 2011), including authors such as Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Karen Horney, and Eugene Gendlin. In broad strokes, the movement is characterized by its emphasis on man's capacity for self-realization. Human nature is viewed as inherently good, and psychotherapeutic practice is concerned with unfolding its potential.

Proponents of the humanistic approach have pleaded for the need of a psychology of health (Maslow 1968), making the humanistic approach—in the eyes of some—a predecessor of contemporary positive psychology. In this vein, Abraham Maslow (1961) developed his notion of peak experiences (in brief: transformative high-points in life), embedding them in his famous hierarchy of needs. The intuition that the hierarchy of needs is reminiscent of the hierarchy of values in material value ethics is strengthened by the fact that Maslow (1968) engaged with and build on phenomenological approaches to psychotherapy (especially existentialism), arguing for the objectivity of value and needs and the goodness of the nature of the human being, while criticizing the constructivist approach to values by the existentialists. Maslow engaged in depth with the axiological discourse (Maslow, 1959), establishing interdisciplinary exchange with thinkers such as Robert Hartman, Erich Fromm, Kurt Goldstein, or Paul Tillich advancing the concept of a fusion of fact and value in peak experiences (Maslow, 1963) and arguing for the biological rooting of “value-life” (Maslow, 1967). The latter is reminiscent of the manner in which material value ethics grounds higher and therefore weaker personal/spiritual values in the lower and therefore stronger vital-psychic sphere, e.g. in level ontologies such as N. Hartmann's or Scheler's. Furthermore, Maslow's (1968, 1971) distinction between deficiency-needs (d-needs), i.e., basic needs such as security, warmth, food, and so forth that are experienced in terms of a lack and lead to pathology if dissatisfied over extended periods of time, and being-needs (b-needs), i.e., transcendent needs of the self-actualizing person such as

a relationship with the boundless (religion, spirituality, etc.), self-expression (art, living, etc.) and so forth, and therefore his theory of self-realization runs parallel with the cathartic overcoming of the vital-psychic ego in the process of becoming a person in material value ethics (Cusinato, 2015; Scheler, 1921).

Furthermore, the frustration of b-needs also leads to pathology. Maslow (1967) even develops a notion of “value disturbances” (109) in terms of metapathologies. These metapathologies refer to the metamotivations of self-actualizing persons, i.e., motivations stemming from intrinsic values that become unlocked after basic needs (d-needs) are satisfied. Metapathologies, in turn, arise as a consequence of b-value deprivation (i.e., intrinsic values or spiritual/personal values), entail “diminutions of humanness” (Maslow, 1967, p. 107), and comprise, for example, axiological depression, ennui/boredom, alienation, anomie, ultimate doubt, resentment, desacralization, and so forth. Maslow’s b-value deprivation metapathology was only sketched explicitly, but not systematically carried out by him (cf. Giri, 2014; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Nasution, 2020). Yet, the issue of metapathology figures implicitly throughout his psychology of being. In his journals, Maslow notes that “The B-person may be more symptom-loaded and have more value pathology than the symptom-free ‘healthies.’ [...] Value pathologies can be a very high achievement” (Maslow, 1982, p. 206). This speaks to the complex relationship between value pathology and psychopathology but also indicates that Maslow’s concepts of metapathology and value pathology remain entangled with cultural and religious notions (amongst others).

In a similar vein, authors such as Karen Horney (1950) distinguished an ideal self, i.e., the idealized self-image that is built from neurotic demands, and a real self, i.e., the authentic self whose expression and actualization is inhibited by the neurotic demands of the ideal self. Psychotherapy, accordingly, is viewed as freeing the person from the neurotic “tyranny of the should” and establishing contact with one’s needs and feelings. Concerning the psychotherapeutic situation, Carl Rogers (1946), for instance, argued that psychological change

arises when individuals encounter a relational climate characterized by congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding. Another trademark of the humanistic approach is the ideal of a fully functioning person, i.e. the “theoretical model of the person who emerges from therapy—a person functioning freely in all the fullness of his organismic potentialities“ (Rogers 1963, p. 17). Critics of the humanistic approach have raised the question whether the darker sides of human motivation and man’s destructive potentials are underestimated or neglected. Since the humanistic emphasis on growth and goodness is intended as a correction for the one-sided deficiency orientation of mainstream clinical psychology, the charge of a positivity bias comes with a grain of salt. Humanistic approaches not only build on existing theories accounting for these phenomena but also develop their own perspective on the realm of disvalues. Consider, for instance, Erich Fromm’s (1992) freudo-marxist analyses of aggression in *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* or Rollo May’s (1981) studies in anxiety and alienation in modernity in *Man’s Search for Himself*.

From social psychology, a psychometric approach to the issue of values and especially the operationalization in value scales, has made a significant contribution to various adjacent fields. Historically, the first notable instance is Gordon Allport’s and colleagues’ (1960) *Study of Values*, a psychometric tool that operationalizes the six life forms of Spranger’s (1922) hermeneutic psychology (religious, economic, aesthetic, scientific, political, social) via preference choices through the participants (cf. Waschulewski 2002). Consequently, other value scales have been proposed, especially Rokeach’s value survey (Rokeach, 1973), Kahle’s (1983) list of values, Miller’s and colleagues (2001) personal values card sort, and Schwartz’s (2012; Schmidt et al. 2007) portrait value questionnaire. Especially Miller’s personal values card sort test and associated q-sort paradigms where patients choose from a large set of values and order them according to their preferences were used in clinical and coaching contexts (Jarden 2010; Nyatanga 1989; Rogers 1995; for a methodological critique, cf. McCrae & Costa 2021). The instruction could read, for instance, “pick the cards with the five most important values from a

stack of 100 value cards, then order them according to their importance to you.” The success of the q-sort paradigm in clinical settings is due to its *prima facie* validity, the relative ease of administration, and because humanists like Rogers perceived the q-sort paradigm as an appropriate measure for a person’s self-perception.

In light of their empirical construction and their wide-ranging intercultural validation, Schwartz’s value theory has recently also been tested on clinical populations or in relation to clinical concepts (Arens et al., 2022; España et al., 2024; Hanel & Wolfradt, 2016; Noyon & Heidenreich, 2026; Socci et al., 2021; Zacharopoulos et al., 2021), revealing a positive correlation between psychopathology and Schwartzian values of power, achievement and tradition/conformity and a negative correlation with hedonism and stimulation (more fine-grained differentiations for specific mental disorders are possible). There seems to exist a partial overlap between the Schwartzian value profiles found in dark triad personality traits (narcissism, psychopathy, machiavellism) (Jonason et al., 2015, 2018, 2018; Kajonius et al., 2015) and psychopathology, where positive correlations are found with the self-enhancement values of power and achievement, negative correlations exist with self-transcendence values of universalism and benevolence and no correlations obtain regarding openness to change and conservation values (with the exception of a positive association between psychopathy and the openness to change value of hedonism). This pattern of results in value profiles has been termed the “system of dark values” (Kajonius et al., 2015, p. 173) or “the ‘dark side’ of personal values” (Hanel & Wolfradt, 2016, p. 140).

Relatedly, the Polish-speaking community attempted to operationalize Scheler’s material value ethics and, accordingly, devised the Scheler value scale (Brzozowski, 1995)—differentiating hedonistic, vital, aesthetic, truth, moral, and sacred values. Jan Ciecuch (2011) provided psychometric evidence and empirical validation indicating that the Scheler value scale depicted a specific subtype of the higher-order values in Schwartz’s value model as assessed with the portrait of values questionnaire (cf. Brzozowski, 2002). The argument for convergent validity

is further strengthened by Piotr Brzozowski (2005), comparing results drawn from the Scheler value scale and Rokeach's value scale that indicate that a two-level hierarchy of values (higher and lower) is substantiated empirically. At the present state of research, a more nuanced description of the number of levels and the value types they contain is not yet feasible. From the domain of forensic psychiatry, the Scheler value scale was used to study the value profiles of criminal offenders, finding a reversal in the hierarchy of values when compared to a control group—preferences for hedonistic values, vital values and aesthetic values in criminal offenders compared to preferences for religious values, truth values and moral values in the control group. This result can be read against the backdrop of Manfred Frings' (2005) investigation of terrorism from a philosophical perspective (to be explicit: without using the Scheler value scale), proposing Scheler's notion of resentment as the axiological mechanism giving rise to the emotional confusion that underlies acts of extreme violence. In another study, value systems derived from ratings of adolescents between the ages of 14 and 19 years of age with a history of suicide attempts showed a disinterest in values of everyday life such as health, fitness and physical strength, but also a disinterest in values such as harmony, national order, knowledge and religion, contrasting a pronounced interest in love and friendship, achievement and wealth and riches (Makara-Studzińska & Koślak, 2009).

Turning to the issue of value transmission, high quality of marital communication among the parents was found to correlate positively with the children later preferring moral values, with gender specific differences in preference for truth, aesthetic, secular and religious values in the Scheler value scale (Komorowska-Pudło & Sameluk, 2022). Another study investigated three generations of Polish women, finding that religiosity is a moderator for inter-generational value change: while, in general, hedonistic and aesthetic values are preferred by successive generations, whereas religious and secular sacred values are deferred, religious families showed stronger intergenerational similarity in value systems (Gorbaniuk & Goleń, 2025). Further developmental evidence suggests that the circumplex structure and sinusoidal relationships that

Schwartz's value theory predicts is consistent with Brzozowski's operationalization of Scheler's value theory and evidence from the gradual development of structures within the value profiles from childhood to adolescence (Cieciuch, 2011).

From a critical perspective, two points should be noted: first, several of the reported findings on the Scheler value scale contextualize themselves explicitly within Christianity, more specifically, Catholicism, at times blurring the lines between science and religion. Furthermore, associating psychopathologies and antisocial behaviour with certain value profiles not only runs the danger of stigmatization but also of hypostasizing research subjects, leaving little room for alterity. Second, the operationalization of Scheler's value theory is problematic because it mixes value strata (sensual, vital, psychic, and spiritual/personal value strata) and modalities with the strata (moral, aesthetic, truth, religious, etc. values), depicting them as subdimensions of the Scheler value scale without adequate differentiation. Besides inaccuracy a possible reason for this could be that (Brzozowski, 1995, 2005) understanding of value philosophy is indebted also to Józef Tischner (1982), potentially colouring his scale construction. Generally speaking, operationalization of concepts of phenomenological philosophy is an extremely difficult endeavour, necessarily capturing only part of the theory. Consequently, inaccuracy or problematic interpretations are the rule rather than the exception and can also be identified in comparable operationalizations. For the sake of illustration, Spranger's philosophy of life-forms is operationalized in the study of value (Allport et al., 1960)—however, to name just one instance, the scale does not preserve Spranger's perspective of Protestantism (complementary to the reverse issue of the applications of the Scheler value study in Catholic contexts). This shows that operationalization too is theory-laden and requires interpretation on the side of the psychometrician. This is reason why Volker Gadenne (2004) holds that operationalization cannot be fully described in technical terms, but amounts to a theory-laden hypothesis about the testability of a certain construct within a theory.

A number of relevant contributions to axiological psychopathology stem from the field of moral psychology (Doris & Moral Psychology Research Group, 2010; Lapsley 2018). Moral psychology is a thematic orientation and integrates findings of several psychological sub-disciplines, especially developmental psychology, differential psychology and social psychology—but also integrate philosophical works. From the developmental domain, investigations into the ontogenetic development of the moral reasoning and character, as well as the conditions of successful value transmission from parents/society to the child, have a long-standing tradition (Duska & Whelan, 1975; Kohlberg, 1971; Kohlberg & Puka, 1994; Piaget, 1965). The most influential proposals in this regard are the stage theories of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, although other proposals, such as the psychoanalytic theory of the super ego development, can be read in continuity with these accounts (Coles, 1981; Freud, 1927; Klein, 1994; Mahler et al., 1975; Stoker, 1925; Weiss, 1952). Within his genetic constructivism, Piaget (1965) differentiates two levels of moral judgment: first, heteronomous morality or moral realism that is oriented on rules that come from an authority, fear of punishment, focus on consequences over motives and the belief in immanent justice (good things happen to good people); second, autonomous morality or the morality of cooperation that emerges around the age of eight, is more flexible, focused on convention and social agreement, considers intentions and concerns of fairness, reciprocity and equality. Kohlberg (1971), on the other hand, distinguishes three levels that each comprises two stages, totalling six stages: level one is pre-conventional morality and consists of the stages one obedience and punishment and two individualism and exchange, level two of conventional morality is made up of stages three good interpersonal relationships and four maintaining social order, and, finally, level three of post-conventional morality divides into stages five social contract and six universal ethical principles. One can observe that Piaget focused mostly on moral development during childhood, whereas Kohlberg was concerned with late childhood all the way to adulthood. The project of tracing the levels of moral development was generalized for the whole life span by theories

such as Erik Erikson's (1963, 1982) account of psychosocial development that identifies phase-specific conflicts.

Concerning contributions to moral psychology from the field of differential psychology, studies into the structure of the moral character have been most prominent (Haidt, 2007; Kernberg, 2016; Narváez & Lapsley, 2009; Renner, 2010; Wertz, 2026). From a historical perspective, the field of differential psychology was founded from the personalistic approach to psychology through William Stern (Stern, 1911, 1950), who envisioned a psychological science of individual differences and developed his own philosophical axiology. Another historical source relevant to the dissemination of value theoretical concepts into the study of personality stems from pedagogy, namely Rudolf Allers' (1970, 2022) psychology of character (as stated above, Allers introduced Frankl to material value ethics, supporting the claim of mutual influences between psychiatry and psychology). In the recent literature, Stern's psychology in particular is debated to this day (Freiherr Von Fircks, 2024; Lamiell, 2003; McCrae & Costa Jr, 2021; Wertz, 2023). For instance, Dan McAdams and his lab reinterpreted the personalistic idea of a levelled conception of the structure of personality (McAdams & Manczak, 2011; McAdams & Mayukha, 2024) in the light of contemporary, predominantly gradualistic accounts (Costa & McCrae, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 2008) and coined the notion of the 'New Big Five' of personality research (McAdams & Pals, 2006; for a Sternian critique, cf. Renner, 2010)—applying this framework also to the issue of moral personality and focussing on evolution, dispositions, goals and adaptations, narratives and culture (McAdams, 2009; McAdams & Mayukha, 2024).

A field closely related to moral psychology can be identified with the newly emerging positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000; Seligman, 2019; Snyder & Lopez, 2001). Positive psychology has been applied to the clinical context in various ways (Lee Duckworth et al., 2005), often referring to central concepts such as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) or subjective well-being (Vázquez et al., 2009). The general thrust of these contributions is to

correct the deficiency focus of clinical psychology and by way of developing a science of health and meaning. This is evident in the attempt to construe a taxonomy of positive mental health that mirrors the nosological taxonomies (Iasiello et al., 2025). A related approach to positive psychology is the empirical study of the meaning of life (Schnell, 2025; Schnell & La Cour, 2018) or experimental existential psychology (Koole et al., 2006; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). This perspective has been developed in close contact with clinical psychology from the outset, especially existential psychotherapy (Kotchen, 1960; Vos, 2023; Yalom, 2015) and Daseinsanalysis (Binswanger, 1962; Boss, 1960; Holzhey-Kunz, 2014). The primary concern is to approach the basic existential concerns of death, isolation, identity, freedom, and meaning with empirical and experimental methods. Another point of convergence between positive psychology and the clinical field lies in the concept of salutogenesis (Antonovsky et al., 1997). Beyond that there are a number of scattered contributions from theoretical and clinical psychology that exceed the scope of moral psychology. From a psychometric point of view, this concerns the axiological interpretation of classical paradigms of psychology such as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962), attitudes (Heider, 1946), social learning (Bandura, 1985, 2021) and deriving value sensitive experimental designs that allow for implicit measures of value phenomena (Noyon & Heidenreich, 2026; Oerter, 1970). Furthermore, axiological interpretations of basic psychological concepts such as the two-systems theory in moral decision making (Haidt, 2007), affordances (Dings, 2020; Fuchs, 2019; Gibson, 1979), affective primacy and automatic evaluation (Rosfort, 2019; Zajonc, 1980, 1984), evaluative judgements (Fiedler & Unkelbach, 2011), intuitive diagnosis and impression formation (Grube, 2006; Lanzoni, 2006; Wyrsh, 1946), and so forth. In contrast, others have proposed practical applications of axiological concepts to coaching, most notably Schulz von Thun's (2008) value and development square ("Werte- und Entwicklungsquadrat") that borrows from N. Hartmann's systematics of complementary values and disvalues (Hartmann, 1949; von Thun, 2015). Furthermore, material value ethics has continued to influence pastoral care after Frankl (Bittner,

1955; Häfner, 1956; Snoeck & Hollenbach, 1958; Splett, 2005). Relatedly, traces of the Christian interpretation of personalism (Wojtyła, 2023) are widespread and can be found, for instance, within the personalistic approach to pedagogics (Ernst, 2017; Ernst & Ernst, 2023; Herwig, 2009) and especially within the polish-speaking discourse, concerning, e.g., intergenerational value transmission (Gorbaniuk & Goleń, 2025), literary analysis of value (Czerenkiewicz, 2019) or investigations into the foundations of anthropological and realistic psychology (Harciarek, 2008, 2015). Proposals stemming from philosophical approaches to psychology attempted to disclose the structure of value-orientations and their constitutive role in the structure of worldviews (Frankl, 1925; Jaspers, 1954; Pfänder, 1904). Relatedly, philosophically informed approaches have called for big-picture re-conceptualizations of psychology—be it the classical version of *personalistic psychology* (Stern, 1906, 1950) or the more contemporary take of *axiological psychology* (Pomeroy, 2005).

In sum, there exist numerous applications of phenomenological axiology to psychology. Within clinical psychology, personalistic approaches, humanistic approaches, and psychodynamic approaches have engaged in-depth with concepts from material value ethics, oftentimes influenced by logotherapy. Notable psychometric operationalizations have been put forward: for instance, the study of values operationalizes Spranger's axiology, whereas the Scheler value scale operationalizes Scheler's axiology, and both have been empirically validated. Moral psychology has investigated the development of moral judgements and character during ontogeny, studied the constitution of the moral character in adulthood and over the life-span, and researched issues such as value transmission, value change and value conflict in the social domain. Positive psychology has picked up the thrust from humanistic psychotherapy, focusing the relationship between values and subjective well-being, mental health, flourishing and self-realization. Reference to axiological concepts can be identified throughout central paradigms of psychology such as cognitive dissonance or attitudes, even though these contributions remain

scattered without an integrative framework. This points to the need for a thoroughly developed, axiological psychopathology.

## **Chapter Overview**

In the following, I will provide a summary of each chapter and comment on the overarching motives of the investigation.

In broad strokes, the course of my investigation moves from general issues to specific issues. Relatedly, it moves from a more philosophical to a more scientific orientation. This means, for instance, that the first chapter is dedicated to the philosophical foundations of material value ethics in realistic phenomenology, followed by elaborations on general concepts of philosophical psychopathology, such as axiodynamics or vulnerability in the middle chapters, while the last chapter homes in on axiological model explication and comparison for the case of depression. Nevertheless, this characterization is only tentative, since philosophical, psychopathological, and psychological considerations are intertwined with each other throughout the entire course of the investigation. For instance, the chapters on axiodynamics and depression also engage in-depth with issues from theory of science. At the same time, every chapter is developed with historical awareness and reconstruction.

The chapter on *Methodological Reductionism in Realistic Phenomenology* outlines the foundations of material value ethics in realistic phenomenology and philosophical anthropology. The angle of the investigation is methodological, since it deals with the issues of the epoché and reduction as the basic methods of phenomenological philosophy. Often encountered contentions that realistic phenomenology was epochistic or made do with only the eidetic reduction are dismantled by in-depth historical contextualization. Special emphasis is placed on Scheler's critique of the phenomenological methodology, raising—amongst other issues—the foundational concern that a theory of reality is required as philosophical

justification before bracketing the moment of reality in experience. Identifying the reality moment with occupying a position in space and time confuses an index of reality with the experience of reality, i.e., a phenomenological analysis of the acts that give rise to the experience of reality is a necessary prerequisite of the epoché and reduction. Scheler identifies the moment of reality in the experience of resistance and provides a phenomenological account of voluntative realism, stratifying the reality experience in a levelled theory of urge and drive. This perspective introduces philosophical anthropology as the foundational science of phenomenology and reconceives of the epoché and reduction as technologies of anthropogenesis, i.e., methodological reductionism of transcendental phenomenology is reconceived as technological reductionism in realistic phenomenology. The one-sided focus on the reduction as a techné of the spirit is corrected and the alternate route of bracketing the acts of spirit is introduced, achieving a sympathetic fusion with the movement of urge. Building on Theodor Celm's methodological investigation, I spell out Scheler's reductions: the scientific reduction, the phenomenological/Appolonian reduction, the Dionysian reduction, the cathartic reduction. The significance of each reduction is discussed within the framework of philosophical anthropology. The result of the first chapter yields technological reductionism and philosophical anthropology as the philosophical foundations also for material value ethics and its utilization within axiological psychopathology.

The chapter on *Psychodynamics, Noodynamics, Axiodynamics* dives right into the subject matter of axiological psychopathology. First, it deals with the scientific and philosophical foundations of psychopathology by positioning it with regard to the controversies on value-judgement (Weber) and on positivism (Popper vs. Adorno). Following Jaspers's historical reconstruction, the common denominator of the various notions of health and disorder in history is their axiological content, i.e., health, in its core, is a value, and disorder is a disvalue. Consequently, Scheler's philosophy is contextualized within the psychoanalytic debate of his time, focusing on mutual reception and interpretations between material value ethics and

psychoanalysis. Afterwards, I reconstruct Frankl's critique of the notion of psychodynamics from depth psychology and his complementation with the notion of noodynamics. Frankl holds that the notion of psychodynamics is biased towards biological drives and entails a sexualization of the human being. In contrast, his notion of noodynamics introduces value qualities and objective should, attesting to the spiritual nature of man. While amicable in spirit, Frankl's reading of material value ethics is itself biased towards personal/spiritual values, endangering the complementation of depth psychology with height psychology into a sterile opposition. Within this controversial context, I propose the concept of axiodynamics that operates with a more encompassing notion of values and disvalues that incorporates sensual, vital and psychic values next to personal/spiritual values. In this vein, axiological psychopathology works as a framework perspective, allowing to integrate psychoanalysis and logotherapy with regard to their central concepts of psychodynamics and noodynamics. Lastly, I elaborate on the issue of sublimation as a proof of concept for an axiodynamical process that crosses-over the vital-psychical sphere and the personal/spiritual stratum, connecting drive and spirit. This interpretation of sublimation draws from Schelerian philosophical anthropology in terms of a spiritualization of life and a vivification of spirit. In this chapter, axiological psychopathology can be identified as a correction of logotherapy for a more correct interpretation of material value ethics and level ontology, or, alternatively, as an extension of logotherapy that reclaims Scheler's original intentions and frees the axiological approach from one-sided biases.

The chapter on *Vulnerability and Value* further engages with the axiological foundations of clinical psychopathology, dealing with the issue of vulnerability as a possible explanation for why there exist mental disorders in the first place. Facing the philosophical question of why the human being is vulnerable, I propose that vulnerability is logically ingrained within the axiological constitution of personal being, i.e., the axiological make-up of personal being through preference structure, the concrete inventory of values and disvalues and the acts of love

and hate. The result of my analysis is an axiological account of vulnerability in terms of all qualities of the ontological category of personal being that contribute to disvalue realization and value prevention in a clinically relevant sense. Vis-à-vis, resilience is conceived in specular terms of disvalue prevention and value realization that is grounded within a realistic value-attitude. Discussing four foundational approaches to the issue of vulnerability, I lay out the implicit axiological dimensions of the biopsychosocial, systemic, anthropological, and existential concepts of vulnerability. This positions axiological vulnerability as the basic concept for vulnerability research. Afterwards, I engage with the perspectives of the philosophy of alterity and existentialism, relating Levinas's intersubjective dimension of vulnerability to Jaspers' psychopathology of limit situations. When basic existential situations become conscious in limit situations, this always also entails value conflicts that reshape personal being by transforming preference structure and the concrete inventory of values and disvalues. This sets the stage for an axiological reading of resilience in terms of a learnable competence in limit situations, appealing to Kaegi's term and enriching it for the clinical domain. This leads me to a focused treatment of the relationship between vulnerability and pain, whereby I propose the concept of anguish to account for the valorative dimensions of culpability, agonality, aversion and absurdity in deep experiences of vulnerability. Whereas the chapter so far dealt with an axiological concept of vulnerability at the object-level of science, I deal with different evaluations of vulnerability and resilience in the final step, discussing the positions of pathocentrism, transhumanism, virtue ethics, and critical social science.

The chapter on *Depression as a Disorder of Valueception* (*Wertnehmungsstörung*) is dedicated to developing axiological models of depression and comparing them within the framework of axiological psychopathology. Defining the motto of the second wave of phenomenological psychopathology as "adequate description, precise explication", my axiological approach does not shy away from formal issues of scientific modelling. This means to bridge between basic questions philosophy to applied issues of empirical research.

Contrasting Ratcliffe's approach of existential feelings that conceives of depression as a loss of significant possibilities, my axiological analysis investigates pathological alterations to valueception in depression in order to understand how changes in mattering come about. More precisely, the chapter explicates diverse models and integrates them from an axiological framework: altered affective response models, restricted access to value classes models and unmotivated intentional arc models. Schlimme's altered affective response model of depression stems from the Husserlian and Binswangerian tradition, while Schneider's restricted access model of depression amounts to the first application of material value ethics to psychopathology, complementing it with Cutting's contemporary restricted access model of melancholia. Lastly, Cusinato's unmotivated intentional arc model represents the neo-Schelerian approach to psychopathology. Model explication and comparison within my axiological framework then allows to propose an integrated framework of depression within material value ethics, which synthesizes key aspects of the other models. In a final step, I thematize the relationship between philosophy, science and practise in dialogue with Schlimme's and Cusinato's commentaries axiological psychopathology—realizing the maximalist programme of axiological psychopathology.

The discussion in *Value Theory as a Paradigm for Philosophical Psychopathology* is programmatic in nature. It distinguishes two ways of relating philosophy and psychopathology and outlines the place of value theory in both. The first way is external and utilizes philosophical tools for the purposes and interests of psychopathology. Axiological considerations enter the picture, for instance, when evaluating medical or psychotherapeutic interventions. The relationship between psychopathology and philosophy is interpreted hierarchically, akin to the relationship between mistress and handmaiden. The second way is intrinsic and attempts to fuse both standpoints. Value theory provides a philosophical paradigm for psychopathology and plays a central role in defining its major concepts, such as disorder and health. My investigation

appealed to the latter vantage point, which interprets the dialogue between philosophy and psychopathology as a dialogue between two friends.

**Methodological Reductionism in Realistic Phenomenology. The Completion of the Reduction in Philosophical Anthropology: Reconciling Scientific, Phenomenological/Apollonian, Dionysian and Cathartic Reduction<sup>6</sup>**

What is the status of the reduction in realistic phenomenology? Approaching this question presupposes understanding what realistic phenomenology is. Five ways of defining realistic phenomenology are delineated: 1) lineage definitions, 2) locality definitions, 3) thematic definitions, 4) definitions from the essence of philosophy, and 5) methodological definitions. The question of the reduction's status concerns mostly a combination of 4) and 5) but also draws on historical considerations. An overview of the realists' critiques of the phenomenological reduction reveals that this method was not unilaterally rejected and, thus, demonstrates that there is not only methodological epochism but indeed also methodological reductionism within realistic phenomenology. The common denominator of these critiques is that the reductive method in transcendental phenomenology depends on a phenomenological theory of reality. An in-depth discussion of Scheler's philosophical anthropology shows that it hinges on a principled revision and systematic completion of the reduction. Reduction is no longer viewed as a scientific method but as a technique of inner acting. From the vantage point of his voluntative realism, Scheler's technological reductionism is spelled out in terms of a stratified scheme relating reality experiences as resistance to the levels of the vital-psychic sphere: 1) primary resistance, 2) ecologically bound resistance, 3) internalized resistance, 4) ego-dystonic resistance and 5) (dis-)inhibition and objectification of drive impulses. Drawing on Celms's

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<sup>6</sup> The following chapter was first published under the same title in issue 2023(1) *Phenomenological Studies/Phänomenologische Forschungen* (Wendler, 2023) and has been reprinted and translated with the permission of the publisher.

distinction between 1) *reducendum*, 2) reductive base, 3) reduction as an epistemic act, and 4) result of the reduction, a new and systematic interpretation of Schelerian reductions is developed for the scientific, phenomenological/Apollonian, Dionysian, and cathartic reductions. Each reductive technique cultivates man's facultative dispositions (intellect, will, feeling). Only their concerted cooperation unlocks man's full cognitive and ethical potential.

### **On the Reduction in Realistic Phenomenology**

Carving up the phenomenological discourse is not an easy task. To the contrary, Spiegelberg surmises that “[i]t can hardly be denied that, on first sight, the history of German phenomenology affords the impression of hopeless schisms” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 3). Indeed, “[t]he first big schism was that between Husserl in Freiburg and the so-called ‘Munichs’” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 3). In his seminal investigation on the antithesis Freiburg-Munich, Avé-Lallement underscores Spiegelberg's apparently grim diagnoses, stating that phenomenology has “suffered the old fate of philosophy, to drift apart in different, partly antithetical directions” (Avé-Lallement, 1975a, p. 19). In the same vein, Parker speaks of “the great phenomenological schism” (Parker, 2021, p. 1). However, one should be wary not to succumb to the misunderstanding that talk of schisms and antitheses would, ultimately, threaten the unity of phenomenology. Phenomenology never was a school. Rather, right from the start, it is best understood as a discourse whose unity enables and is, in part, constituted by controversy. The discursive unity of early phenomenology is aptly attested by Husserl's, Geiger's, Pfänder's, Reinach's and Scheler's shared preface to the *Yearbook for Philosophy and Phenomenological*: “It is not a school's system that unities the editors”, they say and go on state the yearbook's agenda: “Thus, this journal ought not to be a romping ground for vague reformatory ideas, but become a site of serious scientific work” (Scheler et al., 1913, pp. v–vi). Further: “[W]hat unites them is rather the shared conviction that only by going back to the originary sources of intuition

and the eidetic knowledge attained from it can the great traditions of philosophy be evaluated in terms of notions and problems” (Scheler et al., 1913, p. v).

Phenomenology’s discursive unity is not achieved through dogma, but by means of a common attitude. This attitude comes along with “conviction that phenomenology has an unlimited field of strictly scientific and highly consequential research” (Scheler et al., 1913, p. vi), within which there is plenty of opportunity for difference of opinion, which is the fostering ground for fruitful controversy. As such, it is not so much endangered by the antithesis Freiburg-Munich as it is the medium in which the antithesis can be spelled out in the first place.

There are several points of contention concerning the antithesis. Nevertheless, it’s uncontested that “one of the main differences in this process of division” resides in “the role of the phenomenological reduction” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 3). While Husserl came to place increasing significance on his method of reduction as the means to disclose the transcendental realm, others such as Pfänder, Scheler and Celms were skeptical of the reduction, offered revised conceptions or rejected it altogether. Picking up on these differences, Conrad-Martius contrasted a *transcendental and an ontological strand of phenomenology* (Conrad-Martius, 1965a, 1965b). The transcendental strand is represented by the likes of Fink, Landgrebe and Husserl. After his *Ideas*, the latter appeals to the reduction in arguing that anything can principally be given in experience refers back to a constituting, transcendental subjectivity. This maneuver has been perceived to stir phenomenology towards idealism by the proponents of the ontological strand such as Stein, Conrad-Martius or Ingarden. In the broadest sense it can be characterized by the belief that the transcendent sphere retains its independence of consciousness and by implication cannot be reduced to its constitutive activity. This means that the ontological strand is not only interested in the being-for-consciousness, but also in being as such resp. transcendent being, which is why it is also addressed as *realistic phenomenology*.

In order to home in on the status of the reduction in realistic phenomenology, it is paramount to get clear on what realistic phenomenology is. Unfortunately, realistic phenomenology is

difficult to define in a straightforward manner. This difficulty stems from several sources. On the one hand, explicit treatments of realistic phenomenology are still hard to come by (for exceptions see Seifert, 1995; Seifert & Gueye, 2013), and, more often than not, its treatment is interwoven with investigations dedicated to other issues (Schuhmann, 1988; Vendrell-Ferran, 2009). On the other hand, the different attempts at determining what realistic phenomenology is, have yet to engage in mutual discourse. This entails that the discourse so far has been oriented toward the past and while delineating realistic phenomenology from a historical perspective might be possible, its future remains vague and largely unaddressed.

In broad strokes, at least five principled manners of defining realistic phenomenology can be dissociated (without a claim to exhaust the logical space of possible definitions) and categorized according to interest for a historical or systematic perspective (see *table 1*). It is important to note that the following focuses on delineating and describing several forms of definition but does not elaborate or engage in-depth with each of the variants or examples drawn from the literature.

A schema for structuring definitions of realistic phenomenology.

<b>Historical Perspective</b>	<b>Systematic Perspective</b>
Lineage definitions	Thematic definitions
Locality definitions	Definitions from the essence of philosophy
	Methodological definitions

Table 1. The discourse on realistic phenomenology lacks systematicity. Starting from the formal difference between historical and systematic perspectives, five manners of defining realistic phenomenology are most prevalent (additional forms of definition might be devised to complement the schema).

*Historical Perspective:*

- 1) *Lineage definitions.* Lineage definitions appeal to teacher-student relationships or institutional continuity (i.e., lines of succession) (Schuhmann, 1973; Smid, 1982; Spiegelberg, 1965). This manner of defining realistic phenomenology can yield important clues when tracing down possible influences for a philosophical conception of interest or methodical approach to a given problem. For example, when judging whether Stoker's (1925) treatise on conscience belongs to realistic phenomenology, his homage to his teacher Scheler as well as Scheler's (1925) ambivalent appraisal of Stoker's monograph should be taken into consideration (additionally, incorporating a systematic perspective, Heidegger's (1927, p. 272) self-delineation from Stoker's notion is informative, since Heidegger's affiliation with the existentialist strand of phenomenology allows for a contrastive view). Lineage definitions are of particular interest for philologically inclined investigations.
- 2) *Locality definitions.* Locality definitions are akin to and interlinked with lineage definitions. They appeal to geographical or institutional contiguity. Assessing whether proponents of realistic phenomenology worked in geographical proximity of each other (e.g., same city or at two faculties that might belong to different disciplines but are nearby each other) for a given time (e.g., while being employed by an university or during a shared vacation or when attending a conference) or whether they were institutionally linked (e.g., published in the same volumes, belonged to the same faculty or were part of the same discussion group). Avé-Lallement's (1975a) antithesis Freiburg-Munich or T. Conrad's Munich-Göttingen phenomenology (cf. Avé-Lallemant & Schuhmann, 1992) are a paradigmatic example for a geographical definitions. On the other hand, when Scheler speaks of the "enthusiastic period" during the 1890s in the *Akademischer Verein für Psychologie (Academic Society for Psychology)* that was founded by Lipps and became a "nursery for phenomenological research", then this approach works by assessing strong institutional bonds.

Both lineage and locality definitions are of particular interest from philologically inclined investigations. The historical perspective offers a range of additional tools that can enrich the understanding of realistic phenomenology attained by these approaches, such as asserting influences outside their primary scope that is laid out in correspondences or by turning to private notes or diaries that might contain clues that could potentially overrule probable allegiances. However, a perspective that is overly reliant on historical considerations faces the problem of how to decide which cases belong to the realistic strand of phenomenology, which presupposes a notion of *what realistic phenomenology is*. After all: it is an old phenomenological insight that identifying an exemplar of a class presupposes an understanding of the class itself. The historical approach must then turn to complementary, systematic considerations.

*Systematic Perspective:*

- 3) *Thematic definition.* Thematic definitions are a minimalistic approach to determining realistic phenomenology. They proceed by identifying typical or paradigmatic themes of investigation for realistic phenomenology (and in contrast to other strands of phenomenology). An example of this approach would be Vendrell-Ferran (2009) identifying “a common interest on the theme of emotions” (p. 71) or a special “interest in value ethics” (Vendrell Ferran, 2011, p. 71) as characterizing features of early, realist phenomenology (it ought to be noted that Vendrell-Ferran’s approach is not restricted to a thematic definition). The same holds for construing its identity by appealing to Geigerian immanentistic realism, viz. the view that intentional experiences disclose only a perspective on the psychic realm (analogously to how perception gives a perspective on the physical realm), which is itself vaster and contains unconscious or ‘under-conscious’ realms (Geiger, 1930; cf. Scheler, 1915b)
- 4) *Definition from the essence of philosophy.* Definitions from the essence of philosophy are maximalist approaches to conceiving of realist phenomenology. These approaches are concerned with what the realistic orientation adds to the phenomenological conception of

philosophy (or with how the latter is transformed by the former). There are manifold ways of spelling out the phenomenological view on philosophy, but in general terms they appeal to a) the mereological structure that resides in philosophy being the discipline in which the question ‘what is philosophy?’ must be answered, b) to the ideal of philosophical knowledge to be without presuppositions or c) to phenomenological philosophy being radically empiricist or positivistic (even concerning ideal or general entities). In this vein, Seifert identifies “the perhaps most central contribution of realistic phenomenology” in the notion of the material a priori that “rejects any subjectivization of the a priori by truly returning to the proper nature of objective necessity” (Seifert, 1995, p. 96). This understanding of philosophy is typically associated with the so-called *turn to the object* (Geiger, 1933). Scheler gives the definition from the essence of philosophy his signature twist by recasting it in personalistic terms: “Philosophy, however, is the manner of relating to things, which the true philosopher has and in which *he* sees things” (Scheler, 1921, p. 64). Philosophy, here, is conceived in light of the idea of the philosopher and the turn to the object is spelled out in ethical terms, namely as a ‘moral act’ or ‘upswing’ that connects the mind with the realm of essences (which it cannot access within the natural worldview). In a variation of the Platonic conception, Scheler terms this philosophical manner of relating to things as “the *love to the essential*” (Scheler, 1921, p. 65).

- 5) *Methodological Definition*. Methodological definitions have received the most attention for determining realistic phenomenology, especially with regards to delimiting it from other strands. These definitions focus on whether and how the methodological arsenal of phenomenology is employed in realistic phenomenology, especially concerning the notions of epoché and reduction. Vendrell-Ferran (2009; 2011) offers a rendition of the popular methodological definition that realistic phenomenology works with the eidetic reduction but criticizes or spares out the transcendental reduction.

This manner of defining realistic phenomenology will be elaborated in more detail in the next section.

As with the historical perspective, a systematical perspective alone poses little promise for defining realistic phenomenology. This is obvious when considering that the term also designates historical accounts, implying that one validity condition of a systematic definition is that it aptly describes the phenomenological proposals of the early realists (explicating their methodical procedure, highlighting their strengths, providing insights into – and potential remedies for – their shortcomings).

The formal distinction between historical and systematic perspectives is abstract in the sense that there are no principled reasons not to opt for composite definitions. An example for a composite definition is Vendrell-Ferran, who starts from a *localist* sketch by contrasting phenomenologists from Munich and Göttingen, identifies the *common themes* of an immanent-realistic conception of the psychic realm and an interest in emotional life, which are investigated *methodologically* through eidetic reduction.

Dissociating the different manners of defining realistic phenomenology can prove helpful for systematically developing the discourse in the future.

The remainder of this article will be, for the most part, invested in reflecting on methodological definitions of realistic phenomenology and connecting them to definitions from the essence of philosophy.

### **Phenomenological Reductionism and Epochism: Methodological Considerations of the Reduction**

Methodological definitions have been at the center of recent discourses. For instance, Spiegelberg (1973, 1974, 1982), Bossert (1974), Pettit (1973) and K. Hartmann (1973) contrasted Husserlian and Pfänderian phenomenology in pursuit of the question of whether

phenomenology can make do without or with a stripped-down version of the reduction, but not without the epoché. Even more recently, the general thrust of this discourse was mirrored by methodological disputes in the field of phenomenological psychology, culminating in the ‘antithesis Center for Subjectivity Research-Duquesne’ (Barber, 2021; Gutland et al., 2021; Morley, 2019a; Paley, 1998; Van Manen, 2016; Zahavi & Martiny, 2019) with Zahavi’s (2021) formula that *it is safe to ignore the epoché* within applied phenomenology, while Morley (2019b) insists that *it’s always about the epoché*.

As we have already seen, this methodological interest is anything but a new trend. Almost exactly 50 years ago, Spiegelberg (1973) asserts that “since its beginnings the reduction has been a stumbling block to many insiders and outsiders and certainly an embarrassment to its interpreters” (p. 4). Relatedly, Avé-Lallement (1975a) argued that Husserl’s development of the notion of reduction was perceived to push phenomenology towards idealism, resulting in a polarized reception. Nevertheless, the importance of the reduction was ever-increasing in Husserl’s (1913, 1959; cf. 2002) self-understanding, which is best attested to in one of his letters to Ingarden: “The hardest thing in all philosophy is the phenomenological reduction, to penetrate it with philosophical understanding and to practise it” (Husserl, 1968, p. 74). This perceived importance is still present in the contemporary literature (Drummond, 1975; Kern, 1962; Ströker, 1981), aptly surmised in Luft’s claim that the reduction “stands pars pro toto for his [Husserl’s] mature philosophy as a whole, viz. for the transcendental-eidetic phenomenology” (Luft, 2012, p. 5).

Following Spiegelberg’s (1974) distinction between “epochistic” and “reductionistic phenomenologists” (p. 256), this methodological emphasis on the reduction can be termed *phenomenological reductionism*. Another clear-cut characterization of phenomenological reductionism is offered by Fink:

The basic method of phenomenological philosophy of E. Husserl is solely the ‘phenomenological reduction:’ it is the epistemic route of beginning philosophical thinking to the ‘thematic’ realm of philosophy, it is the ‘access’ to transcendental subjectivity, within it lie all problems of phenomenology and their coordinated special methods. (Fink, 1933, p. 322)

Of course, this must strictly be distinguished from the common understanding of reductionism that derives from the philosophy of science that is at work, for instance, in the claim that consciousness can be reduced to neural activity.

The complementary view, therefore, is not a form of anti-reductionism or pluralism, but precisely *phenomenological epochism*. “Epochistic phenomenologists” hold that the essential method of phenomenology is the epoché, which is also seen as the common denominator between realistic and transcendental phenomenology.

A historical instance of phenomenological epochism can be found in Pfänder’s critique and revision of Husserl’s reduction. Pfänder’s primary objection is that Husserl’s reduction is not radical enough and, ultimately, fails to measure up to the ideal of presuppositionless philosophical knowledge: “The phenomenological reduction also starts from the presupposition that e.g. the external world ultimately is a unit of validity [“Geltungseinheit”]” (Pfänder, 1973; cit. in Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 9). According to Spiegelberg, Pfänder reconceives the reduction as the intermediary step of a three-step method, amidst the clarification of sense (“Sinnklärung”) and proper phenomenology. Even though Pfänder sticks to the term “reduction”, Spiegelberg interprets its methodological radicalization to “correspond to Husserl’s first characterization of the epoché in the *Ideas*” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 15).

Do these methodological considerations yield the conclusion that realistic phenomenology is epochistic, while transcendental phenomenology is reductionistic?

In light of the contention surrounding the method of reduction and the criticisms voiced against it in the discourse by realistic phenomenologists, answering this question affirmatively might be tempting. It would be wrong, nevertheless. In fact, this issue has been subjected to scientific scrutiny in Celms's seminal study *The Phenomenological Idealism of Husserl* (Celms, 1993). Celms poses the question of whether adopting the method of reduction implies transcendental idealism. The point of departure is that the reduction consists in reducing (lat. re-ducere) "the conditioned to the conditional" or the constituted to that which constitutes, which reveals the "original unity between conditioned and conditional" (Celms, 1993, pp. 84–85). If the reduction reveals that transcendent objects depend on the constituting activity of a transcendental subjectivity, then the appeal of an idealistic interpretation looms large. However, Celms (1993) argues that Husserl's idealism is not transcendental "in the usual sense of the term ever since Kant, but a *spiritualistic metaphysics*" (p. 32)—which Celms judges to be groundbreaking in its own right. What then *is* the connection between phenomenological method and idealism? Celms (1993) arrives at the conclusion that "*the phenomenological method is by no means necessarily destined*" for phenomenological idealism, which "may not claim *absolutely strict certainty*, but at most a certain degree of *probability*" (p. 32). Furthermore, Celms was among the first to raise the charge of solipsism against Husserl, pointing to methodological inconsistencies in his treatment of alter-egos (Parker, 2013). Even more to the point, Celms (1993) holds that the phenomenological method is "essentially indifferent regarding the question of idealism-realism" (p. 116). Celms arrives at a highly consequential conclusion for the methodological appraisal of realistic phenomenology:

All discussions concerning the phenomenological method as such thus proceed in principle *on this side of* the idealism-realism question. From this it follows with all clarity that the way to this method is also open to all those who consider the idealist position in philosophy unacceptable. (Celms, 1993, p. 32)

According to Celms analysis, the phenomenological method is developed at a level that precedes the dichotomy between realism and idealism (cf. Vēgners, 2020) and can, therefore, be incorporated into either of the two at a later stage. This is in line with the view that one of the major achievements of phenomenology was to overcome the dichotomy between realism and idealism. The threat of losing sight of this achievement can, to a significant degree, be traced back to an equivocation regarding the term “reduction.” The first sense of reduction is that of “leading back all objectively (transcendently) directed *reflection* to the forms of consciousness that correspond to that reflection” (Celms, 1993, p. 83). The second sense of reduction concerns “leading back objective (transcendent) *being* to the being of the corresponding forms of consciousness” (Celms, 1993, p. 83). The first sense of reduction can be termed *reflection* and has been associated with the epoché in the literature, whereas the latter might be termed *reduction aimed at being* or *reduction in the narrow sense* (Celms, 1993, p. 84). Only the correlation revealed through the reduction in the narrow sense poses the question of phenomenological idealism, whereas the correlation disclosed by reflection thus conceived is entirely indifferent to the dichotomy between idealism and realism. In this sense, “phenomenological idealism stands and falls with the justification of the ph. reduction” in the narrow sense, the so-called “proof of reduction” (Celms, 1993, p. 91).

Celms’s methodological analysis was received as an opportunity to reconcile one of the schisms of the phenomenological discourse, by reinventing realistic phenomenological approaches to the methodological discourse whilst offering a critical appraisal of transcendental-idealistic ones (Avé-Lallemant, 1975a; Vēgners, 2020). Of the many endearing commentaries Celms’s monograph received, Pfänder’s and N. Hartmann’s reviews speak the most for its significance for realistic phenomenology (Vēgners, 2020, pp. 157–160). The former speaks of Celms’s work as “a thorough and sound treatment of the foundational questions” that troubled early realistic phenomenologists and laurates Celms’s discussion of Husserl’s phenomenology as “exceedingly diligent, precise and clear,” offering “a portrayal, which is indeed the best that

exists so far” (Pfänder, 1929, pp. 2048–2049). Even though it remains questionable whether Celms’s renunciation of transcendental phenomenology was motivated by a turn to realistic phenomenology or critical realism (Vēgners, 2020), his analyses nevertheless demonstrated that the phenomenological method is dissociable from ontological commitments. Celms reorients the phenomenological discourse back to its basics and highlights that it encompasses both, idealistic and realistic positions. Simultaneously, Celms brings to the fore the twofold sense of phenomenology:

1) Phenomenology as “a basic science for philosophy” in the just specified sense, which is “a science that serves all sciences without exception for their absolutely last justification” (Celms, 1993, p. 36). This also is termed *phenomenology in the narrow sense*. Establishing this sense of phenomenology is intimately tied to fulfilling the philosophical ideal of presuppositionless knowledge.

2) Phenomenology as “a phenomenological philosophy that is founded thereupon” (Celms, 1993, p. 35). This can take on the form of phenomenological realism or idealism and, furthermore, can conceivably be extended to object-phenomenology (“Gegenstandsphänomenologie”), existential phenomenology, and so forth. Establishing this sense of phenomenology recognizes that any fully developed philosophy must take a stand on the nature of transcendent being resp. reality, a requirement that derives from the ideal of philosophy as a universal science.

The antithesis between transcendental-idealistic and ontological-realistic phenomenology is orthogonal to these two senses of phenomenology. This is evident in methodological definitions, which – in the Celmsian tradition – discuss matters belonging to 1) phenomenology in the narrow sense. The same can be said of definitions from the essence of philosophy, which in general and by implication are concerned with 1) the narrow sense as well. The inner logic of their intimate intertwinement compels phenomenology to progress towards a fully articulated 2) phenomenological philosophy.

In sum, realistic phenomenology need not be epochistic and restrict its methodological discourse to Husserlian epoché or Celmsian reflection. On the other hand, the method of reduction needs to be rooted in the discourse of phenomenological philosophy, because the reduction “must judge of the transcendent precisely in the sense that this is only a constitution” (Celms, 1993, p. 85), as is apprehended in phenomenological reflection. Therefore, the epochistic “abstention” regarding the validities of transcendent objects must be strictly distinguished from their reductive “denial” (Celms, 1993, p. 85). This was also recognized by Conrad-Martius who speaks of “a nuance more than abstention from all judgments about being and non-being” regarding the world as reduced of the validities of being, viz. the world as a pure phenomenon (Conrad-Martius, 1965a, p. 398). Going a step further, Conrad-Martius envisioned an “inverse route” to the transcendental reduction, i.e., a *realistic reduction* in which the “world with all its contents is posited as hypothetically being” (Conrad-Martius, 1965a, p. 398). The radicalism of this realistic reduction mirrors that of the transcendental one, demarcating one of two end-poles of philosophical knowledge:

Is it then possible that the entire meaning and being of the world of being, taken in the broadest sense, can spring both from an egological subjectivity that cannot be transcended in a backward direction and from an ontological objectivity that cannot be transcended in a forward direction? (Conrad-Martius, 1965a, p. 400)

This ambitious conception that aims at “real reality” (“wirkliche Wirklichkeit”) (Conrad-Martius, 1965a, p. 397), viz. transcendent, consciousness-independent reality, in contrast to the consciousness of reality (“Wirklichkeitsbewusstsein”) (cf. Miron, 2021; Parker, 2021, p. 15), viz. immanent reality given as an idea, and, in particular, “attempts to rehabilitate the *facticity* (“Faktizität”) of the real reality (“wirkliche Wirklichkeit”) within metaphysics” (Miron, 2021, p. 193). This already pre-empts the follow-up question that if realistic phenomenology is not epochistic, it might be reductionistic only in a limited sense. It has been proposed that “the main

tool of investigation here [in realistic phenomenology] is the so-called ‘eidetic reduction’” (Vendrell Ferran, 2011, p. 73). From a methodological perspective, realistic phenomenology then would amount to little more than a leaner version of transcendental phenomenology. Vendrell-Ferran has defended such a view for the case of Scheler: “Scheler’s analyses of feeling and feelings, resentment, humility, sympathy, suffering, shame, repentance, love and hate can be taken as examples of eidetic reductions” (Vendrell Ferran, 2011, p. 75).

However, even more so than Conrad-Martius, Scheler offers the clearest-cut example of an independently and comprehensively developed notion of reduction. Commentators such as Avé-Lallement (1975b), Cusinato (1998, p. 84), Sepp (2003), Vetter (2004, p. 147) and Janssen (1994, p. 240) agree that Scheler is not limited to the concept of eidetic reduction. Avé-Lallement was the first to demonstrate that Scheler engaged critically and at length with Husserl’s reduction and independently developed his own concept of reduction as a technique. Even though it is sometimes asserted that “the realistic phase of Scheler ended around 1919, when he moves to Cologne and increasingly becomes interested in philosophical anthropology and sociology”, his thought of the reduction prevailed and continued to play a central role in his mature philosophy (Vendrell Ferran, 2011, p. 71). Accordingly, a recurring mantra for remembering Scheler that spans at least from E. Stein to the present is that “Scheler had always emphasized that he had developed his phenomenological method independently from Husserl” (Gottlöber, 2021, p. 119).

The next two sections will investigate Scheler’s critique of the reduction as an exemplar for a realistic perspective and his counterproposal of a reconceived reduction within the framework of his philosophical anthropology.

### **The Realistic Critique: Suspending the Moment of Reality without a Theory of Reality**

Realistic phenomenology not only encompasses methodological reductionism but affords a wide variety of perspectives. The significance of these approaches exceeds that of exegesis and

can meaningfully inform future debates. Celmsian approaches methodologically delimit a sense of reduction that is indifferent with regards to realism and idealism, Pfänderian approaches aim at a modified version of Husserlian reduction, Conrad-Martiusian approaches aim at a complementary route towards philosophical knowledge of transcendent being. It is important to note that realistic phenomenology is not a homogenous discourse but comprises plentiful opportunities for constructive debate. Take Ingarden, for instance, who is critical towards Husserl's constitutional analyses enabled by the reduction, especially because they lead Husserl to the – condensed – claim that “‘If we strike out pure consciousness, then we strike out the real world’” (Ingarden, 1998, p. 213). Opposite to Celms, Ingarden is critical of the assessment (which is also present in Celms) that “‘this problem [of idealism-realism] dissipates or would become meaningless on grounds of Husserl's phenomenology’” (Ingarden, 1998, p. 213). Opposite to Conrad-Martius, it is “‘through the rejection of Husserlian transcendental reduction [that] Ingarden [attains] the field of ontological analyses’” (Rynkiewicz, 2008, p. 29).

In spite of its heterogeneity, the discourse of realistic phenomenology converges on certain themes, in particular in criticizing how the moment of reality is reduced within transcendental approaches to phenomenology. As previously discussed, Celms is wary that the reductive denial implies a negative judgement about the validity of transcendent being, with which Conrad-Martius agrees when arguing that Husserl's reduction requires an additional commitment to the inwards route to the subject that has an alternative, outwards route and Pfänder warns that the presupposition of the real world as a unit of validity is unfaithful to the ideals of absolute knowledge. Perhaps the most in-depth, realistic critique of the reductive suspension of experience's moment of reality was offered by Scheler.

Scheler's reception of Husserl's notion of reduction divides into two phases. After Scheler habilitated in Jena and switched to Munich in 1906, there are several instances of him acknowledging Husserl's notion of reduction, both critically and affirmatively. Generally speaking, Scheler's early reception was rather positive. It is only during his late phase that

Scheler developed an in-depth critique of the notion of reduction, which makes his earlier engagement seem quite superficial in comparison. On multiple occasions between 1922 and 1928, Scheler speaks of the importance of the reduction. He even announces to dedicate a monograph specifically to that issue with the working title *Phenomenological Reduction and Voluntative Realism*. In spite of his untimely death in 1928, Scheler's lectures in Cologne on metaphysics attest to the fact, that these were not just empty words, even if the monograph on the reduction was never completed. As Cusinato (1998, p. 83) remarks, during his late period, Scheler either used the term "phenomenological reduction" with quotation marks or spoke of the *techné* of reduction, instead of the method of reduction. "Personally, I generally avoid the word [phenomenology]", Scheler (1979c, p. 285 FN. 1) states accordingly.

Given Scheler's prolonged work on the issue of the reduction and his terminological reservations, this makes for a difficult exegetical situation. Scheler's thought on the reduction is dispersed and, at times, takes place in notes, but is most clearly articulated in *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* (Scheler, 1924, 2012), *Cognition and Work* (Scheler, 1926a, 2021) and in his posthumously published works *Idealism-Realism* (Scheler, 1928b) and *The Human Place in Cosmos* (Scheler, 1928a, 2009) (all of which, by now, are available in English; except for *Idealism-Realism* (however, see Gottlöber, 2021)). Two main lines of criticism can be distilled from Scheler: one "realistic" and one "anthropological" in kind. The former targets the reduction of the moment of reality, while the latter ultimately reconceives of the reduction as a technique and completes it within philosophical anthropology.

The point of departure for the realistic critique is simple. The idea of suspending experience's moment of reality hardly makes any sense without a properly developed theory of reality: "[I]n order to suspend the moment of reality so that the essence can appear, we have to find out what this moment of reality is and in wherein it is given" (Scheler, 1928b, p. 206). Without determining the moment of reality and the acts in which it is given, how would a phenomenologist know what to reduce? Since this line of critique is quite well developed in the

literature (Avé-Lallemant, 1975a, 1975b, 1980; Cusinato, 1998; Gottlöber, 2021; Janssen, 1994; Sepp, 2014), the present investigation will be limited to a general appraisal of it.

In *Cognition and Work* Scheler relates “one of the most enigmatic in any or every philosophy: the question regarding the essence of “reality”“ to the notion of reduction:

And then a theory of the essence of reality and of the having of reality would make possible the technique and method of spirit through which we can complete what E. Husserl has called the “phenomenological reduction.” The phenomenological reduction is a spiritual disposition that Husserl himself knew how to carry out exquisitely in his investigations, but he was totally unsuccessful with the descriptions and theory because they led him to an utterly unclear and, insofar as it is given, a certainly incorrect theory of reality: a being-real that was defined as having a place in time. Only by disconnecting from the acts and psychic functions which give the reality-moment is it possible to introduce a refraining from reality, a leaving-open and bracketing-out of the being-real, which Husserl viewed correctly as the precondition for any cognition of essences, as the purest theoretical disposition in general. It thus requires two completely different things: (1) a technology of the cognition of essences, and (2) a methodology of the cognition of essences. (Scheler, 2021, pp. 90–91)

This passage already contains the motive of *completing the reduction*. Scheler adds a sketch of how he conceives of the technology of reduction that “also the bracket[s]-out of any impulsive love of the being and value-being of all things” and “transition[s] the energy of activity that was anchored in the mastery relation to nature [...] to the loving relation to nature, i.e., the highest condition of any pure objective behavior devoted to the thing itself” (Scheler, 2021, p. 91). This technology, technique, or *techné* of reduction will be further analyzed in the next section.

While the passage contains explicit recognition and approval of Husserl's performance of the reduction, the main thrust of Scheler's critique targets the description of the reduction itself, i.e., Husserl's eidetic reduction. Primarily, this concerns Husserl's interpretation of the *principium individuationis* of experiences of reality. By Husserl positing that the reduction should bracket out the being insofar as it has a place in time, he *confuses an index of reality with the acts giving rise to the experience of reality*. In *Idealism-Realism*, Scheler posits that space and time "are [not] the principle of individuality. They are only hints to and indices for the singularization", whereas the "proper principle [...] rather is the principle that posits real-being" (Scheler, 1928b, p. 245). Hence, rather than bracketing space-time, it is necessary to bracket the acts grounding space-time. "Space and time are dependent upon reality and its inherent principle of causality, not the other way around", says Scheler (1928b, p. 245).

This implies that the *principium individuationis* must be searched for elsewhere. In this endeavor, Scheler turns to the sphere of urge ("Drang") and develops a version of *voluntative realism*. The workings of urge in an individual center of living ("Lebenszentrum") are what presents consciousness with 'singular images' and what ultimately give rise to the experience of reality, which is *given as resistance*. As such it primarily occurs within the *organism-environment correlation*. The experience of resistance has a twofold structure: On the one hand, it entails an *active* component that derives from the activity of the vital urge (that must be distinguished from (conscious) willing, which it precedes). On the other hand, it encompasses a *passive* component that stems from the encounter with the resistance of reality, viz. an experience of the type "suffering" ("Widerfahrnis"). Accordingly, the principle of reality is relative to the vital sphere ("lebensrelativ").

Before this backdrop, Scheler highlights the pre-conscious and pre-objective character of the experience of reality: "Pre- given to everything else that is given in the natural worldview [...] is the still unqualified *reality of the world in general*, and the general thesis corresponding to it: 'There is in reality a world'" (Scheler, 2021, p. 168).

If you could imagine the entire content of the natural world being dismantled piece by piece, allowing all colors to fade, all sounds to die away, all spheres of body consciousness and their content to disappear, all spatial and temporal forms and all forms of being (categories) of the things being leveled down to an indeterminate being—thus, there remains as the not-able-to-be-dismantled a basic, fundamentally simple *impression of reality in general*: the impression of an absolute ‘resistance’ opposing the spontaneous—regardless of whether it is characterized as voluntary, involuntary, or as willing or only as drive impulse—activity that supports our conscious having and being in continued execution. *Being real is not objective being*, i.e., it is not the identical being—thus correlate of any intellectual act; rather, it is being resistant to the original arising spontaneity that is one and the same in willing, in attending of any kind. (Scheler, 2021, p. 168)

There is a sense in which reality “is there-before” any intentional acts, “it is as unreachable to everything that we call our intellectual, representing, thinking behavior and to all its possible contents and givennesses as color is to hearing, as the number 3 is to tasting and smelling”. (Scheler, 2021, p. 169). Since this pre-conscious and pre-objective moment of reality is experienced as resistance to urge activity, the notion of reduction is honed to depict this accordingly. Janssen (1994, p. 260) stresses that Scheler conceives of the eidetic and existential cognition (“So-seins- und Daseinserkenntnis”) as two forms of participation (“Teilhabe”) with being. While eidetic cognition is achieved in intellectual acts of apperception, it is preceded by existential cognition that is given voluntarily. Put differently: the experience of reality is not the correlate of a constituting activity of transcendental subjectivity, but “can only be accomplished by the vital center of a living being”, viz., is produced by urge (Janssen, 1994, p. 260).

Scheler's voluntative realism ought not to be conflated with critical realism. He develops a distinct critique of Husserl's conception of the transcendental, which is operative in the conception of the reduction and ought, in turn, to be attained through it. As Cusinato (1998) remarks "[t]he separation between the 'being of consciousness' and the 'being of reality' shows that Husserl conceives of the transcendental correlation as inherent in the immanent sphere, whereas Scheler starts from the assumption that the distinction reality-irreality is indifferent to the distinction transcendence-immanence" (p. 88). This is in line with Gottlöber, who comments on Scheler's "psychological and epistemological" critique of Husserl that "the problem of reality is entirely different from the transcendence of the objects" and since "the transcendence of objects is independent of their existential (Dasein) modification [ideal, real or fictional], transcendental consciousness is not useful at all to solve the problem of reality" (Gottlöber, 2021, p. 128).

Separating the problem of reality from the problem of transcendence has important implications for methodological reductionism in realistic phenomenology. Urge is pre-given to consciousness as well as transcendent objects, which both are constituted on grounds of the experience of reality. Within Scheler's thought, this entails that "bracketing what transcends consciousness does not mean determining the intentional sphere, but rather annihilating it, because the objects transcending consciousness form 'an unbreakable structure' with consciousness and they arise simultaneously through the same process" (Cusinato, 1998, p. 88). The descriptive advantage that Scheler's realistic critique promises to bring to the table is precisely to analyze this "unbreakable structure." This way the reduction of reality or experience's reality moment is provided with the necessary theoretical underpinning, viz. a theory of reality. In light of this account, the target for reduction shifts from being-thus in space and time to the activity of urge and, hence, to the vital-psychic sphere. Scheler develops his account of the vital sphere first and foremost in the context of his anthropology, which brings us to his second, anthropological critique of the reduction.

## **Technological Reductionism in Philosophical Anthropology: Scientific, Phenomenological/Apollonian, Dionysian and Cathartic Reduction**

In contemporary accounts of philosophical anthropology, the notion of reduction hardly is represented. Albeit, for instance, Schloßberger (2019) develops his *Material Anthropology* in a close reading of Scheler but makes do basically entirely without the reduction. Noteworthy exceptions are Vendrell-Ferran (2011), Sepp (2014) and especially Cusinato (1999) with his concept of the *cathartic reduction*. This section is dedicated to systematically developing different notions of the reduction in Scheler's thought and integrating them within the framework of philosophical anthropology.

In his influential handbook entry on *Man*, Fahrenbach (1973) argued that Scheler ought best not be considered the first exponent of philosophical anthropology, which he saw in Plessner, but as a visionary reformer and perhaps the last defendant of *metaphysical anthropology*. Opposite to this, Fischer's (2008) seminal study on *Philosophical Anthropology* inaugurates Scheler as the initiator of this discourse, with Plessner and Gehlen as his comrades in spirit. There is truth to both characterizations. Some of Scheler's concepts bear an unmistakable metaphysical semblance, such as the microcosm-macrotheos correspondence, while the question of whether philosophy must ultimately be founded upon anthropology indeed surfaces during his late period and was without a doubt one reason for some of the critical appraisals Scheler's work received, e.g., the charge of anthropologism issued by Husserl (1989) and Heidegger (1927). In this vein, Frings (1996) holds that "Scheler repeatedly referred to three major comprehensive works on which he was working: 1. *Philosophical Anthropology*, 2. *Metaphysics*, and 3. *Theory of Cognition* ["Erkenntnistheorie"]" and is quick to add that, in addition to his *Material Value Ethics*, "it is safe to assume that these three volumes [...] would have constituted the pillars of Max Scheler's philosophy" (p. 2). The guiding thesis of the present treatment is that Scheler's concept of reduction can help elucidate not only the status of

his anthropology but functions as an overarching theme of these four pillars. At the same time, they provide the framework within which the reduction can be “completed.”

Ultimately, the question of anthropology’s status for Scheler can only be decided by engaging with the subject matter. This question has been subject to extensive scientific scrutiny. In his introduction to Scheler's work and life, Frings (1996) glosses that “there is one subject in which ultimately all of Scheler's thoughts focus: Man” (p. 2). Near the end of his life, Scheler also professed this anthropological focal point in the preface to *The Human Place in Cosmos*. There he states that the question “What is the human being, what is its position in being?” has occupied him ever since his ‘philosophical awakening’ and that he “was blessed with the good fortune to see that the vast majority of all problems of philosophy which [he] had treated earlier coincided in the question concerned” (Scheler, 2009, p. 3).

In light of this retrospective, the importance of anthropology for Scheler cannot be overstated. At the same time, Scheler plays a significant role in the development of the discourse of philosophical anthropology, *inter alia* by rediscovering a metaphysical approach to the question of man amidst the decidedly anti-metaphysical atmosphere of his times. Not only did he put forward the distinction between naturalistic and eidetic notion of man (“Gattungs- und Wesensbegriff”), but his theory of the stratification of the vital sphere also exerted widespread influence within anthropology – e.g., Plessner, Gehlen, N. Hartmann, E. Rothhacker – and beyond it – e.g., Schneider, von Weizsäcker, Lersch. It is precisely Scheler’s account of the stratification of the vital-psychic sphere that ought to be scrutinized in order to flesh out the anthropological of critique of the reduction, because this is where Scheler delineates several forms of urge.

The special place of man derives from his unique relation to the vital-psychical sphere, because he is the only being in which its urge coincides with and is opposed by spirit, meaning that there is an anthropological dualism in the sense that man unifies the vital-psychic and the spiritual

spheres (Cusinato, 1995). Scheler (2009) dissociates the vital-psychical sphere into four levels, to which distinct forms of reality-experience as resistance correspond:<sup>7</sup>

- 1) *The level of urge*. Scheler speaks of an urge of life (“Lebensdrang”) or an urge of feeling (“Gefühlsdrang”) that is present in all living beings as a striving without consciousness, without sensation, and without representation. This basic vegetative level of life is characterized by growth and reproduction and already exhibits a physiognomic structure, viz., vegetative life already exhibits the primordial phenomenon of expression. The workings of this urge are minimally “structured” by non-goal-directed movements towards something and away from something (“Hinzu und Vonweg”), for instance in relation to light or nutrition, from which this urge is still undifferentiated (i.e., it does not objectify). This basic urge of life affords the whole energy required for activity in the vital sphere and is, hence, the motor constituting the experience of reality.
- 2) *The level of instinct*. While the drive is present already in plants, instinct is specific to animal life forms. It encompasses an active directedness towards a goal, to which it moves the animal in a rigid and inflexible manner. At this level, externally observable “behavior” emerges. This means that the instinctive plan for action cannot be modified through individual learning and, hence, does not afford any degrees of freedom for the individual. The function of instinct is to channel the life force of urge towards specific types of experiences of resistance. Instinctive behavior is psycho-physically indifferent, rhythmic (and unlearned), reacts to phylogenetically (not individually) significant situations (i.e., is innate), and unlearned (i.e., indifferent to the number of situational encounters). Further, the relation of instinct to the structure of the environment *a priori* determines what an animal can sense and represent. This level is characterized by a basic appetitive-aversive structure, e.g., one of pleasure and pain.

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<sup>7</sup> The discussion below is oriented along the lines of Avé-Lallemant (1975b).

3) *The level of associative memory.* This level is marked by an increasing singularization of the organic individual from phylogenetical determination. While the latter was characterized by an inflexible instinct, the former exhibits a comparatively 'free' drive ("Trieb"). Here, the instinctually motivated plan for action can be intercepted by the individual. The structure of drive illuminates the organism's environment and allows it to engage with it behaviorally. The means for the transformation from instinctual (re)action to behavior are habituation and learning that afford a limited degree of freedom. Besides the obvious close connection between associative memory and the psychic principle of association (a complex of representations tends to reproduce itself according to laws such as those of similarity or contiguity), associative memory is also intimately tied to stimulus-response schemes, conditioned reflexes (reflective reactions to intermittent stimuli), the reflex arc (separation between the sensory and the motor system), and the formation of habits (an idiosyncratic manner of connecting certain behaviors to certain representations that are determined by past learning history). Importantly, this level is characterized by trial-and-error learning, viz. by a principle of success. Having associative memory implies the internalization of experiences of resistance and a projection of the organism's psychic functions onto reality. Further, it introduces a novel form of resistance that consists of limited capabilities for adapting to the environment.

4) *The level of practical intelligence.* Whereas the levels of instinct and of associative memory primarily designate lower genera of the animal order, practical intelligence is reserved for higher genera, for example, great apes. At this level, individuals can discover new and unprecedented connections in the world and realize them by means of purpose-oriented 'intelligent' behavior ("intelligentes Verhalten"), choice ("Wahlhandlung"), and preference ("Vorzugsfähigkeit"). It is called 'practical' intelligence, because it ultimately always terminates in action. Good illustrations for the constitutive performance of practical intelligence are Köhler's chimpanzees' *heureka moment* ("Aha!'-Erlebnis") or

demonstrations of ‘intelligent’ behavior through testing trials (“Probierversuche”) towards new situations, viz. sudden onset, independent of the number of previous encounters with the situation and typicality of the situation). Next to a sudden insight, these examples demonstrate a certain level of anticipation, viz., being mindful of something not yet lived through. Notice that the level of practical intelligence seems to almost transcend the vital sphere and yet it remains bound to practical interests and sensual givenness, put differently: organically bound. Practical intelligence projects ego-syntonic desires onto the environment and thus transforms the active-passive correlation of the experience of resistance to an ego-centered realization of the organism’s interests *against* the resistance of reality.

Even though it is essential for man to partake in the higher, spiritual sphere, all the levels of the vital-psychic sphere are conserved and transformed in his mode of being. This so-called *microcosm thesis* holds that “man [...] combines all essential levels [“Wesensstufen”] of existence, especially those of life, and, at least regarding the essential regions [“Wesensregionen”], the whole of nature attains its most concentrated unity of being in him” (Scheler, 1928a, p. 16). Man is the only (secular) being that exhibits such a microcosmic structure, i.e., partaking in all spheres of being at once. Even though human being is thus plurally stratified, it is once more structured by the basic *anthropological dualism* of urge (“Drang”) and spirit/mind (“Geist”), which Scheler conceives of as fundamentally opposing principles that emerge from the ultimate ground of being (cf. Cusinato, 1995). In this sense Scheler offers a new spin on Herder’s account that the totality of the biopsychical functions is transformed in man, viz., that the whole life force is *toto coelo* re-oriented in man (Boyle, 2016). Mapping Scheler’s spheres of being precisely onto the drive and spirit would require separate treatment (that would also have to take into account the stratification of values and the teaching of the three facts in order to be comprehensive) but is telling for identifying the anthropogenetic transformation of each level of the urge and, furthermore, for arriving at a *stratified account of reality experience* (see table 2).

**Stratification of reality experiences**

<b>Sphere</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Anthropogenetic transformation</b>	<b>Experience of reality</b>
Vital- psychic sphere (urge)	Urge ("Drang")	Urge ("Drang") connected with anxiety	Primary experience of resistance
	Instinct	Atavistic residuals of instinct	Ecologically bound resistance <u>Structured by:</u> Appetence-aversion
	Associative Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased principle of association</li> <li>• Isolation of drives ("Triebe") and instrumentalization as a source of pleasure (hedonism)</li> <li>• Habitualization of tradition</li> </ul>	Internalized experience of resistance <u>Structured by:</u> stimulus-response, pain-pleasure, futility-utility
	Practical intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prudence ("Klugheit," "List")</li> <li>• Will to dominate ("Herrschaftswille")</li> <li>• Homo faber</li> </ul>	Experience of ego-dystonic resistance <u>Structured by:</u> problem-solution, anticipation, choice, ego-dystonic/syntonic
Spiritual sphere (mind/spirit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectification</li> <li>• Self-consciousness</li> <li>• Ideation</li> <li>• Unboundedness from the environment ("Umweltentbundenheit")</li> <li>• Openness to the world ("Weltoffenheit")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectification of urge-produced experiences of resistance</li> <li>• Inhibition and disinhibition of drive-impulses</li> </ul> <u>Structured by:</u> Reflexivity, naysaying, guidance, personal values	

*Table 2.* A schema depicting different experiences of reality that correspond to the levels of the vital-psychic and spiritual spheres. The approach through stratification is useful for considering a stepwise procedure of reduction that progresses through each level in contrast to universal procedures that bracket the whole vital-psychic sphere in one blow.

Three broad types of anthropogenetic reality experiences can be dissociated:

- 1) There is the *primary experience of reality* as resistance: “The feeling urge [“Gefühlsdrang”] is the subject of this primary experience of resistance also in man, which is the root of all givenness of ‘reality’ [“Realität”], of ‘existence’ [“Wirklichkeit”]” (Scheler, 1928a, pp. 16–17). This primary experience of reality originates in the activity of the urge and precedes all representation and thinking, which can only “indicate the ‘thus-being’ and ‘being-different’ of this reality” (Scheler, 1928a, pp. 16–17). Akin to Conrad-Martius’s real reality, Scheler posits a “‘being-real’ of reality”, which is given only in the experience of resistance or in “a general resistance that is accompanied by anxiety” (Scheler, 1928a, pp. 16–17).
- 2) The vital-psychic levels above that of basic urge are increasingly structured in a succession of modal opposites that derive from the spheres of sensual, vital, and psychic values. Each relatively higher level builds upon, conserves, and transforms the properties of the relatively lower levels.
  - *Ecologically bound resistance* at the level of instinct. The “knowledge, which lies in instinct” is one of “feeling value-laden appetitive and aversive resistances that are differentiated according to value-experiences” (Scheler, 1928a, p. 22). The appetitive-aversive structure of the vital sphere can be spelled out in terms of sensual values.
  - *Internalized experiences of resistance* at the level of associative memory. The drive at this level is relatively free in contrast to ecologically bound instinct and, thus, individuates the organism. It is structured through sensual and vital values and can be described in stimulus-response categories, viz., in behavioristic terms. Anthropogenetic transformations concern the exploitation of pleasure sources, remembering individual and singular events, and breaking tradition (social inheritance through repetition drives).

- *Ego-dystonic experiences of resistance* at the level of practical intelligence. This level is structured by psychic values. Here, a “shift” of the vital-psychic ego’s “drive impulses into the things of the environment” occurs that can be articulated in terms of an ego-syntonic and ego-dystonic relation to the environment (Scheler, 1928a, p. 30). This is the root of the human will to dominate nature, which Scheler identifies as the core motif of pragmatism (Scheler, 2021).

3) There are *spiritualized experiences of resistance*. Two basic forms can be dissociated: Firstly, the opposing principle of spirit can relate to urge through objectivication: “Such a being can also elevate the originally given centers of ‘resistance’ and reactions in its environment, which are all that the animal has and in which it is absorbed ecstatically, to ‘objects’ and apprehend the essence of these objects” (Scheler, 1928a, p. 32). Secondly, the spirit can guide, (dis)inhibit and deny drive-impulses, ultimately leading to a “principled reversal of the interaction with reality” that is “independent of the physiological or psychic states of the human organism, independent of its drive impulses and [...] the sensual outside of the environment”: “The second act of the drama is the free, i.e., originating in the person’s center inhibition of a drive impulse or the disinhibition of an initially inhibited drive impulse” (Scheler, 1928a, pp. 32–33).

Before the backdrop of an anthropological stratification of experiences of reality, the question of the completion of the reduction can be revisited. Albeit analogizing Husserl’s and Scheler’s description of the reduction is a common occurrence, connecting the methodological idea of a stepwise and universal reduction to Scheler’s voluntative theory of reality largely remains a desiderate for future research. Experience’s moment of reality can either be bracketed in one blow, viz. by a universal reduction that targets the whole vital-psychic sphere of drive, or step by step by proceeding through its four levels. Both the universal and the stepwise procedure could entail specific difficulties and paradoxes, pointing to the additional need for a theory of reductionist idols. Further, the question must be addressed that if one of the basic spiritual

activities consists in the inhibition of drive impulses, are reductions then an omnipresent occurrence in philosophical anthropology? If this is not the case, then how can reductive bracketing and spiritual inhibition be dissociated?

Regarding the latter, Avé-Lallement offers an answer: “One must not understand the phenomenological reduction as if it was attainable through a momentary act of will” he states and refers to Scheler when adding that it rather is “about the ‘technical production of *dispositions* of feeling and spirit for *philosophical eidetic cognition*”” (cf. Avé-Lallement, 1975b, p. 171; Scheler, 1924, p. 138). In this vein, the momentary inhibition of drive impulses is not to be confounded with the reduction, because the latter is about the cultivation of the faculties to enable specific philosophical insights. This is in line with Scheler’s critique against Husserl’s eidetic reduction, insisting that suspending the judgment of reality (“*Daseinsurteil*”) is not enough, instead an „exhaustively performed technique of reduction (our reduction)“ is required, which “inhibits the reality of the world (not of real things) by inhibiting the drive center (of whose functions the being resistant depends)” (Scheler cit. in Cusinato, 1998, pp. 86–87).<sup>8</sup> What delineates Schelerian reduction from omnipresent anthropological inhibition of drive, therefore, is 1) its conception as a technology and 2) its target being reality itself, i.e., the inhibition of drive-produced, primary experiences of resistance.

Scheler explicitly stresses that his reduction “is no longer concerned with a mere method, i.e., an intellectual procedure [“*Denkverfahren*”], but with a *techné*, i.e., a procedure of inner acting, the performance which factually inhibits certain functions that are ever active in the natural worldview [“*natürliche Weltanschauung*”]” (Scheler, 1928b, p. 207). In this sense the appraisal that “Scheler’s solution is a methodological one but as Sepp rightly points out, one which is rooted in his anthropological conceptions” (Gottlöber, 2021, p. 65) ultimately must be revised:

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<sup>8</sup> See also Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 315, CB II, 38.

*In philosophical anthropology, methodological reductionism is replaced by technological reductionism.*

The purpose of reductive techniques is to “change our attitude to the world” and, therefore, to altogether alter phenomenology’s character, which essentially consists of an attitude or worldview (Gottlöber, 2021, p. 132). The reduction, at the same time, becomes a technology for the cognition of essences, by bracketing drive impulses, and a technology effectuating a comprehensive transformation in the philosopher him- or herself, who is personally involved in the procedure. This connects the reduction to anthropological conceptions such as the naysaying to vital-psychic values and their corresponding resistances and guiding drive force towards higher spiritual values of the person, i.e., the cultivation of feeling dispositions that anthropologically precede the cognition of essences.

Turning to the question of the completion of the reduction in philosophical anthropology, the point of departure is once more the microcosm thesis. Avé-Lallement (1980) highlights the central importance of the microcosm thesis, because “man as a microcosm [...] becomes a correlate of universal realms of experience. One such [realm] is phenomenology itself” (p. 92). This formulation already points to the self-understanding of Scheler’s late philosophical anthropology as a foundational discipline for phenomenology (and not the other way around). This exceeds the Conrad-Martiusian idea of complementing transcendental and realistic notions of reduction. It is not about complementation but completion. Based on Scheler’s lecture on metaphysics in 1923-1924, the three main pillars of this philosophical or metaphysical anthropology are 1) the *natural worldview* that affords absolute cognition of existence (“Daseinsabsolutes”), 2) *science* that pertains to the complete realm of reality, yet not relative to the vital sphere (“vitalrelativ”) but only to the pragmatic motif of pure will to domination, and 3) phenomenology that provides absolute and evident knowledge. “Metaphysics is the synthesis of these three modes of worldview [“Weltanschauung”] according to very specific

methods” (Scheler, 1979a, p. 98). The three pillars of metaphysical anthropology are connected through reductive techniques.

Scheler differentiates between three reductions: 1) the scientific, 2) phenomenological, and 3) Dionysian reduction. Building on the literature, 4) Cusinato’s cathartic reduction can be added. Each of these reductions encompasses a *negative and positive aspect*. The negative aspect of reduction eliminates something that would otherwise interfere (switching off, bracketing, denying, eliminating), while the positive aspect of reduction discloses something that would otherwise be hidden by that which interferes (switching on, attaining, achieving, apprehending). This twofold structure is recognized in Schelerian literature. Avé-Lallement (1975b) offers the *example of daytime and nightfall* as an illustration: “Just like we cannot see the stars during daytime, because the sunlight reflected by the atmosphere blinds us, and the disappearance of this light during nightfall renders them visible to us” (pp. 161–162). This means that reductive techniques coordinate switching off certain aspects of experience (being blinded by the light) and switching on others (seeing the starry skies above).

The reductive technique can be further elaborated by appealing to Celms’s analysis of reduction:

Each reduction encompasses the following four moments: 1) that *towards* which is reduced; 2) that *which* is reduced; 3) the reduction itself as an *epistemic action* [“Erkenntnisaktion”]; 4) the *result* of the reduction.

For the first we introduce the term ‘reductive base’ [“Reduktionsbase”]. The second we want to designate as the ‘reducendum’ [“Reduzendum”]. (Celms, 1993, p. 84)

Celms acknowledges the negative switching off and positive switching on of reduction and assigns them to 3) the reduction as an epistemic action. What is switched off is 2) the manner in which the reducendum is posited before the reduction (in the natural worldview), but not the

reducendum itself. What is switched on is 1) insight into the primordial presence of the conditioning reductive base and the conditioned reducendum. The result of the reduction in Husserl would be 4) eidetic cognition and insight into the structures of pure consciousness, whereas for Scheler the result would be 4) the cultivation of mental and emotional dispositions and the moral upswing. Celms's concept of reduction is devised to deal with seven types of transcendence, i.e., 1) real facts, 2) the pure ego, 3) alter egos, 4) essences, 5) God, 6) my future, 7) my past. "All transcendences named are most heterogeneous" (Celms, 1993, p. 88).

As argued before, Scheler and the realist phenomenologists argue that the axes immanence-transcendence and irreality-reality are orthogonal to each other. Therefore, even though Scheler is concerned with 1) real facts, providing a Celmsian analysis of Schelerian reductive techniques requires a theoretical transfer since Scheler posits real immanent facts. An additional feature of the following proposal is that the three philosophical reductions (2-4) are associated with the tripartition of mental faculties of intellect, will, and feeling (based on hints throughout Scheler's (1979b, p. 222) thought).

1) *The scientific reduction.* As an epistemic act, scientific reduction entails a twofold negative-positive structure. On the one hand, it has to switch off all eidetic questions ("Wesensfragen"). This corresponds to the switching on of positivistic or mundane knowledge and practical interest. Second, it switches off the specific sensual and psychophysical organization of the natural worldview. This entails switching on abstraction and generalization. It frees the scientist from the presupposition of the reducenda and instead makes them the study of its investigation. Scientific knowledge, hence, is no longer anthropomorphic in the empirical sense but remains relative to sensuality and psychophysics in general, viz. relative to the vital-psyche sphere ("vitalrelativ"). Accordingly, the general thesis of the natural worldview remains intact but is disclosed from the reductive base of a 'view from nowhere' or 'scientific objectivity'. Moreover, scientific cognition is guided by practical interest: The "positive-scientific epistemic attitude"

demands “the resolute *switching off* of all questions of *essence* in favor of the cognition of the laws of space-timely coincidences of appearances (the ‘hic-nunc’-thus-being) and simultaneously the conscious *switching on* of technical goal setting” (Scheler, 1924, p. 139). Therefore, the result of the scientific-reductive technique is a pragmatic goal orientation, i.e., ultimately cultivating a will to dominate (“Herrschaftswille”) nature that is structured by the modal opposite of futility-utility and is technically isolated from possibly conflicting values of the higher strata. “Science expands our world picture towards the quantitative and mechanical side beyond the content of the natural world view and absolutizes its forms” (Scheler, 1979a, p. 99).

For these reasons, it is quite possible that the scientific reduction and Scheler’s almost completely overlooked “existential reduction [“Daseinsreduktion”]” are identical, even though additional research is needed (Scheler, 1979d, p. 247). Another pressing question is spelling out whether and how the will to dominate can be overcome and transformed within the Schelerian framework, i.e., how the philosophical reductions (2-4) can help to revise science.

2) *The phenomenological reduction.* The epistemic act of Scheler’s phenomenological reduction functions by switching off experience’s reality moment and by switching on the eidetic cognition. Within the anthropological framework, the *reducendum* no longer consists in a judgment of validity regarding the external world or the position in space and time of a transcendent object, which is only an index for the underlying activity of urge in the layers of the vital-psychic sphere that produces experience’s moment of reality as different forms of resistance. Similar to Husserl’s eidetic reduction the reductive base primarily is the eidetic sphere (Scheler criticizes Husserl’s description of his method of reduction but acknowledges his performance of the reduction for eidetic cognition). In the development of Scheler’s thought, the eidetic sphere transitions from an ontic status in earlier phases to being only discernible in intellectual apprehension in the anthropological

phase. The result of the phenomenological-reductive technique is an eidetically-oriented objectivity (“Sachlichkeit”), viz., freeing the philosopher from psycho-physically contingent motivations and opening his mind for pure objective motivations. In this anthropological interpretation the “objective turn” attributed to realistic phenomenology cultivates mental dispositions of intellectual openness to the world and a “direction towards ‘absolute being’” (Scheler, 1979a, p. 99). This concerns absolute eidetic being, i.e., “‘true essence’ that crosses over all existential relativities [“Daseinsrelativitäten”]” (Scheler, 1979a, p. 99).

What is the scope of the phenomenological reduction? Scheler doubts that the “general thesis” can be switched off, because real reality or being-real also is an essence for him, implying that “only the production of the reality moment for specific objects can be switched off”, i.e., “special thesis” (Scheler, 1979a, p. 100).

Phenomenological reduction targets the activity of urge but leaves that of the spirit unscathed and, therefore, is associated with the faculty of the intellect resp. is an epistemic act of intellectual apprehension. This combined with the fact that Scheler also developed a Dionysian reduction warrants an anthropological revision as an *Apollonian reduction*. Sepp points to this possibility:

Starting from Scheler’s metaphysical standpoint – his concept of considering the pole-‘system’ of ‘spirit’ and ‘drive’, then the phenomenological reduction is an ‘*Apollonian*’ reduction: it provides access to the spirit ‘side’ of the world by eliminating the reality-positing urge moment. (Sepp, 2003, p. 248)

Nevertheless, Sepp only mentions the idea of an Apollonian reduction, without developing it. Interpreting the Apollonian reduction as a cultivation of the intellectual faculties allows for dissociating Schelerian concepts such as the openness to the world and eidetic objectivity from those of the naysayer or the ascetic of life, which better correspond to the

other philosophical reductions. The Apollonian technique is logomorphic and discloses a deindividuated and essentialized ‘realm of light:’

The phenomenologically reduced world = logos and intuitive eidetic structure results in the material aprioris, which are valid in all reality, the human-existentially-relative and absolute [reality]. Each true essence corresponds an infinite row of real beings [...]: infinite inorganic worlds, infinite organic realms in one life, one personal world. (Scheler, 1979a, pp. 98–99)

Apollonianism runs the danger of bargaining the essentialization of life for its devitalization. This is where Scheler’s denial of the possibility of bracketing the general thesis originates since this reductive technique is supposed to aid the “simultaneous ‘spiritualization of life’ and ‘vivification of spirit’” (Scheler, 1923, pp. 97; 103). From this vantage point, relying solely on the phenomenological or Apollonian reduction would amount to an intellectualistic lateral neglect, a quite common criticism against Husserl’s reduction (cf. Heinämaa, 2002). To overcome this one-sided focus on the intellect, the cognitive potential of the other faculties ought to be considered.

- 3) *The Dionysian reduction.* Passing mentions of the Dionysian reduction are widespread (Sepp, 2003; Vetter, 2004, pp. 455–458), while focused treatments are hard to come by (Avé-Lallemant, 1975b; Cusinato, 1998) or occur under specialized circumstances (Cutting, 2018). The framework employed here can provide grounds for systematic scientific scrutiny in the future.

Within the framework of metaphysical anthropology, the Dionysian reduction is the systematic complement of the phenomenological or Apollonian reduction, complementing its daytime view with a nightfall view. The Dionysian reduction operates in the opposite direction of the Apollonian reduction. Instead of bracketing urge-produced experiences of resistance, “spirit, intellect, and perception are switched off as what is primary given” in

order to sympathetically merge with the movements of the urge in the vital sphere (Scheler, 1979b, p. 251).

As an epistemic act, the Dionysian reduction, therefore, switches off the (objectifying) activity of the spirit and intellect and switches on an “intuitive co-urging with urge”, i.e., “co-striving”, “co-feeling” or sympathetic feeling-as-one (Scheler, 1979d, p. 252). The *reducenda* are thoughts, perceptions, memories, and other forms of mental guidance of drive through which a dualistic separation from nature is built up. The reductive base is a re-connection with the expressive sphere of life, viz., the “physiognomy of life”, the organological worldview and the “expressive pictures” which “grow from the producing forces, drives” (Scheler, 1979d, p. 251). The result of the Dionysian reductive technique is the cultivation of willing and feeling dispositions through cosmic-vital feeling-as-one (“kosmovitale Einsföhlung”) that unlocks the cognitive potentials of urge by sympathetically fusing with it, i.e., “cognitive sympathieien” (Scheler, 1979d, p. 251). In this way, a non-objectified mode of participation (knowledge) is enabled in which the solidarity of all living beings (instead of the struggle for existence or the survival of the fittest) is disclosed. The unlikely exemplar of the Dionysian reduction is St. Francis, who expanded the spiritual-personalistic love of God in Christianity to the “total sub-human nature” and thereby effects a “simultaneous ‘spiritualization of life’ and ‘vivification of spirit’” (Scheler, 1923, pp. 97; 103). While Dionysianism indeed amounts to an assimilation to the animalistic or instinctual way of life, the technical character of the reduction that is guided by acts of will ought not to be overlooked, which means that the Dionysian reduction still remains specific to man.

The Dionysian reduction enables a non-objectifying knowledge from within the things themselves by sympathetically co-urging with the urge activity. For an illustration consider a *bonmot* of Rodin:

Once the expressed meaning is made out, the conative-affective self makes an immediate, non-inferential leap into the living *heart of things*, taking in their form and pattern and realizing that their perceptible attributes (colours, sounds, scents, tastes and so forth) are only the outward aspect and frontier of the inner life thus imparted. There is an admirable remark by Rodin, an artist whose entire approach is expressive rather than formal: ‘A thing’, he says, ‘is simply the shape and outline of the ‘flame’ which gives it birth.’ (Scheler, 1913, p. 82)

Here, resistance is overcome by feeling-as-one or becoming-one with the live urge shared by all living things. The philosopher, in a way, swims along the stream of universal life (“Allebensstrom”), without resistance as if he or she was one with the waves. Avé-Lallement (1975b) coined a metaphor the *metaphor of hemispheres* for illustrating how Dionysian and Apollonian reduction complement and complete each other. The phenomenological or Apollonian reduction discloses a trans-mundane hemisphere of essences, while the Dionysian reduction discloses sub-mundane hemisphere of reality. Only the concertation of both reductive techniques leads to the full wealth of humanly possible experience. It is important to note that this does not amount to a duplication of the world, since reductive techniques do not effectuate ontic but mental separations.

In contrast to what is often surmised, Scheler, during his later periods, does not teach the ontic separability, but the unity of essence (“So-Sein”) and existence (“Dasein”). As Janssen notes, Scheler argues for “the spiritual formation of existence-producing drive, especially through the production of their identity through self-identification of the hybrid man, who can operate with their separation only in temporary acts” (Janssen, 1994, p. 260). This already points to the anthropological completion of the notion of reduction. From the anthropological vantage point, the reduction is not conceived of as a method that accesses an until then unbeknownst realm of being that would remain (statically) accessible

henceforth, but as several psychic techniques (“Seelentechniken”). This rests on an idea that Scheler develops after his ‘anthropological turn’, i.e., that the modifications of being (value, existence, essence) are separable only to the mind, but not in reality. Regarding the question of whether there is „an ontic duality between an eidetic sphere, which is posited through the spirit, and an existential sphere, which is posited through the urge” Scheler changes his position in his later writings “by claiming that this distinction is no longer a ontic difference, but concerns only the mind” (Cusinato, 1997, p. 66). Before this backdrop, Scheler interpreted Husserl’s *Ideas* as a step towards Bolzano by positing a sphere of ideal being, which Scheler rejected for the same reasons as N. Hartmann’s axiological Platonism. This has implications for how to conceive of the reduction: “Husserl misapprehends that being-real [“Realsein”] vanishes with being-eidetic [“Wassein”] and being-eidetic [vanishes] with being-real” (Scheler, 1979b, p. 242). Reductions are not methods for accessing novel realms of being, but techniques of cognition. Reality cannot be cognized by intellectual apprehension but is given in conative-affective acts of cognitive sympathy.

- 4) The *cathartic reduction*. The cathartic reduction has a special status among Schelerian reductions. Not only was the term coined and developed by Cusinato, but the cathartic reduction also does not quite belong to the same level as the other two philosophical reductions (Cusinato, 1998, 1999, 2012). Whereas phenomenological/Apollonian and Dionysian reduction complement and complete each other, the cathartic reduction underlies and enables them both. This basic status stems from Scheler’s ethical personalism and emotionalism. The cathartic-reductive technique is the gateway to philosophy itself.

As an epistemic act, the cathartic reduction switches off the attachment to the vital-psychic ego and switches on higher moral acts of the person in the spiritual sphere. This epistemic act connects the person with the highest ethical principle that guarantees the absolute hierarchical structure of the value spheres, i.e., through acts of humility the person’s core increasingly opens up towards the ultimate principle of holiness (Cusinato, 1997). The

reducendum is the natural but short-sighted self-interest and the egoism that follows from being restricted to the psychic-vital sphere (Cusinato, 1998). The reductive base is the person's openness to the spiritual sphere, which remains correlated to the vital-psychic reducendum through ascetic acts of spirit. Before this backdrop, Cusinato speaks of the "death" of the vital-psychic ego and the "(re-)birth" of the spiritual person: "The *catharsis* is the eternal 'nay-saying' to vital and egocentric values and in this sense it entails learning to die: an eternal upward-dying<sup>9</sup>, a continuous attempt to switch-off the reality of the vital and egological center as a condition for reaching a higher reality" (Cusinato, 1998, p. 93). The result of the cathartic-reductive technique is the cultivation of feeling dispositions that coincide with anthropogenesis. For the philosopher to transcend the vital-psychic sphere and its egoism entails that he or she transitions from a "centric *cura sui*, which is intimately concerned with the cultivation of the 'beautiful soul'" to a vantage point of "cosmological relevance", namely that of an "excentric *cura mundi*, which works in the solitary perspective of openness to the world" (Cusinato, 2015, p. 38). The notion of catharsis, therefore, is correlated to that of formation ("Bildung") and builds up an ethical scope corresponding to the microcosmic structure of the human being. In this sense, catharsis is the means to achieve the moral upswing that Scheler and Cusinato maintain to be both the beginning and the essence of philosophy (Cusinato, 2012; Scheler, 1921).

As with the other reductions, techné here has little to do with our modern-day understanding of the term but designates an "art of inner acting." Since the cathartic "death of the ego" draws on Platonic learning-to-die variant of the conception of ethics as *prima philosophia*, it combines a methodological/technological definition with one from the essence of philosophy. Even though the moral upswing is essential to the field of philosophical

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<sup>9</sup> Cusinato uses the German word *Ersterben*. In his philosophical thanatology, Scheler (1986, 1987a) uses this term to designate forms of dying that refine, ennoble and purify life, such as the death of a hero or that of a martyr. Since it is used as a complementary term to Nietzschean *upward-reproduction* ("Hinaufpflanzung"), viz. the ethical appeal to heightening mankind in reproduction, a more adequate translation of *Ersterben* than the common *dying* is the technical term of *upward-dying*.

anthropology, either explicitly or in the guise of conceptions such as the nay-sayer, sublimation of drive, or the spiritualization of life, its connection to the reduction has only seldom been recognized. Another Platonic aspect that is shared by Husserl's reduction and the cathartic-reductive technique is their conception in terms of a philosophical conversion (*periagoge*). Catharsis, therefore, amounts to a complete reversal of life conduct that is akin to the philosopher leaving the cave and later returning for his or her peers.

The cathartic reduction's special status resides in it affecting both, the cultivation of the cognitive feeling faculty and the cultivation of the philosophical worldview itself. The latter can be expressed in terms of a "re-interpretation of the 'epoché' in the sense of a *techné* for sublimation" (Cusinato, 1998, p. 93). Catharsis, accordingly, is a twofold technique: First, it comprises an *epochistic technique* that lies at the heart of the philosophical worldview, i.e., establishing a loving relation to the world. This epochistic technique underlies the other two philosophical reductions, which build on it and synergetically strengthen it. Second, it comprises a *reductive technique* that cultivates this loving relation by orienting the philosopher's feeling dispositions upwards. Because Schelerian approaches see the essence of man in the *ordo amoris*, i.e., the individual structure of the acts of preference that are founded in loving and hating, practicing cathartic-reductive techniques adjust and reorient these preferential structures, which amounts to nothing short of a philosophical transformation of man: anthropogenesis.

### **Man amidst White Nights**

Each reduction has its exemplars. Coming up with ever-new ingenious inventions, N. Tesla as a representative of *homo faber* is an exemplar of the scientific reduction. Grasping the essence of suffering in one instance, Buddha is an exemplar for the phenomenological/Apollonian reduction. Expanding the Christian love to the whole of nature, St. Francis is an exemplar for the Dionysian reduction. Breaking the spell of the cave, Plato's philosopher is an exemplar for

the epochistic cathartic technique. Confessing and atoning for his sins, converting and fundamentally changing his way of life, St. Augustin is an exemplar of the cathartic reduction. Within the framework of philosophical anthropology, no reductive technique is to be privileged, absolutized, or one-sidedly favored. Corresponding to Husserl's Apollonian lateral neglect concerning the one-sided bracketing of the vital-psychic sphere, it is possible, e.g., to identify a Dionysian lateral neglect regarding a one-sided elimination of the spiritual sphere. Such is Scheler's appraisal of Bergson's method of intuition, regarding which he claims that it "is so personal, so dependent on the peculiar artistic imagery of his mind, that he may well have real disciples and even more easily monkeys, but by no means good pupils." (Scheler, 1915c, p. 324). Instead of favoring one reductive technique, philosophical anthropology strives for their harmonious synthesis. If man is to reach his true fate as "all-man" ("Allmensch") that unities within himself the "greatest tension between spirit and drive, idea and sensuality, and *simultaneously* an ordered, a *harmonious fusion* of both in *one* form of existence and one action" then the reductive techniques must be brought into an equilibrium ("Gleichgewicht") and compensation ("Ausgleich") (Scheler, 1929, p. 158):

Only *wonder, humility, and spiritual love lead to the essential*, gained through a *phenomenological reduction of the existent*; secondly, *Dionysian devotion* leads into emotional identification ["Einsföhlung"] and becoming one with the urge that is part of all of our urges, wishes, and drives.

It is only in the greatest *tension* between both these dispositions and primarily through the *overcoming* of this tension in the unity of the person, that genuine philosophical cognition is born. (Scheler, 2021, pp. 167–168)

Each reductive technique has its cognitive value and ethical function within the framework of philosophical anthropology. Anthropological reductionism is principally holistic since each reductive achievement is produced by and synthesized in the microcosmic human being. For an

illustration, allow me to return to and adapt Avé-Lallements *example of daytime and nightfall*. Each reduction, he says, works by a change of scenery just like the dimming of the sunlight in order to gaze upon the starry heavens. The scenery of philosophical anthropology, then, is that of *white nights*, where sun, moon and stars are simultaneously present in the skies above.

## **Psychodynamics, Noodynamics, Axiodynamics: Reflections on the Theory and Practice of an Axiological Psychopathology and on Overcoming the Opposition between Psychoanalysis and Logotherapy through Generalization**

### **Irreducible Value-Qualities in Psychopathology**

What is axiological psychopathology? The term itself indicates a conjunction of axiology, that is, the theory of values (from Greek ἀξία, “axía,” meaning “value”), and psychopathology, that is, the study of mental disorders (from Greek πάθος, “pathos,” meaning “suffering”, “illness”, or “affliction”). One of its basic concepts is that of a *disorder of value* (“Wertstörung”; sometimes also referred to as *value-blindness*). This concept corresponds to the finding that the ways of relating to values and disvalues can become modified in psychopathology—for example, a partial insensitivity to certain classes of values in depression (Cutting, 2018), or the construction of idiosyncratic value systems in schizophrenia (Stanghellini & Ballerini, 2007). Beyond the axiological description of nosological categories, the axiological approach also addresses psychopathology at the level of philosophy of science. In this context, the scientific status and applicability of psychopathological categories are examined, furthermore, a proprietary framing of fundamental psychopathological concepts (such as disorder or health) that is based in value theory is proposed.

In the following, I will take in the perspective of foundational discourse by subjecting the concepts of psychodynamics and noodynamics to an axiological analysis and, finally, by generalizing them into a concept of axiodynamics. For preparation, some general remarks on

the philosophy-of-science structure of psychopathology are required. In particular, I will show in what sense both psychopathological theory building and its psychotherapeutic application involve irreducible value-qualities—qualities that can be explicated and developed within axiology.

If an initial hesitation toward an axiological approach in psychopathology may be understandable due to the partially outdated appearance of its terminology, it would nevertheless be fatal to stop there. Value theory does not only count among the earliest philosophical influences on the psychopathology that emerged in the twentieth century, but the concept of value is systematically indispensable for psychopathology and necessarily features in its conceptual inventory. This is because psychopathology, as a discipline, operates with normative concepts that can be explicated axiologically. To make this connection more explicit, one may also speak of the *valorative dimension* of psychopathological concepts (from Latin “valor”, meaning “value” or “validity”).<sup>10</sup> Viktor Frankl expresses this point in unequivocal terms: “We must be clear about the fact that the principle of psychotherapy is essentially an ethical one, namely a evaluative one” (Frankl, 1925, p. 250). On his view, psychotherapy (as applied psychopathology) is not valorative only in its fully developed form, nor additionally or merely contingently so. Rather, it is valorative in its very first principles and basic propositions—that is, psychotherapy is principally valorative (from Latin “principium,” meaning “foundation” or “beginning”).

A related insight was formulated by Karl Jaspers regarding psychopathology (now from a theoretical perspective) when he observed that, in the history of the concept of illness (“Krankheit”), no substantive common denominator can in fact be found: “Rather, the only thing they have in common is that a value judgment is always being expressed. ‘Ill’ means, from some perspective—though by no means always the same one—‘harmful,’ ‘undesirable,’

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<sup>10</sup> I use the term valorative to designate that form of normativity which arises from axiological entities.

‘inferior’” (Jaspers, 1913, p. 652). Nor does recourse to the statistical concept of illness, which was already popular in empirical research at the time, suffice to circumvent the axiological dimension of the concept of illness. For deviation from a statistical average becomes meaningful *as deviation* only once one explains why the average is to count as healthy and the deviating case as ill. For the statistical deviant to be interpreted psychopathologically, an additional axiological qualification of this deviation must be introduced (as “inferior” or “bad”), which in turn constitutes its pathological meaning in this sense (as “ill” or “disordered”). Recourse to axiological categories is therefore unavoidable in psychopathology.

Still influenced by the *value judgment controversy* (“Werturteilsstreit”) initiated by Max Weber, this state of affairs may be perceived as a violation of the postulate of *value-freedom of the sciences* (Pieper & Hügli, 2017). Yet even though, within medicine, psychiatry and psychology, in general, are especially concerned with securing their scientific status, such doubts—as Hans Albert (1996) has shown—rest on a *metabasis*. They conflate object language and metalanguage of a given theory. The value-quality that inherits the concept of illness irreducibly (metalanguage, as methodologically reflected discourse) must not be confused with a possible value judgment to the effect that those who are afflicted by that illness are themselves inferior (object language, in which substantive value judgments are formulated and which then become the object of methodological reflection at the meta-level). An axiological analysis does not violate the value-freedom of scientific psychopathology so long as it does not formulate or imply value judgments at the object level.

Rather, to speak with Jonas Cohn (1932), axiology has the task of demonstrating the possibility of critical cognition of value—that is, of providing what he termed a “proof of value” (“Wertbeweis”)—and, in doing so, of becoming a fully developed “science of values” (“Wertwissenschaft”). This involves a theory concerning the mode of being of values and disvalues (“axiotics”), of the relations among their domains (“systematics”), and the conditions of their realization and prevention (“ergetics”). In this way, axiology clarifies the conditions of

possibility of value judgments within psychopathology. In this sense, axiology has an *enlightening* function within psychopathology, insofar as its analyses establish the prerequisites for assessing the justification of judgments made at the object-level (for example, when an organic failure is illegitimately overgeneralized into a claim about an inferior mode of being). An engagement with the axiological dimension of mental disorders is largely absent from the major contemporary diagnostic manuals, the *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD) and the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), both of which claim to be not only value-free but also theory-neutral (Förstl & Hoff, 2009). Elsewhere, however, theory-based diagnostic manuals have been proposed in which axiological considerations are introduced. This applies, for instance, to the conflict axis of *Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnostics* (OPD) (Benecke et al., 2018; Schüßler et al., 1996). This is due to the fact that the psychodynamic concept of conflict is inherently value-laden: what grounds the collision of opposing tendencies is that they axio-logic-ally exclude each other's realization. This way every conflict can always (though not exclusively) be understood as a value conflict. This characterization is plausible *prima facie*—consider, for instance, the self-esteem conflict (K4) or the guilt conflict (K5) in the OPD. An explicit treatment with the axiological dimension of mental disorders is offered by Bill Fulford's (2011) *value-based medicine* (VBM), developed in the context of healthcare personalization initiatives in England. Fulford proposes complementing *evidence-based medicine* (EBM) with *value-based medicine*. Drawing on the tradition of the *Oxford school of ordinary language philosophy*, he develops an approach based on value theory that is intended for practical implementation in medical ethics, clinical practice, and professional training. Against the backdrop of the distinction between factual and value judgments, Fulford argues for a cooperation of perspectives—that is, for a medicine that sees with both eyes (i.e., is neither blind to facts nor values). This is poignantly articulated in the first principle of VBM, the so-called “two feet principle”: “All decisions stand on two feet, on values as well as on facts, including decisions about diagnosis” (Fulford, 2004, p. 50).

Yet the fact–value dichotomy—which Bill Fulford presupposes—is not absolute, but can be cast into doubt. If irreducible value-qualities are not merely attached to psychopathological concepts but genuinely *inhere* in them, then such a bifurcated approach is no more convincing than those positions which, in the name of value freedom, isolate a supposedly autonomous realm of facts. This raises the question of what theory-of-science structure a psychopathology must exhibit if it is to do justice to the substantive unity of factual and valorative aspects within psychopathological phenomena.

This question leads directly to the debates subsumed under as the *positivism dispute*, conducted primarily between Karl Popper and Theodor W. Adorno. In these debates, the focus shifts from the value freedom of science to the emancipatory potential of theories to critically reflect upon and transform social relations. For the present context, it is important to note that that the positivism dispute calls into question the strict separation of value judgments and factual judgments that is traditionally associated with positivist philosophy of science. Popper argues, for example, that value-freedom—at the meta-theoretical level of theory of science—constitutes a value in its own right. The individual theories inhabiting the object-level of theory of science ought to be guided according to it. Value-(judgment-)freedom is itself a value of pure scientific knowledge: “Objectivity and value-freedom are themselves values. And since value-freedom is itself a value, the demand for unconditional value-freedom is paradoxical” (Popper, 1969, pp. 114–115). Adorno, by contrast, goes a step further by questioning the very antinomy between “value-free” and “prescribed and arbitrarily posited values”: “The entire problem of values [...] is therefore ill-posed” (Adorno, 1972, p. 560). Given the irreducibly normative structure of social reality, so the verdict runs, the positivist separation of factual and value judgments cannot be maintained without misconstruing both the object of inquiry and the research process itself. If one assumes that psychopathological phenomena likewise contain irreducible value-qualities, then—by analogy with Jürgen Habermas—it can be argued that the “positivistically purified boundary between knowledge and values” (Habermas, 1969, p. 171)

is neither a necessary precondition nor a secured outcome of scientific research, but rather constitutes a research problem in its own right. As Habermas puts it: “Practical questions therefore cannot be adequately answered through the instrumentally-rational choice of value-neutral means alone” (Habermas, 1969, p. 188). The selection of such means must instead be oriented toward the things themselves, which implies that the relevant value standard must be gained from the phenomena under investigation.

The psychotherapeutic and psychiatric discourse has engaged extensively with the question of the emancipatory versus system-stabilizing effects of psychopathological concepts, e.g., in the debates of critical psychiatry, social psychiatry or more general critiques of psychiatry (Thoma, 2018). Psychotherapeutic practice is obviously guided by values at the object-level, insofar as it aims at the alleviation of suffering, restoration of health and assisting with self-realization or self-understanding. As a practice, psychotherapy may proceed in a scientifically informed manner, yet it cannot itself claim scientific status in the strict sense and is therefore subject to different kinds of objections. One such objection can be formulated as the *dilemma between valuation and octroi*, which constitutes an axiological structure intrinsic to the psychotherapeutic situation. As Viktor Frankl writes: “We thus find ourselves confronted with a dilemma: on the one hand, the necessity—indeed, the presupposition—of values; on the other, the moral impossibility of octroi” (Frankl, 1937, p. 21). What Frankl draws attention to is that imposing one’s own value convictions on patients—whether by coercion (octroi) or by implying entire value systems—would cause psychotherapy to overstep its boundaries and encroach upon that of pastoral care (“Seelsorge”) (Snoeck & Hollenbach, 1958). Frankl’s response to this dilemma consists in orienting therapy toward the formal value of responsibility. As he puts it: “There is, namely, a formal ethical value that is itself the condition of all further evaluations without yet determining their ranking: responsibility!” (Frankl, 1937, p. 21). Interpreting this idea, however, presents certain difficulties. Conceptually, it is unfortunate that Frankl construes responsibility as a value whose formal function is to make other values accessible, since this

involves a circular argument. The circle consists in the fact that, for the (formal) value of responsibility to disclose other (material) values, it must itself already have been disclosed.

Had Frankl had better characterized responsibility as a value-attitude (“*Werthaltung*”) (Graumann & Willig, 1983)—that is, as an attitude one adopts toward values or toward the realm of values—he nevertheless identifies a crucial aspect of psychotherapeutic practice. Although psychotherapy cannot be value-free at the object-level, it must not proceed naively but in a methodologically reflected manner. This entails accounting for the valuation-octroi dilemma which inheres the therapeutic situation. Accordingly, the basic repertoire of clinical–technical interventions therefore contains techniques that aim at enabling patients to recognize which value judgments caused them suffering and that they are not without alternatives. Thus, the point of an interpretation is neither affirming nor disconfirming the patient’s value judgments, but rather in opening up new possibilities of evaluation—possibilities that may alleviate suffering by shedding new light on what has been burdensome for a long time. Making the decision for one or the other possible valuation, however, is a matter of the patient’s responsibility (cf. von Gebattel, 1954). In short, from an axiological perspective, psychotherapy is primarily concerned with establishing the formal conditions that enable responsible value judgments on the side of the patient.

Following these general reflections on the theory and practice of axiological psychopathology, I will now attempt to establish the concept of axiodynamics.

### **From Psycho- to Noo- to Axiodynamics**

#### Material Value Ethics and Psychoanalysis in Context

Addressing the question of how Max Scheler and his work relate to psychoanalysis requires distinguishing several levels: these include Scheler’s reception of psychoanalysis—which can be divided into affirmative, ambivalent, and critical treatments—as well as Scheler’s influence on psychoanalysis. Regarding the latter, direct and indirect influences must be differentiated,

that is, explicit discussions of Scheler's work must be contrasted with more general developments within psychoanalytic discourse and psychopathology in general.

Scheler's reception of psychoanalysis can be characterized by two features; it set in particularly early and put forward a nuanced appraisal. Although Scheler engages with various psychoanalytic authors—for example, critically acknowledging Alfred Adler's theory of overcompensation (Scheler, 1913, p. 354) and taking note of Carl G. Jung's interpretation of Freud (Scheler, 1923, p. 198)—the focal point of his discussion are the founding works of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. Accordingly, this will also be the main focus of what follows. From an exegetical perspective, Scheler's (2008) most intensive engagement with Freudian thought can be traced back to first edition of *The Nature of Sympathy*, and thus must have taken place prior to 1913. Scheler therefore had in view a Freud who was in the process of transitioning from neurologist to psychotherapist, but who had not yet become what we would today describe as a depth hermeneutician—appealing to Alfred Lorenzer terminology that became popular since the 1980s. Nonetheless, Eduard Hitschmann (1914), for instance, credits Scheler's monograph *Sympathy* for having acknowledged Freud's foundational achievement. For Hitschmann, however, Scheler, in his critique of Freud's libido theory, remained limited by his own complexes and ultimately lacked clinical experience. Due to Scheler's early death, his reception of Freud ends by 1928 at the latest, implying that he was unable to consider a number of discursive transformations within psychoanalysis. The following will demonstrate to what extent Scheler's thought nevertheless exerted an influence on psychoanalysis.

Concerning Scheler's *affirmative reception*, there are several issues to note: in *The Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler (2008) engages with Freud's account of ontogeny and subsumes this treatment under his *critique of naturalistic theories*. Furthermore, Scheler acknowledges Freud's work on sexuality in early childhood and his theory of psychosexual development as a scientific discovery: “An entirely new territory of the child's psyche has indeed been discovered

here” (Scheler, 1923, p. 195). Bracketing the correlated assumption of psychic determinism, Scheler understands Freud’s approach as a method for investigating fate and thus as a contribution to resolving the dispute between nativism and empiricism (Scheler, 1923, pp. 195–198). He interprets fate, as in the *Ordo Amoris* fragment, as the totality of what encounters us contingently in time but could only have encountered us, and which subsequently determines our essence (what encounters us in space belongs, by contrast, to the moral environment). The timing of an experience is thus meaningful and co-determines its sense and content. This also connects to Scheler’s theory of functionalization (Scheler, 1968, p. 195), insofar as each psychic experience depends on the overall development of the person, albeit occurring only once itself (Henckmann, 1987; Sepp, 2015; Zhang, 2011).

In the *Idols of Self-Knowledge*—a work of particular importance for the psychopathological discourse of Scheler’s thought (Arndt, 2001; Cusinato, 2019; Guccinelli, 2022c)—Scheler introduces the distinction: on the one hand, there are psychic surgeons or cynical psychotherapists, who seek to intervene in the causal sequence of psychic experiences on the basis of the psychology of association (for example, in the suggestive methods of hypnosis clinics; see Mayer, 2002). On the other hand, this can be contrasted by Socratic psychotherapists. Socratic psychotherapists may also employ technical interventions but always subordinate them to the maieutic aim of fostering patients’ insight into the meaningful connections of their experiences and of liberating them from self-deception. For Scheler, the Socratic conception is the one that corresponds to psychoanalysis properly understood (Scheler, 1915b, pp. 220–222). To realize its full potentials, however, psychoanalysis must not be limited to the cognitive sphere, in which it promotes self-insight and dissolves self-deception (“anamnesis”); rather, it must also account for the affective sphere, in which it unlocks the healing potentials expressing what has been concealed and of purifying of what has been repressed (“catharsis;” Scheler, 1927b, p. 60)). From an exegetical standpoint, it ought to be considered that Scheler does not use the term *psychoanalysis* solely to denote the movement

originating with Freud, but also understands it in a literal sense and, thereby, situates it in continuity with other approaches. Generally speaking, Scheler is appreciative towards the “extraordinarily diverse experiences that Freud and his students” (Scheler, 1927b, p. 60) discovered in the clinical field. Nevertheless, Scheler refrains from more elaborate treatment or definitive judgement due to a lack of the relevant expertise.

Other aspects of psychoanalysis are *received more ambivalently* by Scheler. This includes, for example, the analysis of repression, which Scheler also treats in *Idols* (Scheler, 1915b, pp. 281–283). While Scheler acknowledges that psychoanalysis has correctly identified repression as a source of deception in inner perception, he criticizes its construal as a causal hypothesis and the limitation of its scope to memories from early childhood. Instead, repression is to be understood as a lived experience in which the “value perfume” (“Wertparfüm”; Scheler, 1915b, p. 281) of an experience is present in inner perception and already orients repressed drive activities even before its contents become given. Closely related to repression, yet phenomenologically distinct from it, is moral self-control. In the latter, there are real motivational conflicts between the apprehended experiential content and conflicting strivings of drive or feeling-functions (“Fühlfunktionen”). In this case, a tension for moral correction is built with respect to the experiential content. In repression, by contrast, the conflict does not come to consciousness at all, since one has already turned away inwardly in advance; as a result, repressed experiences unfold without correction and can often assume a pathogenic form (for example, in neurotic symptoms).

Scheler’s assessment of the concept of sublimation is *even more ambivalent*. On the one hand, he acknowledges the historical feat of psychoanalysis in overcoming “classical anthropology,” which conceived of the human being as a rational animal, of reason as spontaneous and of its lack as one’s own fault: “There is no doubt that psychoanalysis, like scarcely any other direction in psychology and anthropology, has contributed to the correction of an extremely one-sided image of the structure of man that we inherited from tradition (since the Greeks)” (Scheler,

1927b, p. 64). This achievement is due in no small part to the central role that sublimation plays within psychoanalytic explanations of human cultural and spiritual achievements. Scheler connects sublimation to his thesis of the impotence of mind (“Ohnmacht des Geistes”), insofar as sublimation accounts for the fact that “the rational principle must, as it were, first appropriate quanta of energy,” which presupposes the “damming up of drives and their impulses, what Freud calls ‘repression’”—so that this “vital and instinctual energy” can later be sublimated (Scheler, 1927b, p. 65). In his own writings, Scheler affords a central role to the concept of sublimation, particularly in his later work in philosophical anthropology, for example in *Man’s Place in the Cosmos*. However, he insists that it must first be freed from two distortions: its inappropriate naturalization (whereby creations of mind are explained in terms of natural causal processes; Scheler, 1928a, p. 45), and the moralistic circle (in which sublimation is supposed to explain the emergence of morality while already presupposing a concept of morality; Scheler, 1928a, pp. 47-48; 1923, 205). Against these tendencies, Scheler posits spirit (“Geist”) as a metaphysical principle equiprimordial with life and insists on the irreducible autonomy and intrinsic dynamics of the supravital strata.

This leads seamlessly into Scheler’s *critical reception*. He regards libido theory—closely bound up with the concept of sublimation—as an illegitimate reduction of love to the sexual drive. Libido theory loses sight of love as a value-disclosing act and as the ultimate foundation of emotional life (Scheler, 1923, pp. 198–209). In the domain of psychoanalytic ethics, this reduction leads to a false dichotomy between an unrestrained, drive-determined primitivism and a completely sublimated, ascetic renunciation. This way, moral self-perfection and the balancing of all human capacities (in the *all-man* “Allmensch” (Scheler, 1923, p. 209; cf. Scheler, 1928b, p. 158) are overlooked. Scheler further argues that Freud fails to adequately distinguish between sexual drive and libido when accounting for the emergence of libido in terms of the accidental stimulation of erogenous zones and the accompanying sensations of sensual pleasure. Such an account overlooks the necessity of an original striving or desire that

finds its fulfillment in this stimulation (Scheler, 1923, p. 198). As libido theory becomes increasingly formalized, it obscures the transition between value-directed striving—though it may be libidinally energized—and the strivings of the sexual drive that are directed at representations or images. This transition proceeds, in a phase-typical manner, from a dimly intuited and inadequate givenness of value toward a differentiated constitution of its object in the other sex (Scheler, 1923, pp. 199–200). Moreover, Scheler objects to Freud’s dictum that man is born polymorphously perverse. This claim rests on a methodological error: the attempt to explain the normal case based on pathological phenomena. This error implies a form of pathomorphism, according to which all sexual and loving life is supposedly constructed from elements of perversions, infantilisms, or residues of earlier developmental stages (Scheler, 1923, pp. 200–202). In his later writings, Scheler formulates several further objections to psychoanalysis and summarizes the “[t]hree principal errors of Freud” (Scheler, 1927b, p. 78) in a fragment: “1. association mechanism instead of a drive automatism with goal-directedness and ‘objective meaning’ of processes;” “2. the derivation of spirit from libido repression rather than from a theory of drive energetics and drive economics [“Triebenergieumsatzlehre”];” “3. genetic naturalism and sensualism” (Scheler, 1927b, p. 78). One might add a methodological directive concerning the proper placement of psychoanalysis within the “philosophy’s problematic situation within world history,” which requires abandoning “the utterly childish notion that psychoanalysis is—by its themes and problems, and not merely by its utilization of clinical experience for these problems—something completely brand new, something unprecedented” (Scheler, 1927b, p. 59).

What undergirds this critique is the conviction that psychoanalysis is in need of a *philosophical correction* if it is to realize its full potential, i.e., its mode of thought and practice. Scheler refers to the work of the American psychoanalyst James Putnam (1912) for an exemplary realization of that promise (Scheler, 1923, p. 208). Mediated through his students, Scheler’s ideas, however, also resulted in further developments within the psychoanalytic discourse. Thus,

Hendrikus Stoker's (1925; see Scheler, 1925) treatise on conscience contains a critique of the psychoanalytic theory of the superego, and Aurel Kolnai saw Scheler's phenomenology as an attempt to "found a pre-psychology in place of a metapsychology" (1925, p. 135). Moreover, Kolnai's (2007) later study on hostile emotions can be interpreted as an effort to complete Scheler's thought, which had been focused one-sidedly on love and value (Vendrell-Ferran, 2008, 2018). In this sense, Axel Honneth reads Kolnai as arguing that "nearly all the acts Scheler described as 'value-experiences' can also be shown to correlate with a negative counterpart—an attraction to the 'valueless,' to moral 'evil,'" such that, given human fallibility, "an element of Freudian doctrine must be carried over into value ethics" (Honneth, 2007, pp. 150–151; see Paul Ricoeur, 1971; Greisch, 2009). Furthermore, in the contemporary research, besides historical reconstructions (d'Anna, 2004; Kotkavirta, 2005), there are attempts to interpret psychoanalysis—especially of Freud's work—from a perspective that is informed by Scheler's philosophy (Köth, 2017; Streubel, 2019).

The history of psychoanalysis itself is complex and characterized by numerous ruptures, reformatory movements, and attempts at restoration. A frequently overlooked, *direct connection* to Scheler's thought can be found in the paradigm of personal depth psychology (Häfner, 1956, 1960; Snoeck & Hollenbach, 1958), as well as in related approaches within the personalist orientation in psychotherapy (Carp, 1959; Wiesenhütter, 1969). As an axiological reformation of psychodynamic methods, these approaches place the concept of the person at their centre and, in doing so, pick up on essential elements of Scheler's thought. For example, Heinz Häfner (1956, 1959)—who later founded the *Central Institute of Mental Health in Mannheim (ZI Mannheim)*—understands conscience as an affective awareness of the diminution of one's subjective value-project ("Wertentwurf") and the objective hierarchy of values. Appealing to Scheler's work, Häfner emphasizes the therapeutic potential of repentance as a renewal of the person. On a conceptual level, such approaches are continuous both with person-centred psychotherapies associated with the humanistic tradition (Cain, 2010; Längle, 2016; Rogers,

1995) as well as with medical anthropology (von Gebattel, 1954) and the related personal medicine (Danzer, 2021). Almost entirely below the radar fly the works of the still-existing *Vienna Working Group* (“Wiener Arbeitskreis”), whose founder, Igor Caruso, together with his collaborators at the time, pursued the completion of the psychoanalytic project through what they termed a *synthesis of existence* (Caruso, 1952, 1959; Daim, 1955; Frühmann & Petzold, 1994; Lackinger, 2019; Nowak, 1988). These thinkers—some of whom were at odds with the established psychoanalytic societies—were committed to a holistic form of assistance in becoming (“Werdenshilfe”) and to the perfection of the person. This included attention to patients’ religious or transcendent needs, for example by seeking to strengthen their felt connection to an objective–personal hierarchy of values.

Better known, though rarely placed in context, is Scheler’s significance for existential analysis and logotherapy. This amounts to an *indirect influence* on a partially overlapping psychoanalytic discourse and its critical development. The founder of logotherapy, Viktor Frankl, became aware of Scheler’s *Material Value Ethics* through the recommendation of Rudolf Allers, who developed his theory of education and character based on Scheler’s thought. Later, Frankl remarked that he had carried Scheler’s *Formalism* with him “like a Bible” (Frankl, 1995, p. 42). In his own self-understanding, Frankl positions himself equally against the natural-causal drive theory of Freudian psychoanalysis and against the motivational–finalistic individual psychology of Adler. He conceives logotherapy as a therapeutic approach grounded in the spiritual dimension, introducing the central concept of noogenic neuroses, i.e., neuroses arising from despair and suffering in the face of a subjectively experienced meaninglessness of life (Frankl, 1946, 1994). The oft-cited dictum attributed to Frankl—that depth psychology (“Tiefenpsychologie”) must be complemented by a height psychology (“Höhenpsychologie”)—can already be found in Scheler: “Depth psychology calls for a height psychology (noetics) that likewise goes beyond consciousness. Freud forgets this” (Scheler, 1927a, p. 109).

Logotherapy, the so-called *Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy*, has been elaborated extensively and remains influential to this day. This tradition draws substantially on Scheler's ethical personalism and axiological emotionalism (Fetz & Graeßner, 2005; Gritschneider, 2005; Henckmann, 2005). The former president of its *International Society*, Alfried Längle, states explicitly: "Logotherapy and existential analysis are largely based on Scheler's phenomenology, philosophy, and anthropology" (Längle, 2001, p. 289). There exist further plausible connections that still remain to be fully explored, for instance, the connection between Scheler's theory of fate and Leopold Szondi's (1999) psychotherapeutic method for the analysis of fate ("Schicksalsanalyse") (Friedemann, 1958).

Scheler's *influence on psychopathology in general* has been documented from historical (Arndt, 2001), philosophical (Cusinato, 2019; Guccinelli, 2022c), and medical perspectives (Cutting, 2009; Sass, 2009). This research commonly emphasizes Scheler's impact on anthropological and phenomenological psychiatry, for example within the Wengen Circle ("Wengener Kreis") that is made up of Erwin Straus, Ludwig Binswanger, Viktor von Gebsattel, and Eugène Minkowski (Passie, 1995; Spiegelberg, 1965; Wiesenhütter, 1962), as well as the Heidelberg School evolving around Karl Jaspers, Kurt Schneider, and Viktor von Weizsäcker (Cusinato, 2017; Janzarik et al., 1998; Krahl & Schifferdecker, 1998). Furthermore, these investigations highlight that Scheler's writings on *Self-Deception*, *Idols*, and *Ressentiment* were published in Wilhelm Specht's *Journal of Pathopsychology* and thus addressed a medically oriented readership from the outset. Mediated through his influence on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, several Schelerian motifs are introduced indirectly to the contemporary enactivist approaches to psychopathology (de Haan, 2020; Fuchs, 2008, 2023; Maiese, 2022; Nielsen, 2023)—for example in the concept of affordances, in accounts of disorders of sense-making, or in relational conceptions of value (de Haan, 2017; Fuchs, 2019). Scheler's enduring relevance for psychopathology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy is further evidenced by the fact that entries on his work continue to be listed in thematic and biographical lexica (Danzer, 2011; Vetter, 2005).

Overall, it must be noted that Scheler's thought did *not* exerted a significant influence on the innermost core of classical psychoanalysis, be it Freud, Jung, or Adler. Nevertheless, Scheler and his work had a considerable impact on some of the most important undercurrents and later developments within the psychoanalytic discourse. This is reflected in the fact that personalist and logotherapeutic approaches often understand themselves as forms of Schelerianism. Psychoanalytic and Schelerian thought thus profit from one another, not merely in terms of a conceptual possibility, but as a historical fact. In this sense, Scheler deserves a place in the front row of philosophical influences on psychoanalysis, alongside thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

#### Critique of Psychodynamics: Noodynamics and Related Concepts

In the following, I will develop the thesis that axiological psychopathology provides a meta-perspective that reconciles the apparent opposition between psychodynamics and noodynamics. This opposition is merely superficial and can be shown to dissolve once seen in the light of a properly understood concept of value. Rather than categorically separating vital–psychic drive dynamics (psychodynamics) from free decisions oriented toward spiritual–personal values (noodynamics), the concept of axiodynamics allows to demonstrate their conceptual continuity. The clue is that there exist not only spiritual–personal values, but also sensual, vital, and psychic values, each organized within their own orders (the so-called spheres or strata).<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, psychodynamics *already* describes axiological dynamics. Against the backdrop of the presupposition of a hierarchy of value strata, psychodynamics can thus be conceived as a *local axiodynamics* of the vital–psychic sphere, whereas noodynamics describes a *local axiodynamics* of the spiritual–personal stratum. Axiodynamics, in turn, may be understood as a generalization of both psychodynamics and noodynamics. This conceptual move is therefore

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<sup>11</sup> I use the term sphere terminologically to group together related strata, for example, by speaking of a *vital–psychic sphere* in contrast to the vital and the psychic strata taken separately.

not aimed at pitting one position against the other, nor at proving either of them wrong. Rather, the insights gained through psychodynamics and noodynamics can be conserved and expanded after an axiological correction. This corresponds to an attempt of accounting for the structure of personal being holistically and to arrive at an adequate understanding of its dynamics.

What line of thought leads to these theses? The point of departure is the critique advanced by Viktor Frankl of the concept of psychodynamics as formulated by Sigmund Freud. With psychodynamics, Freud developed a theory of intrapsychic forces that, within metapsychology, is distinguished from topology as the study of psychic localization (the localization postulate) and from economics as the study of the regulation of psychic energies (the homeostasis postulate). Based on his structural model of the psychic apparatus and his theory of drives, Freud elaborated a differentiated account of psychodynamics that deals with the interactions among the psychic instances and relates them to the underlying drive energies that imbue them. *Dynamics* (from Greek δύναμις, “dynamis,” meaning “force,” “impetus,” or “power”) here means that “psychic phenomena are to be regarded as the result of conflict” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2016, p. 215). In this picture, psychic phenomena stem from as conflicting forces of drive energy. The theoretical innovation associated with Freud’s concept of psychodynamics lies in the fact “that psychoanalysis replaced a so-called static conception of the unconscious with a dynamic one” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2016, p. 125), whereby Freud sought to distinguish his position from Janet’s hereditary account.

Frankl, by contrast, criticizes Freud’s notion of psychodynamics for privileging the drive and thus of the vital–psychic sphere without sufficient justification. This is coupled with an illegitimate neglect of values and especially the spiritual–personal stratum. It is for this reason that he contrasts psychodynamics with his concept of noodynamics. *Noodynamics* (from Greek νοῦς, “nous,” meaning “mind,” “reason,” or “intellect”), accordingly, relates to values and denotes “the polar tension that opens up between man and his meaning that awaits fulfillment” (Frankl, 1946, p. 21). Elsewhere, Frankl characterizes noodynamics as follows:

The dynamics that establishes itself within the polar tension between being and ought is termed noodynamics in logotherapy, in contrast to all psychodynamics. It differs from the latter primarily in that it incorporates a moment of freedom: whereas I am driven by drives, I am drawn by values—that is, I can say yes or no to a demand of value [“Wertforderung”]; I can therefore decide one way or another. (Frankl, 1946, p. 109)

With the concept of noodynamics, Frankl posits a form of dynamics independent of the drive that Freud regarded as primary—one that still structures human life conduct fundamentally (see *table 3*). While vital–psychic drive dynamics unfold within the relation of being, free, value-oriented decision-making relates the realm of being to that of ought and transforms the states of the former towards those of the latter (in the sense of Cohn’s axiomatics). The meaning of this becomes warrants clarification. Within psychodynamic circles, Frankl is known amongst other things for advocating the supplementation of depth psychology with a so-called *height psychology* (“Höhenpsychologie”). This height psychology includes not only the “will to pleasure” but also the “will to meaning,” thereby allowing psychotherapy “to view human existence not only in its depth but also in its height” (Frankl, 1946, p. 32). In his logotherapy, Frankl seeks to correct the psychodynamic conception of the human being—viewed from below, i.e., from the abysses of the unconscious—through a shift in perspective that also brings the human being’s spiritual heights into view (view from above). In short, this means: “Ideals are the very stuff of survival—human beings can survive only if they live oriented toward ideals” (Frankl, 1946, p. 64).

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Movens</i>	<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Order</i>	<i>Lived- Direction</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>Psychodynamics</i>	Drive	Drive object (Depth)	Vital- Psychic sphere	Being- Driven	Within the Relations of Being
<i>Noodynamics</i>	Free Choice	Value (Height)	Spiritual- Personal Stratum	Being- Drawn	Transforming Relations of Being Towards Those of Ought

Table 3. *Comparison of psychodynamics and noodynamics from the perspective of Frankl's critique.*

Frankl takes issue with three distinct yet closely interconnected tendencies within depth psychology's picture of man. Recast in axiological terminology, they entail the following:

1. First, depth psychology's picture of man is too negative, i.e., there is a tendency to uncover impure motives even in good deeds. In axiological terms, it thus exhibits a problematic tendency toward disvalues—a *disvalue bias*.
2. Second, by placing drive processes at the centre of its analysis, classical depth psychology homes in on *naturalistic, causal explanations*. Ultimately, this tendency culminates in the frequently criticized mechanization of the "psychic apparatus" and its supposed "hydraulics." Even Alfred Adler's individual psychology, which places greater emphasis on *motivation* (psychic finality) and purpose-oriented forms of understanding, does not suffice for Frankl, who envisages a "*psychology grounded in the spiritual*" ("Psychologie vom Geistigen her") (see *table 4*). The spiritual stratum introduces a novel and categorically irreducible form of dynamics. This becomes

evident when Frankl asks “whether, in addition to ‘must’ (arising from causality) and ‘will’ (according to psychic finality), a new category of ‘ought’ must not be introduced” (Frankl, 1946, p. 32).

3. This consideration leads directly to the third issue: the focus on drive processes entails a one-sided privileging of the lower ontological strata—above all, the vital-psychic sphere. Nicolai Hartmann’s value theory (1949) advanced an innovation that relevant to this theme (and that was also acknowledged, e.g., by Max Scheler). It concerns the insight that there is an *inverse proportional relationship between value height (“Werthöhe”) and value strength (“Wertstärke”)*. In other words: the lower strata are the stronger ones. A “psychology grounded in the spiritual” therefore seeks theoretically capture and do justice to the weaker, higher strata and to therapeutically cultivate their relative freedom vis-à-vis the stronger, yet lower strata.

	<i>Psychoanalysis</i>	<i>Individual psychology</i>	<i>Logotherapy</i>
<i>Nexus</i>	Nexus of Causality („Kausalnexus“)	Nexus of Finality („Finalnexus“)	Nexus of Values („Valorialnexus“)
<i>Structure</i>	Cause-Effect	Reason-Consequence	Value-Demand
<i>Movens</i>	Must	Want	Ought
<i>Source</i>	Drives	Purposes	Values

Table 4. *Charting the conceptual field in the self-understanding of logotherapy from an axiological point of view.*

A closely related critical treatment of the concept of psychodynamics is associated with the notion of existential dynamics (see *table 5*). While Viktor Frankl (1946, pp. 108 ff.) uses the term *existential dynamics* (from German “existentielle Dynamik” with a “t”) synonymously

with *noodynamics*, Irvin D. Yalom proposes a different conception of *existential dynamics* (from German “*existenzielle Dynamik*” with a “*z*”). In Yalom’s account, the polar tension between being and ought—within which Frankl places vocation (“*Berufung*”) and value demand—is reinterpreted as a temporal dynamic: “The-future-becoming-present is the primary tense of existential therapy” (Yalom, 2015, p. 12). Unlike Frankl, Yalom continues to place the notion of *depth* at the center of his approach, fundamentally reinterpreting it. Whereas Freud conceives of depth largely in terms of chronological priority—such that early childhood experiences populate the deepest layers of the unconscious—*depth* in existential psychotherapy means “setting aside everyday problems and thinking deeply about one’s existential situation” (Yalom, 2015, p. 11). Yalom develops his existential dynamics, like Frankl, in a three-step dialectic—critique of classical psychoanalysis, critique of the neo-Freudians, and construction of his own approach. Yet, there exists a decisive distinction. Frankl’s *noodynamics* is formal in the sense that it does not provide a typology of successful life projects or of highest oughts, whereas Yalom seeks to specify the fundamental existential conflicts more concretely. Yalom identifies “*death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness*” as the “*four ultimate concerns*” (Yalom, 2015, p.7). More recently, Alfried Längle attempted to synthesize both positions. Längle (2000d), in his personal existential analysis, likewise concretizes basic conflicts and characterizes them explicitly in axiological terms.

In sum, Frankl contrasts psychodynamics with his concept of *noodynamics*. The notion of *noodynamics* emphasizes the human beings orientation towards values and the will to meaning (as opposed to an unilateral focus on disvalues), free decision for what ought to be (rather than naturalistic, causal necessity or motivated wanting), and the weaker, simultaneously higher value-strata (as opposed to the stronger, lower ones). Yet, the notion of *noodynamics* must be developed further and specified within a comprehensive framework of axiology.

	<i>Freud and the Freudians</i>	<i>Neo-Freudians</i>	<i>Own Approach</i>
	Naturally Determined Causal Must	Motivated Finality of Wanting	Freely Responding to Ought
<i>Logotherapy According to Frankl</i>	Psychodynamics	Psychodynamics	Noodynamics
		Adler and Individual Psychology	
	Nativism	Culturalism	Existentialism
	Inherited Instincts and Drives	Socially Acquired Conflicts	Limit-Situations
<i>Existential Psychotherapy According to Yalom</i>	Psychodynamics	Psychodynamics	Existential Dynamics
		H. S. Sullivan, K. Horney, E. Fromm	

Table 5. Comparison of Frankl's and Yalom's engagement with Freud, the Freudians and the Neo-Freudians.

#### Critique of Noodynamics: Generalization to Axiodynamics

For my critique of Frankl's concept of noodynamics, I will proceed with a three-step argument. First, Frankl must be acknowledged as a forerunner of axiological psychopathology. Second, his concept of spirit ("Geist") must be contextualized and his concept of value subjected to critique. Finally, I will outline the anthropological problems of his theory.

By emphasizing the healing potentials of spiritual ideals, Frankl rightfully earns a place among the pioneers of axiological psychopathology. His programmatic formula—that man can realize

himself only insofar as he lives oriented toward ideals—must be regarded as a basic principle of the axiological paradigm. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe puts it: “If we take people as they are, we make them worse; but if we take them as they ought to be, we make them what they can become” (cited in Frankl, 1946, p. 143). Moreover, Frankl makes a genuinely axiological contribution when he distinguishes three types of value within the scope of psychotherapy: creative values (“schöpferische Werte”), which are fulfilled in our actions; experiential values (“Erlebniswerte”), which are fulfilled in conscious experience; and attitudinal values (“Einstellungswerte”), which are fulfilled in the manner in which we bear our fate (Frankl, 1946, pp. 94 ff.)—the so-called *value triad* (“Werttriade”).

Against this backdrop, logotherapy may appear as an early application of axiological psychopathology. This raises a further question: *Is noodynamics already axiodynamics?* The answer is: by no means.

This brings me to the critique of Frankl’s notion of value and spirit. Frankl’s approach is interesting for developing a programme of axiological psychopathology insofar as it “rests largely on Max Scheler’s phenomenology, philosophy, and anthropology” (Alfried Längle, 2001, p. 289). There is no doubt that Scheler’s (1913) *Material Value Ethics* counts among the most significant philosophical influences on Frankl (Batthyány & Zsok, 2005). Frankl himself remarks that he carried Scheler’s book with him “like a Bible” (Frankl, 1995, p. 42). Reflecting on the relationship between Frankl and Scheler will therefore help to identify weak points within the concept of noodynamics that require axiological correction.

First and foremost, it must be noted that despite his profound engagement with material value ethics, Frankl construes the scope of axiology too narrowly, insofar as value for him always means *value within the spiritual-personal stratum*. Although “the central impulse transmitted from Scheler to Frankl” consists in “the view of man as a free, spiritual being” who “orients his life according to values which he can perceive in an act of spiritual feeling” (Gritschneider,

2005, p. 124), Moritz Gritschneider is right when pointing out that “Frankl in fact does not concern himself at all with the hierarchy of values” (Gritschneider, 2005, p. 123).

Admittedly, the energetics of Frankl’s value triad builds on the personalist idea of increasingly deeper levels within the structure of personal being, such that opportunities for realizing creative values are forfeited before those of experiential values, whereas those of attitudinal values cannot be forfeited at all.<sup>12</sup> Frankl illustrates this, for example, with a clinical vignette involving a cancer patient (Frankl, 1946, pp. 94–95) or along the lines of his own experiences in a concentration camp (Frankl, 1946, pp. 146 ff.). Yet his axiological conception of personal depth is neither developed from nor mediated with Max Scheler’s theory of preference acts (1913). One can plausibly speculate that where Scheler posits an absolute hierarchy of value spheres (Cusinato, 1997)—which attains *a priori* evidence through acts of preference, and under which all empirically discoverable values may be subsumed (past, present, or future)—Frankl either is wary of the danger of octroying one’s own value-project upon others or of clashing with the ineffability of personal being. Since Frankl does not address this issue explicitly, further hermeneutic investigation is required at this point.

More pressing, however, is a closer examination of Frankl’s concept of spirit. As Wolfhart Henckmann observes, “the ‘spiritual person’ is a key concept not only of Frankl’s framework but also of Scheler’s philosophy” (Henckmann, 2005, p. 150). Both thinkers advance an axiological concept of the spiritual person. For Frankl, whose concept of value is situated in the “highest,” spiritual–personal stratum, an axiological determination of the spiritual person entails supplementing psychotherapy with his *height psychology*. Two points need to be emphasized. First, an quote that is often attributed to Frankl can already be found in Scheler, who—among the early phenomenologists—was one of the first and few to engage psychoanalysis explicitly: “Depth psychology calls for a height psychology (noetics) that

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<sup>12</sup> See the chapter on vulnerability for a more detailed discussion.

likewise goes beyond consciousness” (Scheler, 1987b, p. 109). Second, Scheler is not focussed solely on the spiritual stratum in his axiological conception of the person.

Since this calls for further elaboration, I turn to my third step: anthropology. It is true that Scheler—especially in his later work—posits an anthropological dualism of *drive* and *spirit* (Cusinato, 1995). Yet he is far from privileging the “higher” spirit over the “lower” drive. This is programmatically articulated in his formula of the *vitalization of spirit* and corresponding the *spiritualization of life*, according to which the spirit is energized by the strivings of drive, while, in turn, spirit is what first gives direction to these otherwise blind strivings (Scheler, 1928a). Where Frankl’s logotherapy conceives of noodynamics in terms of freely adopting a stance towards the demands (the ought) of spiritual–personal values, a concept of axiodynamics informed by Scheler can instead articulate the spiritually guided *cultivation of desire*, encompassing modes of solicitation (“Veranlassung”) that arise from sensual, vital, and psychic value strata as well (Cusinato, 2014).

For explicating his picture of man (“Menschenbild”), Frankl appeals to the notion of “dimensional ontology” (“Dimensionalontologie”). He invokes the tradition ranging from Thomas Aquinas, to Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann when he characterizes the human being as a *unitas multiplex*: “The signature of human existence is the coexistence of anthropological unity and ontological differentiation” (Frankl, 1946, p. 52). Although Frankl explicitly draws on Hartmann’s level ontology (“Schichtenontologie” or “Neue Ontologie”) and the categorical laws governing the ontological strata, he fails to thematize the parallelism that exists between ontological strata and value strata.

What does this imply? If Frankl allows for valorative demands only at the spiritual–personal stratum, he overlooks the motivational power of values belonging to the subpersonal strata. If one adopts the terminology of Scheler’s material value ethics—which distinguishes sensual, vital, psychic, and spiritual–personal values—then Frankl’s concepts of value and ought are too narrowly construed. For Frankl, values and ought come into play only on the spiritual level,

toward which *logotherapy* is inclined from the outset (from Greek λόγος, “lógos,” meaning “reason,” “spirit,” or “discourse”). This etymological inclination is expressed most concentratedly in the term *noodynamics*. At the same time, the creative, experiential, and attitudinal values located within the spiritual–personal sphere remain underdetermined, since this stratum itself is further differentiated into aesthetic, epistemic, moral, religious, and other value series (cf. Hartmann, 1949). The same applies to the concept of *ought*, which must at least be differentiated into *ought-to-do* (“Tunsollen”) and *ought-to-be* (“Seinsollen”). Furthermore, this distinction requires further qualification and contextualization through subpersonal modes of solicitation, such as sensual attraction and repulsion or the motivational force of desire—depending on the value series in question (Reiner, 1974).

The basic contention of philosophical anthropology, which is founded in level ontology (Scheler, Hartmann, Plessner, Rothacker, Lersch, Schneider, among others), is that the ontological uniqueness of the human being consists in the fact that the maximum number of strata of real being converge within it. The human being thus becomes a *microcosm* in which the structure of the *macrocosm* is repeated, thereby elevating human experience, in the final analysis, to a correlate of universal domains of knowledge (Lenk, 1958).<sup>13</sup> From the vantage point of value theory, the microcosmic–macrocosmic correspondence is cashed out in the notion of the *ordo amoris*, according to which the make-up of the person constitutes an ordered mirror-image of the make-up of the objective world of values (Frings, 1966). Before this backdrop, to oppose psychodynamics and noodynamics to one another would amount to *tearing apart what in fact belongs together*. It would be to *divide what is united in human nature*. The full potential of the axiological paradigm in psychopathology becomes unlocked only by synthetically integrating psychodynamics and noodynamics—the standpoint of *axiodynamics*. Along the

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<sup>13</sup> Compare this to the elaboration on microcosm-macrocosm correspondence in the chapter on *Methodological Reductionism*.

lines of the microcosmic–macrocosmic correspondence, axiodynamics can at the same time be mapped onto an *anthropodynamics*.

To further illustrate the concept of axiodynamics, I will now turn to an instructive example.

### *Sublimation*

Axiology provides a framework within which both psychodynamics and noodynamics can be reformulated and redescribed. As a result, it also becomes possible to capture interactions between value strata that otherwise would have to be reduced either to a psychodynamic or noodynamic perspective. In this respect, Heinz Häfner's (1956) personal depth psychology can be seen as a predecessor. Like Frankl, Häfner criticizes Freud's mechanistic conception of psychic life for losing sight of the spiritual life of the person, to the point that psychoanalysis ultimately becomes unable to account for morality. As with any new psychopathological approach, one criterion of success for axiological psychopathology consists in its capacity to redescribe well-established phenomena in its own terminology and thereby to cast them in a new light.

One paradigmatic example of an axiodynamic process that traverses between several strata is *sublimation*. In sublimation, “lower value tendencies that are unfulfillable for various reasons—above all instinctual needs—achieve, by indirect routes, a partial fulfillment with the help of a substitute value [“Ersatzwert”]” (Häfner, 1956, p. 112). In his original theory, Freud had a narrow concept of sublimation that primarily focussed on sexual drive energy, which is why Laplanche and Pontalis summarize in their dictionary: “A drive is said to be ‘sublimated’ insofar as it is diverted toward a new, non-sexual aim and directed toward a new, non-sexual object” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2016, p. 478). Freud later also considered “the possibility of sublimation of aggressive drives” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2016, p. 481).

For illustration, imagine an artist whose paintings repeatedly depict violent and gruesome scenes. In producing such works, one might interpret, the artist is be channeling fundamentally

aggressive drive energies into a higher, spiritual (and culturally sanctioned) form of expression. In this process, the sublimated drive energy passes into ego-distance, such that it need not be consciously accessible that these works express one's own aggressive impulses cloaked in a "moral cloak" ("moralisches Mäntelchen"). Instead, the artist might describe the works as social critique—which may well be true, yet from an axiodynamic perspective represents only half the truth.

The benefit of a value-theoretical perspective, however, does not lie solely in the fact that the psychodynamics of sublimation can be reformulated in axiodynamic terms. Rather, the axiological framework yields an additional conceptual surplus by relating sublimation to the concept of inauthenticity ("Unechtheit"; as it is, e.g., known from William Stern's personalist psychology):

What thus emerges is a trait that is almost universally characteristic of sublimation: while there is a partial or concealed fulfillment of value or disvalue tendencies that are excluded from the ego's value project in their unmasked form, one may even believe oneself to be condemning or overcoming these tendencies. It is from this 'hypocrisy'—or, more precisely, from this masking of lower value or disvalue tendencies with a moral cloak—that sublimation very often acquires the character of inauthenticity. This essential feature of sublimation can be directly experienced in the cloying romanticism and moral indignation of those who are vitally inhibited. (Häfner, 1956, p. 113)

Sublimation appears inauthentic when lower value tendencies ("Werttendenzen") are presented as higher ones—for example, when a form of vanity bound to the vital–psychic ego is disguised as a romantic gesture ("By courting her, I am allowed to present myself in my best light"). Yet even in this case, the vital–psychic tendency is directed towards values, which means that it already belongs to axiodynamics; axiodynamics therefore does not begin only at the spiritual

level. Moreover, as Scheler (1928a, pp. 45–48; 65) has emphasized, the alternative conception—one that sharply separates drive and spirit by aligning them with being and ought—faces serious difficulties. On the one hand, it risks an *inappropriate naturalization* of spirit, insofar as genuinely spiritual creations are reduced to processes describable in naturalistic, causal terms. On the other hand, it is caught in a *moralistic circle*, since sublimation is meant to explain the genesis of morality (the psychogenesis of morality) while simultaneously presupposing a concept of morality. Axiodynamics avoids both problems: it acknowledges the proper laws (“Eigengesetzlichkeit”) of spiritual–personal value dynamics while at the same time assuming tendencies that are directed at values already at the level of natural processes (that is, subpersonal modes of solicitation, for example, in embodied sense-making).

For a fully developed account of axiodynamics, it would be necessary to revise other established concepts as well—such as overvaluation or idealization and conflict from psychodynamics, or the existential vacuum and the will to meaning from noodynamics. Furthermore, one would have to show how the shift in perspective toward axiodynamics discloses additional processes, including promising concepts such as resentment, deification, or subsumptive blindness (von Hildebrand). On this basis, axiological psychopathology can coin innovative notions such as the *axiological refractory period*, i.e., the period following a value fulfillment in which the same fulfillment is no longer possible. For instance, the phase after a separation during which a person is temporarily incapable of love, sometimes rather awkwardly referred to as a “mourning period.”

## Vulnerability and Value. Value-Theoretical Foundations of Vulnerability in Clinical Psychology<sup>14</sup>

### What is and Why is There Vulnerability?

Human beings are vulnerable creatures. They fall ill. They can be humiliated. Yet they cannot rid themselves of their vulnerability without, as it were, ridding themselves of their very vitality. Why does vulnerability exist at all? An answer to this question must be sought in the mode of being and the structural make-up of the human being. In doing so, it is important not to confuse vulnerability as *explanans* with vulnerability as *explanandum*. For illustration: in psychiatric anthropology, vulnerability has been identified—alongside other features—as an *explanans* for why human beings can become mentally ill (Fuchs, 2020). But what, in turn, explains the fact that the human being is vulnerable at all? That is, how are we to approach vulnerability as an *explanandum*? Answers to this question have sought the root of vulnerability either in man’s openness to the world (“Weltoffenheit”; Scheler) or in the transcendence of consciousness (Merleau-Ponty).

I wish to pursue a different path, one that aims at a phenomenological–ethical determination of vulnerability. A striking feature about recent research on vulnerability and resilience is that these concepts have been developed by reflecting moral extreme situations. Thus, for example, Antonovsky (1987) articulates his criteria of comprehensibility, meaningfulness, and manageability for resilience through an examination of the experiences of inmates in concentration camps. Similarly, in Frankl’s (2007) logotherapy, the central point seems to be that while the spiritual nature (“geistige Natur”) of the human being renders them vulnerable to moral humiliation, their orientation toward values can preserve them, in their innermost core,

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<sup>14</sup> The following chapter was first published in German language with the title *Verwundbarkeit und Wert: Werttheoretische Grundlagen der Vulnerabilität in der klinischen Psychologie* (Wendler, 2025c) as part of the collected volume *Vulnerabilität der Natur: Mensch – Tier – Erde* (Schnell, 2025) and has been reprinted and translated with the permission of the publisher.

from being wholly destroyed. In what follows, I attempt to develop a perspective that corresponds to these moral origins of the concepts of vulnerability and resilience by grounding them in phenomenological ethics. Accordingly, the thesis that will serve as my guide will be that *the root of vulnerability is to be uncovered in the value-ethical constitution of the person and in their distinctive mode of being.*

An initial approach to the question of vulnerability can be etymological. Thus, for instance, Breyer (2017) writes: “In a general sense, vulnerability—derived from the Latin “vulnus” (wound) or “vulnerare” (to wound)—denotes the susceptibility of an individual, a group, or even a non-human entity (e.g., an ecological system) to certain stressors” (119). In ordinary language, the German words “Vulnerabilität,” “Verwundbarkeit,” and “Verletzlichkeit” can be used almost interchangeably. Their commonality, too, seems to consist in a susceptibility to so-called stressors.

Even a cursory analysis of the contemporary debate on vulnerability reveals that the concept of vulnerability is *en vogue*. There is a *vulnerability trend*. The concept is discussed across politics, science, and society at large; vulnerability has become a firmly established concept in fields such as global governance, educational research, and psychopathology (Stöhr et al., 2019). In these contexts, the concept of vulnerability is located within a specific semantic field. It is associated with notions such as resilience, crisis, pain and suffering, self-care and care for others, as well as violence and trauma. Moreover, the debate on vulnerability is structured valoratively.<sup>15</sup> This means that discourse on vulnerability depends on assumptions about values. For illustration, what distinguishes a mere change from an injury is a difference in the axiological dimension of affection. What separates an injury from an otherwise neutral change

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<sup>15</sup> I employ the term *valorative* in a technical sense and explicitly in contrast to *normative*. *Valorative* demands are experienced as an *ought-to/ought-not-to* that can be traced back to axiological structures such as values, disvalues, or relations of ranking. *Norms* may be valorative, but they may also be instituted, for example, by convention or arbitrary choice. Consequently, valorative and normative demands can, but need not, be coextensive. A similar distinction applies to the term *evaluative*, which commonly designates an act of appraisal and thus places greater emphasis on the role of the value-positing subject.

is that, in a sense still to be specified, a diminution of value or a realization of disvalue is brought about in injury.

To structure this complex debate, it is helpful to distinguish between its *object-level* and its *meta-level*. Within the debate, ethical perspectives are predominantly introduced from an external standpoint, in the sense of evaluating or reevaluating vulnerability (concerning the meta-level). Vulnerability is construed either as something that ought to be overcome or as something that endows human life with depth and meaning. By contrast, an internal perspective at the object-level offers underexplored potential. This potential can be investigated by means of a value-theoretical phenomenology of the experience of vulnerability.

Given this discursive constellation, it is necessary to specify the present project in order to avoid overburdening the investigation.

First, its *scope* must be delimited. The question of vulnerability and value will be addressed exclusively within the domain of clinical psychology, and more specifically within psychopathology. Second, the *aims of the inquiry* must be articulated. Two objectives are to be distinguished here. The first is to *disclose the implicit value-theoretical assumptions underlying the vulnerability debate*. In this context, I will develop the thesis that the foundations of this discourse are structured axiologically and that it calls for a treatment within phenomenological ethics. The second objective is to *disclose insights yielded by an internal ethical perspective at the object-level*. This aim rests on the thesis that the phenomenological shift in perspective reorients evaluative discourse toward the value-theoretical structures that underlie such evaluations. Put differently, rather than offering an external ethical appraisal of vulnerability, the standpoint of phenomenological ethics promises to articulate a concept of vulnerability that stands on its own right. This means that phenomenological ethics attempts to explicate the valorative dimension of vulnerability from within, i.e., ethically on the object-level.

## Four Concepts of Vulnerability and Their Value-Theoretical Foundations

In this section, I address both aims of the investigation. First, I will juxtapose four concepts of vulnerability that are particularly influential in clinical psychology and, more specifically, in psychopathology, and I will examine their implicit value-theoretical assumptions. On this basis, I will then develop a new, fundamental concept of vulnerability, which I term *axiological vulnerability*.

For reasons of argumentative clarity, I will refrain from undertaking a historical analysis of the concept of vulnerability. Since Canstatt's (1841) introduction of the term to denote exceptionally high degrees of psychic excitability, the concept has undergone numerous modifications and reformulations. While tracing these conceptual transformations is undoubtedly a worthwhile endeavor, it has already been pursued at various points in the literature (Stanghellini, 1997).

I propose to distinguish between two “gestures” that are characteristic of contemporary theory formation in psychopathology: an *integrative gesture* and a *reductionist gesture*. The integrative gesture can be associated with approaches such as medical anthropology or the biopsychosocial model, whereas the reductionist gesture is exemplified, for instance, by the Research Domain Criteria Project (RDoC) (Cuthbert, 2015).

Phenomenological or anthropological approaches typically show an integrative gesture. This means that they aim to show how the various concepts relevant within the discourse can be related to one another in a fruitful manner. Albeit phenomenological, the approach I pursue departs from this logic by advancing a reductionist gesture instead. It is therefore to get clear on the right understanding of *reduction* in this context. I do not intend to introduce a variety of “nothing-but” reductionism—for instance, the assertion that all vulnerability is nothing but a value-theoretical matter. Rather, I am concerned with the literal sense of reduction from the Latin “re-ducere”: a “leading back” to what is essential in vulnerability. Phenomenological

reductionism aims to uncover the common ground on which any other conception of vulnerability depends on.

Let us begin by considering an influential approach in contemporary phenomenological psychopathology that exemplifies the typical integrative gesture. Recently, Thomas Fuchs advanced an *ecological conception of vulnerability* that is articulated in terms of circular processes.

The concept of vulnerability (Zubin & Spring, 1977; Nuechterlein & Dawson, 1984) brings together a range of factors—primarily genetic influences on temperament and personality—but it tends to construe such ‘vulnerability markers’ as relatively stable and ultimately biological traits. Vulnerability can, however, also be understood as the outcome of circular interactions in which genetic, epigenetic and social influences are intertwined. The consolidation of dysfunctional perceptual and behavioral dispositions—dispositions that may contribute to the onset of illness under conditions of stress—is a biographical process extending back into early childhood. On this view, vulnerability is not merely an organic diathesis accessible from a third-person perspective; it is also, and inseparably, a phenomenon of lived experience from the perspective of the subject. Those affected experience themselves as fragile, insecure, easily hurt or irritated, lacking in self-efficacy, shaped by unfavorable attachment patterns, and marked by other dispositions and orient their lives accordingly. Understanding vulnerability not only in biological terms but also as biographical and, indeed, existential (Fuchs, 2013a) is of particular importance when aiming to modify such dispositions psychotherapeutically (Stamm & Bühler, 2001). (Fuchs, 2023, pp. 153–154 [references omitted])

Fuchs thus criticizes a one-sidedly biological conception of vulnerability, such as is often associated with various versions of the diathesis–stress model—models that tacitly suggest that, for instance, a personal life crisis merely triggers genetic dispositions that were already present latently but previously inhibited. Against this view, Fuchs argues for a more expansive conception of vulnerability, one that includes psychosocial dimensions such as perceptual styles and attachment patterns, as well as the individual’s life history, and even existential dimensions. None of these perspectives is rejected: biology, psychology, and philosophy coexist. They are, instead, integrated in such a way that each occupies its proper place and none is absolutized at the expense of the others.

Within this framework, vulnerability functions as a core concept of ecological psychiatry, even playing a role for the definition of the basic concepts of health and disorder:

Health: ‘Vulnerability: normal psychological vulnerability to stressful events, generally compensated for by resilience, experiences of self-efficacy, and a sense of coherence’ (Fuchs, 2023, p. 138).

Disorder: ‘Vulnerability: excessive vulnerability to stressful events; premorbid dispositions toward dysfunctional sense-making, for example in the context of personality disorders, basic self-disorders in schizophrenia, etc.’ (Fuchs, 2023, p. 139).

There is no health without vulnerability. Accordingly, to be resilient does not mean to be invulnerable. Not unlike Canstatt’s historical approach, the level of disorder is reached here when the normal dispositions for vulnerability become excessively excitable. Vulnerability and resilience cut across the distinction between health and disorder like two intersecting axes: they illuminate one another without collapsing into each other.

Extending von Weizsäcker’s *Gestaltkreis* in the sense of a responsive phenomenology, vulnerability in Fuchs’s ecological psychiatry figures—alongside sense-making, flexibility,

responsiveness, self-efficacy, the personal niche, and the sense of coherence—as one of the “guiding categories for a phenomenological–ecological analysis of the patient’s situation” (Fuchs, 2023, p. 140) for diagnostics.

At this point, I move to the next step of my project. I will explicate and juxtapose four concepts of vulnerability that are significant within psychopathological discourse and that Fuchs seeks to integrate. To this end, I propose a paired exposition in a table format (see *table 6*): on the left-hand side, an account of the respective concepts of vulnerability, and on the right-hand side, an explication of their underlying value-theoretical presuppositions.

The axiological analysis explicated valorative dimensions presupposed in the various concepts of vulnerability. This points to a fundamental axiological structure whose examination falls within the domain of ethics. Ethics thus emerges as a foundational discipline for vulnerability research. In this sense, and from the perspective of philosophy of science, it is appropriate to invoke the notion of *ethics as prima philosophia*.

Based on this comparative analysis, I will now proceed to coin the concept of *axiological vulnerability*. I will propose it as a basic concept for vulnerability research. The concept of axiological vulnerability accounts for the fact that any form of vulnerability—and, e.g., in contrast to simple change—can be conceived only by recourse to value-theoretical categories, explicitly or implicitly. It is therefore a metatheoretical concept, which implies the thesis that whatever X it is that makes vulnerability vulnerability in the first place, that this X must be explicated in value-theoretical terms, i.e., axiologically.

**Exposition of Vulnerability**

**Value-Theoretical Explication**

**Concepts**

**Biopsychosocial Vulnerability**

<p>Vulnerability is conceived as a (e.g., (epi)genetic) disposition, i.e., in terms of a risk factor and as premorbidity. For example, increased metabolic activity in the amygdala predisposes individuals to depression (Leite Dantas et al., 2021).</p>	<p>Remaining within a scientific attitude, valorative concepts such as <i>risk factor</i> or <i>premorbid</i> are treated as if they were value-neutral (often unreflected). To characterize a symptom-free condition as premorbid, however, is to qualify it retrospectively in light of the illness or disorder to which it may lead and which is detrimental to the organism. What is “at risk” is the organism’s health. From the self-understanding of the biopsychosocial model, the ethical perspective remains external to the concept of vulnerability; yet, implicitly, ethical matters are internal.</p>
<p>Vulnerability is understood, based on a homeostatic model in terms of an imbalance. In this sense, a system is vulnerable when it is susceptible to perturbations or when the regulation of such perturbations does not function properly (Fuchs, 2023).</p>	<p>Treated as a merely descriptive term, imbalance does not yet constitute vulnerability. Only because homeostasis—and with it the structural integrity of the system—is positively valued (as health) do perturbations threaten the system. They in turn appear negatively valued (as disorder) only when viewed from this frame of reference. Likewise, from a descriptive standpoint, regulatory processes that restore the system’s equilibrium are hardly different from mechanisms for state-change. In order to explain why and how vulnerable beings develop literal or metaphorical “scars” (and what these scars mean for those affected), an additional valorative qualification is required.</p>

**Systemic Vulnerability**

<b>Anthropological Vulnerability</b>	Vulnerability is conceived as part of the <i>conditio humana</i> . It arises necessarily from its structural features. Human beings are vulnerable because they are open to the world, poor in instincts, embodied, eccentrically positioned, social, and free (Zirfas, 2020).	These anthropological determinations are double-aspectual in the sense that they render human beings receptive to the realization of values and disvalues. The lack of instinct rids the human being from the narrow confines of a closed life-circle (that other animals are restricted to), yet at the same time exposes them to vertigo from the heights of freedom.
<b>Existential Vulnerability</b>	Vulnerability is conceived as a form of “heightened sensitivity” to existential conflicts that are otherwise mute. A person is vulnerable when everyday events are experienced as Jaspersian limit situations (e.g., Alessiato & Quante, 2022).	Existential conflicts can be construed as value conflicts and invariably include a valorative dimension. In limit situations, antinomies of existence become conscious as the inescapability of value conflicts. For example, the human being can and must act freely, which enables self-formation and authentic life, yet at the same time renders them responsible and thus culpable. Jaspers developed his limit situations of guilt, battle, suffering, chance, and death on axiological grounds.

Table 6. *Explicating value-theoretical presuppositions in different concepts of vulnerability.*

In developing this concept, it is necessary to distinguish between an ontological and a valorative dimension. In its *ontological dimension*, vulnerability designates something like a field within which values may be thwarted or disvalues realized.<sup>16</sup> Resilience, by contrast, refers in this context to any properties of the ontological field that contribute to the persistence or realization of value-being and counteract that of disvalue-being. This ontological field of the realization of

<sup>16</sup> *Nota bene*: Vulnerability is not primarily a matter of the realization of values or the prevention of disvalues, even though both may play a role—for instance, in the form of a considerate value-attitude toward someone who is vulnerable, or in a self-aware relation to one’s own vulnerability.

values and disvalues is the person. Personal being thus comes into view as an autonomous ontological category.

With reference to clinical psychology, this account can be further specified. The axiological quality in question is that structural quality within the fabric of personal being that makes the prevention of values and the realization of disvalues possible in a manner that is meaningful for the affected person. In this context, resilience denotes a structural quality of the same field of personal being that is secondary to vulnerability, because it logically depends on it. The quality of resilience renders the prevention of values or the realization of disvalues less likely to occur. Translated into metaphorical language, the clinically relevant form of vulnerability concerns the “fragility” of personal being, while resilience concerns its “flexibility” or “malleability.”

What it means, in turn, for something to be “meaningful for the person” or “clinically relevant” becomes intelligible only through examining the *valorative dimension* of vulnerability. The valorative dimension concerns the conceptual core of vulnerability. In this valorative dimension, vulnerability consists in something like the fragility or endangerment of the structural integrity of the personal field of realization, precisely through the values and disvalues realized within it. The specific meaning of this claim varies depending on which value theory is presupposed by the analysis. I will illustrate this point exemplarily with reference to material value ethics, as developed in the works of Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann, and Hans Reiner (for an overview, see Römer, 2018, pp. 206–254). On this view, the person is not merely the bearer of axiological qualities; rather, their being a person is constituted by the preference-structure and the concrete inventory of their values and disvalues. Accordingly, the subset of all possible value-preventions and disvalue-realizations that is relevant for defining vulnerability axiologically can be identified. This subset comprises two types of entry: namely, first, alterations to the person’s preference-structure (the order of preferences consists of the totality of acts of preferring and dispreferring) and, second, alterations to the persons’ (dis-)value-

inventory (the individual values and disvalues that are the objects of all of the persons' acts of love and hate, valueception and preference). It follows that vulnerability concerns the very make-up of personal being in such a way that the personal being constituted as such can be impaired or even destroyed in its enactments (i.e., conscious goal-setting and goal-pursuit or lived experience of meaning).

This concerns not only the specification of the valorative dimension of vulnerability and its demarcation from simple or neutral change, but equally the valorative sense of resilience. For resilience acts here as the structural qualities that stabilize the preference-structure and the concrete inventory of (dis-)values of the person—structural qualities that defend against valoratively significant changes in the sense of diminution of value. In the literature, this conception of resilience has been explicated from the perspective of material value ethics. For instance, Rinofner-Kreidl (2014) conceives of it as a reality-oriented value-attitude (“Werthaltung”). According to this view, the preference-structure and the concrete inventory of (dis-)values are resilient to the extent that they are anchored in a subject-independent reality from which they derive their stability.

For the clinical field, this account simultaneously provides an axiological explication of the mechanisms through which therapeutic interventions exert their effects—for instance, insofar as talk therapy helps align one's own goal-orientations and the lived experience of meaning with the real conditions and demands of the environment (harmony or correspondence). It follows that the axiological opposite of resilience is not vulnerability—which resilience rather presupposes as secondary to it—but an excessive egoism in the valorative dimension. Rinofner-Kreidl seeks to explicate this as an illusory-optimistic self-deception, that is, as a turning-away of the underlying value-attitude from reality and a turning-toward the ego. The loss of a reality-oriented value-attitude has been described by Cusinato (2019), in his psychopathology of the *ordo amoris*, as axiological egoism, which he relates in particular to psychotic loss of world.

An important, though underexplored, source for a value-theoretical explication of vulnerability and resilience is the work of von Hildebrand (1922). Von Hildebrand distinguishes different forms of value-blindness and describes several ways in which value-obscuring factors distort valueception, e.g., in coarsening or brutalization (“Verrohung”). The two primary value-obscuring factors are being lulled by the agreeable and hubris that is truly value-hostile and self-willed. In this way, the foundations are laid for a further development of the structural value-ethical concepts of vulnerability and resilience presented here, now also from the perspective of act-phenomenology. The difficult question—that I do not intend to settle at this point—that von Hildebrand’s approach raises concerns whether, and to what extent, the moral character of the person is relevant to the determination of vulnerability and resilience.

### **From the Meta-Level to the Object Level: Value-Theoretical Contributions to Vulnerability Research**

#### Vulnerability and the Other

Delving deeper into phenomenological ethics, I will now introduce another line of thought that shares with material value ethics the principle of ethics as *first philosophy*: the philosophy of alterity. Historically, the movement of the philosophy of alterity delineated itself from so-called “totalizing logic of order” that they diagnosed as characteristic for earlier ethical theories, including material value ethics. Nevertheless, there are metatheoretical potentials for convergence that I wish to outline, at least in sketch form, in order to unlock them for the philosophical reflection on clinical vulnerability. The result will be that the concept of axiological vulnerability can be proposed not only as a basic concept at the metatheoretical level of vulnerability research, but also as one that contributes at the object-level, by making forms of particularly “deep” vulnerability articulable.

Based on his philosophy of alterity, Lévinas (2005) develops an ethical concept of vulnerability that can be further elaborated in the sense of a revised—that is, alterity-sensitive—axiology and

clinical value psychology. For Lévinas, vulnerability emerges, given his ethical account of subject-constitution as a fundamental cipher of our mode of being-with, i.e., us being oriented toward the social realm. In the backdrop stands Lévinas's claim to the primacy of the intersubjective sphere and, in particular, to the encounter with the otherness of the Other.

Four central features can be distilled from Lévinas's ethical–phenomenological concept of vulnerability.<sup>17</sup>

The first feature is the *fundamentality* of vulnerability in the philosophy of alterity: “The I is vulnerability, from head to toe, to the very marrow of its bones” (Lévinas, 2005, p. 94). Expressed in the language of classical metaphysics, vulnerability here would have to be understood as an essential rather than an accidental property.

The second feature is the *valorative dispositionality* of vulnerability: “Vulnerability is more (or less) than the passivity that receives a form or an impact. It is—that which every being, in its ‘natural pride,’ would be ashamed to admit—the capacity ‘to be struck,’ ‘to receive a slap’” (Lévinas, 2005, p. 94). Just as a valorative qualification is required in order to describe a change as an injury, so too is a valorative qualification required in order to distinguish the passivity, for example, in the transmission of a physical impulse from the passivity of being wounded. A being can only be vulnerable if it can also be whole.

The third feature consists in the *social dimension of othering*: “Vulnerability thus contains a relation to the Other that is not exhausted by causality. [...] Vulnerability is being possessed by the Other or the approach of the Other” (Lévinas, 2005, p. 95). At this point, an alterity-philosophical qualification of the category of causality is required to make sense of the extent to which our social mode of being fundamentally shapes our subjectivity. In grasping myself as

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to emphasize that my aim here is not to provide the most exhaustive or faithful exegesis of Lévinas, but rather to mediate between the ethics of alterity and material value ethics with respect to their potential contributions to a clinical value psychology.

a social being, I grasp myself as endangered by the Other and vice versa: the Other can wound me, and I can wound the Other.

The fourth feature of the alterity-philosophical concept of vulnerability lies in its *disruptive responsibility*: “No one can remain within themselves: the humanity of the human being, subjectivity, is responsibility for the Others—an extreme vulnerability” (Lévinas, 2005, p. 100). For Lévinas, the human’s social mode of being is structured ethically precisely because of the vulnerability that arises from it. Accordingly, the subject finds itself in a state of unrest, since it is addressed by the claim of the Other—a claim that already announces vulnerability in its very first word by saying: “You shall not kill.” Put differently, this disruption or unease consists in the fact that, because we can wound one another, we are responsible for one another, even before we have in fact wounded one another.

In Lévinas’s philosophy, vulnerability is closely bound up with his concept of the *face*. Vulnerable beings have a face, in contrast to faceless things, which are not even invulnerable but rather fall entirely outside the scope of the category of vulnerability. A being with face possesses a dignity that can also be violated. Correlated to this is the experience that I can wound the Other. If the basic call of the Other’s face is “You shall not kill,” then this corresponds to an awareness within me that “I can kill”—and, conversely, “I can be killed.”

#### Psychopathology of Limit Situations

The philosophy of alterity can make an important contribution to the philosophical grounding of the concept of vulnerability. These considerations become particularly illuminating when viewed against the background of developments within existentialism that have already been rendered fruitful for the clinical field. The existentialist perspective allows to relativize the primacy of the social sphere that is characteristic of the philosophy of alterity—and upon which it sometimes appears to focus one-sidedly—and to situate it within a broader context. Consider, for instance, Irvin Yalom’s existential psychotherapy and its reference to the *four ultimate*

*concerns*: “death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness” (Yalom, 2015, p. 7). Each of these ultimate concerns corresponds to a fundamental existential conflict, which affords the person with the task of integration, i.e., mature and learn to accept what is inescapable—namely, that we must die, that guilt is unavoidable, that we are alone and isolated, and that all our purposes are ultimately null and destined to become so.

From this perspective, the one-sidedness of the philosophy of alterity becomes explicable. In its account of socio-ethical subject constitution, it focuses predominantly on the social conflicts of freedom and isolation. By contrast, existential psychotherapy—developed in close relation to clinical experience—places greater emphasis on the concrete conflicts that preoccupy patients in the therapeutic encounter. Emerging from Talmudic studies and the philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig, the philosophy of alterity advances a primacy of the essent (“das Seiende”) over being (“das Sein”). Compare this to existential psychotherapy, which works through the conflicts that arise from human finitude as it is lived and suffered. Such a theory-genetic perspective is not external to the matter at hand; rather, it helps to explain how fundamental tensions between these two approaches arise—where one side maintains that we are inescapably disturbed by one another, while the other insists that we are inescapably individuated and, in the end, thrown back upon ourselves. One position grapples primarily with the Other; the other with finitude.

At this juncture, the value-theoretical perspective can once again be brought into play, both in a general and in a specifically clinical sense. At a general level, it can be shown—much as in the preceding analyses that the four ultimate concerns contain value-theoretical presuppositions which can in turn be explicated axiologically. Central to this endeavour is Karl Jaspers’s concept of the *limit situation* (“Grenzsituation”), since all four existential fundamental conflicts come to consciousness in such limit situations. For Jaspers, limit situations initially include death, suffering, battle, chance, and guilt, and later also existence itself (cf. Kaegi, 2004). In the opening paragraph of *Psychology of Worldviews*, Jaspers offers an unambiguous axiological

characterization of the concept of situation: “In value-collisions that force human beings to destroy values, even while affirming values, we encounter only one case among many in which existence appears to the human being as much a process of value-creation as a process of value-destruction” (Jaspers, 1954, p. 229).

Following this axiological characterization of the conflictual situation as an unavoidable collision of values, Jaspers goes on, in the same paragraph, to distinguish the “decisive, essential situations that are bound up with human existence as such” from the “infinitely manifold concrete individual situations.” Whereas individual situations are marked by a contingent character—such that it seems as though things could always be otherwise—limit situations are experienced as bearing an unconditional and necessary character:

We therefore call these situations that are felt, experienced, and thought everywhere at the limits of our existence—*limit situations*. What they share is that, within the subject–object–split, objectified world, nothing firm remains: no indubitable absolute, no foothold that could withstand all experience and thought. Everything flows; everything is caught up in a restless movement of being called into question; everything is relative, finite, split into oppositions—never the whole, the absolute, the essential. (Jaspers, 1954, p. 229)

Limit situations differ from ordinary, particular situations (“Einzelsituationen”) by their unconditional character and by the fact that, when we find ourselves within them, we no longer orient ourselves by a practical, problem-solving stance of action. Instead, we are compelled into a decision that lifts us into new, spiritual heights—sometimes unhelpfully transfigured as heroic. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize the complexity of situational analysis at this point. Kaegi (2004) rightly insists that “the most frequent misunderstanding of Jaspers’s ‘limit situations’” (p. 24) consists in confusing reflected particular situations with limit situations.

Rather, “the systemically relevant caesura does not run between situation and limit situation, but between limit situation and fundamental situation [“Grundsituation”]” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 24). This becomes clear by way of example: “Illness itself is not a limit situation; but illness can set in motion a process through which we become clear about the fundamental situation of having to die” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 24). The significance of this *becoming clear* is central, for “limit situations are conscious fundamental situations” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 24). Strictly speaking, it is therefore not possible to simply “stumble into” a limit situation as though it were something that befalls us entirely passively. Rather, the experience of a limit situation presupposes an active achievement on the part of the subject, who becomes aware of an existential fundamental situation.

From a value-theoretical perspective, this circumstance can be explicated and generalized. What comes to consciousness in limit situations is always also (though not exclusively) that the value-standards which had been operative in ordinary, temporary particular situations are themselves destabilized and questionable. What thus becomes conscious in limit situations is that the preference-structure and the concrete inventory of (dis-)values of the person undergo a transformation. In conjunction with the characterization of axiological vulnerability developed above, it follows that limit situations involve an experience of axiological vulnerability itself—that is, the person becomes aware of their essential vulnerability and can take a stance toward it.

The connection between limit situations and the emergence of mental disorders has already been noted in the literature. Thus, for instance, Fuchs writes of “the deep felt impact that ‘yanks the carpet away from under one’s feet’ and that breaks down the ‘housing’ around one’s life plan,” which “can also shake the foundations of one’s mental constitution to the extent that mental illnesses may result – especially when the limit situation as such remains uncomprehended and does not allow the person concerned any distance and freedom” (Fuchs, 2013a, p. 303). The call for a *psychopathology of limit situations* has since met with

considerable interest (Achella, 2022; Alessiato & Quante, 2022); yet the dialogue with the value-theoretical tradition into which Jaspers's concept was inscribed from the outset has, until now, scarcely been taken up.

### Competence in Limit Situations

Nevertheless, there are some significant exceptions. One such exception is Alfried Längle's (2000d) more recent synthesis of the two perspectives in question, namely *personal existential analysis*. This approach likewise specifies fundamental conflicts at the existential level and basic motives at the anthropological level, yet characterizes them by explicit recourse to personological and axiological concepts. Its background lies in a further development of Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, in which the personal triad of *appeal* (impression), *response* (expression), and *understanding* (taking a stance) is placed prior to Frankl's concept of lived meaning ("Sinnerleben"), which is thereby reconceived not as a causal but as an outcome variable.

Another important exception is provided by Dominik Kaegi (2004) with his concept of *competence in limit situations* ("Grenzsituationskompetenz").<sup>18</sup> Although Kaegi's thinking does not directly engage the clinical field, his concept nevertheless expresses one of the central desiderata of the psychopathology of limit situations. Determining who, under which circumstances, and for what reasons can cope with a limit situation in a non-pathological way—or even with personal growth—and whether and how the competence thereby realized can be fostered therapeutically must constitute a crucial foundation for such a psychopathology if it is to bear practical fruit. Kaegi develops his concept of competence in limit situations through a close engagement with Jaspers's work and assigns it a primarily philosophical significance. The basic insight, as outlined above, is that in limit situations the fundamental situations of existence

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<sup>18</sup> Since Kaegi's work offers an impressive overview of Jaspers's conceptual development, I refrain from reproducing Jaspers's formulations here once again and instead focus on presenting and extending Kaegi's line of thought.

come to consciousness. Put differently, limit situations are cognitive or epistemic in nature, insofar as something is understood within them.

In its primary sense, competence in limit situations—as it can be reconstructed from the *Philosophy of Worldviews*—is concerned with disclosing of the antinomies of existence. These become especially evident in value collisions, or more precisely, in the irreducible structure of reference between their value-positive and value-negative conditions of realization. Ergetics, that is, the study of the conditions under which values and disvalues are realized, shows that value-creation and value-destruction are inseparably intertwined. In the case of guilt, for example, this may mean that an action decided upon with good intentions can nonetheless give rise to unintended negative (long-term) consequences—such as offering well-meant advice to a friend who, in following it, ruins their chances of happiness. Transposed into the clinical field, this might mean that we decide, to the best of our knowledge and conscience, in favour of a therapeutic intervention that nonetheless turns out to the patient's detriment.

“To recognize fundamental situations as limit situations therefore means to recognize them as limits of value-realization,” Kaegi writes (2004, p. 127), and, following Jaspers, characterizes death, battle, chance, and guilt as “ultimate limits of value-realization.” He continues: “We are able to recognize these limits because we are capable of reflecting upon the temporary situation—in which value-realization and value-destruction are intertwined—in the light of existence as a whole” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 127). At this juncture, the distinctive role that value-positings occupy within the constitutive logic of worldviews in Jaspers's philosophy becomes clearly recognizable. Alongside attitudes and world-images, they are the elements from which worldviews are “composed,” and it is their efficacy that “vitalizes the spiritual forces” and provides us with “orientation and support.” It is therefore fair to state that an essential part of the concept of the limit situation is to be explicated in value-theoretical terms; in other words, that it belongs primarily to value theory and is first accessible from this perspective. Without these—sometimes described as “queer” (Mackie, 2013)—properties of values, the cognitive or

world-disclosing achievement of competence in limit situations would remain entirely unfathomable.

Kaegi develops the second meaning of competence in limit situations by considering Jaspers's philosophy as a *clarification of existence* ("Existenzerhellung"). To understand the respective conceptual transformation, it is helpful to briefly recall some historical facts.

Kaegi (2004) distinguishes—without further elaboration—"three cognitive achievements" of competence in limit situations: "totalization, recognition of the antinomies of existence as a whole, and recognition of the limits of value-realization" (p. 127). When we experience a fundamental situation as a limit situation, we are oriented toward the whole, which reveals its contradictions to us and, through them, constrains of our valuing allow us to experience and process. Much could be added here by way of interpretation, though this would inevitably become speculative. What is decisive instead is that, in this three-step structure, Kaegi identifies the Kantian legacy in Jaspers's thinking: "Corresponding to the assurance of totality in existence is reason's advance toward the unconditioned, which generates antinomies through which reason becomes aware of its limits" (Kaegi, 2004, p. 127).

This Kantianism was already criticized in contemporary debates, most notably by Heidegger. He regards the "reflection on the whole" to which Jaspers attributes the consciousness of limit situations as little more than a "formal indication." Kaegi summarizes Heidegger's objection as follows: the problem lies in the fact that Jaspers "derives the experience of limit situations, through a 'theoretical reinterpretation,' from the cognition of the antinomic structure of existence, without describing cognition itself as a lived experience" (Kaegi, 2004, pp. 127–128). Heidegger opposes such an antinomic analysis of existence, first because the whole that encompasses antinomies cannot itself be constituted antinomically. Second—and more importantly—Heidegger objects because an antinomic whole could not be realized in the first place, i.e., cannot be. From this an alternative assessment of limit situations follows: "Mortality does not negate life but is itself, as an existential possibility in the sense of being-toward-death,

a way of existing; guilt does not negate action but is itself, as an existential possibility in the sense of ‘being-able-to-be-guilty,’ a way of acting” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 128). In short, without a prior Daseinsanalysis, the project of analysing limit situations would be doomed to failure.

In *Philosophy of Existence*, Jaspers introduces a modified concept of the limit situation. The novelty now consists in the claim that the “antinomic structure of existence” itself can be experienced as a limit situation. In each of the limit situations, the polarity of value-positive and value-negative realization is experienced in a proprietary fashion; experiencing this commonality brings the antinomic structure of existence to givenness. It is important that, according to Jaspers’s self-understanding, this does not amount to a generalization but is given in experience—albeit an experience of the questionability of existence as such.

Without disputing the existence of such experiences, it seems to me nevertheless questionable whether Jaspers’s line of argument is ultimately convincing. The reason is that it involves a meta-theoretical decision as to whether one takes in the perspective of existential philosophy and looks onto value theory or *vice versa*. Jaspers, by contrast, appears to attempt to hold both standpoints simultaneously, thereby risking a loss of theoretical coherence.

Be that as it may, his account yields a number of additional qualifications for the concept of competence in limit situations. What is added, in substance, is that this competence includes the capacity to apprehend the finitude of existence within each type of fundamental situation. This means, first, that competence in limit situations presupposes a form of “existential distance” (“Daseinsdistanz”), grounded in the ability to transcend existence. Boundary-situation competence thus denotes “the capacity to detach oneself from existence and to adopt a standpoint beyond it, from which all existence is recognized as contradictory, and as transient precisely in its contradictoriness” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 130). This first additional qualification can be subsumed under the concept of *solitude*. Solitude, in turn, constitutes the condition for the second additional qualification, which—via an analysis of the historicity of existence—seeks to demonstrate that the possibility of experiencing limit situations is essential to *Dasein*.

Furthermore, it is essential that we can express this through philosophy. The methods of existential clarification—namely “indirect communication,” “leading to the boundary,” and “speaking in signs” (Kaegi, 2004, p. 130)—articulate this second qualification of the concept of competence in limit situations. They can, in turn, be subsumed under the concept of *communication*.

Proceeding from the *ergetics of value-collision*—that is, from the insight that value-creation and value-destruction are inescapably co-conditioned—Kaegi’s investigation homes in on the concept of competence in limit situations. What is at stake is a world-disclosing, cognitive achievement through which fundamental situations become conscious as limit situations. This process can be characterized by a range of predicates: totalization, disclosure of antinomies, orientation toward the whole, existential distance, solitude, communication, and so forth.

What does this result imply for the clinical field? It should be clear from the outset that the lesson is not that a philosophical education would help one cope with illness or mental disorder.<sup>19</sup> Nor should limit situations be conflated with vulnerability, just as competence in limit situations should not be confused with resilience. Even if it may be true that our existential vulnerability becomes manifest in limit situations, and that competence in limit situations is reminiscent of coping resources, these concepts nevertheless appear to stand in an orthogonal relation to one another.

To explain how these concepts can nevertheless profit from one another, I would like to invoke the concept of the *value triad*. This concept originates in Frankl’s logotherapy and is regarded by some as his most original extension of material value ethics (Batthyány & Zsok, 2005). The value triad belongs to Frankl’s ergetics, insofar as it specifies three levels of personal depth in the conditions under which values are realized: *creative values*, *experiential values*, and *attitudinal values* (“schöpferische, Erlebnis- und Einstellungswerte”). To determine the

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<sup>19</sup> If that were the case, health and pension insurance providers would long since have begun to fund a minor in philosophy.

personal depth of the respective modes of value realization, Frankl employs something like a “subtraction method,” which indicates the order in which these modalities are lost, or which of them persist while others have already fallen away. For illustration, considering one of Frankl’s case vignettes is instructive:

A young man was lying in the hospital with an inoperable tumour high in the spinal cord. He had long since been unable to work professionally; symptoms of paralysis had severely impaired his capacity for employment. Thus, he no longer had access to the realization of creative values. Yet even in this condition, the realm of experiential values remained open to him: he engaged in intellectually stimulating conversations with other patients (not without at the same time entertaining them and giving them courage and comfort), he occupied himself with the reading of good books, and above all with listening to good music on the radio. Until one day, he could no longer tolerate the headphones, and his increasingly paralyzed hands were no longer able to hold a book. At this point, he gave his life a second turn: having already been forced to withdraw from creative values to experiential values, he was now compelled to turn to attitudinal values. Or can his behaviour be interpreted otherwise when he has now devoted himself to being an adviser and a role model to his fellow patients? For he bore his suffering with courage. On the day before his death—which he foresaw—he knew that the attending physician had been instructed to administer a morphine injection in due time. What did our patient do? When the physician appeared for afternoon rounds, the patient asked him to give the injection already that evening, so that the doctor would not have to be woken up during the night because of him. (Frankl, 1946, pp. 94–95)

The value classes of the value triad are distinguished energetically, insofar as they are differentiated according to the kinds of achievement for their realization: *activity, experience, and attitude*. Creative values are bound to productive forms of activity that presuppose an active and, depending on the domain of activity, a more or less healthy person. Because they have many presuppositions, creative value realization also is the first to be lost by the patient in the case vignette. Within the energetic structure of the person, they are situated relatively close to the surface. Experiential values likewise have bodily prerequisites, such as an intact sensory apparatus; unlike creative values, however, they are not bound to activity but can also be realized receptively and passively. They therefore have less presuppositions and are lost by the patient only at a later stage. Accordingly, they occupy a “middle” position within the make-up of the person. Attitudinal values have only minimal presuppositions—for example, that the person is alive and that they are still in some way capable of taking a stance (regardless of whether this stance is outwardly perceptible or communicable). For Frankl, they inhabit the deepest layers of the person and, like human dignity, are neither alienable nor losable.

This interpretation of the value triad can be connected to axiological vulnerability as developed above. In this way, competence in limit situations can also be rendered fruitful for a clinical value psychology.

Frankl’s value triad describes a successive stripping away of layers within the energetic structure of the person. It follows logically that the concrete inventory of values—and, under specific conditions, also the preference-structure of the person—changes when the modes of value-realization are restricted or dissolved.<sup>20</sup> The crucial point, however, is that this does *not* amount to an axiological impoverishment or emptying of the person, as one might assume from a “coolly rational” point of view. The sequence of losses described by the value triad is not a mere

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<sup>20</sup> For the sake of completeness, it is important to note that what Frankl overlooks is that, *mutatis mutandis*, the same also applies to the modes of prevention for the inventory of disvalue. To elaborate on this point, however, would lead us too far afield into the question of the (a-)symmetry between the realm of values and that of disvalues.

subtraction. What the case vignette illustrates is not only that, even when one mode of value realization is lost, others remain available, but also that the loss of one mode can sometimes first unlock other ones that are deeper.

Of particular importance is the fact that attitudinal values are separated from the other two types of value by a qualitative hiatus. This can be characterized as follows: in the attitude that a person adopts toward their fate, they relate to nothing other than their axiological vulnerability. The enabling condition for this is that the person is structurally affected and, as it were, takes a stance with respect to this affectedness. In doing so, the person adopts a standpoint outside of themselves—which, in this value-theoretical formulation, means nothing other than that Kaegi's criterion of existential distance, or solitude, is fulfilled. This is true even if other terminologies are more common in the personological literature, such as spirit, self-transcendence, or eccentric positionality. In the final instance, the patient in the case vignette appears to exhibit a kind of sovereignty by taking an attitude toward his suffering, thereby demonstrating that illness may take much from him, but not everything. Frankl himself experienced this phenomenon first-hand, which he expressed in his book recounting his experiences as a concentration camp inmate with the credo "saying yes to life in spite of everything." Put differently: whoever has a "why" in life can endure almost any "how."

This analysis casts competence in limit situations in a new light. From a value-theoretical perspective, it can be fleshed out clinically as soon as one recognizes that its achievement cannot consist in a merely philosophical—or even purely intellectual—reflection on fundamental situations. Even so, this does not rule out that philosophical education may help cultivate a clinically relevant competence in limit situations. This will be the case whenever philosophical education is an *education of the heart* ("Herzensbildung") rather than a mere *education of the intellect* ("Verstandesbildung"). Instead of responding reactively when a limit situation strikes, philosophical education can enable to engage proactively with the possibility of being affected at all. This works by cultivating the different modes of value-realization

articulated in the value triad—activity, experience, and attitude. What philosophical education can contribute concretely to clinical competence in limit situations is that it can make us recognize that we are obliged or even responsible to cultivate our ergetic capacities and, ideally, provide us with the means to do so. This way, philosophical education can stabilize our *ordo amoris* axiologically. Frankl expresses this poignantly elsewhere:

A person can thus also be ‘obligated’ to joy. In this sense, someone sitting on a tram who witnesses a splendid sunset or notices the scent of acacias in bloom, and who does not give in to this possible experience of nature but continues reading their newspaper—such a person could, in that moment, be called somehow ‘forgetful of their duty.’ (Frankl, 1946, p. 94)

Finally, a word must be said about the difference between an existentialist and a value-theoretical approach to limit situations. In my view, these are complementary and mutually enriching perspectives, yet they are by no means to be conflated. To work out the difference in full would far exceed the scope of the present discussion, so I will employ a parallelizing technique. Where the existentialist elaboration and critique of Jaspers’s limit situations is concerned with recognizing fundamental situations and situating them within an all-encompassing nexus of being (from death as a limit situation to being-toward-death as a mode of Dasein), the value-theoretical perspective is concerned more with explicating the ergetics of value collision presupposed by the concept of limit situation, and with defining the modalities of value-realization. Competence in limit situations thus appears, in the one perspective, as a *cognition* of fundamental situations, but in the other as a *revaluation* of fundamental situations. Awareness of one’s own death—or of other fundamental situations—can therefore vitalize the person’s spiritual forces and motivate them toward diverse forms of value-realization. In this sense, any clinical value psychology must always also include the perspective of a “height psychology” (“Höhenpsychologie”).

## Pain, Anguish, and Suffering

Through engaging with the philosophies of alterity and existence, particularly deep experiences of vulnerability have become articulable—experiences that concern the constitution of the subject itself. Yet this alone does not suffice to connect with the mainstream discourse on vulnerability. At the object-level, this discourse is concerned with the relation between vulnerability and pain.

Pain is regarded by some as a direct experience of one's own vulnerability, for example insofar it serves as a warning function for impending tissue damage (Heitkamp, 2021). However, there is no complete correlation here, since there exist also experiences of vulnerability without pain. A value-theoretical perspective can help to thematize a particular qualitative dimension within the experience of pain, namely *anguish* (“die Pein”). Pain and anguish are sometimes used synonymously. The etymology of the archaic German term *Pein* points to Middle High German “pîne,” “pîn” and Old High German “pîna” (as in “peinlich”). Ultimately, it derives from the Latin “poena,” meaning “atonement, punishment, or retribution.” This etymology indicates a valorative dimension of usage, which can be terminologically coined as the *debitum component*. Phenomenological analysis identifies anguish as a subtype of pain experience that includes, alongside the *debitum component*, suffering, and that stands in proximity to trauma. In anguish, pain becomes personified, such that an inner dialogue with it can be taken up. This inner dialogue can be characterized by three predicates. First, there is *agonality*, since in anguish we encounter ourselves as though we were a hostile stranger. Bahr (2007) characterizes anguish as an “adversary [...] that often attacks life unexpectedly from concealment, harasses, weakens, and crushes it” (p. 25).

The second characteristic of anguish is *aversion*. Aptly, Nietzsche has the woes sing in *The Other Dance Song*: “Woe saith: Hence! Go!”—for we wish for anguish to pass at any given moment. Yet this is not merely a formal qualification of aversion in the sense of a negative

affective tone; rather, it is a deeply moralized aversion. Against this background, it becomes understandable why chronic pain patients are often perceived as if they had a “character flaw.” The final predicate is the *absurdity* of anguish. Frankl (1946) repeatedly reports that his patients ask: “Why is this happening to me?” The point here is that whoever can find an answer to this question can rid him- or herself of anguish. Those who know why they must suffer (their fate) are more resilient. Antonovsky (1987), too, developed the concept of salutogenesis inspired by concentration camp survivors who evaluated their lives as meaningful.

Although it may not seem obvious at first glance, the value-ethical perspective is in fact compatible with the classical understanding of vulnerability as pain experience. The ethical perspective can help to examine the meaning of pain within the lives of those who suffer from it. In order not to misunderstand the role of value ethics, however, it is necessary not to confuse it with a misguided moralism. This requires a further step of analysis.

### **Vulnerability in the Crossfire**

The preceding analyses have shown that an internal ethical treatment of vulnerability at the object-level is indeed possible. Ethics—and value theory in particular—can therefore make substantive contributions at the object-level of the scientific discourse. It follows that a phenomenological ethics of vulnerability cannot be reduced to a merely secondary or external perspective on vulnerability, but is independent of it and, in fact, foundational for it.

To render this thesis intelligible, let me briefly discuss the discursive structure of vulnerability research. The critical, political, and ethical discourse on vulnerability most often proceeds from the natural, scientific, or personalistic attitude (Staiti, 2009). This discourse can be studied phenomenologically.

There are four prototypical positions to be distinguished within this discourse, depending on whether vulnerability and resilience are evaluated affirmatively or negatively. This yields the following four-field matrix (see *table 7*):

	<b>Affirmative</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Vulnerability</b>	Pathocentrism	Transhumanism
<b>Resilience</b>	Virtue Ethics	Critical Social Science

Table 7. *Logically possible evaluations of vulnerability and resilience from an external ethical perspective.*

Each of the four fields can be exemplified with a position from the discourse.

An affirmative evaluation of vulnerability is exemplified by *pathocentrism*. Thus, in his work on medical ethics, Maio argues for accepting vulnerability and ultimately learning to engage with it in a mature way: “Not a fight against pain, but struggling for a life with pain—a life that can be learned [...]” (Maio, 2016, p. 95). From a pathocentric standpoint, any ethical approach that denies or seeks to overcome vulnerability appears naïve and, ultimately, unsuitable for the clinical field.

The opposed position is the rejection of vulnerability, as articulated, for instance, in *transhumanism*. Here, vulnerability appears as a deficiency of the human being, which is to be overcome through an imagined higher form of life: „[T]he Homo excelsior, a posthuman species which is superior to ours, composed by exceptionally gifted beings that have been genetically selected, designed and improved and which — according to the transhumanist imaginary — will dominate the posthuman future and will be happier, more virtuous, long-lived and intelligent than us” (Llano-Alonso, 2019, p. 39). From a transhumanist perspective, an accepting attitude toward the weaknesses of human existence appears as little more than a romantically embellished self-affirmation and, ultimately, as evidence of an inadequately trained imagination.

Analogously, one can contrast an affirmative and a rejecting position with respect to resilience.

Within *virtue ethics* as applied to the clinical field, one finds affirmative attitudes toward

resilience that relate it to a realistic view of both self and world. “In contrast to this,” Rinofner-Kreidl (2014) writes, “the strength of resilient persons lies in the fact that their will to social survival and to coping with challenges is borne precisely by a will to reality—that is, by a will toward a realistic view of (one’s own) life” (pp. 75–103). From this standpoint, resilience is by no means wholly independent of a virtuous way of life, but rather emerges, to a certain extent, from the moral cultivation of the person.

The opposing position can be found, for example, in *critical social science*, which adopts a sceptical stance toward resilience. “Resilience cannot be separated from the imperative to habituate to a permanently endangered life,” Slaby writes; and further: “Under conditions of hegemony, oppression, global extraction, and deliberately imposed scarcity, there can be only one attitude: not adaptation to existing conditions, but struggle against them [...]” (Slaby, 2016, pp. 292, 296). Here, resilience is not counted among the virtues but is instead understood as a stabilizing factor for the hegemony—one that renders internally disciplined subjects governable.

This synoptic overview of the vulnerability discourse reveals that none of the positions depicted here is wholly in line with the thrust of the concept of axiological vulnerability. The difference lies between an external, evaluative, and an internal, value-theoretical approach to vulnerability. The value-theoretical perspective on vulnerability need not itself be evaluative; rather, it can simply treat the irreducible valorative dimension of the concept. In this sense, the concept proposed here is, as it were, independent of evaluative positions, such that the value-theoretical perspective must not be identified with any particular stance but is instead compatible with all of them. The reason for this is that value-theoretical analysis operates at a more fundamental level, which is itself concerned with providing the basis for any justified evaluation in the first place.

In summary, the axiological analysis of vulnerability does not, in principle, converge with any specific moral, political, or critical position. The analysis of the valorative dimension of

vulnerability (internal ethical perspective) must not be confused with an evaluative stance toward vulnerability itself (external ethical perspective). Phenomenological ethics explains this by elaborating the thesis of the perspectivity of “value-ception,” or value-cognition. Matters of value (“Wertverhalte”), like objects of perception, are always given from a specific perspective. It follows that the pluralism of perspectives is conducive to the cognition of the essence of axiological entities (variation). A fully developed clinical value psychology must therefore take into account both internal and external perspectives in the ethical analysis of vulnerability.

### **Depression as a Disorder of Valueception (“Wertnehmungsstörung”).<sup>21</sup> Outlining Model Specifications and Comparisons in the Framework of Axiological Psychopathology<sup>22</sup>**

With the onset of the new millennium, phenomenological approaches started to redefine their outlook on the field of psychopathology. The main thrust of the “second wave” of phenomenological psychopathology can be summarized through the motto *adequate description, precise explication*. In pursuit of this motto, I turn to the field of psychopathology of emotions, in particular regarding experiences of something as mattering, significant or relevant. Homing in on depression as a paradigmatic case study, I argue for the utility in establishing a concept of disorders of valueception for explaining psychopathological alterations in such experiences of mattering. To this end, I identify several key contributions for understanding disordered manners of apprehending values and subsume them under the umbrella term of axiological psychopathology. The goal of this article is to demonstrate how

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<sup>21</sup> The term valueception derives from the German neologism “Wertnehmung.” The term value-ception is formed in analogy to per-ception (German “Wahrnehmung”). Nevertheless, the metaphor of an organ (or faculty) for “perceiving” values is only of heuristical utility and positing anything of the sort would run danger of an inadequate hypostasis (see von Hildebrand, 1922, pp. 481-486). Rather, valueception is better conceived as the apprehension of values, e.g., through feeling or reasoning and ought to be delineated from value responses, value systems or ethoi, value-attitudes, etc. The first uses of the term valueception stem from the phenomenological tradition in philosophy, where value-ception (Scheler, Husserl, etc.) and value-feeling (German “Wertfühlen”; Scheler) were delineated.

<sup>22</sup> The following chapter was first published under the same title in issue 32(3) of *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* (Wendler, 2025a) and has been reprinted with the permission of the publisher.

axiology (the study of values) provides the meta-discursive matrix that allows to specify and compare different models of depression. I demonstrate this for the cases of Ratcliffe's (2010) existential feelings, Schlimme's (2013) depressive habituality, Schneider's (1920) endogenous, reactive, and complex forms of depression, Cutting's (2018) interpretation of psychotic depression, and Cusinato's (2018b) unmotivated intentional arc. Also, I propose an integrated model of depression based on the axioms of material value ethics. Relying on disorders of valueception as a common conceptual foundation, an axiologically enriched, phenomenological psychopathology possesses proof of concept that it is able to adequately describe the sufferer's lived experience and to precisely explicate its pathological alterations in its models.

### **The Second Wave of Phenomenological Psychopathology**

During the last decades, clinical psychology, psychiatry and psychopathology have been in a period of upheaval (Andreasen, 2007). This is exemplified in current trends to redefine classical categorical accounts of mental disorders in a dimensional approach in the DSM-V (Helzer et al., 2009) and the ICD-11 (Krueger & Bezdjian, 2009). A similar trend can be observed in the attempt to reconceive of nosological categories as psychometrically robust entities through the hierarchical taxonomy of psychopathology (HiTOP) (Kotov et al., 2022). The same holds for the call to replace traditional nosological categories altogether through a novel research classification system for mental disorders in the research domain criteria project (RDoC) that focusses on neurobiological and behavioral systems (Cuthbert & Insel, 2013). In the midst of this constellation and especially since the 2000s, phenomenological approaches are rediscovering their inter- and transdisciplinary potential, for instance, in the cognitive sciences (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2020). Phenomenological psychopathology must be considered a forerunner of this development (Fuchs, 2017). The renewed interest and fruitful application of phenomenological methods and concepts to psychopathology is so pronounced that it might

even justify asserting a “second wave” since founding days of the likes of Jaspers (1913) and Schneider (1946).

However, there is a palpable difference between the first and second waves of phenomenological psychopathology. This difference resides in the increasing awareness that if phenomenological thought is to continue and be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it requires *methodological reformation* (Wendt et al., 2023). In this vein, researchers within and beyond the psychopathological discourse are working on developing novel methods that allow to bridge the hiatus between phenomenological description and empirical research practices, for example microphenomenology (Bitbol & Petitmengin, 2017), neurophenomenology (Varela, 1996) or the descriptive phenomenological method (Giorgi, 2009). What undergirds this development is the following insight: While phenomenology has always excelled at *adequately describing* lived experience, it now needs to learn to *precisely explicate* its descriptions and theories. This motto of *adequate description, precise explication* entails that phenomenology can no longer shy away from tools for theory construction such as formalization, model specification and comparison and operationalization that have become standard practice in the relevant discourses. Albeit, the crux of renewing phenomenological psychopathology in this sense is that one must be wary not to adopt such research practices naively.

In pursuit of contributing to the methodological reformation of phenomenology, I turn to the field of values and emotions in psychopathology. The recent phenomenological discourse in psychopathology has swayed towards the study of emotionality, showing particular interest in the affective dimension of mental disorders (Rosfort, 2019). This has prompted some to extend the 4E-cognition framework to a 5E-cognition framework, now listing *emotive cognition* besides enacted, embodied, embedded and extended cognition (Fuchs, 2023; Newen et al., 2018). In the phenomenological literature, a constitutive role has been ascribed to emotionality for explaining how something is experienced as mattering, as having significance or as being

relevant (Dings, 2021; Ratcliffe, 2013). Turning to the axiological framework<sup>23</sup> is promising for further fleshing out these accounts, since it allows to analyse affective experiences of mattering in terms of their correlated experiences of values and to specify the changes to which these are susceptible in mental disorders. Thus, the *emotional turn* is undergirded by an mostly unrecognized *axiological turn*.

Accordingly, the present investigation is dedicated to the question of how the study of values can help us to understand the role of emotions for psychopathology. My goal is to demonstrate that the axiological framework provides a meta-discursive matrix in which several psychopathological *models can be specified and compared*. I will argue for the need to establish a concept of *disorders of valueception*, i.e., disorders of the (emotional) apprehension of values. In this vein, I will highlight the continuity between several key contributions and group them together under the umbrella term of axiological psychopathology. Since varying the nosological categories under consideration would overburden the argument, I will restrict the scope of this investigation to a proof of concept for changes in valueception that occur in depression.

The intention behind this this line of reasoning is to show how axiology can help systematize the phenomenological discourse on the psychopathology of emotions, both concerning concept formation and modelling. I will delineate three distinct types of axiological models that specify depression as a disorder of valueception:

1. Depression as disordered affective responses
2. Depression as restricted access to certain value-classes
3. Depression as a disordered intentional arc of valueception

At the present state of the debate, axiological perspectives in psychopathology are rare and, I suggest, there is dire need to lay the foundations for systematic and cumulative scientific work.

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<sup>23</sup> Axiology derives from the Greek ἀξία, “axia” for “value” or “worth.” Appealing to Cohn’s (1932) terminology, it is concerned with the study of the being of values and disvalues (axiotics), their relations (systematics; e.g., hierarchical, symmetrical, antithetical, etc.) and the conditions of their realisation or prevention (ergetics). Another term for the study of values is timology, from τιμή, “time” for “value” or “honor”.

## **Existential feelings and depression**

My agenda in this section is to reconstruct some essential characteristics of Ratcliffe's descriptive psychology of depression. I will focus on outlining how pre-intentional moods or feelings of being determine the manner in which something is experienced as mattering, having significance or being relevant in depression. These descriptions will provide the basis for developing different models that attempt to explicate how these changes come about in terms of disordered valueception. What I *do not* strive for in this section is to provide a comprehensive appraisal of Ratcliffe's approach or the concept of existential feelings.

My point of departure is Ratcliffe's observation that there is a class of feelings that "concern[s] an all-enveloping sense of reality and being rooted in a world" (Ratcliffe, 2020, p. 250). Because of their "non-localized" and all-encompassing character, they concern "The Feeling of Being". The clue is that more specific emotional experiences of something always already presuppose and are embedded in existential feelings. More precisely, existential feelings determine the intentional structure of emotional experiences that are directed at something. Thus, they act as the medium that enables more specific experiences, specifically experiences of something as mattering. Therefore, Ratcliffe's argument has it that they concern the manner in which we experience possibilities: "Things are experienced as significant to us, as mattering to us, in different ways, something that involves a sense of the possibilities they offer" (Ratcliffe, 2020, p. 252).

This is the point where psychopathology comes into play, because it contains particularly clear-cut cases of altered existential feelings: "We understand all-enveloping changes in the sense of reality and belonging as changes in the types of possibility one is open to" (Ratcliffe, 2020, p. 253). In the quest for distinguishing different types of mattering, Ratcliffe turns to the study of emotionality.

In this field, it is common to refer to the kind of significance that is experienced in an emotion as its *formal object* (Kenny, 1963; Mulligan, 1998). Picking up on that, Ratcliffe differentiates between shallow and deep emotions. *Shallow emotions* have an intentional structure, for instance, when someone feels guilty about his or her wrongdoings or for not living up to an ideal with the associated formal object of insufficiency. *Deep emotions*, on the other hand, select and form which kinds of formal objects are available to a subject: „Deeper emotions shape the kinds of significance we are receptive to. They are pre-intentional, by which I mean that they determine what kinds of intentional state it is possible to have” (Ratcliffe, 2010, p. 604). For describing the altered existential feeling in depression, Ratcliffe focuses on the experience of deep guilt. “[D]eep guilt is a shape that constrains the scope of all possible experience. Everything is experienced through the guilt, and kinds of emotion that are incompatible with guilt are no longer possible” (Ratcliffe, 2010, p. 613).

Therefore, emotional depth can be understood in terms of widening or limiting the space of possible intentional experiences. In depression, this is articulated as a pervasive loss of practical significance and interpersonal connection. This loss is the existential basis for the ‘feeling of not feeling,’ which can accordingly be reformulated as a loss of (a subclass of all) possible feelings. However, conceiving of this solely as the absence of feelings would be to misconstrue the specific depressive mode of experience. Rather, “[t]he loss is very much a part of the experience; the absence is there. [...] There is a deep and painful feeling of absence, an awareness of the loss of possibilities” (Ratcliffe, 2010, p. 610). Accordingly, it is important to recognize that depression does not dissolve all formal objects. Rather, deep guilt amounts to an all-enveloping change in the structure of the possibility space, which is paired with the depressive mode of apprehending mattering in terms of threat, unease, wariness, menace, dread, anxiety and so forth.

Deep guilt can become habitualized as a constant feeling of being unfulfilled and, in extreme cases, lead to an inability of making correcting or (emotionally) novel experiences altogether.

This habitualization also affects the experiential structure of space and time, which sufferers often describe by *metaphors of imprisonment*. Regarding inner time-consciousness, Ratcliffe holds that depression is characterized by an atemporality, more precisely a predicament that results from the inability to appreciate the contingency of one's situation. The felt-sense for a possibility of change is lost and, therefore, "the dynamic between past, present and future that people generally take for granted is replaced by a predicament that seems eternal" (Ratcliffe, 2010, p. 611).

By conceiving of mental disorders in terms of changes in the emotional apprehension of possibilities, Ratcliffe sketches the outline of a more encompassing research program: "My proposal is that we seek to chart the possibility space and distinguish the types of change it is susceptible by interpreting various 'existential changes' that people describe" (Ratcliffe, 2020, p. 253). Ratcliffe (2015) proceeds with this program by elaborating on depression in terms of concepts from phenomenology such as lived-bodily experience, time-consciousness and intersubjectivity and by providing in-depth psychological descriptions of the loss of hope, deep guilt or the loss of agency described by depressed persons.

Despite of the sensible appeal for a bottom-up approach, one is hard-pressed to find an explication of how these 'existential changes' come about. What is the underlying structural change giving rise to alterations in the possibility space of perceived significance? And how can we study it? What (implicit) concepts do we appeal to when speaking of possibilities that matter to us and how do we differentiate those from possibilities that do not matter to us (e.g., the inability to feel joy about children's laughter (significant possibility) versus the impossibility to walk on the right side of the road when walking on the left side (insignificant possibility))?

My answer is that these questions are best answered through recourse on the concept of (dis-)values and, accordingly, require axiological elaboration. The following sections will demonstrate that existential changes are qualified by shifts in the valuative structure of

experience. In order for something to matter, be significant or be relevant, it must relate to axiological entities, such as (dis-)values. I will attempt to spell out the felt changes in mattering and the loss of possibilities in depression in terms of different models of disordered valueception.

### **Depression as a Disorder of Valueception: Disordered affective responses**

Valueception is a neologism that was coined by Scheler in order to designate the apprehension of values (see footnote 1). Recently, Schlimme applied this concept in psychopathology, when he proposed that “[d]epression should [...] be called [...] a ‘Wertnehmungsstörung’ (disorder of pre-reflective value-apprehensions)” (Schlimme, 2013, p. 110). This means that there is a “specifically ‘depressive’ means by which things are disclosed in experience” (Schlimme, 2013, p. 112) that can be captured in terms of a profound alteration of “their style of pre-reflective valuing” (Schlimme, 2013, p. 110).

In light of this, Schlimme’s account can be used to redescribe Ratcliffe’s existential change in depression in Husserlian terms by appealing to the concept of *depressive habituality*. For Schlimme, depression encompasses “alterations on the level of one’s automatic and habitualized passive syntheses” that “imply a consciously experienced loss of the taken-for-grantedness of certain crucial features of mental life” (Schlimme, 2013, p. 97).

This can be demonstrated along the lines of the depressive *changes to inner time-consciousness*. Before the backdrop of the phenomenological model of internal time-consciousness in psychopathology (Fuchs, 2013c; Vogeley & Kupke, 2007), Schlimme describes depression in terms of a disaggregation of the inner unity of the intentional constitution of time-objectivity. He characterizes the depressive’s retention in terms of *retrospective self-accusation*. This means that depressive experience is accompanied by a lingering sense of guilt, by an awareness of irrevocable insufficiency that warrants self-damnation. The depressive’s protention takes on the form of *prospective expectations of disappointment*. The depressed person realizes her inability

to actualize her own interests, which sediments to an anticipation of unfulfillment. These qualitative changes to inner time-consciousness are acquired in an incremental learning process, which gives rise to the depressive habituality, or whatBinswanger called the *experiential mode of loss* (“Verlust-Stil der Erfahrung”). Depressive habituality undergirds depressive protention and retention and is formed primarily at the level of pre-reflective valueception, which is “operated by a depressive mode of selection in [the sufferer’s] affective response to the non-axiological properties of her situation” (Schlimme, 2013, p. 111).

On a meta-theoretical level, Schlimme’s proposal to conceive of depression as a disorder of valueception entails the proposal to turn to axiology in order to explain how the experience of significance and alterations in the space of possibilities come about. Schlimme adopts Drummond’s concept of valueception that draws first and foremost from the representationalist tradition in phenomenology.

Drummond starts from the “Brentanian claim [...] that value-attributes [...] are the correlates of affective experiences [...] and that they are grounded in cognitive representation” (Drummond, 2008, p. 39; cf. Drummond et al., 2002). The basic structure of Drummond’s concept of valueception is that a subject (*S*) values an object (*O*) by cognitively presenting (a non-axiological) property as such-and-such (*p*) and, consequently, affectively responds (*a*) to the presentation of *O* as *p* (of the object as such-and-such). This *representationalist conception of valueception* (RVC) can be formalized as follows:

*RVC. S values (O as p) as a.*

Consider the following illustration. Someone is uneasy about receiving too much change-money. In Drummonds RVC, this felt unease presupposes a cognitive representation of the amount as excessive (e.g., 7 € instead of 5 €), which founds the valuation as bad then is affectively experienced. Albeit emotions fulfil an epistemic function in pre-reflectively disclosing value-attributes as their correlates, they are founded acts in the sense that they are

grounded in the representation of non-axiological properties: “The value-attribute is the correlate of a feeling or emotion that is the affective response to the non-axiological properties of the object or situation by a subject with a particular experiential history, particular beliefs, emotional states, dispositions, practical interests, and so forth” (Drummond, 2008, p. 39).

It is before this background that Schlimme stresses that non-axiological properties can be presented adequately in (non-delusional) depression, which means that the founding acts of cognitive representation are intact, while the specific disturbance in depression concerns the founded acts of valuing in terms of altered styles of affectively responding to the represented objects. Connecting this to the RVC formalism, Schlimme’s model of depression as a disorder of valueception can be expressed in general terms as follows:

*ARD. S values (O as p) through a disordered a.*

In the *affective response model of depression* (ARD), the cognitive representation of non-axiological properties of the object is unaltered, while the affective response to this representation is disordered (see figure 1). This means that valueception is conceived as an affective response to a cognitive representation (ultimately blurring the boundary between valueception and valuing/evaluation).

The ARD formalism can be linked to the account of depressive habituality. The latter describes the manner in which alterations in the object-constitution of inner-time consciousness sediment in biased styles of affective responses. This implies that the Binswangerian experiential mode of loss qualifies the disordered mode of affective valuing in depression, i.e., specifies the manner in which “a” is disordered in the ARD-formalism. This specification can be depicted formally as follows:

*EML. S values (O as p) in the experiential mode of loss as a.*

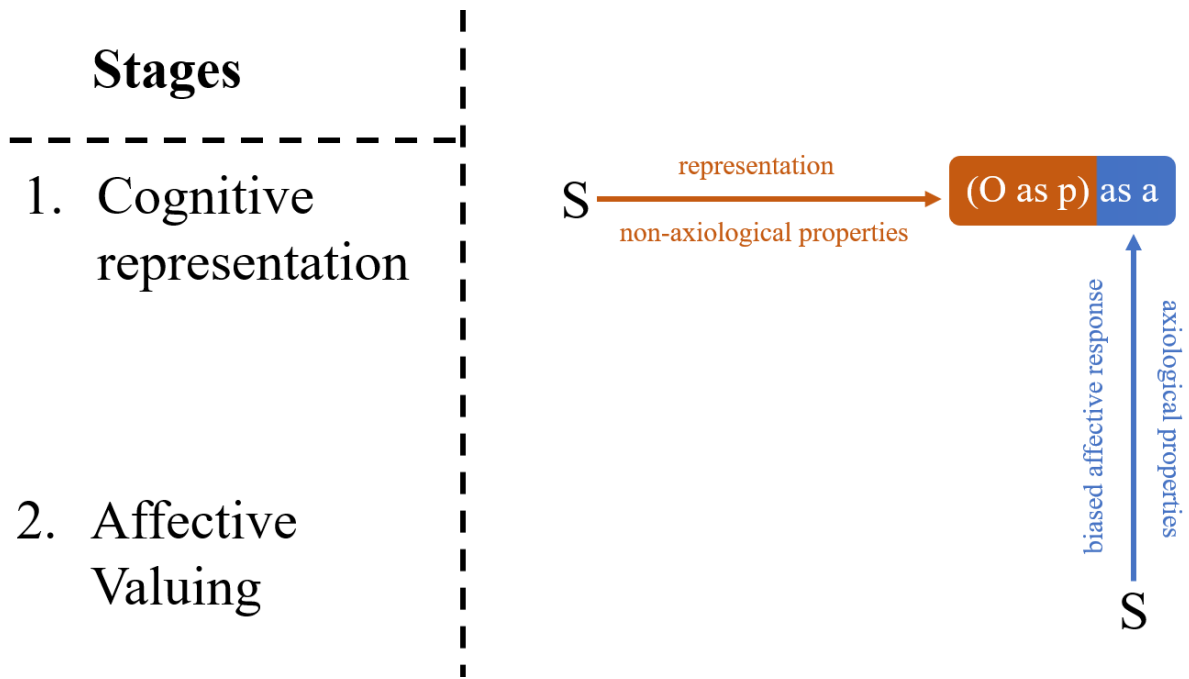
The advantage the *experiential mode of loss formalism* (EML) is that it makes explicit where alternative conceptions depression can challenge or connect to it. I will proceed to line up some illustrative examples:

- First of all, it provides a *prima facie* valid description of the often-observed *negativity bias* that is characteristic of depression, viz. the proclivity to negative affective reactions even to stimuli whose valence is neutral or positive (Gollan et al., 2016; Schlimme, 2013). In such cognitivist models, it would be possible to differentiate an intact cognitive representation from an negatively biased affective appraisal.
- Furthermore and concerning phenomenological accounts that appeal to habitualization, the “experiential mode of loss” might be replaced by, contrasted with or compared to the “constriction” of the lived body that Fuchs argues for in his interaffective and intercorporeal model of depression: “In short, the depressive state may be characterized by a general constriction or ‘congealment’ of the lived body, leading to a numbing of emotional resonance and loss of attunement. This alters the patient’s existential feelings of being-with [...]” (Fuchs, 2013b, p. 226). An additional surplus of this approach is that it highlights the question of whether this “constriction of the lived body” is concerned with and limited to affective responses. The concept of lived-bodily emotional *resonance* might be used to adapt the ARD formalism and, perhaps, reconceive it in terms of an accumulative process that approximates a qualitative shift in experience (e.g. the so-called downward or depressive spiral). Such emotional resonance might be introduced as a potential mechanism underlying depressive habitualization, i.e., maladaptive learning processes reaching back to the early and even the prodormal phases of the disorder.
- In a similar vein, affordance-based approaches from ecological psychology and the 4E-paradigm that conceive of the depressive’s loss of possibilities in terms of a loss of action-possibilities in the field of affordances (Kiverstein et al., 2020; Ratcliffe, 2010)

can be improved by specifying whether these action-possibilities are still cognitively represented and have merely lost their motivational appeal, viz. do no longer elicit appropriate affective responses and consequent actions. This would raise questions such as, for instance, which motivational or mnemonic constructs would have to be active to maintain a cognitive representation of an affectively unappealing affordance (keeping in mind the enactivist critique of representationalism).

- In principle, an analogous argument is feasible for more diverging conceptions that are compatible with the representationalist take on valueception. In this vein, the disordered pattern of affective reactions in depression could also be modelled by using sociological concepts and analysing the material conditions that foster it. The conditions under which affective responses become disordered can be illuminated by concepts like the accelerated society and its corresponding exhausted subjects (Ehrenberg 1998) or social sanctioning of certain affective responses, i.e., feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979). Cultures and more specific learning environments might be introduced as moderating variables to the ARD formalism.

It exceeds the scope of the present investigation to flesh out these alternatives. I will suffice with pointing out that formalized model specifications, such as in ARD or EML facilitates the (precise) explication of theoretical concepts, that would all too easily fly under the radar if they were only expressed only via natural language. Since the axiological framework provides theoretical tools for model comparisons, its added value consists in establishing a meta-discursive matrix that is able to systematically account for otherwise divergent conceptual contributions in the field.



### Depressive Habituality, Experiential Mode of Loss and Disordered Valueception

Figure 1. *Affective response model of depression (ARD)*. Axiological specification of Jann Schlimme’s model of depression as a disorder of valueception in terms of habitualized affective responses.

Disorders of valueception are explicated in terms of biased affective responses. These founded valuing connect to the founding acts of cognitive representation, which remain intact in depression.

The takeaway message of all this is that both within and beyond the discourse of phenomenological psychopathology, qualifications of the affective disorder occurring in depression can take on many forms, and the RVC and ARD formalisms provide a tool for focused model comparisons.

From a more general perspective, Drummond’s cognitive valueception and Schlimme’s depressive valueception provide principled grounds for a phenomenological explanation of the changes in the space of possibilities or the types of mattering that Ratcliffe’s descriptive psychology is about. If this is true, then the changes occurring in existential feelings can be

explicated in axiological terms and, more specifically, there is an argument for understanding them in terms of valueception.

### **Recovering the Discourse of Axiological Psychopathology**

It is important to note that conceiving of depression as a disorder of valueception is anything but a new idea. Nevertheless, the precursors of this line of thought have largely been forgotten or stayed at the sidelines of the scientific discourse. Unearthing approaches that appeal to disorders of valueception and highlighting the conceptual continuities between them remains a more encompassing project of axiological psychopathology, which is yet to be developed.

Albeit more should be said about the context and extend of the axiological approach to mental disorders, reference to the relevant literature will have to suffice for the purposes of this investigation.

The influence of material value ethics on the psychopathological discourse has been investigated from a historical (Arndt, 2001), a philosophical (Cusinato, 2018a; Guccinelli, 2022c) and a psychiatric perspective (Cutting, 2009; Glazinski, 2020; Sass, 2009). For instance, its influence can be traced in the works stemming from the Wengener circle (Passie, 1995), i.e., phenomenological psychiatrists such as Binswanger, Minkowski, von Gebattel and Straus utilized Schelerian concepts. However, its reach extends to the *Vienna Working-Circle for Depth Psychology* (Caruso, 1952), Logotherapy (Frankl, 1946; Henckmann, 2005) and beyond.

In the remainder of this section, I will introduce key concepts for psychopathology from material value ethics. This manner of proceeding has two purposes: First, it demonstrates the breadth of the discourse of axiology by enabling comparison of concepts such as existential feelings, affective responses and valueception. Second, these concepts are a necessary preparation for proceeding to additional model specifications and comparisons.

In order to disclose the meta-discursive matrix of the axiological framework, I will begin by contextualizing Schlimme's representationalist conception of valueception within a broader axiological perspective.

From this vantage point, Schlimme's concept of disorders of valueception can be criticised and, consequently, further fleshed out. My argument is that by characterizing depressive valueception in terms of negative appraisals or valuations, Schlimme is occupied primarily on the outcome of disordered valueception. Where does the bias for negative valuations in depression come from? Answering this by an appeal to habitualization and learning is a step in the right direction, however, what is needed beyond that is to connect this account with a structural analysis of the act of valueception itself.

What changes does depressive habitualization effectuate in the structure of valueception? What is its specific structural impairment that leads to a bias towards negative valuations? Engaging with these questions discloses a deeper level of axiological analysis that is central for the psychopathology of depression. The most important guide for remedying this shortcoming can be found in the history of the discourse at the intersection of axiology and psychopathology.

One of the most influential axiological approaches in the early psychopathological discourse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century stems from Scheler's (1913) *Material Ethics of Value*. In his comprehensive investigation into the laws of meaning in emotional life, Scheler puts forward an account of *valueception through feeling*. This account is akin to that of Brentano and Drummond, since it ascribes affective experiences an epistemic function for the apprehension of values that occurs pre-reflectively. However, Scheler's account does not share the contention that affective valueception presupposes cognitive representation. Rather, values are apprehended directly, viz., without mediation, through feeling:

This feeling thus has exactly the same relationship to its value correlate as the 'representation' has to its 'object' – namely the intentional relationship. Here,

feeling is neither connected immediately to an object, nor *mediated externally* through a representation [...], but feeling *originally* goes to its *own kind* of objects, precisely the ‘*values*’ (Scheler, 1913, p. 263)

Since detailed elaborations on Scheler’s work are available in the literature (Frings, 1996; Kelly, 2012), I will restrict my discussion of his axiology to the features that are relevant for understanding the model specifications in the next sections.

In Scheler’s account, valueception precedes perception. Acts of valueception neither connect to preceding acts of perception, nor to cognitive acts of representation. Instead, we valueceive through intentional feeling that exhibits its own proper “cognitive” structure, which is termed the *emotional a priori* (Henckmann, 1987; Khorkov, 2015). Additionally, this account is embedded in material value ethics. One of its core characteristics is that it proposes a hierarchical stratification of four classes of feelings that disclose values from correlated value spheres (Bermes et al., 2003): sensual feelings such as pleasure or displeasure, vital feelings such as vigour or tiredness, psychic feelings such as aesthetic appreciation or intellectual dissatisfaction and spiritual feelings such as bliss or despair. Since Scheler’s account assumes an a priori hierarchy of value spheres (and coordinated feelings), it is often mistaken as an objectivist approach to axiology; for instance in criticisms issued in 4E approaches (de Haan, 2020; Fuchs, 2019). However, axiological objectivism ought not to be conflated with axiological realism. Since Scheler’s valueception depends on both, the preference structure of the valueceiving *person* and the structure of the apprehended values, it exhibits commonalities with dispositionalist accounts (Howard, 2023; Vendrell Ferran, 2013).

Material value ethics can be considered the first phenomenological proposal that explains experiences of something as mattering, significant or relevant in terms of feelings that disclose values. While related to Brentano’s preceding approach (Vendrell Ferran, 2015), there exist deep-running differences. It is important to note that Scheler’s account of valueception cannot

readily be reformulated according to Drummond's RVC-formalism "S represents (O as p) as a." The reason is that in Scheler's model, valueception is not composed of founding and founded acts, but constitutes a *sui generis* class of acts (Wendt, 2021). This entails that Scheler's intentional feelings must be delineated from Drummond's affective responses and also from mere feeling states (Mulligan, 2012). Valueception is not conceived as an evaluation of objects, which are primordially presented through representation (or perception for that matter), but as an intentional apprehension of a special class of objects, namely values, which are primordially felt.

Values, in this picture, are the original sources of normativity and, thus, inhabit the most basic layer in the constitution of experiences of (something as) mattering. It follows that within material value ethics, the experience of something as mattering precedes the experience of something as something (Avé-Lallemant, 1980).

I will now briefly outline the key concepts that help to understand the manner in which mattering is constituted through values. Thereby, I will highlight those concepts from material value ethics that are most interesting for connecting to the Ratcliffe's and Schlimme's proposals on depression.

The conceptual toolkit from material value ethics for psychopathology comprises at least the following inventory.

#### The constitutive role of values for mattering

Something is experienced as mattering in virtue of its relation to values. Cusinato (2012) illustrates this general contention with the concept of *vertere* that describes the manner in which values shine through objects or imbue them respectively, which prompts us to take notice in the first place. Within the boundaries of heuristic illustration, there exists an analogy between how light is perceived in visual perception and how *vertere* is valueceived in valueception.

Imagine, for instance, walking through a museum and a painting catching your eye. What is it that explains that you have noticed this painting and, say, not the one next to it or the one opposite to it? This is an instance illustrating the sense in which valueception precedes perception, namely by orienting it towards the values to which it is predisposed to respond. This could mean, for example, that you have turned to this particular painting because of your lifelong proclivity for Christian art. Suppose it was Nesterov's *Holy Princess Olga*, then what caught your eye might have been the *vertere* of her sublime solemnity. Complementarily, you would not have oriented towards the other paintings because you are not as inclined to respond to the values expressed in them. Valueception is realized as a situated interplay between the personal preference structure and the value structure and governed by the a priori laws of an emotional life.

*Disvalues, re-evaluation and negativity bias.* If depression is described in terms of a biased apprehension of disvalues, this means that the valueception is particularly keen for them. One might be prone to notice negative valences or find the fault even in things that seem good at first glance or are mostly positive. Asserting a proclivity for the *vertere* exerted from disvalues (or, in certain instances, relatively lower values) would amount to an axiological reformulation of the negativity bias. For illustration, I want to distinguish several cases of axiological specifications of negativity bias:

First, imagine someone visiting our museum who is not affected by the value of beauty, viz., his or her valueception is blind to its *vertere*. In this context one might speak of *value-blindness* or a *blinding of valueception*. The personal preference structure that is indifferent to, say, *Holy Princess Olga*, constitutively and pre-intentionally pre-empts an emotionally significant experience of the painting.

Alternatively, someone might orient towards Nesterov's *Olga* only because the theme of sacrality awakens his or her lingering sense of guilt or because he or she takes issue with the brushwork, i.e., finds a fault. Here, the preference structure of the person is not indifferent or blind to the

value in question, but rather *hyperacute*. When faced with the painting, a lingering sense of moral inferiority might awaken, which is then felt as guilt. This can be interpreted in terms of a *negativity bias*, in which the value of *Olga's* sacrality is dimmed off, while the valueceiver's felt inferiority is in focus, ultimately distorting valueception into disvalueception (and object-orientation to self-orientation).

In a similar vein, the person who finds flaws in the brushwork would exhibit a different kind of negativity bias. Whereas the first case would re-evaluate experience by transforming the intentional apprehension within one axiological sphere (from awe to guilt), the latter case works by narrowing the "cone" of valueception to an hyperacuteness towards disvalues of lower spheres, i.e. by diming off values from the higher spheres (beauty) and focusing on disvalues from lower spheres (craftsmanship).

I will return to these distinctions below and apply them to the clinical modelling of depression.

#### Significant and insignificant possibilities

Appealing to *vertere* can help to explain why the loss of some possibilities is experienced as painful and might persist as a lingering sense of tormenting absence, while the loss of other possibilities is not experienced the same way and sometimes might not even be experienced at all. In fact, transforming possibilities into realities is an inevitable part of life, which is why Scheler (1987a) conceived it to be essential for the experience of aging (Wendler & Breyer, 2023). Each decision we make entails a collapse of indefinite possibilities towards only one reality and not each lost possibility is experienced as a loss. For instance, deciding to train martial arts might exclude the possibility of also becoming a ballerina. But if dance never was valued in one's life design, then that loss will hardly be mourned.

#### Pre-intentional determining factors of mattering

Beyond that, material value ethics also provides theoretical resources for explicating pre-intentional determinations of experiences of something as mattering. This corresponds to the

role that moods or existential feelings play in Ratcliffe's account and that of depressive habituality in Schlimme's account. Material value ethics encompasses at least two concepts that can fulfil the function of pre-intentional determination: *the acts of preference* and *the acts of love and hate*.

#### Acts of preference and preference structure

In Scheler's ethics, valueception, i.e., intentional feeling of values is founded in the acts of preference, which disclose a value as belonging to a higher or lower sphere (Cusinato, 1997). While acts of preference are intentional themselves, they are founding acts with regards to the founded acts of valueception. Therefore, while intentional analysis remains feasible on the level of preference, the structure of preferences determines the scope and quality of the possible acts of valueception. Therefore, one might speak of a pre-intentional determining structure fulfilling an equivalent function to existential feelings in the constitution of experiencing something as mattering.

Illustrating, when you are faced with the choice of aiding a friend in need or spending a peaceful evening after a hard day's work, an appropriate act of preference would disclose to you that you should help your friend. Even though regenerating is important (vital values), helping your friends trumps it because it belongs to a higher order of conduct (psychic values).

The totality of the acts of preference and their structure make up the personality in the moral domain. Knowing a person's preference structure is equivalent with knowing the whole person. This concept exerted considerable influence within psychology, as is evidenced by the *study of values*, one of the most widely used inventory to measure personality, being based on Spranger's value ethics (Waschulewski, 2002), "which defends the view that the personalities of men are best known through a study of their values or evaluative attitudes" (Allport et al., 1960, p. 3).

*Love and hate.* The acts of preference are in turn founded in the primordial acts of love and hate, which discover (in delineation to “disclose”) the existence of novel values and disvalues (Frings, 1969). Love and hate, here, are used as technical terms. They are primordial, spontaneous movements of temper. Put in abstract language, they designate the functions through which a person establishes the first contact with values and disvalues. Therefore, in material value ethics, neither love nor hate are blind. Rather, they make us see the axiological realms.

When someone loves someone else, he or she sees something that nobody else can see. The other is coronated by an open horizon for possible value discovery. She does not love him because he has certain properties, e.g., is knowledgeable, but she might open herself to the value of knowledge even if she was not particularly scholarly before she met him (discovery of novel values). Similarly, hating some goes along with an acute, at times even detective-like sense for the disvaluable. Hate can help to see, for instance, the disdainful true motives hidden behind a polite façade (Bollnow, 1962). The acts of love and hate are founding acts for the acts of preference and, in turn, for the acts of valueception.

When considered in terms of Ratcliffe’s existential feelings approach, love and hate can be conceived of as pre-intentional determinations of possible valueceptions. The advantage of the axiological framework, however, consists in differentiating two strata of pre-intentional determining factors for the experience of mattering, where the acts of preference and their structure inhabit the relatively more shallow stratum, while the primordial acts of love and hate occupy the deepest stratum. Accordingly, in the axiological framework, love and hate are foundational to moods as well (Mulligan, 2012).

*Feelings of the highest spheres.* One last comment concerning existential feelings within material value ethics: Some accounts of material value ethics assume the existence of spiritual feelings (Hartmann, 1949; von Hildebrand, 1967; Scheler, 1913), such as beatitude, despair,

piety, viscousness, devotion or defiance. Albeit the assumption of these feelings constituting a proper sphere can be contested (Fuchs, 2019), they are relevant for the case in question.

Spiritual feelings occupy a special place in material value ethics not only because they amount to the highest level of the hierarchy of feelings. They are conceived to exhibit a proper logic, namely that they are not gradual, but discrete or absolute. This is best illustrated by way of example: A state of devotion cannot be approximated by conscientious prayer. Similarly, meditating once a day does not accumulate to an ever-increasing illumination, nor is it safe to assume that it would render illumination more probable with each session. Spiritual feelings do not start out subtle and then increase in intensity. Rather, measuring them with any gradual scale, intensity or probability, mis-constructs the nature of their experience.

The reason is that spiritual feelings imbue the whole being of the person. Even if beatitude might, at times, be subtle, comparable to the dabbling of a river (Weil, 1986), it still is a state of being. One must be wary not to confuse “silent” modes of the manifestation of meaning (Ortega y Gasset, 1961, pp. 87-90), which are typical for values of higher strata, with weak precursors of potentially more intense experiences. The highest values correspond to the deepest feelings, which at times can be most subtle or quiet and, consequently, the most easily overlooked.

This conceptual repertoire from material value ethics will suffice for understanding its applications in psychopathology.

In the following sections, I will pick out three examples of phenomenological approaches that apply Scheler’s axiology to the psychopathology of depression. This will provide the basis for explicating two additional ways of modelling depression as a disorder of valueception.

### **Depression as Restricted Valueception of Certain Value-Classes**

Roughly 100 years ago, Schneider, who studied under Scheler in Cologne (Krahl & Schifferdecker, 1998), advanced the first applications of material value ethics to

psychopathological phenomena. He studied disturbances of sympathy and love (Schneider, 1921), disturbances of drive and will (Schneider, 1932) and put forward the first account that conceives of depression as a disorder of valueception (Schneider, 1920). More specifically, Schneider conceives of depression as an impairment of valueceiving certain classes of values. Schneider is well known for his distinction between endogenous, reactive and complex forms of depression (see figure 2), which are utilized by clinicians to this day.

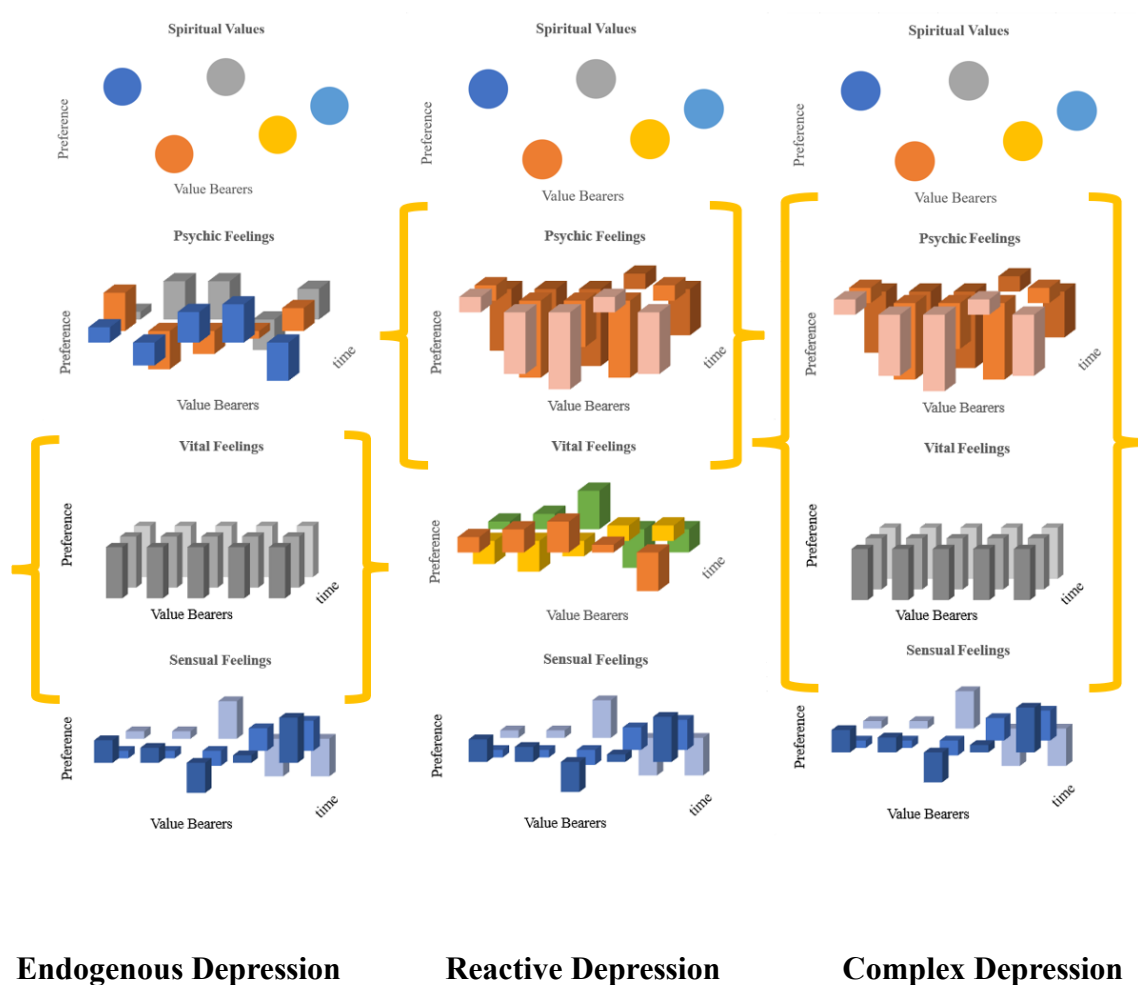


Figure 2. *Restricted access models for endogenous, reactive and complex forms of depression.* Axiological specification of Kurt Schneider’s model of depression as a disorder of valueception.

Each class of feeling is structured according to its own proper laws, which is indicated by the different colour schemes and dimensions. The bars represent feelings, their height or depth represent the intensity of their positive or negative valence, their colours and colour schemes represent different affective tones. Spiritual feelings constitute a special case since they imbue the whole being of a person and thus are not gradual and, correspondingly, lack the dimension of time.

Different forms of depression can be differentiated regarding the class of feelings that is affected by them. Endogenous depression is characterized by a feeling of not feeling deriving from the vital sphere. Reactive depression is characterized by intense negative feelings from the psychic sphere, e.g. sadness, anger or guilt. In complex depression, both characteristics occur together.

- *Endogenous depressions* affect vital feelings. These originate from inner, lived-bodily causes, are unmotivated and encompass feelings such as languor or tiredness. The feeling of depression, here, is a feeling of the lived-body that has no definite content. This is the axiological root for “the symptom the feeling of not feeling [“Gefühl der Gefühllosigkeit”]” (Schneider, 1920, p. 285). Because endogenous depressions concern the vital sphere, Schneider holds that they are accompanied by a feeling of quasi-somatic sickness (“Krankheitsgefühl”).
- *Reactive depressions*, on the other hand, affect psychic feelings. These originate from external influences, through which they are motivated and encompass feelings such as sadness or laziness. If they are accompanied by feelings of the lived-body, then only as secondary symptoms. For Schneider, the felt quality of reactive depressions is *toto coelo* different from that of endogenous depressions. Whereas the latter is characterized by an unmotivated sentiment of sadness, the former is a rather “normal” sadness, that meaningfully responds to something, for instance, a relative’s death.

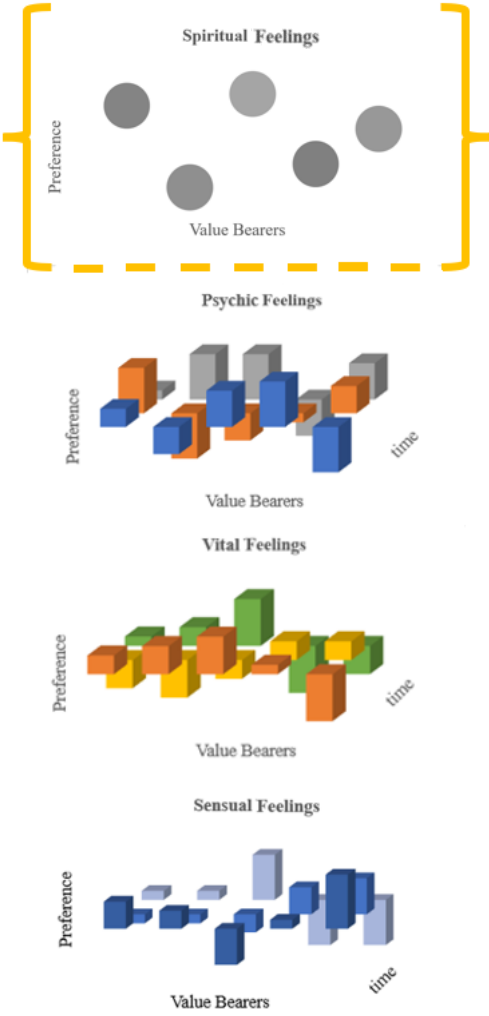
- In *complex forms of depression*, where someone suffers from an endogenous depression and a reactive depression, Schneider holds that the psychic and vital feelings of depression can be distinguished by the patients. This means that sufferers can introspectively tell the difference between the vital feeling of not feeling and the psychic feeling of sadness or guilt. In severe cases of endogenous depression, the loss of feeling can be so pervasive that it inhibits the additional experience of reactive sadness, for instance, when a depressed patient cannot mourn the death of his or her father. In other cases the loss of feeling can be experienced as traumatic and, thus, trigger an additional depressive reaction, for instance, when a patient who cannot resonate with the joy of his children starts accusing him- or herself severely.

How does this relate to the descriptive psychology of depression offered at the outset? Adopting a Schneiderian perspective, losing parts of one's possibility-space would correspond to an inability to value certain classes of values.. On the other hand, Schneider's model also provides tools for an axiological take on the negativity bias. A proclivity for negative valuations can be described as a *bias for disvalueception*, that is a proclivity to feel disvalues: For instance, when a depressed person remains unfazed by a friendly smile, this can be described as an *emotional 'blindness' or 'insensitivity'* to the value expressed by the other, while finding flaws in a heartfelt apology can be described as an *emotional 'hyperacuteness'* for disvalues.

It is important to note that on Schneider's account, depressive valueception is impaired for certain classes of values resp. value-strata, while it remains intact for others. Therefore, he conceives of depression as a local disturbance in valueception. One might argue that this explains why a depressed patient's valueception is altered in some but not all acts of valueception.

In the more recent literature, Schneider's model of depression was further developed by Cutting (Cutting et al., 2016; cf. Cutting, 2009; Sass, 2009), who complemented Schneider's typology through an axiological account of psychotic depression (also referred to as depression with

delusional symptoms or melancholia). He argues that in psychotic depression, valueception is disturbed at the level of spiritual feelings, while vital and psychic feelings remain intact or are altered as a secondary consequence (see figure 3).



**Psychotic Depression (Melancholia)**

Figure 3. *Restricted access model for melancholia.* Axiological specification of John Cutting’s model of depression as a disorder of valueception in terms of an *in vivo* Dionysian reduction, resulting in struck out spiritual feelings.

This depiction can be formally interpreted in the way described in *figure 2*.

Psychotic depressions are characterized by a lack of spiritual feelings, such as love or hope. Their absence can be felt in the feeling of not feeling. Delusional nihilism and delusional guilt are explained along the lines of altered structures of knowledge and subjectivity, i.e. because of the bracketed cognition of essences and an overreliance of sympathetic apprehension of reality.

Whether the bracketing of mind practiced in Dionysian reduction is adequately depicted by bracketing only spiritual feelings is open to debate within axiological psychopathology. An alternative mode of representation could depict the deprivation of spirit through a discoloration of several classes of feeling.

Cutting, like Schneider, builds on Scheler's axiological framework. In contrast to Schneider, however, Cutting conceives of depressions with delusional symptoms neither as a quasi-somatic event nor as an understandably motivated reaction. Instead, he argues that "[t]he depressive [...] is a Dionysian human *in vivo*", which means that "mind and spirit are abolished but reality is preserved" (Cutting, 2018, p. 66). The lived experience in psychotic depression is characterized by three features:

- An *altered objectivity* that is characterized by the fact that "[t]he 'thingliness' of things starts to disappear" (Cutting, 2018, p. 69).
- An *altered mode of knowing* that lacks the cognition of essences and relies on sympathetic apprehension of reality. The "inability to think" and the "dilapidated grasp of the essence of anything" is expressed in "nihilistic delusions" (Cutting, 2018, p. 73).
- Most significantly for the present investigation, there is an *altered sense of subjectivity*, which comprises amongst other aspects the deprivation of "certain mental acts and emotions" (Cutting, 2018, p. 72). Cutting explicitly appeals to Ratcliffe's account of depression and argues that the Dionysian *modus vivendi* explains that "hope" is lost in

psychotic depression *because* it is a spiritual feeling. The same holds for other examples of spiritual feelings: “Love and sadness are *geistig* [spiritual] feelings [and therefore wiped out; my remark]; gloominess, which is preserved, is a *vital* feeling” (Cutting, 2018, p. 72). Furthermore, Cutting argues that Schneider was right in differentiating several classes of feeling, since the feeling of not feeling could otherwise not be explained: “He [Schneider] alone appreciated that if a person experienced feelings about lack of feeling then that must be because there are more than one class of feelings” (Cutting, 2018, p. 72).<sup>24</sup>

This last point has important consequences for the specification of Cutting’s model of psychotic depression: The feelings whose absence are felt in the depressive’s feeling of not feeling are spiritual feelings.

Cutting explains this by appealing to Scheler’s concept of the Dionysian reduction, which was intended to complement Husserl’s phenomenological reduction: while the latter brackets the workings of the drive that constitutes the experience of reality, the former brackets the workings of spirit (or mind) that apprehends essences (cf. Scheler, 2008). Since the concept of Dionysian reduction was never fully developed by Scheler and contemporary research has yet to reach a consensus about its interpretation (Wendler, 2023), Cutting’s model is more difficult to specify and there remains considerable opportunity for speculation concerning the details of depiction. Identifying and problematizing this hermeneutic leeway is an advantage of the model-based approach. It is important to note that while model specification requires precise concept explication, this should not lead to discrediting theories that contain “fuzzy concepts.” Doing so would confuse the levels of theory and model. Sometimes phenomena are vague or theories operate close to the limits of what can

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<sup>24</sup> Concerning deep guilt, Cutting argues that the Dionysian human’s subjectivity is primarily structured through sympathetic attunement, rendering them “unduly influenced by other people”, which “shows itself in the frequent delusions of guilt” (Cutting, 2018, p. 71).

be known; sometimes additional theorizing is required. Nevertheless, becoming aware of problems like underspecified concepts is “good” in the sense that it can stimulate further research.

In the axiological framework of material value ethics, endogenous, reactive, psychotic and complex forms of depression can be modelled as specific deficits in accessing certain classes of value through certain types of feelings. However, this tradition is heterogenous and comprises other ways of modelling depression.

### **Depression as a Disordered Intentional-Arc of Valueception**

The heterogeneity of psychopathological models stemming from material value ethics can be illustrated by considering Cusinato’s work. Before this backdrop, Cusinato’s line of reasoning can be construed as a fundamental critique against Schneider’s and Cuttings conceptualization of valueception disorders. His account contains reasons to belief that it is ill-advised to conceive of disorders of valueception in terms of an inability to feel certain classes of values. This would amount to a structural disintegration of valueception and, therefore, raise the question of whether there are several acts of valueception that lack inner unity. It is more promising, instead, to conceive of depression as an impairment in the act-structure of valueception. Depressive valueception, for Cusinato, is “unmotivated” in a quite literal sense of lacking motivational force, ultimately weakening “the enactive capacities for sense-making” (Cusinato, 2018b, p. 83).

While Cusinato’s interest is primarily philosophical, model explication is feasible with regards to his theory (see figure 4).

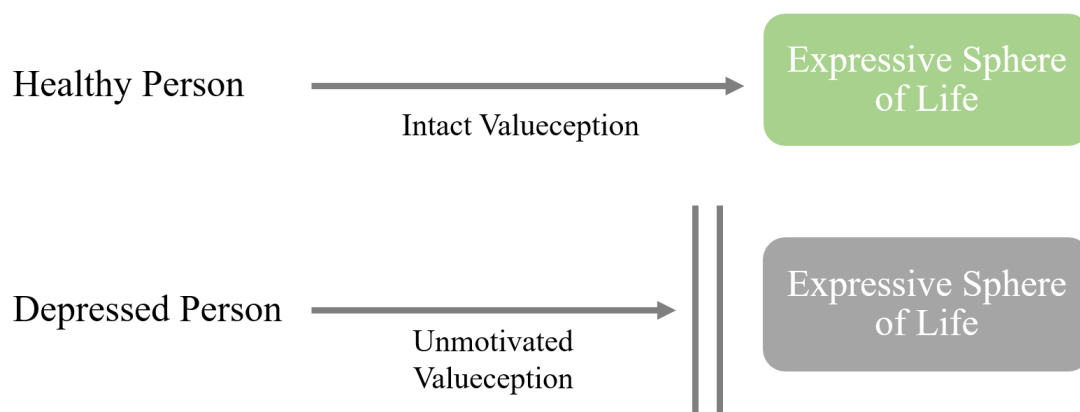


Figure 4. *Intentional arc model*. Axiological specification of Guido Cusinato’s model of depression as a disorder of valueception in terms of an un-motivated intentional arc structure. The top panel depicts a healthy person’s intact valueception. The bottom panel depicts a depressed person’s disordered valueception. The double-dashed line indicates that there is a distance between depressed person and expressive sphere of life. The intentional arc’s structure is qualified as unmotivated. This has to be interpreted literally, viz., from the etymological root of a directedness that does *not move* beyond the depressed person herself. The loss of sense-making capacities is indicated by the grey colouring of the expressive sphere of life, whose meaning the depressed person is disconnected from. In the top panel, where valueception is intact, sense-making capacities connect with this meaning. This is indicated by the green colouring of the expressive sphere of life.

The depressed person is disconnected from the expressive sphere of life and, therefore, struggles to find meaning in it. Emotions lose their motivational force for action and movement, leading to an axiological form of paralysis. A sterilized valueception reduces motivations to interact with others and the world, while the loss of direction in the structure of the intentional arc weakens sense-making capacities.

Cusinato spells out the typical feeling of not feeling in terms of an impairment of intentional feeling. While depressive persons are able to experience feeling states, their valueception fails to connect them with the value-spheres connected to the drive of life that would bestow meaning onto these feeling states. Instead of appealing to pre-intentional moods or existential feelings, the Schelerian framework allows to conceive of depression as an impairment of the intentional structure of valueception that consists in a loss of direction of intentional feelings and, hence, connects the feeling of not feeling with the phenomenological concept of empty intentions. Having an unmotivated intentional arc structure means that the person is disconnected from his or her life and, therefore, struggles to find meaning in it.

The feeling of not feeling figures as a cardinal symptom in this account and is traced back to a “weakening of the pressure of the vital impulse (*Lebensdrang*)” (Cusinato, 2018b, p. 83). Coming close to Fuchs’ inter-corporeal characterization of depression, this weakening transfers to embodied and enactive sense-making, which is sterilized or unmotivated in depression: “this form of sterilization of valueception drastically reduces the motivations for and interest in bodily and emotional interaction with other people and with the world” (Cusinato, 2018b, p. 83). In depression, the person’s emotional life loses its motivational force for movement or action, amounting to an *axiological form of paralysis* (emotions, from Latin “e-movere”, are literally paralyzed in the sense that the person can no longer “express” or “move beyond” him- or herself). This paralysis accounts for the shrinking of the space of possibilities, while the disordered and weakened patterns of sense-making account for the changes in experiences of mattering.

With regards to Ratcliffe’s account of existential feelings, the unmotivated act structure explains how the loss of possibilities comes about and in what sense it is still felt by the depressed person. Furthermore, the question of why some possibilities matter to us more than others is explained by appealing to values. This might be illustrated by imagining two ontological spaces, one of possibilities and one of values, whereby only part of the space of possibilities is illuminated by

the *vertere* exerted from the space of values. These are the possibilities that matter to a person and whose absence is experience as painful. The loss of possibilities that are not illuminated by *vertere* therefore fail to connect to the personal preference structure and, accordingly, are not felt at all. Neither would such a loss of “empty” possibilities have a pathological character or be helpful for describing the experience of depression. Thus, the axiological framework can aid in specifying the existential feelings approach by providing a discursive matrix in which the foundations of significant and insignificant possibilities can be addressed and explained in terms of values and disvalues.

While Cusinato’s model is also formulated on the basis of Schelerian material value ethics, it differs significantly from Schneider’s and Cutting’s models. Depression is not conceived in terms of restricted access to certain classes of values, but as a loss of direction of the intentional arc. This raises the question of whether the different models of material value ethics could be combined in order to formulate a unified model.

My point of departure was that Cusinato’s intentional arc model can be interpreted as a criticism against the Schneider’s and Cutting’s restricted access models. The argument in the background is that the structural change of the intentional arc occurring in depressed valueception explains how the access to certain classes of values becomes limited. In this sense, the intentional arc model entails the claim to pertain to a more foundational level of psychopathological analysis. From a philosophical vantage point, it is therefore the more intriguing model, while the restricted access models are more convincing from a clinical perspective, since they allow to explicate several forms of depression that are already well established within nosology (convergent validity).

Is it possible to formulate a unified model that combines the strengths of both the intentional arc model and the restricted access model? I believe that it might be. Even though additional research is required, I want to at least outline a rough sketch of such a *unified model of depression within material value ethics* (see figure 5). However, it should be noted that such a

move is interpretative. Consequently, it no longer stems from an attempt depict the author’s intentions. Rather, specifying such an integrated model is a research venue that is disclosed only in virtue of the model building approach. In this regard, it is *synthetic* insofar as it combines aspects of other existing models and it is *creative* insofar as it generates a novel psychopathological perspective.

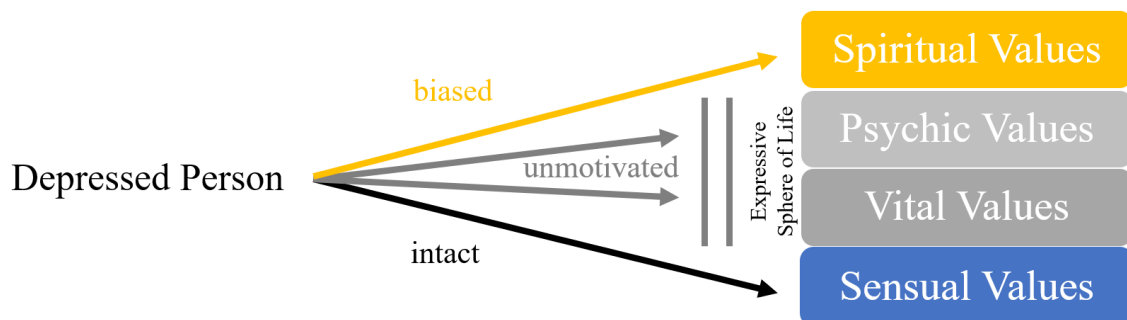


Figure 5. *Unified model of depression within material value ethics.* Axiological specification of a model that combines Cusinato’s intentional arc model with Schneiderian restricted access models of depression in terms of a disorder of valueception.

This depiction can be interpreted analogously to figures 2, 3 and 4. The arrows indicate acts of valueception. Depending on what classes of value are intended, the act structure varies. Concerning sensual values, a depressive person’s valueception is intact. The vital and psychic classes of value are agglomerated and identified with the expressive sphere of life. Here, valueception is unmotivated in the sense that the depressed person remains disconnected from these classes of value (restricted access), as indicated by the two vertical lines. Concerning spiritual values, valueception inherits a bias that stems from the disintegration of its structure at the lower levels (negativity bias). This is expressed by a feeling of being that can be qualified as deep guilt or despair.

One of the difficulties in explicating this model resides in identifying the classes of value that correspond to the expressive sphere of life. This can be resolved by turning to Scheler's (1928a) late work, where he develops the idea of an anthropological dualism (Cusinato, 1995) between urge and spirit. Since he puts this opposition in terms of a categorical hiatus existing between the vital-psychic and the spiritual spheres, one can argue for identifying the expressive sphere of life with the sensual, vital and psychic classes of value. What is expressive about the sphere of life? The activity of the urge, i.e., the metaphysical principle that governs nature as opposed to spirit.

This perspective draws insights from psychopathology for illuminating the structure of the axiological spheres. Unmotivated valueception in depression concerns vital and psychic values, to which the depressed person has only limited access (sterilized capacities for sense-making resp. feeling of not feeling). But what about the other classes of value? As Schneider and Cutting argued, it is typical for depressed persons to experience positive and negative feelings that belong to different classes of value at the same time. For instance, the valueception concerning sensual values remains intact, which is why, e.g., eating a chocolate cake will still provide a sense of savoriness. This entails that either the depressed person is not totally disconnected from the expressive sphere of life (since sensual feelings are intact) or that the expressive sphere of life contains a qualitative shift above the sensual sphere or consists only of the vital and psychic spheres in the first place. This means that psychopathological consideration can identify exciting venues for further philosophical research in axiology.

Beyond that the sterilization of sense-making capacities affects the structure of valueception of spiritual values, by introducing a negativity bias. As outlined above, spiritual feelings differ from other feelings in the sense that they are not gradual but discrete. This means that they do not come in measures of intensity, but are categorical and always fulfill the person's whole being. Thus, the negativity bias at the spiritual sphere accounts for a feeling of being that can be qualified in terms of deep guilt or despair.

While this model has some *prima facie* advantages in comparison to the other models from material value ethics, it is not without problems. Several questions that exceed the scope of the current investigation ought to be addressed. How can intact, unmotivated and biased valueceptions cooccur? Does this entail situationalism concerning valueception? How are traditional nosological categories addressed, e.g., the intensely negative, psychic feelings in reactive depression? How is depressive valueception pre-intentionally modified by the preference structure and the acts of love and hate? For instance, if personality is explicated in terms of preference structure, what would the axiological description of the depressive personality resp. the *typus melancholicus* (Tellenbach, 1961) look like?

### **Axiology as a Discursive Matrix for the Psychopathology of Emotions**

In sum, the axiological perspective allows to relate several psychopathological conceptions from different traditions.

Before this backdrop, axiological psychopathology provides a discursive matrix that allows to formulate several psychopathological models. A strength of phenomenological approaches to psychopathology has always been that they strive to *adequately describe* the sufferer's lived experiences as adequately as possible. Complementing the axiological perspective not only entails a comprehensive perspective on experiences of something as mattering, but also allows to *precisely explicate* and compare different psychopathological models, either through formalization or graphical depiction (both of which are relatively scarce in the phenomenological literature).

For the case of depression, three model-types of disordered valueception have been specified. The first model-type relates primarily to the representationalist tradition, while the second and third models belong to material value ethics.

- *Disordered affective responses*: Incremental learning experiences lead to a depressive habituality that expresses itself in a loss mode of experience, viz. altered inner time-consciousness that encompasses prospective expectations of disappointment and retrospective self-accusations. Negatively biased valuations through affective responses connect to intact cognitive representation of non-axiological properties (see figure 1). Altered experiences of mattering are explained in terms of habitualization of negatively biased affective responses.
- *Disordered access to certain classes of value*: Several forms of depression can be explicated in terms of the classes of intentional feelings that are affected by them and the correlated values disclosed through them (see figure 2; see figure 3). In endogenous depression, vital feelings are inhibited (feeling of not feeling). In reactive depression, psychic feelings are negatively biased (intense sadness or anger). In complex depression, characteristics from endogenous and reactive depression cooccur. In psychotic depression, spiritual feelings are struck out (delusional guilt or nihilism and the painfully felt absence of spiritual feelings). Changes in experiences of mattering are explained in the alteration in the hierarchical structure of intentional feeling. Losses in the possibility space are modeled as restricted access to certain classes of value.
- *Disordered intentional arc in acts of valueception*: Instead of specifying certain classes of value that are no longer disclosed properly in depression, this model analyzes the intentional structure of the acts of valueception. Depression consists in a loss of direction of the intentional arc that fails to connect the valueceiver with the life-sphere (unmotivated, here, is used literally as the negation of the Latin “movere”). In depression, emotions no longer motivate action or movement, leading to an axiological form of paralysis (emotion (from the Latin “e-movere”), here, literally fails to express or move the person beyond him- or herself). Modifications in felt mattering are explained as weakened enactive capacities for sense-making. Losses in the possibility

space are accounted for by the disconnect that exists between valueceiver and life-sphere.

The model specification in the axiological framework allows for systematic and cumulative research in phenomenological psychopathology. I want to highlight three venues for further research.

First, these models of disordered valueception should be connected to additional related conceptions from phenomenological psychopathology, such as affordance based models from ecological and 4E approaches (de Haan, 2020; Dings, 2021; Nielsen, 2023). Since affordances can be understood as a pragmatically inclined *vertere* of the vital-psychic sphere, axiological psychopathology would amount to a generalization that includes also non-pragmatic values and values from the spiritual and sensual strata. Additionally, the hierarchical stratification of qualitatively distinct value spheres comes with an increase in discriminatory power when compared to the comparatively ‘flat’ landscapes of affordances.

Second, the model specification should be advanced to the point where empirical model tests and comparisons become feasible. A crucial step in this direction is to operationalize the models and identify adequate tools for testing (Gallagher, 2003; Wendt, 2022). At the present stage, the axiological framework offers a primarily theoretical approach to modelling disorders of valueception. Albeit additional research is needed until these models can be used for empirical studies or clinical applications, the theoretical underpinning offered here provides grounds for cumulative research projects.

Third, the theoretical discourse in axiological psychopathology should be rejuvenated. Axiological accounts of the past provide rich resources for clinical psychology, psychiatry and psychopathology. Philosophical research on the nature of values and disvalues can provide a helpful guide for studying affective disorders and other clinical phenomena (Alessiato & Quante, 2022; Cusinato, 2018a; Stanghellini & Ballerini, 2007). In this vein, axiological

psychopathology has the potential to be maximalist in the sense that it can address philosophically foundational issues and methodological concerns of model-specifications simultaneously.

At the present state of the debate, axiological models in psychopathology can be identified, but have yet to engage in mutual discourse. I suggest that the relevance for establishing such an exchange exceeds the field of depression research, for which I have provided a proof of concept. In fact, it has the potential to renew one of the first applications of phenomenology to psychopathology, namely axiological psychopathology. It is important to note, however, that since axiology is not indigenous to phenomenology, axiological psychopathology ought not to be conflated with a sub-species of phenomenological psychopathology, but can also incorporate axiological concepts from other traditions such as naturalism, Neo-Kantianism or existentialism. As long as this discourse is not systematically developed, the different approaches that try to unravel the role of emotionality in experiences of mattering lack the common framework that is required for scientific progress.

### **Philosophy, Science and Practice: Modelling Depression as a Paradigm for a Clinical Psychology of Value<sup>25</sup>**

One may take from my feature article that valueception may be used to bridge philosophical, scientific and practical perspectives on mental disorders (as demonstrated for the case of depression). That this is not one of those ideas that may sound good but will hardly be put into practice, is dispelled by the commentaries being one primarily philosophical and the other primarily psychotherapeutic or from a psychiatric perspective. I am humbled by and grateful

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<sup>25</sup> The following chapter was first published under the same title in issue 32(3) of *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* (Wendler, 2025b) and has been reprinted with the permission of the publisher. This chapter depicts the author's response to Cusinato's (2025) and Schlimme's (2025) commentaries on my target article (Wendler, 2025a), i.e., the previous chapter on *Depression as a Disorder of Valueception*. Since both commentaries are summarized within the text, this chapter can stand alone and be read in its own right.

for the insightful commentaries of Cusinato (2025) and Schlimme (2025), and happily respond to the best of my ability.

The take-away message from this triologue is that the special place of science can be that of a mediator between philosophy and practice. Precisely this is what the axiological model-explication and comparison offer.

In his commentary, Cusinato (2025) provides a predominantly philosophical perspective on the models of depression within axiological psychopathology. He begins by providing clarification with regard to the interpretation of material value ethics and Scheler's concept of valueception and his philosophy in general. Afterwards, he proposes his account of the *intentional arc of personality (IAP)*, through which he reconceives the phenomenological notion of intentionality (more discussion below). He then appeals to Plessner's notion of eccentric positionality when addressing the anthropological presuppositions of mental disorders which entail a de-centering of the conduct of life that is specific to the human form of life. Afterwards, Cusinato connects his ideas to those of von Weizsäcker's and Kimura's and argues that disorders of valueception amount to a disruption of the ground relationship, i.e., the enactive connection to the expressive sphere of life. Lastly, Cusinato uses his concept of IAP to position depression and schizophrenia as two poles along which the ground relationship can be disturbed, namely through hyperactivation of the enactive potentials and their biasing towards spiritual values in schizophrenia and through hypoactivation of the enactive potentials and their biasing towards vital values in depression.

Before I delve into the more substantial questions, I would like to address a subtlety of interpretation for clarity's sake. Cusinato seems to suggest that the integrative model depicted in figure 5 is the final result of the whole investigation. This is not entirely accurate. The integrated model is a proposal within the tradition of material value ethics, whereas the paper is set out to sketch a general framework of axiological psychopathology which can incorporate the different axiological traditions (in principle within and without phenomenology). In this

sense, the investigation is set up more pragmatically and attends to the interests of empirically oriented scientists and practitioners in particular.

Cusinato makes a very important point in the passage that summarizes the vision of the feature article: It “sets out to address a crucial issue at the boundary between psychiatry and philosophy: that of the *relationship between disorders of valueception and psychiatric disorders*” (Cusinato, 2025, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph; my italics). While there exists a connection between disorders of valueception and mental disorders, it is crucial to uphold the difference. Disorders of valueception have been studied in the field of ethics. For instance, von Hildebrand (1922) used the approach of material value ethics to put forward a typification of several forms of value-blindness that are not of clinical interest. Von Hildebrand was chiefly interested in the moral education of man and whether the nature of his moral character is connected with his ability to adequately apprehend (dis-)values. While these considerations are *not directly related to clinical contexts*, they become highly relevant through the perspective of axiological psychopathology. So one may for example recognize the slippery slope from the von Hildebrandian point of view to the historical approaches of moral treatment (cf. Schott & Tölle, 2006, p. 364).

Although this historical connection is interesting, it’s real value gets unlocked only when one learns from history, avoids its pitfalls and harvests its insights. Cusinato, therefore, is in the right when surmising that the sense of disorders of valueception considered in my feature article “refers to a disorder at the level of the perceptual adoption of a position in the world and has no moralistic connotation” (Cusinato, 2025, 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph). This follows logically from the phenomenological notion of valueception, which “is not an evaluation, but a perception at the pre-representational level.” (Cusinato, 2025, 12<sup>th</sup> paragraph). The biases in valueception that occur in depression, therefore, are to be understood at this perceptual level and must neither be confused with the negative evaluative judgments often uttered by depressed patients nor with the – quite implausible and yet not uncommon – notion that depression would amount to little

more than a flaw in the moral character. These insights are fundamental for understanding Cusinato's project of connecting valueception (Scheler) with biosemiotics (von Uexküll), because valueception at the perceptual level is possible for non-human forms of life as well. This means that, for instance, non-human animals possess a selective function that renders certain environmental stimuli salient while leaving others in the background (e.g., perception of potential mate) and are capable of a corresponding form of position-taking in terms of comportment and emotion (e.g., activation of sex-drive).

Let me now turn to the most pressing issue concerning Cusinato's commentary. It concerns his introduction of the *intentional arc of personality*. Structurally, Cusinato's IAP comprises a passive, axiological moment that addresses the selective function of valueception at the perceptual level, and an en-active moment of position-taking that also evokes emotion. The IAP is intimately linked to the *ordo amoris of the person*, which means the essence of a person in the sense that Schelerian material value ethics define it, namely as their individual order of preferences. For illustration, consider the means in which Cusinato uses the enactive moment of the IAP to explain the origin of emotion: "Emotion arises only when the perceived value interacts with the *ordo amoris* of the person. More precisely, emotion is the adoption of a position of a person's *ordo amoris* toward a significant valueception" (Cusinato, 2025, 11<sup>th</sup> paragraph).

I consider the notion of IAP crucial, because it exposes a weak-spot in my feature article. It one-sidedly focusses on the passive, axiological moment of valueception in terms of its selective function. In principle, this is evident in all of the graphs depicted in the article. While there are, of course, reasons for developing the argument in this way (limited space, reducing complexity, etc.), it should be recognized that fully developing the axiological models of depression would mean to incorporate an axiological model of the depressed personality-structure, i.e., the *ordo amoris*. Consider figure 6 for a rough graphical illustration:

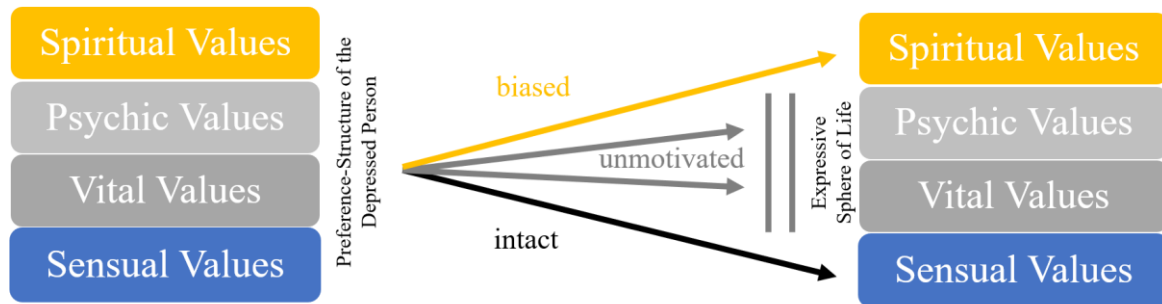


Figure 6. *Using IAP to expand the unified model of depression within material value ethics.* The left side depicts the personal preference-structure. The right side depicts the objective hierarchy of values. The arrows in the middle depict the depressed person’s intentional valueceptions.

This illustration highlights that there exists a certain kind of correspondence between the personal preference-structure and the objective hierarchy of values, viz., a kind of mirroring or, to use one of Scheler’s terms “a match<sup>26</sup> [“Zusammenstimmung”] between world and man” (1957, p. 350).<sup>27</sup> Within the framework of material value ethics, a fully developed account of what is altered in disorders of valueception would have to be explicated in terms of changes in this correspondence. For the case of a given disorder such as depression, it follows that one would have to say how the selective function is altered, what position-taking is implied at the perceptual level and which emotions arise correspondingly. In this sense, a particularly interesting avenue for future research would be investigating the ways in which personal preference-structure and objective hierarchy of values map onto each other in mental disorder. For instance, a relevant question on which I have been working on for some time is whether mental disorders entail some sort of mismatch or – literally – disorder between these two sides. This would entail that the emotions in mental disorders are confused, i.e., *désordre du cœur*.

<sup>26</sup> An alternative and perhaps more fitting translation would be “a harmony between world and man” or “a correspondence between world and man.”

<sup>27</sup> Without going into detail, it is crucial not to conflate the distinction between personal and objective with that of inner and outer (see Stern, 1918).

Therefore, the question becomes crucial which disorders of the preference-structure undergird the disorders of valueception at the level of personality. Modelling this would amount to an axiological explication of the depressive's personality (or the older idea of Tellenbach's *typus melancholicus*). Albeit adopting mostly the perspective of philosophy and cultural studies, the most fruitful previous work in this regard has been put forward by Frings (1972, 2005) with his conception of a *topology of the heart* and the way he connected this to the notion of resentment and, in particular, the disordered patterns of feeling states that arise from a preference-structure afflicted with resentment.

Prompted by Cusinato's commentary, critical questions merit further discussion. What axiological models can explain which feeling-states derive from which preference-structures and under what circumstances should they elicit clinical interest, e.g., for early diagnosis or prophylactic treatment? How plausible is Cusinato's idea of modelling depression and schizophrenia as two poles of hypo- and hyperactivation of the enactive potentials in IAP, i.e., is it clinically more reasonable to use positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia instead? How exactly can we model the alteration in the 'ground relationship' axiologically? If non-human animals cannot be afflicted by a certain class of mental disorders, then how do we depict the underlying change in the preference structure of the lower domains (sensual, vital, psychic) in the human specific preference-structure (consider, for instance, de Haan's (2020) idea of existential position-taking in enactive psychiatry (cf. Wendler, 2021))?

In his commentary, Schlimme (2025) sketches the outlines of an encompassing theory of depression that connects his axiological train of thought with relevant findings of contemporary research. In particular, he is investigating how and to what extent phenomenological descriptions (mostly from the Husserlian tradition) of the depressive's experience can be made fruitful in light of insights drawn from developmental psychology and critical perspectives on society. In his review of the contemporary literature, he points to the field of traumatology in the search for the basic science of depression. Schlimme identifies victim-offender reversals as

well as splits between explorative and injured ego states as the possible starting points of a depressive development. In addition, he stresses the influence of early experiences (childhood), which he combines with the psychodynamic thesis that non-integrated experiences of loss and grief can lead to depressive moods and disorders. At the core he holds on to the *disordered affective response model of depression*, which he creatively relates to the other axiological models of depression in a complementary fashion. Finally, Schlimme also commits to the idea that depression is to be described along the lines of a (Binswangerian) model of self-devaluation. For describing the latter, he appeals to the metaphor of a 'depressive lense' (analogously: a 'psychotic lense'), which fits seamlessly with the thesis of depression as a disorder of valueception.

The most controversial issue is Schlimme's position regarding the scientific status of psychotherapy and psychiatry. Although Schlimme speaks to the topic only briefly, I seize the opportunity by discussing a particularly telling passage:

Psychotherapy and psychiatric treatment will therefore always be, on the one hand, a practical science and, on the other, a multi-method chameleon with a limited understanding of what they do and why some things work and others don't. (Schlimme, 2025, first paragraph)

I read this quote together with the way Schlimme ends his commentary: “Is the first-world epidemic of depression and anxiety simply a lack of access to the value of grief? I don't know. But as a psychotherapist and psychiatrist, I know that [...]” (Schlimme, 2025, transition from the second-to-last and to the last paragraph). Although I admire the way in which Schlimme openly communicates the limits of (his) knowledge or what can be known given the present state of psychotherapeutic research, I feel uncomfortable with these characterizations of psychotherapy. While I can agree that psychotherapy can be described as a mixture between practical science and a multimethod chameleon, I cannot concede that this “will therefore

always be” the case. Instead, one is better advised with limiting the scope of this definition to what can be called the “factual object” of psychotherapy, following Traxel (1976, 107). The factual object of a science is the sum of what its scientists and practitioners are actually working on. Correspondingly, Schlimme’s proposal smuggles in the Trojan horse of an operationalist definition of psychotherapy *à la psychotherapy is what psychotherapists do*. Such a point of view runs the danger of absolutizing the status quo of psychotherapy.

I prefer the reverse approach that defines psychotherapy through reference to its “programmatic object”, which denotes “the nature of its subject matter” (Traxel, 1976, p. 107). From this vantage point, the factual question of what psychotherapists do in practice is no longer absolutized by incorporating the answer into the definition of psychotherapy itself, but remains of interest for evaluating the state and progress of psychotherapy concerning its programmatic question.<sup>28</sup>This is the intended scope of the proposal of axiological psychopathology as a theoretical framework. Furthermore, it is for this scope that I regard the model specification and comparison of depression as a disorder of valueception to be a proof of concept. The thesis is that all mental disorders entail changes in the way in which one relates to values and disvalues (in terms of valueception, preference structure, enactive potentials of affordances, maturity of character and so forth). To deserve the status of a practical *science*, psychotherapy ought to be founded on rigorous psychopathological considerations. This has been the outlook of phenomenological psychopathology since its founding days through Jaspers and others. My angle specifically can be expressed through the additional claim that theoretical ethics, in the form of axiology, can provide a rigorous philosophical foundation of psychopathology.

Psychotherapeutic treatment is eclectic, pragmatic and must always remain open for new evidence. Therefore, practice is where Schlimme’s term of the multimethod chameleon fits best. However, the underlying eclecticism permeates Schlimme’s commentary to a certain degree

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<sup>28</sup> In this sense, Bühler’s (1927, pp. 3-4) distinction between psychology’s initial and final object (German: “Ausgangs- und Endgegenstand”) could equally be applied.

and, ultimately is what makes it so versatile. I base this interpretation on the way in which Schlimme's adheres to his disordered affective response model of depression. He defends it by quoting an axiological remark of Husserl. Then, he uses it in a somewhat playful fashion to outmanoeuvre Schneiderian restricted access models of depression because of their disregard for life-historical processes in the pathogenesis of depression. He does so by referring, for instance, to research from the field of traumatic imprints. In my view, this flexibility is an obvious advantage of an empirically oriented account of psychotherapy as a practical science. The axiological models of depression have proven to be useful in my clinical work for both psychoeducational and casuistic-technical purposes. For psychoeducational purposes, I explicitly use simplified sketches of the models depicted in the feature article to assist my patients' orientation, to explain some of the intricacies of their disorder by reference to the sketches and to provide a model for understanding why they experience some symptoms but not others. For casuistic-technical purposes, I have used these models implicitly in planning treatments or constructing hypotheses that guide therapeutic interventions.

Consider briefly the following *clinical case*:

In one recent case, graphs of reactive, endogenous and complex depression were used in psychoeducation as a guiding tool for mapping the individual's pathogenesis. Initially, a reactive depression had developed after losing a parent that later became chronic over several years with co-morbid substance addiction and developing into a pattern resembling endogenous depression (pervasive feeling of not-feeling). The casuistic-technical use was to hypothesize that if the pervasive melancholic mood and the acute inhibition of drive remitted after pharmacological treatment and ACT-based psychotherapy, the earlier reactive feelings of intense psychic grief would re-surface and become available for treatment. In brief, axiologically inspired psychotherapy, here allowed to hypothesize and model the shifts in the depressive syndrome (from earlier reactive to later endogenous depression; for an account on syndromal shifts see Mentzos,

(1992)) and guide treatment by reversing the syndromal shift through a combination of goal-oriented behavioral activation (via de-fusion) with biographical exploration and re-evaluation of the traumatic imprints (working through the loss of the parent and, in particular, related themes of masculinity) that lay at the root of this case of depression.

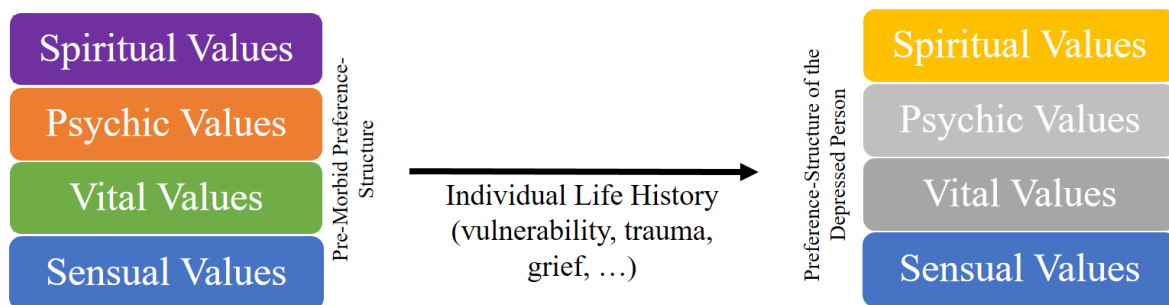


Figure 7. *Pre-Morbid and Depressed Preference-Structure throughout Life.* The individual's preference-structure is subject to alterations over the course of its life-history (indicated by different colouring schemes). Empirical research suggests that pre-existing or newly forming vulnerabilities, traumatic experiences, unresolved grief and other phenomena can be identified as the mechanisms that elicit the alteration from a pre-morbid to a morbid preference-structure in depression. Traumatic imprints or defence mechanisms relating to grief might then be considered to exhibit a signifying function, i.e., as symptomatic, because they entail cues pertaining to the life-historical pathogenesis of the individual's depressed preference-structure.

From this case study and the material that Schlimme discusses, one may hypothesize that if traumatic experiences and unresolved grief are major components in the pathogenesis of depression, then the disorders in the preference-structure at the level of personality can be explicated in terms of traumatic imprints and defence mechanisms pertaining to grief. Differently put, these traumatic imprints and these defences are what confuses emotional life, i.e., effects a change from order to disorder. Exploring them biographically and interpreting the

individual's life-history in terms of the depressive dynamic then would amount to unravelling these confusions (see figure 7). In this way, Schlimme's account can be combined with that of Cusinato, identifying traumatic imprints and specific defence-constellations as mechanism that alter the IAP in depression (most probably alongside other vulnerabilities).

Future research on this topic should connect these model sketches with empirical measures for preference (q-sort paradigms, personality measures, etc.). This would amount to a fresh take on one of first approaches to the study of personality by Allport, Vernon and Lindzey (1960) in their seminal *Study of Values*, in which they developed one of the first empirical personality scales that relied on preference-measures derived from the material value ethics of Spranger.

Further discussions remain. If valueception and responding to action-possibilities are closely interrelated, while accessing other's mental states belongs to a different set of problems altogether, is it then not a mistake to speak of value-ception, mental-ception (empathy) and action-ception (affordances) as if each was a separate and independent faculty? How can the reference to Husserl's term of 'the whole of life' that pertains to the pre-intentional horizon of experience help to better model the selective function of valueception that singles out that which matters to experience? To what extent can the genetic phenomenology of depression and its life-historical development in the individual mutually illuminate each other or even be parallelized? While an interesting proposition that ontogenetically earlier structures are also more basic in the essential structuring of the phenomenon, this invites questions regarding the relationship between empirical, essential and transcendental science (see Zahavi 2021). Why is it that while most clinicians tend to agree that values-based work is essential to psychotherapy and psychiatry that the theory of values is hardly ever explicitly (not to speak of systematically) employed, and how can we change that?

## Value Theory as a Paradigm for a Philosophical Psychopathology

Allow me to close with some *programmatic considerations*. *Axiological psychopathology strives to provide a paradigm of philosophical psychopathology in the strong sense*. In recent years, interest in the idea of a philosophical psychopathology has gained momentum. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that even widely read publication platforms explicitly solicit philosophically oriented contributions or in the fact that the discourse on psychopathology is nuanced and explicitly addresses philosophical questions—unlike many other areas of medicine and psychology. Before this backdrop, however, two *toto coelo* different conceptions of what philosophy can contribute to psychopathology ought to be distinguished.

The *first conception* conceives the task of philosophy as guiding the description, explanation, and normative evaluation of psychopathological questions and objects of investigation. On this view, philosophical methods would be employed, for instance, when ethical dilemmas arise in the treatment of a patient or when theoretical assumptions are to be clarified or consistently outlined. In this *weak* sense, axiological psychopathology would be philosophical insofar as it seeks, for example, to respect patients' values and to take them into account when proposing treatment options (cf. Fulford, 2008, 2011). Values would thus enter the picture, but they would remain external to psychopathological work proper. On this model, the patient is viewed as the bearer of both illnesses and values, while the physician's medical training applies to the treatment of the underlying disease and their philosophical training to the reflection on questions related to values. Ultimately, this does not achieve an intrinsic connection between axiological and psychopathological perspectives; instead, they remain complementary yet separate approaches within the medical field.

Given the auxiliary role assigned to philosophy in this framework, this first conception may be summarized under the heading *philosophia ancilla psychopathologiae: philosophy as the handmaiden of psychopathology*.

According to the *second conception*, philosophy does not have such an auxiliary role or merely heuristic status with respect to psychopathology. Philosophy is not understood as a tool suitable for specific tasks, but rather as a stance or attitude towards psychopathology. This is not supposed to mean that the *strong sense* of philosophical psychopathology would disregard patients' values. In this respect, the two conceptions may remain compatible to a certain degree. The decisive difference, however, is that the strong conception seeks to introduce philosophical considerations at the object-level of psychopathology. In contrast to almost all other philosophical disciplines, *axiology occupies a special place within psychopathology*, since it is capable not only of addressing mental disorders at *the meta-level*, but also of developing models for their description, genesis, and explanation at the *object-level*. Regarding questions of value, this means that patients' attitudes toward values and disvalues—that is, their value-attitudes or styles of valueception (“Wertnehmungsstile”)—can be examined with respect to their pathogenic or salutogenic properties. Only from this vantage point can the age-old question as to whether a moral way of life is conducive to health be recovered (cf. Vickers, 1955). This also entails the question whether there can be such a thing as a “philosophical diet”—in the literal sense of a practice of life-conduct—or a “diet of the mind [“Diät des Gemüts”]” (cited in Schneider, 1947, p. 8), as already demanded by Immanuel Kant.

Whereas the first approach could be described as a *philosophically informed psychopathology*, the second amounts to a *genuinely philosophical psychopathology*, or *philosophical psychopathology in the strong sense*.

It is easy to see why the weak sense of philosophical psychopathology may appear attractive to the ethically minded clinician, but for the wrong reasons. This might be the case, for instance, because contemporary societal developments might make it opportune or even profitable to explicitly incorporate considerations of value into one's image or practice. The proper task of axiological psychopathology, however, lies elsewhere and requires a fundamental dialogue between philosophy and psychopathology. This dialogue must *not* take the form of a

conversation between a *mistress and her handmaiden*, but rather that of a *conversation between two friends at eye level*.

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