



## Mental Illness and the Consciousness of Freedom: The Phenomenology of Psychiatric Labelling

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*Paradigmatically led by existential phenomenological premises, as formulated by Jean-Paul Sartre and Edmund Husserl specifically, this paper aims at a deconstruction of the value of psychiatric labelling in terms of the implications of such labelling for the labelled individual's experience of freedom as a conscious imperative. This work has as its intention the destabilisation of labelling as a stubborn and inexorable mechanism for social propriety and regularity, which in its unyielding classificatory brandings is*

### The Phenomenological Attitude

At the outset, it is necessary to elucidate the fact that Sartre's is a phenomenologically informed method and attitude. His concern is not with freedom as a metaphysical reality which is diametrically opposed to deterministic influence, and in view of this fact metaphysically grounded arguments for determinism cannot invade and strike down his thesis. Sartre's aim is to show the phenomenological beholding that is a "specific consciousness of freedom", and from this point of view the existence of a physiological determinism could not invalidate the results of (his) description (Sartre, 1943: 33, McCulloch, 1994).

The phenomenological approach is defined by a rigorous attempt to illuminate, and to bring a comprehensive resolution to our encounters with those things in the world which disclose themselves to us, leaking out in uncovered energy the revelation that is our experience of our world (Kruger, 1988). Phenomenology's concern

is with the individual's encounter with his world, and the ways in which meaning, borne out of this experiential dialogue, is elicited through that encounter. Phenomenologically, the individual is present as an openness, and expresses herself to the world in terms of the activity of taking into account that which the world presents her with (Boss, cited in Kruger, 1988). What then, is the experience, the phenomenology, of freedom? As a condition of consciousness, freedom is grasped as an openness to the world, and this openness is the fundamental experience of consciousness of the world. Freedom, as an activity of unfurling and reception, is the bringing of the world into the hospitable berth that is consciousness. Freedom is the world's revelation to being (ibid.). Being, understood as a situation, a presence within the world and its walls, is conceived of phenomenologically as being-in-the-world. This situatedness is paradoxically understood by the phenomenologists as a bursting out into the world, which, in terms of the individual's apprehension of her world, is

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multifariously coloured by the full plethora of potential representations which that world discloses. In describing his perceptions of a tree Sartre explains: "Knowledge, or pure representation, is only one of the possible forms of my consciousness 'of' this tree; I can also love it, fear it, hate it, and this surpassing of consciousness by itself that is called 'intentionality' finds itself again in fear, hatred, and love." (Sartre, 1970: 5). In this sketch of the ways in which the manifold of experiential relations which are disclosed through our contact with the world of phenomena it can be seen that phenomenology, in its attitudinal focus on the unborn, the forthcoming, manifests a theoretical devotion to freedom as an existential necessity (Howells, 1988).

Phenomenologically, freedom reveals itself as a project, that project being the individual's existence, her movement into the world. Man's being, says Luijpen (1969) is apprehended in terms of his freedom as a task, as a compulsion, which man, revealing himself within the shining dynamism that is his potential, must endure. For the existential phenomenologist, the individual's projection of herself into her world, and into the future, manifests as an indispensable necessity which, almost implacably, bellows forth the order "You must become that which you are not yet." Consideration of the implications which this imperative holds in relation to man's phenomenological experience of himself as a situatedness will follow in what is, necessarily, a somewhat diffuse inquiry into Sartre's ontology.

### Self as Transcendent

Consciousness, as a potential for motion and directedness, is posited as a radical freedom, which expresses itself through the human person which is its agent, its manifestation. As an advancement, a propulsion into the future, consciousness is defined as intentionality. In this sense, intentional consciousness is a "being beyond itself", (Sartre, 1970). It is a perpetual flight into the future, which is thereby understood

as consciousness' intentional object, and it is in terms of this being beyond itself that consciousness defines itself as that which cannot be seized, ensnared, and turned into substance. Sartre eloquently affirms this imminence that defines the motioning of being in his bold pronouncement that "man is, before all else, something which propels itself towards a future" (Sartre, 1948, p. 28). The phenomenological enterprise grasps intentional consciousness as that which casts itself out into the world of things; it projects itself in intentional motion towards the world. In this sense, "consciousness is always consciousness of something", and in its motion is aimed at that something (Brooke, 1991: 42). This distinguished Husserlian axiom is the birthplace of the philosophy of transcendence, which apprehends consciousness as a perpetual motion, elementally resistant to constraint and demarcation. Man, as a subjectivity, a consciousness, is not grasped as a being fixed in his world (Luijpen, 1969). Instead, as a being-in-the-world, his occupation is understood as dynamic, ec-static. This dynamism is disclosed in the life-world of the experiencing individual as a basic and cardinal element of her subjectivity: "The dynamism of human existence is the dynamism of subjectivity as freedom." (ibid:186). It is this "free movement of existence" (Beauvior, 1964: 29) which so fully informs and colours the individual's subjectivity, and it is through this fundamental experience of self-government that subjectivity and freedom, in their distinct intertwinement, are affirmed. "To be a subject is to be free." (Luijpen, 1969: 187).

In *La Transcendance de l'Ego* (1936) Sartre's conception of the self as a freedom in action reveals an understanding of the self as constituted by pure intentionality, which is its direction, its imperative (Cited in Howells, 1988). Consciousness, as an intentional activity, is given in the lived world as a non-optional and irreducible imperative which must be in the sense of be-ing (Brooke, 1991). As a dynamic occurrence, consciousness cannot be an encased

and circumscribed existence, and it is in terms of this understanding that consciousness as a transcendence is perceived. The self, as an experience of unity, the 'I', is in this sense conceived of as a transcendent product of consciousness, which Sartre sees as disclosing the potential for transcendence that is the source and centre of meaning (Sartre, 1936). This meaning, this signification, Sartre suggests, is derived from the transcendent function which consciousness, in its activity as an intentional capacity, unfolds and reveals. Consciousness as an intentional space manifests in the phenomenological encounter that is the individual's transcendence of that which she is, and of that which holds her and delimits her. It is in understanding consciousness as intentionality, as a motion towards free action, that the self as a transcendent existence can be grasped (Wild, 1963), and it is from the phenomenological closeness which this understanding reveals that this author draws his theoretical impetus.

### **Being-In-The-World and the Being of Freedom**

Freedom, as an ontological status, a mode of being in the world, is defined by a "presuppositionless and undetermined upsurge of the for-itself in every moment of life." (Caws, 1979: 115). What follows is an account of Sartre's ontology of being-in-the-world as it relates to the freedom that is conscious being. Sartre's ontological formulation posits a division in modes of being-in-the-world in which two radically distinct 'regions' of being, termed being-in-itself and being-for-itself, are differentiated. Essentially, being-in-itself is the being of non-conscious objects, and is definable in terms of its properties; its features are understood as bounded, encased and delineated. Inherent to the mode of being-in-itself is the principle of identity (Sartre, 1943). Sartre aligns with the analytical principle of judgement in which the being-in-itself, the object, is identical with itself (Busch, 1990). In this sense, being-in-itself "simply is what it is" (Sartre, 1943: 58), in

that it is identical with itself, and cannot become that which it is not. This keyboard upon which I lay my fingers has no potential to escape itself in the mode of becoming. In its brute, undeviating embeddedness it stays, unchanging, unchangeable. In its being it is a limitation, an inflexibility. Being-in-itself, by virtue of its adherence to the principle of identity, is thus conceived of in opposition to being-for-itself, which shall be explicated shortly, and which, for the purposes of this paper, is of greater import and gravity. As an object of consciousness, being-in-the-world partakes of the mode of being-in-itself insofar as such a being, the individual human, is bound to a degree by those properties which are perceived as partaking in the mode of the being of objects. My body, as an object in the world, is a being-in-itself, as are those distinctive elements of my situation which define me, which are my limitation. Consciousness depends on being as being is consciousness' revelation, its unfolding. This being upon which consciousness depends exists in the mode of being-in-itself, as an intentional object. I shall explore this aspect of Sartre's ontology further on, bringing resolution to this somewhat ambiguous theoretical convolution that is man in the world.

It is now necessary to explicate the mode of being of the individual consciousness that is being-for-itself. Being-for-itself is conscious being in that being-for-itself must be conscious and consciousness must be an activity of being, but insofar as it is grasped as an activity of consciousness, and thus as a propulsion into the future at which it aims itself, being-for-itself is not identical with consciousness. Barnes, cited in Howells (1992), provides the following account of the relationship between consciousness and being:

Although consciousness reveals being, the fundamental opposition on which he [Sartre] builds his ontology is not that between consciousness and being but the distinction between two regions of

beings, only one of which is characterised as inextricably associated with consciousness. These are being-in-itself and being-for-itself, but insofar as being-for-itself is, it has the same being as being-in-itself. It is distinguished only by the presence in itself of the activity we experience as consciousness. These two regions of being are inseparable except abstractly, and the truth is that the distinction between being-for-itself and being-in-itself is less clear cut and more complex than first appears (Barnes, cited in Howells, 1992:15).

Consciousness and being are thus understood at once as distinct and disunited, and at the same time their entangled undividedness is accounted for and articulated through Sartre's ontology. This ambiguity, which shall be explored in greater depth, in connection with its bearing on the individual's phenomenology of freedom as an existential certainty, has fundamental implications for the unfolding of Sartre's account of human freedom. In terms of the involvement that is being-for-itself's partaking in the mode of being-in-itself, Sartre suggests that consciousness is transcendent because it can transcend what it is, and grasp what it is not, in this case unrealised goals and ideals (Sartre, 1943). Since every act, Sartre argues, is a projection of the for-itself towards that which is not, it follows that no factual state, whether it be the political or economic structure of the individual's society, the individual's cultural and social milieu, nor even her psychological state, can determine consciousness (*ibid.*). Consciousness' freedom lies in its ability to go beyond, to transcend that which it is, in a vibrant intentional motioning towards a state of being other than that which it is now (Anderson, 1993). In his existence, man as a subject, a consciousness, is posited as a being that is not yet, but can and must be, and in his being borne as an activity in relation to this imperative, man is apprehended, defined by liberty and the frank openness that is his autonomy, as a capacity to transcend his circumstance (Salvan, 1962). It is to the encounter between the individual, as a

freedom in activity, and the factual delineation which is her position, her location, that the focus of this work now turns.

In her engagement with the world, the individual's freedom is disclosed as an independence "in relation to a thing" (Beauvoir, 1964: 29). In this sense, freedom is lived as a proud affirmation which renounces the hampering enclosure that is the individual's situation, which presents itself as a restriction of her motion towards transcendence. Freedom is thus experienced phenomenologically as the perennial wellspring of ambiguity which is disclosed in the individual's encounter with her world. This ambiguity is grasped in terms of existential phenomenology as an experiential confrontation between freedom and facticity. There are, constituted within being-for-itself, aspects which are object-like, and which partake in the mode of being-in-itself, that is, the mode of being an object. Being-for-itself is not simply an unconstrained movement into the future, and it is in relation to its facticity that this essential revelation of the limitation that is being-in-itself, that this ambiguity is experienced. Facticity is the collective term which Sartre employs in description of these elements of the being of the self. Within this conception are included such aspects as the individual's history, race, socio-economic state, sex, and body. One's psychological constitution, to a certain degree, may also constitute one's facticity, but more on this later. In his meeting with the world, the individual is not grasped in his entirety as an evanescent and ephemeral motion towards the future at which he projects himself. In his flight of manumission he is not as the wraith which, insubstantial, elusive, glides unshackled through stone as through air. Consciousness is not then understood as the totality of being, for this would be a fragile hypothesis; instead consciousness is taken as the nucleus of being, its impetus, and the source from which being casts itself out into the world of possibilities. Being-for-itself, the being of consciousness, has freedom with respect to the

manifold of conceivable or imaginable interpretations or valuations of its facticity. It is being-for-itself's freely chosen representation of its factual stance which gives to that location the especial psychic signification and eminence which being-for-itself, in its full liberty, deems that situation to own. Being-for-itself is free with respect to what it takes its facticity to represent, and what value it gives to its facticity. History, gender, race, and the like, relate to being-for-itself insofar as the significance which they hold, and the values which they represent with regard to being-for-itself's current projects are determined by being-for-itself itself. It is in this sense that consciousness is grasped as that which, in its attitude, its appraisal, is the phenomenological revelation of being (Barnes, cited in Howells, 1992). Being unfolds in relation to consciousness, and it is consciousness that wills it as such. Being, in its freedom, its motion, allows for the unfolding of the world in relation to its movement through the world as an activity of freedom. As a dynamism, a propulsion into the future, being-for-itself unfolds phenomenologically as the capacity to transcend its facticity, which is the object-like circumstance of being-in-the-world. On the contrary, insofar as being-for-itself, as consciousness of the particular world in which it exists, is capable only of unclosing in a manifold of unbound choices, it is at the same time limited by the range of choices which it is awarded within the specificity that is the mould and enclosure of its situation.

Sartre defines the situation as an ambiguous phenomenon inasmuch as it is the common product of the in-itself and freedom, and, he adds, it is impossible to delineate precisely what comes from the in-itself and what from freedom (Anderson, 1993: 21).

On a more abstract level this somewhat elusive ambiguity is disclosed as an existential certainty. In this sense my facticity, which is understood both as the facticity of my own being and that of my situation, my seat in the world of beings other than myself, is an elemental

condition, grasped as an absolute necessity for my condition of freedom (ibid.).

Real freedom demands that I be located in a world of really existing things that separate me from my goals, while also offering the possibility of attaining them. Otherwise my mere wish or dream would suffice for me to attain my ends, and choice would be unnecessary and impossible. In other worlds, 'if no obstacle, then no freedom.' (ibid: 22, Sartre 1943: 484).

In order to be free, then, it is necessary that I realise that which constrains me, that which is my enclosure; and it is out of this realisation that my freedom - which is the fundamental experience and activity of my consciousness, yields and brings forth the multifarious colouration that is the meaning, the signification which I give to my world. I am not free with respect to the circumstance within which my world, in all its rowdy tumult positions me. But insofar as I am my consciousness, I am that which, in my encounters with the world, gives to the world that splendidous lustre, or that lugubrious bleakness, or that happy effervescence, which I, as free consciousness, deem it to own.

Human reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human reality is (Sartre, 1943: 495).

It is this enveloping and persistent ambiguity, this enigmatic ontological scheme, which characterises the individual's experience of herself as a freedom, an openness, which is nonetheless present to the shackling delimitation that is her being-in-the-world. To say that the individual is free is to say that she is present to a trial, a defiance; it is to say that, in her paradoxical freedom, she advances towards a

conquest, which is always precarious, provoking, and challenging (Marcel, 1963; Warnock, 1966). It is in this sense that human reality unfolds as an ambiguous interaction and interpermeation of transcendence and facticity.

The reason for this somewhat lengthy and abstruse exegesis of Sartre's ontology will become evident when considering its implications for the phenomenological presencing of the mentally ill individual, as a branded and divisioned entity, within his world of experience. It is to this alternative beholding, this recourse of the 'normal' encounter with the lived world that I turn next.

### **The Phenomenology of the Scientific Attitude: The Biomedical Model of Psychiatric Intervention**

The predominant framework for studying mental disorders in psychiatry is known variously as the medical model, the biomedical model or the disease model (Kiesler, 2000). This foundation, so vigorously informed by the scientific paradigm, posits mental and physical illness as equivalent in all fundamental respects. In this sense, mental illness is formulated in terms of a functional psychosis, most likely the consequence of a neurophysiological disorder, and therefore conceived of, and classified in terms of a physical disease (Szasz, 1987). Mental illness, as conceptualised by the medical model, results from biological abnormalities in the "brain, central nervous system, autonomic nervous system, and/or endocrine system" (Kiesler, 2000: 17), and understood as such mental illness is situated within the sphere of biological causation and determination as a disease entity (Szasz, 1987). An exploration of the scientist's deplorable sacrifice of humanism as the fundamental and most appropriate impetus, in favour of the obdurate and unfeeling "lure of positivism" (Szasz, 1973: 191) will follow.

The biomedical model of disease makes the implacable assertion that the predominant and

sole causes of mental disorders, those conditions which are both necessary and sufficient for the genesis of a mental illness, are manifestly and irrefutably biological deviations and abnormalities (Kiesler, 2000). Investigation into the biochemical and genetic constitution of the mentally ill individual is deemed to be of paramount importance in the elicitation of the cause, the biological birthplace of the illness.

Faulty genes that produce abnormal neurotransmitter activity at cortical synapses, structural anomalies of the central nervous system, or abnormal hormonal activity. Mental disorders are not the result of aversive parental behaviours, of societal deprivations or discriminations, and are certainly not the result of personal choice." (ibid: 19)

This unremitting pronouncement is exemplary of the blatant 'biologization' to which psychiatry, as a quintessentially human intervention, has fallen prey. Present day psychiatry, or more suitably termed, biopsychiatry (ibid: 23), motions towards an unobtrusive bypassing of those individual, interpersonal and social elements of existence which so obviously constitute the phenomenologically understood genesis of mental illness. These inherently human components of the individual's lived world are awarded with no causal efficaciousness as far as mental illness as a developmental contingency is concerned, and this misplacement of causal relevance has dire implications for the method of intervention which the psychiatrist, as scientist, adopts in her dull, unyielding office. The biomedical model proceeds through a stringent, inflexible process of identification, deduction and treatment. Initially, the biopsychiatrist aims at generating a symptomatically informed understanding of the individual's behavioural manifestations which posits such manifestations as indicative of a particular syndrome, a specifically defined and identified disease entity which lends itself to reliable diagnosis. Once this has been established, the biological aetiology – that is, the genetic origins representing a potential

causal connection with the development of the disease, must be explored. Potential anomalies such as a biochemical imbalance, or a neuroanatomical abnormality are sought out as being significant components of the biological aetiology of disease. The apprehension of such "biological deviance" (Kiesler, 2000: 27) allows the researcher, the indubitable biopsychiatrist, to evaluate and decide upon the most compelling and operative biological intervention, which aims at the alleviation of the individual's syndrome (ibid.).

The scientific rigour and meticulousness of this procedure seems certain and incontrovertible when applied to the biomedical interventions which characterise attempts to cure physical ailments. It seems indubitable that a symptomatically led evaluation of the biological glitches and malfunctions which emerge as symptoms of a physical ailment are approximated and conceptualised in terms of the biological aetiology out of which they are indisputably borne. However, insofar as mental illness unfolds and reveals itself as an experience of the individual within his world, an understanding of mental illness, and by extension the treatment of such illness, in terms of a biologically informed enlightenment, is fundamentally incomplete. Symptomatological diagnosis based on the manifold of symptoms definitive of the individual's specific illness, and understood in terms of the biological aetiology which, it is supposed, is the genesis of that illness, reveals a distinct methodological and phenomenological gap, in which the individual, as patient, is left misunderstood, and incompletely grasped (Kraus, 1987). Based upon the operational logic that is the bounding delimitation of the natural scientific attitude, the symptomatological diagnostics of biopsychiatry, in attempting to conceive of mental illness in terms descriptive of a physical disease entity, collapses when considered in relation to the anguishing subject upon which it bases its descriptions. It is quite patently evident, when considering the intervening complexity of

the human mind in terms of the pathologies, which are the potential weight and burden of that mind, that a rose is not a rose, is not a rose. And therefore, the function of psychiatric diagnosis, which operates according to this principle of identity (Goodwin & Guze, 1996), appears at the very least 'pseudoscientific' when applied as a methodological tool within psychological research (Ross & Pam, 1995). It is towards a consideration of the subject, the mentally ill individual, as the one whose mental illness is radically oversimplified and distorted (Rishter and Lucksted, 2000) that I turn next.

### **The Scientific Attitude and the Solidification of Consciousness**

The principle of entities in themselves which accompanies the idea of specific aetiologies of illness according to the biomedical model, as afore-mentioned, is related significantly to the notion of biological causality (Kraus, 1987). In this sense, the mentally ill individual is conceived of in terms of a biological determinism which renders that individual as diseased, and manifesting a physiological abnormality. The individual is comprehended as having an illness, rather than being ill. The semantic construction which typifies the biomedical model thus conceives of the individual not in terms of the phenomenological encounter which describes the mentally ill individual's meeting with her world of experience. Instead, this construction - that of having an illness - posits mental illness as something separate, and unambiguously delineated (ibid.). Symptomatological diagnosis - fundamental to the nomothetic methodology of the biomedical model, in positing a biologically determined disease entity, reveals a distinct phenomenological illegitimacy as far as its relation to the science of humanism is concerned. Through an elucidation of the scientific attitude of psychiatric intervention, and an analytical probing into the impact of this understanding on the diagnosed individual, as subject to the essential dehumanisation upon which this attitude is based, I hope to unclothe this methodology as

being phenomenologically unfitting, insubstantial and ineffectual.

Medard Boss, in his work *Existential foundations of medicine and psychology* (1979), expressed with lucidity and vigour the ways in which the scientific attitude, when soullessly forced upon the study of the human subject, colours that study with an unremitting bleakness, lacking entirely the rich and deeply personal character which is so inherent to the value of the psychological endeavour, as an exploration into the human world of lived experience. Boss suggests that natural science, when emphasised as a foundational methodology within the human sciences, overlooks, and remains always inaccessible to the mode of human existence. What follows is an explication of what Boss cites as the function of scientific methodology, that is, to secure a prescientific notion of spatiality, and to understand the subject in terms of that spatiality.

The first task of medicine as a strictly rational science of man is to define precisely prescientific notions of 'somewhere in space' and 'somewhere in time' (1979: 86).

This conception of the spatiality of the world upon which the busy scientist focuses his lens has pervaded scientific understanding. The grasping of space as a scientific objective is seen as a conquest, an enchantment. The calculation and comprehension of spatial relationships in terms of mathematical measurement manifests as a function beautiful to the eye of the scientist. Space is thereby reduced, through the conceptualisation of space in terms mathematical, to intervals between points, homogeneous distances between points, and geometrical dimensions. Historically, says Boss, the scientific objective has been this reduction of space to its mathematical spatial relations. This reduction is achieved through a process of emptying regions

of space, and grasping space as a void, uninterrupted by the significations of the things that occupy that space, so as to allow for honest and exact calculation. Of course, it seems commonsensical and methodologically astute to apply this reduction to the province of inanimate objects. An understanding of the distance between two points would be troubled with endless complications were it necessary to take into account the 'things' occupying and entangling the space between those two points. It is when this treatment of the world, this exacting, inflexible spatialisation, is transferred to the ideographic methodology which must necessarily characterise the human sciences, that absurdity, and implausibility result. "The geometrical representation of space, admirably suited to the mastery of inanimate objects, was transferred without thought to the spatiality of human existence." (Boss, 1979: 86). But on what grounds, asks Kruger (1988) can the transference of this "natural scientific dogmatism" (ibid: 20) be thought of as manifesting any measure of methodological exactness and accuracy? How can it be said that man, grasped within the experiential fullness that is his lived world, can be better understood if one is able to measure him? If the researcher into the human subject is to maintain any degree of methodological integrity, the web of intervolving relationships that is human existence cannot be reified through scientific calculation and mathematical discernment. "The millimetre is not found in nature." (ibid: 36), it is a construction of the scientist who, in her urgent motioning towards measurement and division, aims to understand the bare facts of her world, stripped of entanglements and complications. The subject of the psychiatrist as operative in terms of this scientific endeavour is therefore isolated, encapsulated, reduced. Her condition, her suffering, becomes a variable, a stale and hard bit of information with which the unfeeling scientist works. Upon the subject is conferred a basic meaninglessness. Her situation becomes barren, hollow and nonsensical, as she is discerned and

calculated by the implacable gaze of the scientist. Adamant, fierce in his vision, the scientist takes the subject apart; defines her properties, describes them from within his range of vision as facts, observable and understandable as points, objectifiable elements in a world of objects.

### **Consciousness as an Object of the Scientific Endeavour**

Diagnosis, as operative within scientifically informed interventions into mental illness, occurs within the subject's consciousness, says Wright (1984), and introduces into that consciousness a jarring ambiguity. Labelling, as a scientific imperative, is concerned with that which is explicit, substantial and concrete, therefore the symptomatological diagnostics of the biomedical model, insofar as this model aims at identifying and classifying mental illnesses as exactly defined disease entities, seems well-suited to the classification of physical diseases. To say that one has epilepsy is to locate a fundamentally physiological infirmity in a specific part of the brain, to cite its biological aetiology, and to posit a particular treatment. As a biologically regulated malady, epilepsy can be delineated and anatomised in the lexicon of the natural scientific operative. Physical disease, then, can be grasped as incontrovertibly bounded. The diseased body can be anatomised and scrutinised, leading to meticulous and unerring discovery of the space which the disease, as a physical entity, occupies and environs. It is when this essential dissection of the disease, as an embodied and quantified thing, is transferred and imposed as a methodological exigency on to the human sciences, that a violent ambiguity emerges.

The psychiatrist, operating as "doctor for diseases of the soul" (Van den Berg, 1987), aims his diagnostic bolt at the individual's consciousness, her subjectivity; but in his capacity as scientist and technician, he reifies that consciousness, thereby literalising the metaphor that is mental illness (Szasz, 2000). Through the symptomatological diagnosis of the biomedical

model the consciousness of the mentally ill individual is biologised, 'thingified' at the hands of the mechanomorphic functioning of the scientific endeavour (Szasz, 1973: 196). It is through the scientific orientation towards the spatiality of human existence that the mentally ill subject is converted into a diseased object. This soulless dissection and classification of the individual subject is grounded in the biomedical priority of bodyhood and physical coexistence in a world of fundamentally physical entities (Boss, 1979). In investigating the constitutional biological determinants of mental illness, psychiatry, always unshakable in its employment of symptomatological diagnostics, casts its exact and systematic gaze on the working of the "troubled brain" rather than the "troubled mind" (Andreasson, cited in Kiesler, 2000: 26).

Inexorably dogmatic in its focus on biological mechanism, psychiatry, and psychiatric diagnosis in specific, evinces a dull unfeeling act of discernment, which posits the subject's psychic unrest as being comprehensively reducible to a physiological disturbance. The individual's experience, his subjective apprehension of himself as a mentally ill individual, is simplified. The rich entanglement that is his manifold of experience is denied. He has a sickness. That is all. It is this author's suggestion that the act of diagnosis, the act of informing the patient that her being as a mentally ill individual is fundamentally and completely understandable in terms scientific and biological, involves an unmindful and tactless reduction that amounts to a total degradation of the individual's experience of her illness. It is in the act of telling, in that grave informative step which 'enlightens' and instructs the patient that her subjective experience, her consciousness of illness, is grounded in a physiological malfunction, that psychiatry evinces an implacable unkindness. To be told that my subjective experience of illness, my most intimately felt concern, is a mere biological manifestation, disallows that experience, it robs it of meaningfulness. And it

does this by incontestably dubbing that experience as an objective symptom of a neurologically based disease entity, an easily identifiable structural anomaly (Szasz, 1987). Thought becomes object, and consciousness is objectified. It is precisely this objectivity, states Kraus (1987), which is not distinctive of the mode of conscious being. Description of the pre-objective nature of the experience of mental illness, a description which does not “temporalise, spatialise and mundanise” that experience, is more fundamentally appropriate to the functioning of the human sciences (ibid: 32).

It is now necessary to procure an understanding of the implications which the scientific attitude, as a function of spatialisation and objectification, have for the individual in terms of the phenomenological experience of being diagnosed.

Psychiatric assessment, the assessment of persons presenting themselves as demonstrating or displaying a particular system of complaints, is brought to its most judicious and apparent clarification in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM 4 from hence forth), as conceived and articulated by the American Psychological Association. The most fundamental feature of this text, this bastion of analytical certitude, is its provision of diagnostic criteria to improve the reliability and vigour of diagnostic estimations and verdicts. It is the authors intent to reveal the ways in which the classificatory prescriptions of this apparently invincible tool of enlightenment and acutely reasonable politic functions to prescribe the ill individual's actions, saying what those actions should be, and what they are, in accordance with the specifics of the illness which the individual presents. To echo the sentiments of one of the participants who contributed to this study:

All my actions, and my explanations for those actions, are understood in terms

of my label. All my actions, x, y, and z, are misinterpreted and are seen as the actions of a person with my label.

In this sense, the diagnostic system employed by the psychiatric community at large, as it is grasped by this researcher and by the participants whose expressions are the source of meaning and truth as recounted in this essay, discloses a distinctly ungenerous politic of restriction, which functions as a disavowance of the sick individual from her inherently experience of her illness. This structure of statistical diagnosis essentially informs the individual of the specific system of behaviours which one manifesting her illness would, and should present, thereby delineating the potential behavioural motions of that individual within the terms of the diagnostic classification to which she is thought to belong. This notion of “belonging” to the diagnosis unfolded within the asseverations of the participants in this study as an entrapment which clouds one's identity, and conceals all uniqueness.

I would like to proceed in my argument for this point with an examination of the notion of the category, as it is understood and expressed as an axiom within the DSM 4 diagnostic system:

Psychiatric diagnoses are described as examples of ‘natural categories; concepts that define and group world objects by a set of rules, and which have the characteristics of being organised around ‘best examples’ or ‘prototypes’ possessing vague or fuzzy boundaries.’ (Fraumann, 1994: 4, cited in Rentoul, 1995: 51).

The notion of the category, as it is conceptualised within the psychiatric framework, posits a categorically defined class of entities that is objectively observable in the world. Cognitive psychology makes the necessary distinction between such categories and the relative concepts which are descriptive of the constituents of those categories. The position taken within the DSM 4 classificatory system, however, does not differentiate between concepts and the categories

which are their exemplification, and makes the somewhat dubious assumption, based on its inherently naïve realism, that descriptions generated correspond directly and precisely with phenomena as they are manifest in the world (ibid). This unbending construction of the category as the most exact and definitive account of the vagaries of mental illness is based on a grouping together of conditions displaying particular symptoms, which are shown to be demonstrably born out of a common biopsychosocial aetiology (World Health Organisation, 1992). It is suggested in this dissertation that the category, as a descriptive tool within the psychiatric operative, functions simultaneously as a predictive forecasting of expected behavioural manifestations which, it is suggested, will unfold as behaviours symptomatic of the illness. It is the belief of this author that this inherently predictive description which typifies the languaging of the diagnostic system functions to prescribe the behaviour of the mentally ill individual, thereby channelling that individual's behaviour. The individual's behaviour is thus constrained, rendered determinable, and fundamentally tightened by the shackles of the label which becomes that individual's mould. The one-to-one dialogic relationship which psychiatric discourse assumes as being definitive of its descriptions, in which the category or diagnostic brand is grasped as identical with a specific phenomenological revelation in the world, is apprehended by this researcher as a very real delimitation of the indeterminable fullness of that experience. And it is in terms of the pretensions towards exactitude which the diagnostic system upholds, that this constriction is most stringently evinced. It is this appraisal of the motions of the sick individual which so unfeelingly manacles the creative progression of that individual through her wholly labyrinthine course.

### Conclusion

The bleak denouement of this curling expression of the phenomenological unclosing of

psychiatric diagnosis, as this author understands it to be felt by the labelled individuals who are its victims, amounts to a tightening devitalisation of the freedom of individual subjectivity and consciousness. It is suggested in this paper that through the act of telling, in which the individual – diminished and incapacitated in her position as the one diagnosed – is informed of her diagnosis, that the individual is thereby clasped, bound in a fastening hold, and thus contained.

The somewhat diffuse exploration of the Sartrean notion of consciousness, as exposed within this work, presents what this author grasps as being the most correct expression of consciousness as an experiential relatedness that is man's being in the world. It is within this theoretical context that my conviction in the delimiting effects of labelling finds its grounding and its reason. As has been explicated here-in, consciousness can only be grasped as that which is essentially shapeless, fugitive in its motion, and limitless in its potential and agency (Sartre, 1957). Consciousness lives its fluidity, its unclasped evanescence and dynamism, through the embodied realness that is man's being-in-the-world. And so, although Sartre defines the being of consciousness as that which is unbounded, always shifting in its own intentionality, he at the same time acknowledges those factual constraints which are the object-like elements of being-in-the-world, and which function to locate the individual, to place her within that which she calls her 'situation'. The existence of the conscious being is therefore ambiguously defined as a freedom within facticity, a drifting consciousness within a distinct encapsulating channel (Sartre, 1943). Within this ontological ambiguity that is said to structure the experience of individual consciousness, Sartre nonetheless expresses a conviction in the experientially real freedom which he advocates as definitive of man's being-in-the-world. Thus, those elements of being-for-itself which operate as the situating of consciousness within its objective location, are not, according to Sartre's schema, experienced as

a total limitation of the ec-static freedom that is conscious being. Freedom within facticity is still freedom in totality.

It is at this point that the function of the diagnostic label as a concealment, and an essential thwarting of individual freedom can be seen. It is suggested that the label is met by the experiencing individual as that which prescribes, stipulates, delineates and circumscribes that individual's being-in-the-world. As has been expressed, the label is disclosed as a placing of consciousness within a scientifically (and biologically) defined spacio-temporal location. Through the label, the consciousness of the labelled individual is dissected, anatomised, and giving a form (Boss, 1979). The label unclothes in the presence of the individual as a systematic and implacable encasement within which that individual is said to fit, and it is through this exigent fixture that the labelled individual comes to grasp himself as enclosed, bound up, and petrified\*. It is through the act of labelling that consciousness is given an undeviating and scientifically defined form, and thereby translated into that which is substantial, immovable, and motionless. The shifting autonomy that once defined consciousness is converted through the

diagnostic act into a still and brute fact, which is robbed of its being as an intentional directedness. Consciousness is thereby turned into that which is unalterable, shrouded and clutched within its identity. It is thus that the consciousness of the labelled individual, as it is grasped by this author, begins to partake in the mode of the being of objects, that is, being-for-itself. In being informed of its presencing in the world as an unbending fact, a fixed situatedness, the consciousness of the labelled individual is thereby robbed of its freedom; its fleeting potentiality is despoiled and disallowed. It is thus that consciousness, through the experiential prescriptivism and clasping circumscription inherent within the phenomenological disclosure of the label, is most unfortunately and relentlessly bound, pinioned, and fastened.

\*I use the word "petrified" here in its literal sense, that is, the conversion of a substance into stone.

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