

Social Disorientation:
A (Critical) Phenomenological Study

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Fig 1. Constantin Mehmel, *Three Clay Figures*, 2024.

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ABSTRACT

The everyday language term “disorientation” can be applied to a vast range of different phenomena. As evidenced by everyday discourse, talk of disorientation cuts across both positive, negative, as well as more ambivalent experiences of emotional upheaval in which one appears to lose one’s bearings in and with the social world. For example, one may report a sense of disorientation in response to falling in love, losing a loved one, or misfitting the social norms. In such cases, the term “disorientation” is not evoked in the literal sense of disorientation, namely the malfunctioning of orientation processes in navigating physical space. Rather, it is used in the metaphorical sense, namely the experience of feeling at a loss as to how to go on with one’s own life. This thesis is about the phenomenon of disorientation in its metaphorical sense. Drawing on resources in phenomenology, social philosophy, philosophy of emotions, and philosophy of agency, I examine in detail what it is like first-personally to experience metaphorical disorientation in navigating social space. Despite the heterogeneous nature of metaphorical disorientation, I argue that there is a unifying phenomenological structure underlying paradigmatic cases of metaphorical disorientation. I call this phenomenological structure “social disorientation” and demonstrate that it consists in a constitutive relationship between feeling not at home and perceived lack of agency over one’s personal future. In developing and defending the phenomenological category of social disorientation, I aim to contribute not only to the small but growing scholarship on metaphorical disorientation experiences in particular, but also to philosophical scholarship concerning social life in general.

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INTRODUCTION

The everyday language term “disorientation” can be applied to a vast range of different phenomena.¹ As evidenced by everyday discourse, talk of disorientation cuts across positive, negative, as well as more ambivalent experiences of emotional upheaval in which one appears to lose one’s bearings in and with the social world. For example, one may report a sense of disorientation in response to falling in love, losing a loved one, or misfitting the social norms. In such cases, the term “disorientation” is not evoked in the literal sense of disorientation, namely the malfunctioning of orientation processes in navigating physical space. Rather, it is used in the metaphorical sense, namely the experience of feeling at a loss as to how to go on with one’s own life. This thesis is about the phenomenon of disorientation *in its metaphorical sense*. The metaphor of disorientation operates as an effective figure of speech that I take to disclose a phenomenological reality: namely, a significant alteration in how one can navigate social space in relation to oneself, others, and the social world. But I also believe the talk of disorientation as metaphor risks obscuring this very phenomenological reality, where such talk is often used to stand in for an experience, or set of experiences, that remains vague or unarticulated. Drawing on resources in phenomenology, social philosophy, philosophy of emotions, and philosophy of agency, in this thesis I articulate this phenomenological reality and examine in detail what it is like first-personally to experience metaphorical disorientation in navigating social space. Despite the heterogeneous nature of metaphorical disorientation, I argue that

¹ The linguistic-philosophical reflections that underpin this thesis take their point of departure from the *English* everyday use of the term “disorientation”. However, I suspect them to also hold true for other languages, at least those languages that rely heavily on spatial metaphors.

there is a unifying phenomenological structure underlying paradigmatic cases of metaphorical disorientation. I call this phenomenological structure “social disorientation”.²

0.1. The Designation Problem

Although certainly no stranger to philosophical discussion, metaphorical disorientation experiences have received increasing attention in recent years.³ This includes philosophical treatment in the fields of phenomenology, ethics, philosophy of emotions, philosophy of disability studies, or practical philosophy more broadly.⁴ However different their

² Since this thesis is about metaphorical disorientation, I am neither going to focus in much detail on literal disorientation nor going to include such cases in my search for an underlying phenomenological structure. This is not only because a philosophical exploration of metaphorical disorientation is already no easy phenomenological task. But it is also, and perhaps more importantly, because it is my contention that metaphorical disorientation involves a distinctive phenomenology that differs in significant ways from that of literal disorientation. As I establish in Chapter One, there are good reasons – phenomenological and conceptual – to study metaphorical disorientation as a phenomenon *in its own right*, where this defies a unified treatment under the label of disorientation *simpliciter*, that is, including both literal and metaphorical cases.

³ For an historical overview of philosophical treatments of metaphorical disorientation experiences, see Ami Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3–12. For an overview of the state-of-art research on “disorientation” across disciplines (spanning both literal and metaphorical cases), see Marcella Schmidt Di Friedberg, *Geographies of Disorientation*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁴ For phenomenology, see e.g., Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 543–74, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832>; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness', *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (August 2007): 149–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>; Joel Krueger, 'Finding (and Losing) One's Way: Autism, Social Impairments, and the Politics of Space', *Phenomenology and Mind*, no. 21 (1 December 2021): 20–33; Corinne Lajoie, 'Being at Home: A Feminist Phenomenology of Disorientation in Illness', *Hypatia* 34, no. 3 (2019): 546–69, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12476>; Helen Ngo, "'Get Over It?" Racialised Temporalities and Bodily Orientations in Time', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 40, no. 2 (March 2019): 239–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2019.1577231>. For ethics, see e.g., Ami Harbin, 'Bodily Disorientation and Moral Change', *Hypatia* 27, no. 2 (2012): 261–80; Harbin, 'Disorientation and the Medicalization of Struggle', *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 7, no. 1 (2014): 99–121, <https://doi.org/10.2979/intjfemappbio.7.1.99>; Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*; Harbin, 'Inducing Fear', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 23, no. 3–4 (August 2020): 501–13, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-020-10103-1>. For philosophy of emotions, see e.g., Owen Earnshaw, 'Disorientation and Cognitive Enquiry', in *The Value of Emotions for Knowledge* (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2019), 177–93. For philosophy of disability studies, see e.g., Corinne Lajoie, 'The Problems of Access: A Crip Rejoinder via the Phenomenology of Spatial Belonging', *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 8, no. 2 (June 2022): 318–37,

methodological and analytic intents are, what unites these works is a common concern: namely, to challenge a dominant way of talking about metaphorical disorientation that has underwritten previous philosophical considerations and still, to this date, operates in public discourse. On such a view, metaphorical disorientation is not only (a) a negative experience to be overcome as soon as possible but also amounts to (b) a failure of the disoriented person to orientate properly. Just think of cases of what is sometimes called “disenfranchised grief”, where people report being told to simply “get over it” in response to expressing a sense of not knowing how to go on in their life after a certain loss (e.g., loss of job, romantic breakup, or miscarriage). Or when queer and trans* folks are being denied social recognition and validity of what can be a deeply disorientating experience of navigating a social world that is far from welcoming, and instead being told to “be or act normal”. The growing body of philosophical research has, to my mind, rightly begun to challenge such a view. Not only does it fail to attend to the complex nexus of social norms and wider power relations within which metaphorical disorientation experiences arise.⁵ But it also pre-emptively settles the normative question of whether these difficult experiences may not have some positive effects after all.⁶

Despite this growing interest in metaphorical disorientation as an important philosophical topic, the phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation experiences has

<https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2021.6>; Ryan C. Parrey, 'Being Disoriented: Uncertain Encounters with Disability', *Disability Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (May 2016), <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v36i2.4555>; Parrey, 'Embracing Disorientation in the Disability Studies Classroom', *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 14, no. 1 (2020): 37–56. For practical philosophy more broadly, see e.g., Christopher Cowley, 'Divorce, Disorientation, and Remarriage', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 23, no. 3–4 (August 2020): 531–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-019-10036-4>; Pilar Lopez-Cantero and Alfred Archer, 'Lost without You: The Value of Falling out of Love', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 23, no. 3 (1 August 2020): 515–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-020-10067-2>; Henk Jasper Van Gils-Schmidt, 'Practical Disorientation & Transformative Experiences as a Framework for Understanding & Exploring the Covid-19 Pandemic's Impact', *Revista de Filosofie Aplicata* 3, Summer (2020): 52–68.

⁵ See Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

⁶ See Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*.

remained surprisingly under-researched. Now, it may seem tempting to assume that, in order to challenge the view outlined above, it is sufficient to have an extensionally adequate conception: that is, a conception of metaphorical disorientation that can accommodate all the experiences that people typically recognise as disorientation in the metaphorical sense, where this includes experiences that serve as counterexamples to the above view. But, of course, this is not sufficient for addressing what metaphorical disorientation experiences *are*. It does neither tell us how various different phenomena that people typically recognise as disorientation actually relate to one another, nor if there are any meaningful links between them. Consider a variation of the two examples already introduced – interpersonal grief and queerphobia – both of which scholars like Harbin consider paradigmatic experiences of metaphorical disorientation: what, if any, links are there between the disorientation of losing a loved and the disorientation of experiencing queerphobia? Bereavement centrally concerns the loss of life possibilities that are bound up with the deceased, to the effect that many bereaved people report a sense of feeling directionless going forward.⁷ In contrast, queerphobia involves the confrontation with being socially misrecognised by virtue of being perceived to belong to the social category of queer, where this can take various forms and may bring about fear of being visibly queer in certain social spaces.⁸ Whatever the talk of “disorientation” is meant to play in each case, this brief comparison suggests that metaphorical disorientation experiences can not only differ in terms of content of experience, but also scope, intensity, and depth of experience, as well as the valenced character of experience. To complicate things further, there is a growing consensus that grief comes with a heterogeneous phenomenology,⁹ and

⁷ See Constantin Mehmel, 'Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 22, no. 4 (September 2023): 991–1010, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-021-09752-z>.

⁸ See Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*.

⁹ See Matthew Ratcliffe, *Grief Worlds: A Study of Emotional Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2023).

it does not seem far stretched to assume that experiences of queerphobia similarly refuse a homogeneous treatment.

These reflections begin to put pressure on the very metaphor of disorientation and bring out a central problem for any philosophical conception of metaphorical disorientation. I call this the “designation problem” (henceforth “DP”):

Q^{DP}: Is there merely a terminological unity, or a more substantive kind of unity between these seemingly distinct and heterogeneous phenomena?

In my view, there is a principal distinction to be drawn between these two senses of unity. This is because the mere existence of a single term covering various phenomena is not sufficient for treating such phenomena as *unified in any meaningful way(s)*, where this would provide phenomenological justification for the metaphorical use of “disorientation”. In particular, appealing to a mere terminological unity does not sufficiently address (1) what type of experience(s) the metaphor of disorientation exactly designates and (2) how we can categorise the relevant type of experience(s) accurately in order to mark the conceptual limits of the category of metaphorical disorientation. My goal in this thesis is to develop a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation that can fulfil these two requirements and provide a successful answer to the DP. And for this, I develop the phenomenological category of metaphorical disorientation *as* social disorientation. As I hope to show throughout this thesis, I view such a project to be foundational for any serious attempt to establish metaphorical disorientation as an important philosophical category carrying critical import.

0.2. Methodological Approach

Before I provide an overview of my argument in the subsequent chapters and outline the phenomenological category of metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation, let me comment on my methodology. There are two central features to the methodological approach that I employ in this thesis in order to develop a response to the DP.

First: in developing a response to the DP, my concern is exclusively with metaphorical disorientation as a *phenomenological category* that is typified by certain experiences. I am neither interested in metaphorical disorientation as a *cultural trope* (e.g., to capture turbulent times of the 21st century)¹⁰ nor in metaphorical disorientation as a *functional category* (e.g., marked by specific actions one is unable to perform). To be clear, this does not assume that our current times do not play a part in generating and/or amplifying metaphorical disorientation experiences, nor that metaphorical disorientation experiences may not involve the inability to perform certain actions. However, my primary aim and concern in this thesis is to develop a *phenomenological conception* of metaphorical disorientation that achieves two things: (1) to identify what is central to the relevant type of experience(s) and, in doing so, (2) to appreciate what is distinctive of the relevant type of experience(s) in contrast to other types of experiencing emotional upheaval in navigating social space. I propose that such a phenomenological conception can provide a philosophically satisfying answer to the DP, which I hope to demonstrate in this thesis.

Some readers may have immediate doubts concerning both the possibility and legitimacy of identifying a unifying phenomenological structure, let alone a single

¹⁰ E.g., Bernhard Stiegler, *Technics and Time. 2: Disorientation* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2009). Stiegler gives a portrayal of our contemporary era as one of “disorientation”, critically examining the ways in which new technologies have changed human time, where this results in a “disoriented world”.

phenomenological object. To motivate the plausibility of the phenomenological project I am going to pursue in this thesis, therefore, it is instructive to attend to these doubts here.¹¹ Considering the vast applicability of the metaphor of “disorientation” in everyday life, one may object that there will always be counterexamples to a phenomenological conception of the common features of metaphorical disorientation experiences. Along these lines, one may therefore argue that a phenomenological conception that aims to identify common features will eventually fail. Of course, one could hold onto such a project by excluding certain type(s) of experience from consideration *as* metaphorical disorientation. At this point, however, a worry concerning the legitimacy of such a project would kick in: namely, that one would presuppose access to the very norm of what counts as metaphorical disorientation that such an account in fact seeks to provide.

I have some sympathy with these two worries that clearly contribute to, and demonstrate the importance of, the DP. But let me also emphasise that developing such a phenomenological conception should not be overstated. By employing metaphorical disorientation as a phenomenological category, I do not commit to the position that there will be, or must be, a one-to-one correspondence between the here proposed understanding and all everyday uses of “disorientation” in the metaphorical sense. This is because everyday uses are likely employed in the service of articulating various different experiences that need not necessarily designate the same phenomenological reality. Hence, I am open to the possibility that there will be different uses of the term (a point I shall come back to throughout this thesis). At the same time, my aim is to analyse paradigmatic examples of metaphorical disorientation experiences, where this yields a principled way by which to

¹¹ In articulating these two doubts, I explicitly draw on Matthew Burch, 'Phenomenology's Place in the Philosophy of Medicine', *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 44, no. 3 (June 2023): 213–16, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11017-023-09619-1>. Burch develops a critique of existing phenomenological accounts of medicine (notably, Toombs, Svenaeus, and Carel), which I believe to be of general concern for any phenomenological project and therefore also worth examining in the context of my project.

identify metaphorical disorientation experiences and distinguish them from other experiences of emotional upheaval and disturbance. So, while my phenomenological conception may not correspond to *all* everyday uses of metaphorical disorientation, it is committed to making sense of *paradigmatic* examples that are ordinarily treated as disorientation in the metaphorical sense.

Second: in developing a response to the DP, many of my paradigmatic examples in this thesis broadly concern *experiences of queer people*. I appeal to first-personal testimonies from other people as well as real-life and imaginary examples in relation to my own lived experience as someone who is genderqueer and inhabits a queer sexual orientation.¹² Some readers may take this to limit the scope of my analysis. And from a phenomenological perspective, it is indeed not self-evident how the appeal to socially specific experience can aid the project of identifying something underlying various experiences of metaphorical disorientation, i.e., including those experiences that are not bound up with a queer social identity. Let me therefore make explicit my reason for this choice of focus. I do not appeal to such and related experiences because I view them phenomenologically to bring out something specific to queer people only. To the contrary, I employ them methodologically to bring out, and make phenomenologically salient, a shared condition of possibility for experiencing metaphorical disorientation in the first place: namely, a complex interplay of personal, interpersonal, and social possibilities that structures *anyone's* experience of navigating social space and that shapes if and to what extent *anyone* can come to feel either orientated or disorientated in navigating social space.

¹² There are, of course, also other aspects – notably, that I am White – that play a central role in my lived experience in general as well as in my lived experience of my genderqueerness and sexual queerness in particular.

In this, I build on a phenomenological methodology as recently put forward by Ward.¹³ Ward makes a phenomenological case for the methodological import of socially specific breakdown experiences due to one's social identity (like being queer) for uncovering shared conditions of experience. In support of this, she proceeds from an analysis of Heidegger's use of breakdown experiences in *Being and Time*.¹⁴ As disruptions to the practical pursuit of one's projects, Ward identifies them to have a two-fold function in Heidegger's work: first, they can draw attention to the conditions of experience that make possible the practical pursuit of one's projects, where second, this then allows for a phenomenological inquiry to theorise those conditions of experience. Whereas Heidegger examines breakdown experiences that are not specific to certain groups of people (notably, the breakdown of one's equipment), Ward goes on to identify this methodological approach to be at work in other phenomenological investigations concerned with breakdown experiences that are specific to certain groups of people. In particular, she turns to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of WWI veteran "Schneider", whose inability to perform certain bodily actions due to a traumatic brain injury allows Merleau-Ponty to uncover shared conditions of experience for motricity and perception.¹⁵ Extending this methodological use of breakdown experiences specific to certain people only, Ward demonstrates 'that

¹³ Katherine Ward, 'Standpoint Phenomenology' (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2020), https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/1059517/Ward_georgetown_0076D_14515.pdf?sequence=1; Ward, 'Breaking down Experience—Heidegger's Methodological Use of Breakdown in *Being and Time*', *European Journal of Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (December 2021): 712–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12600>; Ward, 'Misfitting, Breakdowns, and the Normal in Merleau-Ponty', *Human Studies* 45, no. 4 (December 2022): 697–718, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-022-09649-z>; Ward 'The Body Maledict: Understanding the Method of Standpoint Phenomenology through the Work of Frantz Fanon', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 2 (June 2023): 340–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12484>.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19. Aufl., unveränd. Nachdr. d. 15. Aufl. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006).

¹⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012).

other breakdowns that might be distinctive of the experiences of a particular group [*qua* social identity], might be similarly revelatory'.¹⁶

My choice to focus on experiences of queer people is grounded in Ward's argument for the phenomenological revelatory character of socially specific breakdown experiences. But let me emphasise that I make a distinction between two broad and importantly different types of socially specific experiences: (1) negatively valenced experiences of navigating social space due to how one is socially positioned in relation to dominant norms and power structures (corresponding to what Ward considers socially specific breakdown experiences); and (2) positively valenced experiences of navigating social space in spite of how one is socially positioned in relation to dominant social norms and power structures. I contend that both types are crucial for uncovering shared conditions of experience, with a view to yielding a more sensitive and phenomenologically discerning methodological approach: namely, one that relies on socially specific experience in all its experiential and emotional complexity, where both negative *and* positive experiences are recognised for their methodological import to give insight into the experiential structure of metaphorical disorientation that may otherwise remain hidden or, worse, obscured.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ward, 'Standpoint Phenomenology', 74. In drawing on Ward's phenomenological methodology, my concern is exclusively with her argument for the methodological role of socially specific breakdown experiences for phenomenological analysis. But note that this is part of Ward's larger project to develop what she calls "standpoint phenomenology", which consists in two central theses: (1) social identity can shape access to phenomenological insight and (2) marginalised social identities can have a privileged standpoint on phenomenological analysis by virtue of uncovering conditions of experience that may otherwise remain hidden from a non-marginalised, dominant standpoint.

¹⁷ A note of caution here: By broadening the methodological scope, I neither wish to deny that negative experiences are unfortunately an all too common and frequent part of the social reality of queer people, nor to make any concessions to problematic contemporary narratives of the sorts of "queer is great". As trans* theorist Hil Malatino observes in their study of the ordinariness of negative affect for trans* people, 'everyday scenes shaped by forms of negativity ... are too often occluded by a focus on the spectacular and the catastrophic' (Hil Malatino, *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), 6). Without suggesting this insight could simply be transferred to how queer people are typically affectively portrayed, I share this worry. At the same time, I also want to caution against a one-sided focus on the negative, however central it is to the social reality of queer people. As Mariana Ortega points out in her analysis of 'multiplicitous selves' (broadly, the recognition that one person inhabits

In drawing on both (1) *and* (2), I depart from a growing body of phenomenological scholarship – often self-identifying as “critical phenomenology” – in its tendency to appeal primarily to the first type of socially specific experience, where this is done ‘in the service of reflexive inquiry into how power relations structure experience’.¹⁸ This “critical” turn in contemporary phenomenology seeks to uncover the ways in which historically constituted power structures such as heteronormativity, patriarchy, or racism operate as background conditions of experience, where this then shapes experience in different ways depending on what social identity one occupies in relation to those power structures. I believe this critical turn to do important work and share the commitment to incorporating a critical investigation of power relations into phenomenological analysis. That said, the underlying and often merely implicit decision to focus primarily on (1) tends to come with two problematic methodological implications: problematic for theorising socially specific experience in general and for theorising metaphorical disorientation via socially specific experience in particular.

On the one hand, there is the tendency to deflate the lived experience of marginalised social identities into breakdown experiences. Being experientially exposed to and even shaped by the structures of marginalisation can and often does come with disruptions to transparent, smooth activity in navigating social space. But as I am going to demonstrate throughout this thesis, such exposure need not always and necessarily be first-personally experienced as disrupting one’s experiential ability to engage in meaningful

multiple different social identities in relation to social categories such as race, class, sexuality, etc.): ‘I do not wish to overlook or forget those moments when multiplicitous selves struggle with everydayness and find ways, yes, to “make do,” to feel comfortable in spite of a clear understanding of the ways in which power relations are bound to undermine, to hurt, to alienate.’ (Marina Ortega, *In-between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, SUNY Series, Philosophy and Race (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), 205).

¹⁸ Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, eds., *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2020), xiv.

activity relevant to one's practical pursuit and thus amount to a breakdown experience.¹⁹ And on the other hand, there is the tendency to neglect the agential dimension involved in navigating social space that takes place against the backdrop of, but is not exhausted by the appeal to, one's social identity. What specific social identity one occupies and therefore how one is socially positioned in specific ways in relation to the dominant social norms and power structures certainly shapes who one is and can be. But this alone does not give us much insight into the kind of projects one actually pursues and first-personally identifies with in an exercise of one's own agency. However, as I am going to argue in this thesis, a careful analysis of the agential dimension operating at an existential, self-relating level of personhood is in fact required in order to capture the phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation in general, and its debilitating character in particular.

Critical phenomenologists may ask what follows from these critical remarks for the overall status of my methodological approach. As stated in the title of my thesis, ultimately I understand my own work to qualify as a *(critical) phenomenological study*. But since I do not take the plausibility of the two central features of my methodology – (1) to identify a phenomenological structure underlying various experiences of metaphorical

¹⁹ It is here where a potential disagreement with Ward's understanding of the methodological role of socially specific breakdown experiences emerges. In her most recent paper, Ward tentatively suggests: 'People with disabilities, for example, often face obstacles that require they think explicitly about how to move their bodies to navigate around obstacles or through environments that are not designed for them. It is beyond the scope of the article to argue for this, but I think these experiences should be thought of as breakdown experiences.' (Ward, 'The Body Maledict', 18, fn. 6). I interpret Ward to suggest that, inasmuch as the practical pursuit of one's project is disrupted, the relevant type of experience qualifies as a breakdown experience. By implication, being disrupted in smooth, transparent activity in navigating social space *qua* exposure to structures of marginalisation would presumably also qualify as a breakdown experience. Now, while certain social spaces will most certainly give rise to a breakdown experience, I caution against viewing all activity of navigating social spaces that are not meant for oneself unequivocally as breakdown experiences. As Ward suggests elsewhere, a breakdown experience involves 'an interruption to the project ... [that] must concern your ability to complete the task as you are intentionally pursuing it'. (Ward, 'Breaking down Experience', 729, fn. 18). Hence, whether or not something qualifies as a breakdown experience turns on the task that one is pursuing. But referring to 'navigating social space' does not, in my view, do the required phenomenological work of identifying the *relevant* task at hand.

disorientation for anyone alike, while simultaneously (2) attending to the importance of socially specific experience – to turn on this issue, I leave it to the reader to decide whether my methodological approach should be considered “phenomenological”, “critical phenomenological”, or indeed, as I favour, “(critical) phenomenological”.²⁰

²⁰ While beyond the scope of this thesis, I believe a discerning answer turns on two related but analytically distinct questions: (1) Does my methodological approach align with those commitments common to critical phenomenology? But also (2) do those commitments mark a departure from, rather than a continuation of, what is contrastingly called “classical” phenomenology, where this warrants the status of a different methodology compared to its phenomenological predecessors? Let me at least briefly gesture towards my own line of thinking about (1) and (2). Critical phenomenologists typically share a number of core commitments, including:

- (a) to analyse the way power structures shape experience,
- (b) where this turns on theorising subjectivity in relation to various intersecting categories of social identity, in order
- (c) to challenge those power structures that negatively impact and harm marginalised social identities.
- (d) Taken together, (a) – (c) are assumed to make phenomenology “critical” and, in this sense, different from “classical” phenomenology.

Cf. Lana Rodemeyer, 'A Phenomenological Critique of Critical Phenomenology', in *Phenomenology as Critique: Why Method Matters*, ed. Andreea Smaranda Aldea, David Carr, and Sara Heinämaa, Routledge Research in Phenomenology (New York: Routledge, 2022), 102. For one of the most prominent articulations of the critical phenomenological project, see for example Lisa Guenther, 'Six Senses of Critique for Critical Phenomenology', *Puncta* 4, no. 2 (December 2021): 5–23, <https://doi.org/10.5399/PJCP.v4i2.2>; Weiss, Murphy, and Salamon, *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*.

While I share the importance of (a) and (b), I have already addressed the potential limitations that can emerge from a one-sided focus on the ways power structures negatively impact marginalised social identities. In addition, it should also be clear that my thesis does not target power structures per se and thus departs from what critical phenomenologists typically target in their inquiry; cf. Ward, 'Standpoint Phenomenology', 8–9. As for (c), while I share the critical call to challenge existing power structures, I am sceptical about the *extent* to which philosophy can fulfil this task. For instance, critical phenomenologist Lisa Guenther proclaims, ‘the ultimate goal of critical phenomenology is not just to interpret the world, but also to change it’. (Lisa Guenther, 'Critical Phenomenology', in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, ed. Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 16). Now, I share the underlying Marxist sentiment, but it is precisely for this reason, as rooted in my own political activism, that I am convinced that any real challenge to, and thus emancipation from, those power structures must ultimately be grounded in material struggles. And finally, as for (d), I am cautious about viewing “critical” phenomenology to be uniquely distinct from “classical” phenomenology if it is still to remain phenomenology. In this, I share Lanei Rodemeyer’s phenomenological critique of critical phenomenology, while (let me repeat!) acknowledging the important work carried out in its name and indeed sharing the commitment to incorporating a critical investigation of power relations into phenomenological analysis. See Lana Rodemeyer 'A Phenomenological Critique of Critical Phenomenology'.

0.3. Outline of Chapters

Having laid out my methodological approach, let me close this introduction by providing a broad outline of the phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation that I develop and defend in this thesis. Over the course of five chapters I identify and characterise a unifying phenomenological structure – called: *social disorientation* – that underlies paradigmatic experiences of metaphorical disorientation. I argue that a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation *as* social disorientation can provide a philosophically satisfying answer to the DP. In advancing this argument, I hope to make a case for the relevance of the phenomenological category of social disorientation not only for contributing to the growing philosophical scholarship on metaphorical disorientation in particular, but also for contributing to philosophical scholarship concerning social life in general.

In this introduction, I have identified the DP as a significant challenge for any philosophical conception of metaphorical disorientation. In *Chapter One: Theorising Metaphorical Disorientation*, I critically examine the three most prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation in light of the DP. These are Ami Harbin’s proposal to theorise metaphorical disorientation as a “family resemblance concept”, Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al.’s proposal to theorise metaphorical disorientation by taking literal disorientation as the paradigm case, and Sara Ahmed’s proposal to theorise metaphorical disorientation by taking literal disorientation as an instructive metaphor. I argue that all three accounts fail to capture the distinctive phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation. In particular, I develop a phenomenological case against spatialising metaphorical disorientation in relation to literal disorientation, as exemplified by Velasco et al. and Ahmed. In my view, a satisfying answer to the DP requires an alternative to such a spatialising

strategy. For this, I introduce the phenomenological category of “social disorientation” and propose that, in order to get clear on the distinctive phenomenology of loss (i.e., loss of orientation) operative in social disorientation, we must first start with “social orientation” and examine its felt phenomenology via the notion of home.

Building on this, Chapter Two and Chapter Three are dedicated to elucidating the phenomenology of social orientation by way of developing a phenomenological conception of feeling at home in navigating social space. In *Chapter Two: The Promise of Home*, I begin by turning to standard conceptions of feeling at home that model the relevant type of experience on feeling at home in domestic space, where home is taken in the literal sense. I argue that this fails to account for important types of feeling at home, where home is taken in the metaphorical sense of belonging regardless of physical space. To capture what underlies feeling at home in its various experiential manifestations, I draw on Simon May’s account of love as grounded in the promise of home and articulate an alternative way of theorising the phenomenology of feeling at home. I argue that, in order to feel at home in navigating social space, one must be grounded in a promise of home in and through other people who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. This is irrespective of the extent to which one is physically, practically, and/or emotionally familiar with the given surroundings. On this conception, therefore, there exists no essential relationship between feeling at home and space-familiarity.

In *Chapter Three: Inhabiting the Future*, I shift my analytical focus away from the necessary affective-interpersonal fit to the necessary futural-agential fit required for feeling at home in navigating social space. To bring into view the promise-character of feeling at home, I propose a comparative phenomenological strategy of thinking together the promise of home and the closely related phenomenon of hope. For this, I turn to Cheshire Calhoun’s model of “the phenomenological idea of the determinate future

containing success” to characterise hope’s futural orientation. I argue that her model presupposes a degree of agency that is incompatible with hope against hope. But I also argue that this agency problem clarifies *a contrario* the exercise of agency in temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. I demonstrate that what it means to experience a promise of home is to live and act under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which one’s deep personal commitments find a meaningful place, as premised on one’s subjective sense of one’s own agency as one of empowerment. In the process, I also address the relationship between the promise of home and hope and establish that it is incompatible with hope against hope.

Against my phenomenological characterisation of feeling at home as developed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, in *Chapter Four: Two Senses of Home-Absence*, I turn to the negative counterpart to feeling at home in navigating social space. My focus here is on introducing and elaborating the phenomenological category of feeling not at home as central to the phenomenology of social disorientation. To do this, I begin by introducing a foundational phenomenological distinction between two broad and importantly different types of home-absence: *not feeling at home*, and *feeling not at home*. The first type of home-absence captures experiential manifestations of home-negation that actualise in a mere felt difference between oneself and others/social space. I demonstrate that a negation of home does not actualise in a felt lack that would leave a person at a loss as to how to go on. In contrast, the second type of home-absence captures experiential manifestations of home-privation that actualise in a first-personal experience of a lacking a positively valenced sense of home in and through the presence of others/social space. I propose to understand this phenomenologically in terms of the experiential inaccessibility of one’s promise of home. I argue that social disorientation is constitutively

attributable to this experience, where this brings about and actualises in the experience of not knowing how to go on in navigating social space.

Bringing my discussion to a close, in *Chapter Five: Temporal Experience, Powerlessness, and Social Disorientation*, I address in detail what it is like subjectively to experience a sense of not knowing how to go on. Most proposed characterisations of metaphorical disorientation associate a sense of not knowing how to go on with the disappointment of a particular set(s) of anticipations as grounded in habitual patterns of navigating social space. I call this “the disappointed-anticipation model” and argue that it cannot sufficiently account for the altered sense of futurity operative in metaphorical disorientation. Instead, I submit that the relevant phenomenology is primarily attributable to a perceived lack of agency over one’s personal future and demonstrate that such powerlessness takes a distinctively social form as the direct result of feeling not at home in navigating social space. This analysis yields a unifying phenomenological structure, *social disorientation*, where the relevant type of experience consists in a constitutive relationship between feeling not at home and perceived lack of agency over one’s personal future. I submit that a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation can not only avoid the shortcomings of the spatialising strategy introduced in Chapter One, but it can also provide a satisfying answer to the DP.

At last, in *Conclusion: How to Go On?*, I end this thesis by emphasising the importance of making this phenomenological case of metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation and point to future lines of enquiry.

CHAPTER ONE

Theorising Metaphorical Disorientation

In the introduction, I have identified the DP as a significant challenge for any philosophical conception of metaphorical disorientation. In this chapter, I critically examine the three most prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation in light of the DP.

In 1.1., I turn to Ami Harbin's conception of metaphorical disorientation as a "family resemblance concept".¹ I assess Harbin's conception with a view to bringing out two central concerns that underwrite the DP and are in dialectical tension with one another: (a) a concern for the heterogeneity of everyday uses of "disorientation" and (b) a concern for the conceptual distinctiveness of "disorientation" in contrast to other related phenomena. With a more precise formulation of the DP in place, the remainder of this chapter is concerned with examining a prominent strategy for dealing with the DP: namely, to *spatialise* metaphorical disorientation in relation to the literal case of disorientation in navigating physical space. I canvass and critically assess this spatialising strategy by focusing, in 1.2., on Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al.'s explicit solution to the DP,²

¹ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*.

² Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al., 'Temporal Disorientation and the Covid-19 Crisis: Present Episodic Confusion, Past-Oriented Sustained Disbelief, and Future-Oriented Anxiety Are the Three Main Ways in Which People Were Temporally Disoriented during the Pandemic', 1 June 2022, <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/k8p5c>; Pablo Fernandez Velasco, 'Disorientation and GIS-Informed Wilderness Search and Rescue', in *The Philosophy of GIS*, ed. Timothy Tambassi, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 241–51, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16829-2>; Velasco, 'Disorientation and Self-Consciousness: A Phenomenological Inquiry', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 21, no. 1 (February 2022): 203–22, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-020-09659-1>; Pablo Fernández Velasco, Bastien Perroy, and Roberto Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', *Global Discourse* 11, no. 3 (May 2021): 441–62, <https://doi.org/10.1332/204378921X16146158263164>; Pablo Fernandez Velasco and Roberto Casati, 'Subjective Disorientation as a Metacognitive Feeling', *Spatial Cognition & Computation* 20, no. 4 (October 2020): 281–305, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13875868.2020.1768395>; Velasco and Casati, 'The Many Faces of Disorientation: A Response to Daniel R. Montello', *Spatial Cognition & Computation* 20, no. 4 (1 October 2020): 314–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13875868.2020.1772267>; Velasco and Casati, 'Making and Breaking Our Shared World: A Phenomenological Analysis of Disorientation as a Way of Understanding

before I then, in 1.3., turn to Sara Ahmed’s implicit solution to the DP.³ What these solutions have in common, I argue, is that they both fail to take seriously concern (b) for the reason that they each, albeit to different degrees, commit to some sort of equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation. Based on this, in 1.4., I draw out the implications for what a successful phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation must fulfil. I do this by making conceptual space for an alternative solution to the DP and introduce the phenomenological category of *social disorientation*, where this will be the exclusive focus going forward in Chapters Two-Five.

Overall, in this chapter I hope to achieve two things: first, to critically examine the three most prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation (Harbin, Velasco et al., and Ahmed) and identify several phenomenological themes that will be central to our phenomenological project in the remainder of this thesis; and, in doing so, second, to make a phenomenological case against adopting a spatialising strategy for resolving the DP.

1.1. Ami Harbin

I begin by turning to Ami Harbin’s model of metaphorical disorientation as articulated in *Disorientation and Moral Life* that forms the only systematic philosophical study of metaphorical disorientation to date. Harbin introduces the conception of metaphorical disorientation as a “family resemblance concept”, which I interpret as a first approximation of

Collective Emotions in Distributed Cognition', in *The Politics of Emotional Shockwaves*, ed. Ana Falcato and Sara Graça Da Silva (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 203–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56021-8_10.

³ Ahmed, 'Orientations'; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness'; Ahmed 'Mixed Orientations', *Subjectivity* 7, no. 1 (April 2014): 92–109, <https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2013.22>.

an answer to the DP that goes beyond a merely terminological and possibly polysemic criterion. My aim here is to develop a critical discussion of this conception, with a view to further elaborating our understanding of the DP and the requirements for a satisfying conception of metaphorical disorientation.

1.1.1. Family Resemblance

Harbin starts theorising about metaphorical disorientation by attending to everyday uses of “disorientation” in the specific contexts of people’s lives. What people call “disorientation” and how they experience “disorientation” varies significantly, where this sets the bar for what her conception of metaphorical disorientation seeks to accommodate.

In developing her conception of metaphorical disorientation accordingly, Harbin draws from Wittgenstein’s concept of “family resemblance”. Wittgenstein holds the view that there is no single unifying characteristic that is common to all uses of concept *x*. Instead, there is only a network-like cluster (i.e., *family resemblance*) that is established via the use of the everyday language term *x*. How best to characterise the concept *x* is thus determined by its use of particular people in particular contexts.⁴ Applying Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblance to metaphorical disorientation, Harbin provides the following characterisation of metaphorical disorientation:

I want to suggest we understand “disorientation” as a family resemblance concept. Though there is significant variation between different things we call disorientations (like there is significant variation between things we call games), different instances of disorientation are related to each other as are fivers in a rope. Different things we call disorientations in the sense I use the word here have overlapping similarities. ...

⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), section 66.

... there are *threads of relation* that run through these and other cases of disorientation. All the cases I discuss here, roughly speaking, sustained, difficult experiences that make it hard to go on.⁵

I understand Harbin's characterisation of metaphorical disorientation as a "family resemblance concept" as a clear decision against providing a more exact characterisation of the relevant type of experience(s). Harbin specifically takes there to be no necessary and sufficient conditions for an experience to count as metaphorical disorientation. Instead, she argues for a rather *loosened form of unity* – i.e., a family resemblance – between different metaphorical disorientation experiences.⁶ Though they can vary significantly with respect to specific manifestations of their overlapping similarities ('roughly speaking'), they all exhibit the following three overlapping similarities: (1) they are all 'sustained' in the sense that they are not just temporarily fleeting experiences; (2) they are all 'difficult' in the sense that they make a person's life more difficult than it would be without such experience; and (3) they all 'make it hard to go on' in the sense that one's life cannot go on as usual any longer.⁷ On Harbin's conception, therefore, phenomena as diverse and far-ranging as a tsunami, grief, racism, queerphobia, migration, consciousness-raising, and even the first kiss are all treated under the same header of "disorientation" insofar as they all share these overlapping similarities.⁸

⁵ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 17, italics original. For a discussion of how Harbin's use of "family resemblance" goes beyond and departs from Wittgenstein's own account, see Christine M. Koggel, 'Disorientation and Moral Life', *Ethics and Social Welfare* 11, no. 2 (3 April 2017): 191–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2017.1321898>.

⁶ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 21.

⁷ Harbin, 18–19. Concerning the third overlapping similarity ('hard to go on'), it can be added that Harbin rules out (1) *extreme forms* that make it impossible to go on and (2) *minor forms* that merely interrupt an otherwise totally smooth running of things. As for (1), Harbin explicitly rules out psychiatric illnesses as part of her enquiry and furthermore argues against medicalising metaphorical disorientation experiences in terms of psychiatric diagnostic criteria; see Harbin, 12–13; see also Harbin, 'Disorientation and the Medicalization of Struggle'. As for (2), Harbin does not provide an example, though I suspect she has cases in mind like getting a flat tire on your cycle to work.

⁸ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 1–2; Harbin, 'Bodily Disorientation and Moral Change', 266.

1.1.2. Critical Discussion

I interpret Harbin's conception of metaphorical disorientation as a family resemblance concept as a first approximation of an answer to the DP: namely, to identify threads of relation that unify various different phenomena without losing sight of their experiential diversity. Such a proposal comes with certain key merits. The most important one, I argue, is that it allows for the possibility *and* legitimacy of recognising different and diverging uses and experiences of "disorientation". This is important because, as Harbin emphasises, what terms we use to 'describe our personal experiences matters for our ways of coping with or making meaning of them'.⁹ Ruling out certain uses of "disorientation" and consequently discounting them as metaphorical disorientation experiences, therefore, would risk dismissing people's own self-description and obstructing interpretive resources for navigating personal upheaval. On this point, Harbin worries that 'the dismissal of *expressions* of disorientation can mean such individuals are not able to *experience* disorientation in the sense that could be beneficial',¹⁰ where this concern becomes particularly acute for marginalised groups of people being denied interpretive resources.¹¹

Yet, I think that Harbin's proposal falls short of providing a satisfactory answer to the DP. While the use of Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance allows her to think together various differing phenomena, her proposal simultaneously risks extending the conceptual boundaries of metaphorical disorientation too far. That is, a characterisation as broad and permissive as that of Harbin risks covering too many phenomena that pull

⁹ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 16.

¹⁰ Harbin, 157–58, italics original.

¹¹ One example is given by Ngo when she discusses the harmful exhortation to "get over" the historical harms of colonialism in Australia; see Ngo, "'Get Over It'?". For a systematic discussion of the denial of epistemic authority of oppressed individuals and oppressed groups, see Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

into substantially different reactions; recall that she includes e.g., both grief and the first kiss as metaphorical disorientation experiences. Notice that Harbin herself anticipates this potential worry: ‘Given all the variation among the cases of disorientation, it might seem that the cases diverge more than they overlap.’¹² In response, Harbin states: ‘Part of the project of this book is to make the case for the value of considering even very different experiences of disorientation together – not on par, but through the lens of thinking about the place of disorientation in moral life.’¹³ I find this line of response problematic for two reasons.

First: I argue that it exposes a *circularity* internal to Harbin’s justification for a broad conception of metaphorical disorientation. This circularity consists in the fact that Harbin appears to simultaneously argue for the following two positions: (i) a broad conception of metaphorical disorientation brings into view the significance of metaphorical disorientation for moral life, *and* (ii) the significance of metaphorical disorientation for moral life justifies a broad conception of metaphorical disorientation. Position (ii) is illustrated by her above response, whereas position (i) is evidenced by statements like ‘we gain a better understanding of moral life by treating disorientation as a set of related (while still distinct) experiences’.¹⁴ It moreover operates in her use of Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblance, where this makes possible the justification of treating together various different phenomena as “disorientation” by virtue of how the term is used in everyday language. Note that this justification works independently of metaphorical disorientation’s significance for moral life and furthermore serves as a preliminary step for then turning to the exploration of metaphorical disorientation’s significance for moral life.

¹² Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 20.

¹³ Harbin, 20.

¹⁴ Harbin, 21.

In response, Harbin could concede this circularity whilst holding onto the possibility, and legitimacy, of justifying a broad conception in light of metaphorical disorientation's significance for moral life. From the perspective of assessing metaphorical disorientation's moral significance, therefore, Harbin may downplay the importance of developing a clear-cut answer to the DP. Yet at this point, a second and more serious problem emerges: I argue that Harbin's turn to metaphorical disorientation's place in moral life is ultimately *self-defeating*. This is because, rather than supporting a broad conception, it demonstrates the need for a stronger conceptual analysis and clear-cut characterisation of metaphorical disorientation – yet doing so stands in direct methodological tension with her use of Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance. To unpack this problem, I turn to Harbin's argument for metaphorical disorientation's 'tenderizing effects' that can serve as an exemplary illustration.

Broadly speaking, Harbin argues that metaphorical disorientation experiences can be morally significant by virtue of their 'tenderizing effects', where one such effect is characterised as prompting sensibilities 'for *sensing vulnerabilities* – both one's own and that of others'.¹⁵ One of the examples that Harbin provides is being diagnosed with a terminal illness. Harbin surveys how this experience can prompt a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to one's own fragility and mortality, but also other people's sufferings and needs. For present purposes, I leave aside a discussion about what makes such tenderising effects distinctively *moral*. I grant this for the sake of argument and instead focus on the relationship between metaphorical disorientation experiences and tenderising effects. Note that Harbin herself acknowledges that metaphorical disorientation experiences are not necessarily accompanied by those tenderising effects; for instance, not all disorientated terminally ill people will necessarily become more sensitive to their own and

¹⁵ Harbin, 102, italics original.

others' vulnerabilities in ways that will prompt more 'tender' behaviour. Hence, they are only *contingently* related to metaphorical disorientation experiences. Acknowledging this, however, makes it difficult to identify what exactly it is about the disorientation experience that can be tenderising. In particular, it is not clear why the experience of metaphorical disorientation instead of other aspects of the broader emotional response to, and experience of, being diagnosed with a terminal illness is taken to be tenderising; and Harbin herself observes that the experience of metaphorical disorientation often comes hand-in-hand with other emotional responses.¹⁶ Nor is it clear what, if anything, is specific about the tenderising effects of metaphorical disorientation experiences in particular when compared to difficult experiences in general.¹⁷

To address these concerns and develop a conception of the moral significance of metaphorical disorientation *as* disorientation, more would have to be said about what *exactly* metaphorical disorientation experiences are. At this point, however, I submit that a *methodological tension* emerges with the characterisation of metaphorical disorientation as a family resemblance concept. This is because the Wittgensteinian concept of family resemblance rules out the need for a clear-cut conceptual definition of concept *x*, where this also includes an in-depth engagement with the issue of conceptual unity. For once there is an understanding of *x*'s uses, the need for a clear-cut conceptual definition

¹⁶ On this point, Harbin writes: 'At the same time as they are disoriented, individuals may be having distinct experiences triggered by the same event/situation that prompted the disorientation ... Though the distinction between these experiences and disorientations may be more or less murky depending on the particular situation, they can still be distinct.' (Harbin, 15). But how exactly they are taken to be distinct remains unaddressed.

¹⁷ In her review of Harbin's book, Elise Springer also picks up on these concerns: 'These tenderizing effects do not reliably follow upon disorientation, so it's possible to wonder whether to credit them to disorientation as such (rather than, say, to some awareness that is loosely correlated with disorientation). ... Some readers may still doubt that the morally transformative experiences here need to be *disorientation* experiences. It is not common to see difficult experiences in general, of any kind, as nudging people toward 'tender' recognition of others' differences and vulnerabilities?' (Elise Springer, review of *Disorientation and Moral Life*, by Ami Harbin, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, 2017, para. 9, italics original, <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/disorientation-and-moral-life/>).

disappears.¹⁸ Yet, this is exactly what Harbin would need in order to adequately account for metaphorical disorientation's distinctive moral significance.

At this point, Harbin may reply by making the following two-partite point: namely, to emphasise that her characterisation of metaphorical disorientation as a family resemblance concept draws only liberally from Wittgenstein, while also arguing that she has in fact more to say about the character of metaphorical disorientation experiences that would subsequently allow her to bring out the moral significance of metaphorical disorientation *as* disorientation. Thus, she may point to her remarks about the *felt character* of metaphorical disorientation, specifically, that disorientation experiences 'often involve feeling deeply out of place, unfamiliar, or not at home'.¹⁹ This shift towards how the relevant type of experience(s) makes the disorientated person feel seems promising, where the explicit focus becomes *the first-personal felt character* of the experience of metaphorical disorientation. In order to address the DP, then, it may be better to focus not on the kind of experiences that are disorientating, but rather on *how* metaphorical disorientation becomes affectively salient and shows up in one's emotional response to the situation.

While Harbin's remarks may be a step in the right direction for addressing the DP, they are not developed in any detail. The appeal to metaphorical disorientation's *felt phenomenology* remains under-theorised, which renders the characteristics of feeling 'out of place', 'not at home', and 'unfamiliar' vague. The main problem here, I submit, lies in a central *ambiguity* that runs throughout her work, where her discussion of various metaphorical disorientation experiences turns at times on a *literal* understanding of navigation

¹⁸ In fact, some interpretations of Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance make a stronger claim, namely, that 'the project of conceptual analysis will be undermined'. (Colin McGinn, *Truth by Analysis: Games, Names, and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199856145.001.0001>).

¹⁹ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 2.

in physical space (e.g., the disorientation of a tsunami) and at other times on a *metaphorical* understanding of navigation in social space (e.g., the disorientation of racism). In raising this issue, I do not wish to rule out that an experience of metaphorical disorientation may cut across both the literal and the metaphorical sense of space-navigation. For instance, consider the disorientation of migration, where Harbin's discussion captures both the sense in which one may not know how to navigate the new physical surroundings and the sense in which one may struggle to adjust to new cultural norms and values.²⁰ However, by not clearly identifying and distinguishing between the literal and the metaphorical sense, the target phenomenon of her analysis and the characteristics by which to individuate the relevant type of experience(s) are rendered ambiguous.²¹ Already note that I shall return to this point shortly.

1.1.3. Concluding Remarks

I want to conclude this section by drawing out a central tension underwriting the DP that emerges from my critical engagement with Harbin's characterisation of metaphorical disorientation as a family resemblance concept. In discussing Harbin, I hope to have shown that any satisfying answer to the DP must meet two requirements: (1) from the merits of

²⁰ Harbin, 114–18.

²¹ In this context, it is noteworthy that, in earlier work, Harbin explicitly commits to some sort of equivalence between literal (dis-)orientation and metaphorical (dis-)orientation. She writes: 'Orientation is in important senses *learned*, insofar as we are taught to practice habits that allow for consistency of movement, action, and interaction in *geographical and social worlds*.' (Harbin, 'Bodily Disorientation and Moral Change', 264, first italics original, second two italics mine). And: 'As disoriented, we can feel out of place, uncomfortable, uneasy, and unsettled. *The standard sense of being disoriented in physical sense is related*: as disoriented, we can feel and act lost, we don't know how to interact appropriately with our surrounding environments or with others around us.' (Harbin, 266, italics mine). I therefore disagree with Velasco et al.'s reading of Harbin when they suggest that her conception of disorientation does not presuppose and turn on some sort of equivalence between literal (dis-)orientation and metaphorical (dis-)orientation and thereby forms an exception in the existing scholarship on metaphorical disorientation. Cf. Velasco et al., 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 443-444.

Harbin's proposal, it must take seriously what I call *a concern for heterogeneity of everyday uses of "disorientation"*, where this includes attending to the normative implications surrounding the differential access to interpretive resources for making sense of one's experience of upheaval; and (2) from the criticisms of Harbin's proposal, it must take seriously *a concern for conceptual distinctiveness of "disorientation" in contrast to other related phenomena*, where this is a pre-condition for engaging with the value of metaphorical disorientation as disorientation.

For the purposes of developing a satisfying answer to the DP, I understand these two concerns to be in dialectical tension with one another. In embracing some sort of conceptual pluralism, as exemplified by Harbin's proposal, and thereby attending to concern (1), one risks not taking seriously concern (2) and subsuming only superficially related phenomena under a vague conception of metaphorical disorientation. And conversely, in advancing a clear-cut conception, going beyond Harbin's proposal, and thereby attending to concern (2), one risks not taking seriously concern (1) and ruling out certain uses and experiences of metaphorical disorientation and thereby failing to do justice to how people make sense of their own experiences of upheaval.

How then should we go about resolving the DP, with a view to meeting both concerns? Recall that I ended my critical discussion of Harbin with some cursory remarks about her (implicit) commitment to some sort of equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation. I emphasise this here because it points to a common strategy that most authors working on metaphorical disorientation employ in (implicitly) dealing with the DP: they *spatialise* metaphorical disorientation. In identifying this spatialising strategy, I am concerned with something more specific than the fact that descriptions of

metaphorical disorientation rely on spatial metaphors.²² As Charles Taylor remarks in touching on the disorientation of an identity crisis: ‘I feel myself drawn here to use a spatial metaphor; but I believe this to be more than personal predilection. There are signs that the link with spatial orientation lies very deep in the human psyche.’²³ I take the central point to be as follows: there exists not only a widely shared practice of invoking spatial metaphors to characterise metaphorical disorientation, but crucially, this practice is grounded in a commitment to some sort of conceptual equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation.

Over the next two sections, I shall outline and critically examine this spatialising strategy by focusing on the works of Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al. and Sara Ahmed. I interpret their proposed conceptions of disorientation as two chief articulations of the spatialising strategy that lie at different ends: (1) on the stronger end, Velasco et al. argue for a unitary account of disorientation. They do this by taking literal disorientation to be the paradigm case of disorientation that exhibits certain core features they then identify in metaphorical disorientation.²⁴ And (2) on the weaker end, Ahmed argues for a socially

²² E.g., ‘In particular it is not know which way to go or turn – which route to follow’ (Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, 2nd ed, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 151). ‘Disorientations can be a bodily feeling of losing one’s place, and an effect of a loss of place’ (Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 160). ‘I suggest ableness is a social and bodily orientation that extends what is within reach ... the lived experience of facing at least two directions: towards a home that has been lost (ableist compulsions), and to a place that is not yet home.’ (Fiona Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Abledness* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 194). ‘If we embark upon an enquiry and find that we run up against something we cannot possibly comprehend we are left feeling disorientation; a sense of losing our coordinates as to how to go on.’ (Earnshaw, ‘Disorientation and Cognitive Enquiry’, 181). ‘Orientations are foundational in the production and driving force of normalcy ... Conversely, the possibility of losing one’s grip on home anchors the constitutive role of un-homelikeness.’ (Lajoie, ‘Being at Home’, 555).

²³ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 28.

²⁴ See Velasco, ‘Disorientation and GIS-Informed Wilderness Search and Rescue’; Velasco, ‘Disorientation and Self-Consciousness’; Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, ‘The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis’; Velasco et al., ‘Temporal Disorientation and the Covid-19 Crisis’; Velasco and Casati, ‘Subjective Disorientation as a Metacognitive Feeling’; Velasco and Casati, ‘The Many Faces of Disorientation’; Velasco and Casati, ‘Making and Breaking Our Shared World’.

sensitive account of metaphorical disorientation. She does this by taking literal disorientation to be an instructive metaphor for thinking about differential ways of navigating and inhabiting spaces that are always already socially structured in specific ways.²⁵ It will become clear that, however different their methodologies and analytic concerns are, in both cases the (implicit) solution to the DP consists in adopting a spatialising strategy, where metaphorical disorientation becomes theorised in relation to literal disorientation.²⁶

1.2. Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al.

Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al. are committed to developing an explicit solution to an extended version of the DP that is concerned with the issue of substantive unity across literal *and* metaphorical disorientation. They ask: ‘What are the features, or the structures, that are common to getting lost while visiting a foreign city, on the one hand, and getting lost socially, politically, temporally, on the other?’²⁷ Velasco et al.’s response consists in what appears to be an intuitive strategy: namely, to identify core features of literal disorientation to be also present in metaphorical disorientation. I call this *the strong spatialising strategy*. In their view, this is what provides philosophical justification for the metaphorical use of disorientation in particular and for a unitary conception of disorientation in general.²⁸

²⁵ See Ahmed, 'Orientations'; Ahmed *Queer Phenomenology*; Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness'; Ahmed, 'Mixed Orientations'.

²⁶ Although Ahmed comes chronologically first, I start with Velasco et al. for the reason that their stronger spatialising strategy appeals most strongly to the widespread intuition that metaphorical disorientation may best be modelled on literal disorientation. And it is also worth mentioning that, besides a single cursory reference, they do not themselves explicitly engage with Ahmed’s work.

²⁷ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 442.

²⁸ A note on terminology is in order: When I speak of literal disorientation and metaphorical disorientation, Velasco et al. employ the corresponding terms ‘spatial disorientation’ and ‘non-spatial disorientation.’ In my view, casting this distinction in terms of “spatial” vs. “non-spatial” is misleading for two related reasons: (1) it turns on a too narrow understanding of “spatial”. It construes “spatial” in literal terms as navigating physical space, and thereby obscures the many ways in

In my reconstruction and critical assessment of Velasco & colleagues' position, I shall focus exclusively on the question of the relation between literal and metaphorical disorientation. Pursuing an immanent critique, I shall focus on the features of literal disorientation that they export to metaphorical disorientation and ask whether they can yield a satisfying conception of metaphorical disorientation. Note that I therefore leave aside whether their conception of literal disorientation is itself justified and broadly assume for the sake of argument that it is.²⁹

1.2.1. Literal Disorientation

I begin by providing a brief outline of Velasco et al.'s conception of literal disorientation which they consider the paradigmatic case of disorientation. Over a series of papers, they propose a *functional* account that frames the relevant type of experience as resulting from the evaluation and regulation of the person's internal system of spatial representations of the given space.³⁰ The evaluative aspect of literal disorientation refers to the fact that the

which metaphorical disorientation, too, can and does shape our experience of spatiality. (2) In linking metaphorical disorientation to the absence of space, therefore, the task of identifying meaningful links between both cases of disorientation is construed as establishing whether metaphorical disorientation also involves a spatial dimension. They explicitly state: 'For this connection (between spatial and non-spatial forms of disorientation) to hold, we need to understand these frames of reference as spatial in a meaningful way.' (Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 445) The problem with this is that it pre-determines the kind of characterisation of metaphorical disorientation they seek to develop in order to demonstrate the existence of meaningful links between literal and metaphorical disorientation: namely one primarily in spatial terms. However, a central claim of this chapter is that this fails to adequately capture the distinctive character of metaphorical disorientation.

²⁹ For a critical discussion, see the debate between Velasco and Casati, 'Subjective Disorientation as a Metacognitive Feeling'; Velasco and Casati, 'The Many Faces of Disorientation'; and Daniel R. Montello, 'Geographic Orientation, Disorientation, and Misorientation: A Commentary on Fernandez Velasco and Casati', *Spatial Cognition & Computation* 20, no. 4 (1 October 2020): 306–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13875868.2020.1767105>.

³⁰ Cf. 'we characterize disorientation *in functional terms*, as a subsystem that monitors the performance of the online system of spatial representation.' (Velasco and Casati, 'Subjective Disorientation as a Metacognitive Feeling', 15, italics mine.) According to them, the relevant functional subsystem is the metacognitive feeling of confidence in one's navigational abilities; specifically, disorientation is the functional subsystem of the metacognitive feeling of low confidence in one's

relevant type of experience tracks the disintegration of egocentric (i.e., self-referenced) and allocentric (i.e., other-referenced) frames of reference making up the person's internal system of spatial representations, whereas the regulative aspect of literal disorientation refers to the fact that the relevant type of experience causes the person to behave in a variety of ways to become orientated again. It is the *evaluative* aspect of literal disorientation that is my focus going forward. Velasco et al. state:

The idea is that while someone is oriented, indexical [i.e., egocentric] spatial representations (“I am in Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross Road is to my right”) are integrated with non-indexical [i.e., allocentric] spatial representations (“Oxford Circus is north of Trafalgar Square, and Charing Cross Road connects the two”), and this opens up possibilities for navigation (“I can turn right and follow Charing Cross Road to Oxford Circus”) – but when someone is disoriented, egocentric-allocentric integration comes apart and the subject senses their possibilities shrinking in an embodied way, which, as mentioned above, often results in anxiety, confusion, helplessness and self-diminishment.³¹

This passage brings into view the phenomenal character of the evaluative aspect of literal disorientation following the egocentric-allocentric disintegration. Velasco et al. specifically identify two features that they deem central to the *experience* of literal disorientation: first, it involves a subjective sense of one’s agency as having diminished possibilities for action, where this results in feeling unsure of what to do. And second, it is accompanied by a host of emotive intentional states including, but not limited to, anxiety, confusion, helplessness and unfamiliarity.

navigational abilities. See also Velasco, 'Disorientation and GIS-Informed Wilderness Search and Rescue'; Velasco, 'Disorientation and Self-Consciousness'; Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis'; Velasco et al., 'Temporal Disorientation and the Covid-19 Crisis'; Velasco and Casati, 'The Many Faces of Disorientation'; Velasco and Casati, 'Making and Breaking Our Shared World'.

³¹ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 444.

1.2.2. Metaphorical Disorientation

With this characterisation of literal disorientation in place, I now move to Velasco et al.'s characterisation of metaphorical disorientation. In more recent papers, Velasco et al. have begun to extend their analysis of literal to metaphorical disorientation.³² I understand their central claim to be that there exists a *strong conceptual equivalence* between literal and metaphorical disorientation and that this serves as philosophical justification for a *unitary conception* of disorientation *simpliciter*. I understand Velasco et al.'s argument as follows:

1. Metaphorical disorientation results from 'the evaluation and regulation' of processes of integrated frames of reference pertaining to various domains.
2. Those frames of reference can be understood as spatial in a meaningful way.
3. The disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference results in a *considerably similar experience* to that of the disintegration of spatial frames of reference.

(1, 2)

I accept that experiences of metaphorical disorientation may be characterised as the malfunctioning of the processes by which a person orientates themselves (cf. 1), where this is functionally equivalent to literal disorientation. As Velasco et al. note, such a functional characterisation of metaphorical disorientation is in keeping with a wider practice of discussing metaphorical disorientation as 'not knowing how to proceed because one is lacking or unable to access the relevant frames of reference'.³³ In addition, I accept that there may be a single system of representation extending across various domains (cf. 2). On

³² E.g., Velasco, Perroy, and Casati; Velasco et al., 'Temporal Disorientation and the Covid-19 Crisis'.

³³ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 445.

this point, Velasco et al. refer to empirical evidence in neuroscience that demonstrates (a) that the hippocampus has been identified to operate as a single system of representation across various domains (spatial or otherwise), where (b) it is involved in non-spatial domains ‘in a similar way to how it represents physical space’.³⁴ My primary focus here is on their conclusion (cf. 3) that directly concerns the *experience* of metaphorical disorientation. Velasco et al. explicitly state:

If there are space-like representations that frame our navigation through temporal, social and cultural domains, then issues with the integration of those frames are likely to result in experiences that are considerably similar to the experience we undergo when our spatial frames of reference disintegrate during spatial disorientation.³⁵

Elsewhere, they present an even stronger claim:

What is key for the current discussion is that the same affective structure holds for temporal, social or political disorientation as for spatial disorientation, because a single system of representation extends across all these domains.³⁶

I do not think that this conclusion (construed either as strong similarity or as sameness) follows from the first two claims that, taken together, present a characterisation of metaphorical disorientation in functional terms ‘like the paradigmatic spatial case’.³⁷ Further, I argue that adopting a strong spatialising strategy, which, as discussed above, consists in identifying core elements of the paradigmatic case to be also present in metaphorical

³⁴ Pablo Fernandez Velasco et al., 'Lost in Pandemic Time: A Phenomenological Analysis of Temporal Disorientation during the Covid-19 Crisis' *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 22, no. 5 (December 2023): 1123, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-022-09847-1>.

³⁵ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 445.

³⁶ Velasco et al., 'Lost in Pandemic Time', 1123.

³⁷ Velasco et al., 1123.

disorientation, risks rendering the relevant type of experience unrecognisable as an experience of *metaphorical* disorientation.

Let us take a closer look at the malfunctioning of the processes by which a person orients themselves. After all, it is this moment of disintegration that Velasco et al. consider the locus of the experience of disorientation. As we have seen, Velasco et al. ascribe a central role to the egocentric-allocentric disintegration in their characterisation of literal disorientation, for it specifically captures the malfunctioning of the orientation processes at the heart of their functional account. In literal disorientation, recall, the relevant disintegration concerns the relation of ‘indexical [i.e., egocentric] spatial representations (“I am in Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross Road is to my right”) ... with non-indexical [i.e., allocentric] spatial representations (“Oxford Circus is north of Trafalgar Square, and Charing Cross Road connects the two”)³⁸ If these two axes of representation get misaligned, a person undergoes the experience of literal disorientation that, it can be added, typically involves a loss of one’s grasp of the relevant indexical properties. During literal disorientation, therefore, one’s capacity for *self-location in physical space* is compromised, where this prompts the question of ‘Where am I (located in physical space)?’³⁹

Now compare this with metaphorical disorientation. A principal difference, I submit, consists in the fact that the egocentric-allocentric disintegration in metaphorical disorientation cannot be characterised in terms of an indexical vs. non-indexical misalignment precisely for the reason that it does not concern one’s self-location in physical space.

³⁸ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 444.

³⁹ In a single-authored paper, Velasco draws attention to the distinction between (a) minimal self-location and (b) integrated self-location. According to him, the former only involves egocentric frames of reference, whereas the latter involves the integration of egocentric and allocentric frames of reference. Against this distinction, Velasco clarifies: ‘When this capacity for integrated self-location is compromised during disorientation [i.e., literal disorientation], disorientated individuals can still orient in a minimal sense (extreme cases like immersion in sensory deprivation tanks being a possible exception...).’ (Velasco, 'Disorientation and Self-Consciousness', 207). Following Velasco, therefore, the type of self-location in physical space I am concerned with here is that of integrated self-location.

Take experiences of profound interpersonal grief. Imagine being in a long-term relationship. Over the years, you have built a wonderful life together and much of your experiential world has become grounded in, and dependent on, this relationship in one way or another. In the devastating event of your partner's death, presumably you will undergo a profound sense of disorientation, as 'patterns of acting and sensemaking that would have previously set out possible ways for how to go on, dependent on the deceased, are rendered obsolete'.⁴⁰ In such a case, I submit that it would be not only phenomenologically incorrect but also misguided to characterise the relevant type of experience to be about a destabilisation of one's capacity for self-location in physical space. Of course, it may very well also impact one's experience of physical space (e.g., through extreme fatigue as a common physical symptom of profound interpersonal grief). But it first and foremost involves an immensely painful *qualitative change* in the bereaved person's self and world, where this impacts their relation to themselves, other people, and the social world more widely. And this qualitative change is accompanied by affective states such as a sense of lack of belonging that are much more widespread and profound in nature.⁴¹ It can be added that, returning to Harbin, the relevant type of experience prompts questions such as 'Who am *I* now? What should *I* do? How should *I* relate to others?',⁴² and these are importantly different from the question of 'Where am I (located in physical space)?'.⁴³

⁴⁰ Mehmel, 'Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity', 997. As I elaborate there, this is because in such a case, 'their relationship generates shared routines, habits, and assumptions and much of [one's] experiences, activities, and thoughts are likely to implicate and depend for their intelligibility on [one's partner] in one way or another.' (Mehmel, 997). In support of this view, see also Ratcliffe who emphasises how, in cases of profound interpersonal grief, 'there is a profound sense of being lost', that 'it is not that the right path cannot be discovered but that there is no path to follow and nowhere familiar to retreat to.' (Matthew Ratcliffe, 'Towards a Phenomenology of Grief: Insights from Merleau-Ponty', *European Journal of Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (September 2020): 660-661, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12513>).

⁴¹ See Matthew Ratcliffe, 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging', in *Phenomenology of Belonging*, ed. Luna Dolezal and Danielle Petherbridge (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, forthcoming).

⁴² Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, xi, italics added.

⁴³ It is arguable that this phenomenological distinction is in keeping with, or at least broadly corresponds to, the traditional distinction between *indexical* and *qualitative properties*; cf. Max

The preceding analysis puts pressure on Velasco et al.'s claim of a strong conceptual equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation. It implies that there is a phenomenological distinction to be drawn between two importantly different types of destabilisation: (a) a destabilisation of one's capacity for self-location in physical space (i.e., *literal self-location*) and (b) a destabilisation of one's capacity for self-realisation in relation to oneself, others, and the social world (i.e., *metaphorical self-location*). I introduce this phenomenological distinction because it clearly brings into view that the relevant loss of possibilities involved in metaphorical disorientation does not principally concern one's orientational abilities for navigation in physical space. As experiences of profound interpersonal grief indicate, (b) involves the loss of possibilities inextricably bound up with *one's sense of identity*. More specifically, those possibilities (b1) reflect one's set of inter-related, longer-term cares and concerns and (b2) are embedded in a network of social relations (with specific others and others in general) and social norms regulating those social relations.⁴⁴

This phenomenological distinction, I argue, calls into question Velasco et al.'s conclusion that the disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference results in a *considerably similar experience* to that of the disintegration of spatial frames of reference. This is because, whereas the disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference involves (a), the disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference principally involves (b) and in some

Black, 'The Identity of Indiscernibles', *Mind* 61, no. 242 (1952): 153–64; Peter Frederick Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, Reprinted, transferred to digital printing (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁴⁴ Cf. Matthew Ratcliffe and Louise Richardson's phenomenological conception of the phenomenology of loss operative in grief: 'Grief is thus distinctive insofar as it involves recognizing and comprehending the implications of lost possibilities for the structure of one's life or world ... In referring to an experiential world, life structure, or sense of identity, what we have in mind is a network of interrelated projects, commitments, relationships, and expectations, which could be loosely termed a person's distinctive "value system".' (Matthew Ratcliffe and Louise Richardson, 'Grief over Non-Death Losses: A Phenomenological Perspective', *Passion: Journal of the European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotions* 1, no. 1 (9 June 2023): 53–54, <https://doi.org/10.59123/passion.v1i1.12287>).

cases, as in profound interpersonal grief, it may also involve a combination of (a) and (b).⁴⁵

Interestingly, in the context of their discussion of metaphorical disorientations of the COVID-19 pandemic, Velasco et al. give a quotation by the trauma scholar Cyril Tarquinio that draws attention to the relation between metaphorical disorientation experiences and a phenomenological disturbance to one's sense of identity. Tarquinio characterises the COVID-19 pandemic as severely destabilising people's everyday lives; I quote him at length:

Such situations remove any protective layering we develop throughout our lives that stabilize us and allow us to pursue individual, professional, or social paths in life. This deconstruction of self-identity can be linked directly to the breakdown of established frames of reference through we construct ourselves in a social context by conforming to societal norms, group expectations and social pressure.⁴⁶

Although this passage gestures towards the distinctive character of the disintegration process operative in metaphorical disorientation, Velasco et al. do not further develop this insight, let alone take it as a reason against a unitary conception of the *experience* of disorientation *simpliciter*. Quite the opposite, they put sole emphasis on the malfunctioning of orientation and interpret 'the breakdown of established frames of reference' during the COVID-19 pandemic as further support for extending their characterisation of literal

⁴⁵ One may object that certain cases of literal disorientation may similarly involve a combination of (a) and (b) and, therefore, that the distinction between the disintegration of spatial frames of reference and the disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference is not as clear-cut. Consider the example of getting lost in the wilderness for a sustained period of time; cf. Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 446. Absent the prospect of any rescue, it is not hard to imagine that one may eventually fall into despair and experience anguish over one's life. But at this point, I argue, one cannot be characterised merely as feeling literally disoriented anymore because, in taking such a radical form, one's uncertainty of where one is has spilled over into some sort of existential crisis.

⁴⁶ Cyril Tarquinio, 'The Powerful Hold of COVID-19', *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 4, no. 3 (September 2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejtd.2020.100174>; quoted in Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis', 453.

disorientation to metaphorical disorientation.⁴⁷ Where a phenomenological characterisation of metaphorical disorientation is concerned, however, I argue that this renders the relevant type of experience unrecognisable as an experience of *metaphorical* disorientation. This is precisely for the reason that it fails to take seriously the distinctive character of the kind of loss of possibilities operative in metaphorical disorientation.

In his reply to the above paper, Ratcliffe also problematises Velasco et al.'s conceptual focus on the malfunctioning of orientation processes during the COVID-19 crisis.⁴⁸ His central concern is that, in limiting their focus to the issue of processes, their model pays insufficient attention to the interpersonal and social dimensions of metaphorical disorientation. This is because, during COVID-19, many people were not only disrupted in their habitual practices but also disturbed in their ability to trust other people. Complicating Velasco et al., therefore, Ratcliffe highlights how 'we often proceed under the assumption that specific individuals or other people in general will be able and willing to provide information, guidance, and support, if and when needed'.⁴⁹ I see Ratcliffe's claim that the ability to trust is operating as a background condition for accessing interpersonal and social support as complementing and supporting my line of critique. The phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation is too complex to be adequately accounted for with appeal to the strong spatialising strategy.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ In their most recent paper, they quite explicitly highlight: 'In contrast, we put the emphasis on processes.' (Velasco et al., 'Lost in Pandemic Time', 1140).

⁴⁸ Matthew Ratcliffe, 'Disorientation, Distrust and the Pandemic', *Global Discourse* 11, no. 3 (May 2021): 463–66, <https://doi.org/10.1332/204378921X16158114033083>.

⁴⁹ Ratcliffe, 463.

⁵⁰ While outside the remit of my conceptual inquiry here, Ratcliffe can be interpreted as intending his critical remarks to apply to disorientation *simpliciter*, that is, including literal disorientation. Directly preceding the sentence I quoted, Ratcliffe explicitly states: 'In finding our way around different "domains", from the spatial to the political, we do not rely exclusively on internalized frames of reference.' (Ratcliffe, 463). I believe it to be right to emphasise that literal disorientation is not absent of such an interpersonal and social dimension (e.g., turning to someone for help when unable to reach a chosen tourist sight). However, I also believe that this corrective insight should not be interpreted as proof for a unitary conception of disorientation *simpliciter* precisely

At this point, let me be clear about the scope of my critique: I do not wish to deny that there may be a *structural* equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation. For instance, I believe it to be right to transport the structural elements of (a) the first-person perspective (cf. egocentric frames of reference) and (b) points of reference which are not in the framework that constitutes the framework for orientation (cf. allocentric frames of reference) from literal to metaphorical disorientation. In addition, I acknowledge that the phenomenal character of both types of disorientation may first-personally be reported to involve similar feelings. As Velasco et al. correctly observe, it has become commonplace to characterise metaphorical disorientation in terms that are reminiscent of their characterisation of literal disorientation: namely, as ‘not knowing how to proceed because one lacks or is unable to access frames of reference’ and accompanied by a host of emotive intentional attitudes such as ‘anxiety, confusion, helplessness’.⁵¹ But the problem here is, first, that the mere appeal to first-personal reports is not sufficient for establishing a unitary conception of disorientation *simpliciter*, where this involves a strong conceptual equivalence with respect to both the malfunctioning of orientation processes *and* the relevant type of experience(s). Second and in particular, the appeal to existing characterisations of metaphorical disorientation as a standard by which to motivate the philosophical plausibility of a strong conceptual equivalence appears problematic. This is, I argue, because Velasco et al. uncritically accept those characterisations and thereby presuppose access to an understanding of metaphorical that they seek to provide precisely by adopting a strong spatialising strategy. It can be added that this also stands in tension with one of their overall aims of providing a unitary conception of

for the reason literal disorientation does not concern one’s sense of identity (not in any meaningful sense).

⁵¹ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, ‘The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis’, 445; Velasco et al., ‘Lost in Pandemic Time’, 1123.

disorientation *simpliciter*: namely, to account for and justify ‘existing assertions about non-spatial forms of disorientation in a way that goes beyond a figurative use’.⁵²

1.2.3. Concluding Remarks

To conclude this section: I aim to have demonstrated that, contra Velasco et al., the disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference does not result in a considerably similar experience to that of the disintegration of spatial frames of reference. This is because metaphorical disorientation involves a distinctive type of phenomenological disturbance. It consists of a destabilisation of one’s capacity for self-realisation in relation to oneself, others, and the social world, where this centrally concerns one’s sense of identity. Although Velasco et al. can be said to provide philosophical justification for the metaphorical use of disorientation, we have good reason to believe that their strong spatialising strategy fails to resolve the DP. While meeting (a) the concern for the heterogeneity of everyday uses of “disorientation”, it is clear that their model does not meet (b) the concern for conceptual distinctiveness of “disorientation” in contrast to other related phenomena. This is because, by taking literal disorientation to be paradigmatic case of disorientation *simpliciter* and transporting core elements to metaphorical disorientation, they risk rendering the relevant type of experience unrecognisable as an experience of *metaphorical* disorientation.

Before I turn to a weaker version of this spatialising strategy as implicitly operating in the work of Sara Ahmed, let me consider two possible responses that could be made to my phenomenological critique: (1) to defuse my challenge to their model by questioning whether my principal example of interpersonal grief really is an example of

⁵² Velasco et al., 1124.

metaphorical disorientation, and (2) to concede that there may be differences in how the relevant types of experience can become emotionally salient to and affectively actualise for the person but argue that this difference does not cut across the literal/metaphorical distinction. I address each in turn.

First: one may argue that the force of my critique is contingent on interpersonal grief as my principal example. Considering my contrasting emphasis on metaphorical self-location (that is, in contrast to literal self-location), one may press if I am really talking about a *disorientation* experience in the case of interpersonal grief. However, this response is not available to Velasco et al. inasmuch as they precisely seek to account for metaphorical uses of disorientation, including the case of interpersonal grief.⁵³

Second: Velasco et al. may concede that their conclusion will not hold for all cases of metaphorical disorientation. Interpersonal grief may be one such example, where the relevant type of experience affectively differs considerably from typical cases of literal disorientation as, e.g., following from taking a wrong turn. Even so, they may contend that this difference should not be conceptualised as a difference between literal and metaphorical disorientation and, therefore, does not serve to establish the distinctive character of metaphorical disorientation. Comparing the literal disorientation of taking a wrong turn with the metaphorical disorientation of losing a loved one, they may argue that the difference in experience ultimately reduces to a difference between episodic and sustained temporal experience. In fact, Velasco et al. elaborate on this temporal difference by demonstrating that it cuts across both types of disorientation, where this insight yields the following conclusion:

⁵³ Cf. ‘The difference between sustained states is not a difference between spatial and non-spatial forms of disorientation. It would be better to conceptualize it as a difference between episodic affective states and sustained existential feelings, of which grief and depression are prime examples.’ (Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, ‘The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis’, 446). Already note that I shall shortly criticise the here proposed conceptualisation.

The difference between sustained states is not a difference between spatial and non-spatial forms of disorientation. It would be better to conceptualize it as a difference between episodic affective states and sustained existential feelings, of which grief and depression are prime examples.⁵⁴

But I argue that this line of response misses the point: even if one were to grant for the sake of argument that literal and metaphorical disorientation can each be either episodic affective states or sustained existential feelings (however note that I have my doubts here),⁵⁵ the question is whether this modified version of their model would succeed in resolving the DP; and recall, they explicitly seek to develop a conception that can answer the question of ‘What are the features, or the structures, that are common to getting lost while visiting a foreign city, on the one hand, and getting lost socially, politically, temporally, on the other?’.⁵⁶ Rather than helping their case, I argue that this modification would instead only add to the DP. For it would serve to demonstrate the heterogeneity of metaphorical disorientation experiences, where the affective phenomenology would take different forms in metaphorical disorientation. Yet, acknowledging this amounts to a further problem for Velasco et al.’s strong spatialising strategy, precisely because these different forms cannot be adequately accounted for with appeal to the strong spatialising strategy.

1.3. Sara Ahmed

In this section, I move to discuss the model of metaphorical disorientation to be found in the work of Sara Ahmed, with a particular focus on her seminal book *Queer*

⁵⁴ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 446.

⁵⁵ Cf. fn. 45. *Pace* Velasco et al., I argue that, at the point where a literal disorientation experience would last so long as to amount to a sustained existential feeling, the relevant type of experience would no longer constitute a case of literal disorientation.

⁵⁶ Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 442.

Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others.⁵⁷ Unlike Velasco et al., Ahmed is not committed to developing an explicit solution to the DP. Her interest in metaphorical disorientation is not motivated by an analytic concern for providing a systematic conceptual framework that can serve as a philosophical justification for the metaphorical use of disorientation. Quite the opposite, her interest is motivated by an interest in the differential character of the socio-normative architecture of the social world that disproportionately disorients those (i.e., queer, non-white, and other marginalised bodies) whose bodies do not fit the dominant norms. In developing this argument, Ahmed's implicit solution to the DP consists in taking the literal case as an instructive metaphor for thinking about 'how spatial distinctions and awareness are implicated in how bodies get directed in specific ways'.⁵⁸

In my critical reconstruction and assessment, I begin by providing a general outline of Ahmed's queer phenomenological project before I, then, zoom in on her model of metaphorical disorientation as central to this project. Since Ahmed focuses primarily on metaphorical disorientation experiences of marginalised bodies, I shall be primarily concerned with such experiences in my discussion here.

1.3.1. Queer Phenomenological Project

The starting point for Ahmed's argument is the everyday understanding of literal orientation. The opening lines of *Queer Phenomenology* read as follows:

If we know where we are when we turn this way or that way, then we are orientated. We have our bearings. We know what to do to get to this place or that place.

⁵⁷ Ahmed, 'Orientations'; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Ahmed, 'Mixed Orientations'; Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness'.

⁵⁸ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 181, fn. 1.

To be orientated is also to be turned towards certain objects, so that when we face them we know which way we are facing. They might be landmarks or other familiar signs that give us our anchoring points. They gather on the ground, and they create a ground upon which we can gather.⁵⁹

These opening lines introduce the everyday understanding of literal orientation as navigation in physical space. But more importantly, they also and quite specifically describe literal orientation as a matter of spatial relations of proximity and distance, where what is within one's reach and familiar (e.g., 'landmarks') enables 'us to find our way through the world by situating ourselves in relation to such things'.⁶⁰

This everyday understanding is roughly compatible with Velasco et al.'s working definition of literal (dis-) orientation. However, unlike Velasco et al., Ahmed does not take literal (dis-)orientation to be the paradigm case of (dis-)orientation that exhibits core features to be also identified in metaphorical (dis-)orientation. Although she transfers the insight that orientation is about spatial relations of proximity and distance, Ahmed is explicit about developing a queer phenomenological reading of literal orientation. Taking it as an instructive metaphor instead, Ahmed sets out to render the concept of "orientation" a broad critical category for thinking about differential access to feeling orientated in navigating the social world.⁶¹ She explicitly states that her aim is to think about 'how the

⁵⁹ Ahmed, 1.

⁶⁰ Ahmed, 6.

⁶¹ Cf. 'Although I follow the concept of orientations in this book, it is important to note that I start with phenomenology. And yet, even at this starting point I seem to lose my way. Perhaps my own orientation toward orientation is revealed by the style of the book, which tends to drift away from philosophy toward other matters. ... Once I caught sight of the table in Husserl's writing, which is revealed for just a moment, I could not help but follow tables around. ... So I followed Husserl in his turn to the table, but when he turns away, I got led astray.' (Ahmed, 21-22). Even though Ahmed sets out to develop a queer phenomenology (cf. 4), I interpret this passage as a clear decision *against* synthesising phenomenology and queer theory. Indeed, I believe it to demonstrate that Ahmed is not clearly and consistently committed to the phenomenological tradition and its method, where this renders her project of a queer phenomenology more "queer theoretical" than "phenomenological". Already note that Ahmed's methodological choice underwrites how she theorises metaphorical disorientation, a point to which I shall turn later. For a complementary critique of Ahmed's queer phenomenological methodology and an alternative proposal for what a queer phenomenology may look like, see Lanei M. Rodemeyer, 'Husserl and Queer Theory',

bodily, the spatial, and the social *are entangled*'.⁶² Ahmed's argument does not unfold in a systematic manner; however, I interpret it to be roughly as follows:

1. Spatial relations of proximity and distance are experienced in relation to our lived body (*Leib*) that forms the zero point of orientation.
2. What is within one's reach depends on the specific ways in which one's body is always already orientated.
3. However, what is within one's reach also depends on the specific ways in which the social world is always already orientated around some, but not other, bodies.
4. 'Orientations are organized rather than casual, ... they shape what becomes socially as well as bodily given.'⁶³ (2, 3)

Before explicating how the conclusion (4) follows from claims (1), (2) and (3), note the different senses of "orientation" operative in this argument: i.e., orientation as (i) starting point as expressed in (1); as (ii) intentional directedness, (iii) bodily comportment and (iv) background horizon as evoked in (2); and as (v) a specific socio-normative history and (vi) a specific socio-normative architecture of the social world as captured in (3).⁶⁴

Continental Philosophy Review 50, no. 3 (September 2017): 311–34, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-017-9412-x>.

⁶² Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 181, fn. 1, italics original.

⁶³ Ahmed, 158.

⁶⁴ Cf. (i) to be orientated is 'about how we begin; how we proceed from "here", which affects what is "there" appears, how it presents itself' (Ahmed, 8); (ii) 'Consciousness itself is directed or orientated toward objects' (Ahmed, 27); (iii) citing Iris Marion Young, 'even in the most simple body orientations of men and women as they sit, stand, and walk, we can observe a typical difference in body style and extension' (Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: 'Throwing like a Girl' and Other Essays*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 32; quoted in *Queer Phenomenology*, 60.); (iv) orientation designates a background framework 'that puts certain things within reach' (Ahmed, 16); (v) 'The "passing" of history is a social as well as a material way of organizing the world ... *we inherit the reachability of some objects*' (Ahmed, 125-126, italics original); (vi) 'the world is already organized around certain forms of

In singling out these six senses, I do not wish to deny that they may implicate one another. I rather intend to demonstrate the ambiguity (arguably deliberate) in her queer phenomenological rendering of “orientation”, where Ahmed seeks to productively think together various different senses in order to advance “orientation” as a broad critical category. Accordingly, I take this plurality of senses of “orientation” to be central to Ahmed’s project in general and conclusion (4) in particular.

To begin, (1), Ahmed follows the standard phenomenological view that orientation is about starting points. She specifically draws on the foundational phenomenological thesis that the lived body (*Leib*) is the zero point of orientation from which one extends in space and time and that structures one’s perceptual experience.⁶⁵ This phenomenological insight is central to her argument because it reveals that what is experienced as close or far is not per se a matter of physical distance but first and foremost of one’s lived body ‘whose phenomenal “place” is defined by its task and by its situation’.⁶⁶ From a phenomenological point of view, therefore, the space within which one moves is not to be

living – certain times, spaces, and directions’ (Ahmed, 161). As the discussion progresses, there is at least one more sense that can be identified in Ahmed’s work: (vii) orientation as a specific experience or feeling as expressed in Ahmed’s claim that orientation involves ‘to feel at home’ and to be ‘at ease with one’s environment’ (Ahmed, 7, 134). Already note that it is this specific sense that shall be my ultimate concern, however I approach it by way of critically examining the other senses first.

⁶⁵ For classical proponents of this view, see e.g., Edmund Husserl, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, 2nd bk (Dordrecht ; Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1989); Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*; Alfred Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations: Selected Writings*, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). For more contemporary proponents, see e.g., Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Young, *On Female Body Experience*. Note that arguments for the egocentricity of perception can also be found in the analytic tradition, see e.g., Gareth Evans, ‘Identity and Predication’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 13 (17 July 1975): 343, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2025212>; Gareth Evans, *Collected Papers* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1985); Christopher Peacocke, *A Study of Concepts*, 2. MIT Press paperback ed, Representation and Mind (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999). For a very informative overview of various analytic positions on orientation in and of perceptual space, see Jerome Dokic, ‘Perception and Space’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Perception*, ed. Mohan Matthen, First edition, Oxford Handbooks in Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 441–58.

⁶⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 260.

conceived of as mere “physical” or “geometric” space in relation to some external coordinates but as rooted in one’s bodily engagement with the social world.

Next, (2) and (3), Ahmed sets out to deepen and further complicate such a conception of a spatial relations of proximity and distance as expressed in (1). She specifically aims to show ‘how spatial orientations (relations of proximity and distance) are shaped by other social orientations, such as gender and class’.⁶⁷ Ahmed proceeds by developing a critical reading of the inextricable and dynamic relationship between lived body and social world, where each come with their own history that affects what does and can come within one’s reach. Accordingly, I shall henceforth use the term “social space” to mark Ahmed’s emphasis on the *social* character of space.

Ahmed stresses, (2), that ‘what is reachable is determined precisely by orientations that we have already taken’.⁶⁸ This is because the body does not proceed from a neutral starting point but, following Husserl’s concept of natural attitude, from within a specific background orientation that puts some but not other objects within one’s reach. Although typically taken-for-granted, one’s background orientations should not be understood as “natural” and, therefore, simply given. Ahmed instead emphasises that one’s background orientations are “naturalised”. They are ‘produced as an effect of the repetition of “tending toward” at the same time as they come to shape what bodies tend toward’.⁶⁹ One’s background orientations become habitual and recede into the background of one’s experience, as a result of which one typically does not have to think about them but can simply enact them.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 23.

⁶⁸ Ahmed, 55.

⁶⁹ Ahmed, 130.

⁷⁰ See also Gail Weiss who, following Ahmed, sets out to ‘de-naturalize the natural attitude’, that is, ‘to recognize that the natural attitude is not fixed or innate but relative to a particular time period and culture, and therefore always capable of being changed’ (Gail Weiss, ‘De-Naturalizing the Natural Attitude: A Husserlian Legacy to Social Phenomenology’, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 47, no. 1 (19 May 2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691624-12341302>).

Pushing this critical reading one step further, (3), Ahmed adds that what is within one's reach is also shaped by the specific culture, place and time one lives in and is thrown into. Drawing on experiences of queer and non-white bodies feeling out of place in a world orientated around straight and white bodies respectively, Ahmed demonstrates how the social world is always already socio-normatively arranged: '*we inherit the reachability of some objects*, those that are "given" to us ... not just physical objects, but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, even worlds'.⁷¹ When certain bodies come to dominate certain social spaces, the architecture begins to take shape and be shaped by them, to the effect that such social spaces begin to extend those very bodies. This has the consequence that they can move around with comfort and ease for the reason that "*they inhabit spaces that extend their shapes*".⁷² This is nicely illustrated *a contrario*: think of a trans* person in a building with cis-gendered (male/female) toilets only, where the given socio-normative architecture of the relevant social space (in this case, quite literally) does not extend the trans* person's body.

At last, the conclusion (4) holds that 'orientations are organized rather than casual, ... they shape what becomes socially as well as bodily given'.⁷³ This is because, following claims (2) and (3), what is within one's reach depends on both: how one arrives in the relevant social space (i.e., one's bodily capacities, personal history, network of cares, concerns and commitments, and so forth) and how the relevant social space is socio-normatively structured (i.e., making room for dominant bodies but not non-dominant, marginalised bodies). Why does this matter? Ahmed is explicit on this point: 'I would say that being orientated in different ways does matter, precisely because of how spaces are already orientated, which makes some bodies feel in place, or at home, and not others.'⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 126, italics original.

⁷² Ahmed, 134, italics original.

⁷³ Ahmed, 158.

⁷⁴ Ahmed, 'Orientations', 563.

Whether the interaction between lived body and social world is harmonious, therefore, depends on how one arrives in the social space in relation to how the social space is socio-normatively structured.

1.3.2. Metaphorical Disorientation

At this point, I move to a critical discussion of Ahmed's model of metaphorical disorientation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ahmed's use of metaphorical disorientation is not consistent throughout her work, which I take to be the effect of and, grounded in, her methodological choice to provide a queer phenomenological reading of "orientation". The ambiguity in her use of metaphorical disorientation is perhaps most visible in the fact that she subsumes radically discrete experiences under the header of "disorientation": e.g., being disrupted in one's concentrated reading of a text and being confronted with racism.⁷⁵ In my critical discussion, I focus primarily on the latter type of experience as this constitutes Ahmed's primary target phenomenon.⁷⁶ For this, I interpret her model of metaphorical disorientation as follows:

(Def) MD: Metaphorical disorientation = A critical category to signify (a) those moments when marginalised bodies cannot extend into the social world, due to (b) the socio-normative architecture of the social world as orientated around non-marginalised, dominant bodies.

⁷⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 109–11, 157–58.

⁷⁶ One may object that the disorientation of being disrupted in one's concentrated reading of a text may better be interpreted as a case of literal disorientation. One could imagine, for instance, that such a disruption brings about a temporary loss of one's grasp of the directions of up/down, left/right, here/there. While I am open to the possibility of such a reading, I do not think that this is what Ahmed has in mind. I read her own focus to lie more on the sense of confusion as to 'what is behind you', as expressed in descriptions like 'You might even see black lines in front of your eyes as lines that block what is in front of you when you turn around' (Ahmed, 158).

On Ahmed's view, metaphorical disorientation occurs when there is no harmonious interaction between lived body and social world, that is, when 'the extension of bodies into space ... fails'.⁷⁷ Recall claim (3) as discussed in the previous subsection: the social world is always already orientated around some, but not other, bodies. Specifically, this means that those bodies who do not align with the dominant norms of the relevant social space cannot extend into their surroundings. According to Ahmed, this results in the experience of metaphorical disorientation.

To elaborate this view, it is helpful to consider Ahmed's discussion of Fanon's phenomenology of the Black body.⁷⁸ Fanon's work plays a central role in Ahmed's conception. This is because she considers his work to provide an important corrective to traditional phenomenological accounts that assume a harmonious interaction between lived body and social world as "normal" or "universal".⁷⁹ Ahmed reads Fanon's work as an alternative, 'which by beginning with the experiences of a black man in a white world begins with the loss of orientation'.⁸⁰ His starting point does not lie in a harmonious interaction, where the focus is on the bodily extension into space ("I can"). Quite to the contrary, Ahmed notes, it consists in 'the bodily and social experience of restriction, uncertainty, and blockage, or perhaps even in terms of the despair of the utterance of "I

⁷⁷ Ahmed, 11.

⁷⁸ See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1st ed., new ed (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

⁷⁹ For critiques of the "universal" body operating in traditional phenomenological discussions, see also e.g., Young, *On Female Body Experience*; Christine Wiesel, 'Challenging Conceptions of the "Normal" Subject in Phenomenology', in *Race as Phenomena: Between Phenomenology and Philosophy of Race*, ed. Emily S. Lee (Lanham (Md.): Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 69–86; Gail Weiss, 'The Normal, the Natural, and the Normative: A Merleau-Pontian Legacy to Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Disability Studies', *Continental Philosophy Review* 48, no. 1 (March 2015): 77–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-014-9316-y>. Much like Ahmed, they challenge the bodily "I can" as an universal mode of embodiment. While this critique raises important points about various different modes of embodiments at an existential level, let me also stress, as Luna Dolezal emphasises, that 'the "I can," for both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, simply describes the faculty subtending the ego which allows it to freely move the body and to perceive in an active, engaged manner,' where this bodily structure 'does not carry qualitative claims' (Luna Dolezal, *The Body and Shame: Phenomenology, Feminism, and the Socially Shaped Body* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 114–15).

⁸⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 138.

cannot”⁸¹ This alternative point of departure is phenomenologically revelatory because it unmasks that the harmonious interaction between lived body and social world is not so much a matter of ‘competence’ but ‘bodily form of privilege: the ability to move through the world without losing one’s way’.⁸² For Ahmed, this privilege amounts to inhabiting a body that is extended by the social world, so that one does not come to feel disorientated.

The central upshot of Ahmed’s model lies precisely in this emphasis on the interplay between (a) experiences of metaphorical disorientation and (b) the differential character of the socio-normative architecture of the social world. Ahmed’s focus on metaphorical disorientation experiences of marginalised bodies, I argue, makes salient three core characteristics of the socio-normative architecture of the social world: (1) it forms the experiential horizon in relation to which one navigates the social world and emotionally responds to disturbances in navigating the social world. (2) It shapes whether, and to what extent, one can come to feel either orientated or disorientated. And (3) it makes possible and brings about an uneven distribution of disorientation experiences in that its specific orientation around dominant bodies disproportionately affects and disorientates those bodies that do not fit the dominant norms. Two things follow from this conception of the differential character of the socio-normative architecture of the social world. First, it reveals that metaphorical disorientation is a distinctively *social phenomenon*. Ahmed makes clear that the relevant type of experience does not reside simply in the individual (recall: it is not a question of competence) but in the confrontation with the dominant norms of the social world. Second, it complicates traditional phenomenological conceptions of spatial relations of proximity and distance. Ahmed brings into view that one’s experience of spatiality – specifically one’s ability to orientate oneself in light of what is close – depends

⁸¹ Ahmed, 139.

⁸² Ahmed, 139.

on one's *social identity* (e.g., gender, race, sexuality, class), i.e., how one is socially positioned in relation to the dominant norms.

At the same time, I believe this emphasis comes with a significant worry. It concerns Ahmed's claim that the experience of metaphorical disorientation arises due to not extending into the relevant social space because of the ways it is socio-normatively orientated around some, but not other, bodies. It is certainly true that many metaphorical disorientation experiences do meet this characterisation, as evidenced by Ahmed's descriptions of marginalised bodies throughout her work. But note that, on Ahmed's conception, marginalised bodies can, for the most part, not be said to extend into the social world in a here relevant, meaningful way.⁸³ This is because for Ahmed what it means to be a marginalised body, recall, involves lacking 'the bodily privilege: the ability to move through the world without losing one's way'.⁸⁴ For present purposes, the most striking implication of this view is that the marginalised body undergoes and finds itself in a (more or less) perpetual state of disorientation. I believe this claim of perpetual disorientation to be problematic, on both phenomenological and critical grounds.

Before I examine why this is the case, let me distinguish between two possible interpretations of this claim of perpetual disorientation. On the first interpretation, this perpetual state of disorientation is (first and foremost) to be located on the pre-reflective level. Joel Krueger puts forward such a reading, where the emphasis is on the restriction of one's pre-reflective sense of bodily agency, including one's capacities for movement,

⁸³ I say "for the most part" because Ahmed does acknowledge that, through collective efforts, marginalised bodies can create 'other kinds of space' (Ahmed, 105) that accommodate for and extend their bodies. That said, Ahmed warns: 'It is important that we do not idealize queer worlds or simply locate them in an alternative space. After all, if the spaces we occupy are fleeting, if they follow us when we come and go, then this is as much a sign of how heterosexuality shapes the contours of inhabitable or livable space as it is about the promise of queer. It is given that the straight world is already in place and that queer moments, where things come out of line, are fleeting.' (Ahmed, 106).

⁸⁴ Ahmed, 139.

expression, and action.⁸⁵ On the second and more ambitious interpretation, this perpetual state of disorientation is (first and foremost) to be located on the reflective level, where the relevant type of experience becomes emotionally salient to the marginalised body. Even if one were to grant the plausibility of the first interpretation (however, already note that I shall critically discuss Krueger's position in detail in Chapter Four), I take the latter interpretation to be in keeping with, and capturing key aspects of, Ahmed's work. This is because there are many passages in which Ahmed is explicitly concerned with reflective experiences of metaphorical disorientation. Not only does she describe metaphorical disorientation as a 'feeling of shattering' and a 'violent feeling,' but she also states that it 'might persist and become a crisis'.⁸⁶ In both cases, the here suggested intensity of the emotional disturbance, both locally and globally, is presumably registered reflectively. In addition, Ahmed poses the question of 'what do such moments of disorientation tell us? ... what can we do with them?',⁸⁷ where the explicit awareness of the experience appears to be a pre-condition for learning from the experience. Even though I take both interpretations to be possible, my concern here is with the latter interpretation only. This is because it faces several difficulties that are particularly revealing with respect to the overall limitation of Ahmed's implicit solution to the DP.

To begin, I return to the example of cis-gendered (male/female) toilets. As a genderqueer person, I am continuously confronted with and made aware of the heteronormative norms orientated around cis-gendered bodies whenever I use cis-gendered toilets. Yet the central point is that this confrontation does not always and necessarily actualise in a first-personal experience of feeling disorientated in using a cis-gendered toilet. Quite to the contrary, at this point I am simply used to it, where the epistemic and practical

⁸⁵ Krueger, 'Finding (and Losing) One's Way'.

⁸⁶ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 157, 160.

⁸⁷ Ahmed, 158.

knowledge of navigating such a social space usually wards off any strong emotional disturbance.⁸⁸ Importantly, I do not wish to deny that the confrontation with heteronormative norms shapes the experience of navigating such a social space. But this claim is distinct from the more radical claim that heteronormativity restructures a trans* person's mode of bodily engagement altogether – from “I can” to “I cannot” – where this would render any confrontation with heteronormativity a first-personal reflective experience of metaphorical disorientation. Note that Lana M. Rodemeyer raises a related concern in the context of Ahmed's analysis of sensory experience in light of socio-historical conditions of racism. Probing Ahmed's thesis that ‘race does not just interrupt such a (corporeal) schema but structures its mode of operation’,⁸⁹ Rodemeyer asks:

How is my sensing of the table as cold, smooth, and hard restructured by racism? Clearly, racism might add a determinate layer upon that experience, so that, for example, the white person might experience a sense of entitlement in this touching experience, whereas the black person might not. It seems, though, that the rupture of racism, while clearly an essential aspect of the experience, does not erase the sensations of cold, hard, and smooth altogether.⁹⁰

Of course, I do not wish to suggest that the categories of “heteronormativity” and “racism” can be treated analogously. But I interpret Rodemeyer's consideration to point to a broader methodological concern that also underlies my analysis of the example of cis-gendered toilets: while it is important to combine the first-personal perspective of the relevant type of experience and the third-personal perspective of the relevant structures

⁸⁸ Importantly, I am not just claiming that, at this point, I usually no longer experience an epistemic disorientation (concerning ‘know what’) and/or practical disorientation (concerning ‘know how’). My claim centrally concerns an *affectively charged* form of metaphorical disorientation that, in keeping with Ahmed's work, may involve a felt lack of e.g., home, ease, or comfort. Shortly, I shall pick up in detail this affective dimension, which I take to be indispensable for developing a phenomenologically satisfying response to the DP.

⁸⁹ Ahmed, 111.

⁹⁰ Rodemeyer, ‘Husserl and Queer Theory’, 332.

of the social world, these two perspectives do not coincide. By characterising metaphorical disorientation experiences of non-dominant, marginalised bodies as the effect of those bodies not extending into social space by virtue of not matching the dominant norms, I worry that Ahmed's concern for social critique relegates the project of phenomenological inquiry to a secondary role only. I therefore agree with Rodemeyer's observation that Ahmed is 'moving away from the phenomenological stance into a queer one'.⁹¹

In the context of our target phenomenon, I broadly understand this queer stance to consist primarily in the destabilisation of normative models of the orientated body (recall: Ahmed exposes the orientated body as privileged). I believe this methodological choice to be fit for the specific purpose of identifying the differential character of the socio-normative architecture of the social world. However, from a phenomenological perspective, this methodological choice is confronted with a significant difficulty. I submit that Ahmed's model of metaphorical disorientation is insufficiently discerning with respect to a phenomenological distinction between *three broad and importantly different types* of emotional responses to the disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world:

1. Disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world that does not actualise in a meaningful emotional disturbance.
2. Disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world that does actualise in a meaningful emotional disturbance.
3. Disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world that does actualise in a meaningful emotional disturbance, where this amounts to a first-personal reflective experience of metaphorical disorientation.

⁹¹ Rodemeyer, 332.

Let me briefly motivate this tripartite phenomenological distinction with the following examples that would, on Ahmed's view, each qualify as an instance of disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world. As I am 6' 3", many seats on public transports do not easily extend my body. This usually does not yield any emotional disturbance for me (not in any meaningful sense). By contrast, as the only (visibly) queer person at a philosophy conference I notice the heteronormative norms around me, as expressed in other people's ways of behaviour, and the experience of not fitting these norms in that instance is often emotionally disturbing. In particular, it can make me feel quite alienated from other people around me. And still, unless that philosophy conference or its people are of particular personal import, typically, this experience does not yield a first-personal experience of metaphorical disorientation for me where I feel at a loss as to how to go on. This makes clear: if metaphorical disorientation is intended to designate a distinctive phenomenological object, it is important to be able to distinguish it from other emotional responses to the disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world.⁹²

⁹² Along the same lines, in a footnote, Ward gestures towards the shortcomings of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept of "misfit" in the context of disability studies: 'what it seems to have trouble is in making fine-grained distinctions between cases of harmful and non-harmful misfits, and cases of harmful misfits that should count as disability and harmful misfits that do not rise to the level of disability'. (Ward, 'Misfitting, Breakdowns, and the Normal in Merleau-Ponty', 714, fn. 1). For Garland-Thomson, the concept of "misfit" describes the moment 'when the environment does not sustain the shape and function of the body that enters it' (Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept', *Hypatia* 26, no. 3 (2011): 594). Notice how remarkably similar this characterisation sounds to Ahmed's model of metaphorical disorientation. In fact, Ward develops the aforementioned critical remarks with a series of examples, where one of them is identical to my example for type (1): namely, her own experience of being too short to 'reach the top shelf in any dairy or freezer section' as well as her observation that 'very tall people misfit in most plane seats' (Ward, 'Misfitting, Breakdowns, and the Normal in Merleau-Ponty', 714, fn. 1). Lauren Guilmette considers Garland-Thomson's concept of "misfit" to illuminate certain aspects of Ahmed's concept of "disorientation"; see Laurene Guilmette, 'Queer Orientations', in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, ed. Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (Evanston (Ill.): Northwestern university press, 2020), 278–80. In contrast, I interpret this conceptual proximity to be instead underscoring the here identified limitations of Ahmed's model. This is because this conceptual proximity renders ambiguous the phenomenologically distinct character of metaphorical disorientation, which however is the target of the DP.

In addition, there are also *critical reasons* for drawing such a phenomenological distinction. I believe it to be important to make *conceptual space* for the possibility and legitimacy of marginalised bodies feeling orientated in navigating social spaces that otherwise do not extend them.⁹³ From my critique of Ahmed's claim of perpetual disorientation, it should be clear that the 'disorientated marginalised person' and the 'orientated non-marginalised person' cannot be conceptualised as simple counterparts. On the contrary, lived experience of marginalised people in navigating social space is too complex and multi-faceted to be reduced to lived experience of their marginalisation. I believe such a reduction to be a methodological error that, note, stands in tension with Ahmed's critical intent of her queer phenomenological project: it renders conceptually invisible experiences of metaphorical orientation of those who are already marginalised by virtue of their social identity in relation to the dominant norms. This is problematic not only because I take to be epistemically unjust to deny marginalised groups of people the relevant hermeneutic resources for making sense of positively valenced experiences of navigating social space that, as Ahmed herself notes, bear the potential for 'world-making'.⁹⁴ It is also problematic for the reason that it conceptually re-instantiates the orientated body as the dominant body, which however runs contrary to Ahmed's methodological goal to destabilise normative models of the orientated body.

In order to avoid this reduction, therefore, I propose to move away from the talk of metaphorical orientation as (exclusively) dependent on social identity. It is not how one is placed within social space in terms of the social identity one occupies as such, but

⁹³ The emphasis on conceptual space is important because I do not claim that Ahmed is not aware, let alone does not believe in the empirical actuality, of the possibility of marginalised bodies feeling orientated in navigating social spaces that are not orientated around them. She certainly is aware of this. But I claim that she does not adequately integrate this into her conception, and it is this conceptual failure that is problematic.

⁹⁴ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 114. This is not to idealise world-making, but to point to and acknowledge its existence. Here, I am in agreement with Ahmed who cautions against idealising queer world-making. See also fn. 83.

how, against the backdrop of one's social identity, one finds oneself situated in relation to other people and the social norms that may determine whether one comes to feel oriented or disorientated in navigating social space. I shall spell out the phenomenological structure that is at play in this shift of conceptual analysis in the subsequent chapters. For now, it suffices to draw out three central merits of this talk of “how one finds oneself situated”: (a) it does not refer to a fixed placement within social space, but to a person's self-understanding as occupying a certain social position relative to other people and the social norms governing shared social space. Thus, it is essentially lived, dynamic, and relational. (b) But this also means that it is not adequately captured by appealing to some fixed sense of identity either (including identity markers such as “sexuality” or “race,” as in the case of “social identity”), but centrally involves a set of deep personal commitments and thus a degree of self-identification against the backdrop of whatever identity one is perceived to occupy and treated accordingly.⁹⁵ Thus, (c) it is sensitive to the exercise of agency involved in people who are perceived to misalign the dominant social norms, where this allows for the possibility of navigating social space in ways that need not be exhausted by nor correspond to one's social identity.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ The shift away from “social identity” in particular and, by implication, “social position” in general is not to countervail something like “self-identity” either. In contemporary metaphysics of gender, for instance, it is common to side either with “social position accounts”, explaining gender by external factors (how one is perceived, how others react to one, what identity one is taken to occupy etc.), or with “identity-based accounts, explaining gender by internal factors (how one feels, how one self-identifies etc.); for an overview, see e.g., Elizabeth Barnes, ‘Gender and Gender Terms’, *Noûs* 54, no. 3 (September 2020): 706–11, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12279>. In contrast, I do not commit to the view that one's emotional response to social space is solely explicable in terms of one's self-identity. My point is simply that one's social identity is neither identical with nor exhausted by one's deep personal commitments. Now, social identities can be characterised phenomenologically to function as socially structured horizons against which a person comes to experience the world; cf. Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). But this alone does not tell us much about what is of *personal importance to*, and thus *at issue for*, each and every person. I introduce the conceptual shift, therefore, to capture this phenomenologically relevant dimension: namely, operating at an existential, that is, self-relating level of personhood, against the backdrop of those larger social structure. More on this in Chapter Two, in particular 2.5. – 2.6.

⁹⁶ Compare what Serene Khader identifies as the “agency dilemma” that arises for feminists theorising about oppression: ‘Feminists who theorize about oppression and deprivation are faced

1.3.3. Concluding Remarks

To conclude: I aim to have demonstrated that the claim of perpetual disorientation is phenomenologically untenable. It turns out that Ahmed's model of metaphorical disorientation lacks the relevant phenomenological resources to distinguish between different emotional responses to the disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world. The phenomenology of navigating social space is more complex than Ahmed's "all-or-nothing" characterisation allows. This is because, on Ahmed's conception, any non-extension into social space by virtue of not matching the dominant norms would by definition actualise in a first-personal experience of metaphorical disorientation; recall that 'disorientation occurs when that extension fails'.⁹⁷ Even if one were to grant the weaker claim that those who do not fit the dominant norms can extend 'less easily into space',⁹⁸ as Ahmed at times suggests, it does not follow that non-extension (or, the "failure" of extension) is a sufficient condition for experiences of metaphorical disorientation.

To return to the DP: I have outlined that Ahmed's (implicit) solution consists in taking the literal case as an instructive metaphor for theorising metaphorical disorientation experiences. This is what I have called "weak spatialising strategy". Given my critical assessment of Ahmed's model, it can now be concluded that this weak spatialising strategy cannot resolve the DP. Recall that any solution to the DP needs to account for two different concerns that are in dialectical tension with one another: (a) the concern for the heterogeneity of everyday uses of "disorientation" on the one hand, and (b) the concern for the conceptual distinctiveness of "disorientation" in contrast to other related

with a balancing act – that of trying to represent deprived people as agents without thereby obscuring the reality of their victimization.' (Serene Kader, *Adaptive Preferences and Women's Empowerment*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30).

⁹⁷ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 11.

⁹⁸ Ahmed, 102.

phenomena on the other hand. Even if her rendering of the classical phenomenological conception of “orientation” as a broad critical category may possibly meet requirement (a), Ahmed’s model fails to meet requirement (b). This is precisely because her (implicit) solution turns on spatialising metaphorical disorientation, where this has turned out to be phenomenologically insufficient for identifying and characterising the relevant type of experience.

At this point, there are at least two possible ways to respond to my phenomenological critique of Ahmed: (1) to defend Ahmed’s model by showing that she is not interested in developing an (implicit) solution to the DP; and (2) to challenge my critique by pointing to her remarks on the relevant affective phenomenology as a possible way by which to distinguish cases of disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world that are disorientating from those that are not. Let me consider each response.

First: Ahmed may explicitly deny that she intends to respond to the DP. She may therefore argue that the force of my critique is contingent on how exactly one is to understand her overall project. Recall the methodological approach that underwrites Ahmed’s work. I have demonstrated how Ahmed ultimately adopts a phenomenology-inspired queer stance (in contrast to a queer *phenomenological* stance), where the principal focus is on social critique. Accordingly, Ahmed may press that she remains agnostic about how exactly to characterise the relevant type of experience and instead focuses on ‘what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do’.⁹⁹ However, I believe this response to be unsatisfactory. This is not only because I have previously argued that there are also *critical* reasons for the importance of getting clear on the relevant phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation. But I also hold the view that the DP constitutes a significant difficulty that any – including Ahmed’s – conception of

⁹⁹ Ahmed, 158.

metaphorical disorientation inevitably faces. This is because so long as the concept of “disorientation” is extended from the literal to the metaphorical realm, one must address the question as to what exactly is meant by this metaphor.

Second: Ahmed may challenge my critique by noting that I have overlooked one central feature of her model of metaphorical disorientation. Positing that the relevant type of experience comes with its own phenomenal character marked by ‘feeling out of place’,¹⁰⁰ she may argue that cases of disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world give rise to the first-personal experience of metaphorical disorientation if and only if they actualise in a felt sense of being out of place. Along these lines, Ahmed may point to the relevant affective phenomenology as a principled way by which to distinguish various different emotional responses to a disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world. While I believe this emphasis on the felt character to be a move in the right direction, Ahmed (just like Harbin, as discussed in 1.2.) does not clearly define what she takes the relevant type of affective state to consist of. What is more, those approximations of the experiential profile that are given by Ahmed ultimately amount to a conception of ‘a body-at-home in its world, a body that extends into space’.¹⁰¹ At this point, however, this second line of response faces the same difficulties as the rest of Ahmed’s model. This is because it risks collapsing a first-personal account of the relevant type of experience, where the focus is on its felt character, to a third-personal account of the successful extension of one’s body into social space. And note that I have previously demonstrated that the appeal to a third-personal level of analysis alone is phenomenologically insufficient for identifying and characterising the relevant type of experience.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed, 155.

¹⁰¹ Ahmed, 111.

Already note that I shall return to the felt dimension of social disorientation in detail in Chapter Two.

1.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that any philosophically discerning solution to the DP needs to account for two different concerns that are in dialectical tension with one another: (a) the concern for the heterogeneity of everyday uses of “disorientation” on the one hand, and (b) the concern for the conceptual distinctiveness of “disorientation” in contrast to other related phenomena on the other hand. Velasco et al.’s explicit solution and Ahmed’s implicit solution to the DP both fail on the grounds that they cannot meet (b). This is because they both adopt a spatialising strategy in theorising metaphorical disorientation that cannot adequately account for the phenomenological structure of the relevant type of experience.

To be clear, Velasco et al. and Ahmed are right to point to the spatial dimension of metaphorical disorientation. This is because the relevant type of experience takes place in social space and affects one’s experience of social space. But from the perspective of the DP, they are mistaken in grounding their models of metaphorical disorientation in a commitment to conceptual equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation: in taking literal disorientation to be the paradigmatic case for theorising metaphorical disorientation, Velasco et al. risk rendering the relevant type of experience unrecognisable as an experience of *metaphorical* disorientation; and in taking literal disorientation to be an instructive metaphor for broadly theorising metaphorical disorientation, Ahmed risks rendering the relevant type of experience unrecognisable as an experience of *metaphorical disorientation*. However different their methodological and analytic intents are, what

they have in common is that their spatialising strategies lack the relevant discriminatory power. They both sideline key phenomenological distinctions required to analyse the distinctive phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation. As a result, they are incapable of categorising the relevant type of experience in ways that would make possible a conceptual demarcation of the very category of “metaphorical disorientation”.

If my argument has been successful, it turns out that the DP cannot be adequately resolved by adopting the spatialising strategy. The phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation involves a distinctive type of phenomenological disturbance, and acknowledging this stands in direct tension with the commitment to conceptual equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation that underlies the spatialising strategy. That said, let me emphasise once more that my critique exclusively concerns the practice of spatialising that, as we have seen, lacks the relevant explanatory and discriminatory resources required to do justice to the phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation. In abandoning the spatialising strategy, therefore, I do not deny the spatiality of metaphorical disorientation. But as long as we hold onto the spatialising strategy, I believe that we are not in the position to develop a philosophically successful conception of metaphorical disorientation and resolve the DP.¹⁰²

Where does this leave us? The task, I submit, must be to develop and defend an alternative response to the DP that can meet both requirements (a) and (b), with a

¹⁰² At this point, one may object that my conclusion rules out the possibility, and legitimacy, of the following response: namely, to defend the spatialising strategy by developing a modified version. Along these lines, one may try and develop a modified version that would incorporate the relevant phenomenological specifications. For instance, one may characterise the relevant phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation to involve a spatial dimension, but also a social dimension that cannot simply be mapped onto the possibility of extending into social space. But at this point, I argue that it would no longer be a case of spatialising (not in any meaningful sense). This is because, e.g., identifying and characterising the social dimension not simply in spatialising terms would mean to leave behind the commitment to conceptual equivalence between literal and metaphorical disorientation that however underwrites the spatialising strategy, as seen in the case of Ahmed’s model of the social in metaphorical disorientation.

particular focus on (b). For as we have seen, it is from the perspective of (b) the concern for the conceptual distinctiveness of “disorientation” in relation to other phenomena that the models of Velasco et al. and Ahmed face their central difficulties. But we have also seen that the relevant type of experience constitutes an emotional response to, and felt disturbance of, navigating social space in which one is confronted with the loss of certain possibilities that are bound up with one’s sense of identity in relation to other people and shared social space. It can be added that the relevant type of experience involves a distinctively social character that, as Ahmed has rightly identified, resides in the confrontation between oneself and other people/shared social space. However, it has also become clear that we need a different understanding of the source and structure of the phenomenological disturbance so that it is neither characterised as an egocentric-allocentric disintegration of spatial-like frames of reference (Velasco et al.) nor reduced to the inability of extending into shared social space (Ahmed).

In order to achieve this task, I propose a new phenomenological category that I shall call *social disorientation*, and spend Chapters Two-Five developing and defending. In introducing this phenomenological category, my intent is not only to emphasise that metaphorical disorientation experiences both arise and manifest in relation to other people and shared social space, but also to contrast my phenomenological project with the spatialising strategy that predominates contemporary scholarship on metaphorical disorientation.¹⁰³ And I furthermore propose that, in order to get clear on the distinctive

¹⁰³ Although I introduce the term of “social disorientation” as a new phenomenological category here, I am certainly not the first one to employ the term. Let me briefly discuss two other uses of “social disorientation”. First: in a recent paper, Velasco et al. employ “social disorientation” to capture the experience following from ‘the sudden rearrangement of social dynamics based on distancing measures’ during the pandemic, as well ‘as a result of the growing mobility of workers’ (Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, ‘The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis’, 442, 443). While Velasco et al. employ the term to pick out a specific type of metaphorical disorientation, it does not become clear what “the social” in social disorientation exactly amounts to so as to warrant its name; that is, beyond the nod to changing social dynamics operative in the relative type of experience. What is more, I do not think that changing social dynamics are specific to and

phenomenology of loss (i.e., loss *of* orientation) that is operative in social disorientation, we must first turn to what I shall correspondingly call *social orientation* in general and the *felt phenomenology* of social orientation in particular.¹⁰⁴

distinctive of “social disorientation”. Quite the opposite, I take them to be involved in metaphorical disorientation more broadly, including other types of metaphorical disorientation singled out by the authors (e.g., what they call “political disorientation”). Besides these concerns, the principal difference between their and my use of “social disorientation” consists in the following fact: Inasmuch as social disorientation is subsumed under their unitary conception of disorientation *simpliciter*, on Velasco et al.’s view, it must be conceptualised in spatialising terms. In contrast to this view, I introduce the term precisely to mark a conceptual distinction to the spatialising strategy.

Second: John Christman employs “social disorientation” to capture those cases ‘in which people’s practical self-conceptions become fractured and no longer socially meaningful’ (John Christman, ‘Autonomy and Social Disorientation’, in *Authenticity, Autonomy and Multiculturalism*, ed. Geoffrey Brahm Levey, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought 103 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 32). Christman considers the case of forced dislocation of the Crow from their traditional homeland and the case of survivors of human trafficking. What I find interesting about Christman’s analysis of these two (note: very extreme) cases of social disorientation is his insight that in both cases one feels disorientated because one lacks a “social home”: ‘Who they are, in short, is alien relative to their surroundings and so, insofar as needing a social home in which to act and pursue meaningful projects is required for *having* such meaningful projects, they are at a loss about how to proceed.’ (Christman, 36, italics original). Unfortunately, Christman does not say anything else about “social home”, nor does he go into detail about the experiential character and structure of social disorientation. I suspect this has to do with the fact that his overall aim lies somewhere else: namely, to establish the foundational capacity for self-governing that, on his view, is still present in the aforementioned two cases of social disorientation. Leaving aside my concerns with Korsgaard’s account of practical identity that explicitly underwrites his analysis, I take my phenomenological project of developing a conception of social disorientation to be broadly compatible with, and expanding on, Christman’s (under-developed) insight surrounding the importance of a social home.

¹⁰⁴ To clarify: though I believe that social orientation and social disorientation mutually elucidate one another and cannot be studied separately, I do not wish to frame them as simple counterparts. While my thesis is concerned with significant and at times far-reaching metaphorical disorientation experiences, those cases that interest me do *not* compromise one’s agency and abilities of navigating shared social space altogether. As Stegmaier puts it pointedly, our orientation ‘does not reach the “nothing” – except in death’ (Werner Stegmaier, *What Is Orientation?: A Philosophical Investigation* (De Gruyter, 2019), 91, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110575149>).

CHAPTER TWO

The Promise of Home

From the findings of Chapter One, it is instructive to turn to the phenomenology of home as central to the first-personal character of social orientation. This chapter aims to deliver on this task and develop a detailed phenomenological analysis of feeling at home in navigating social space.

In 2.1., I begin by bringing more clearly into focus the phenomenon of feeling at home and introduce a foundational phenomenological distinction between (1) *being at home*, where home is taken in a literal sense as domestic space, and (2) *feeling at home*, where home is taken in a metaphorical sense as belonging regardless of physical space. Against this backdrop, in 2.2., I outline the standard view of feeling at home and demonstrate that it models the relevant type of experience on feeling at home in domestic space. In 2.3., I then argue that this standard view fails to account for important types of feeling at home, where home is taken in its metaphorical sense of belonging regardless of physical space. To capture what underlies feeling at home in its various experiential manifestations, the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to articulating an alternative way of theorising the phenomenology of feeling at home. I do this, in 2.4. and 2.5., by drawing on resources afforded by Simon May's account of home in and through love, specifically his conception of love's "promise of home".¹ I argue that, in order to feel at home in navigating social space, one must be grounded in a promise of home in and through other people who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. This is irrespective of the extent to which one is physically, practically, and/or emotionally

¹ Simon May, *Love: A New Understanding of an Ancient Emotion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).

familiar with the given surroundings. I conclude this chapter, in 2.6., by considering three implications of my proposed conception.

Overall, in this chapter I hope not only to gain a better understanding of the phenomenology of social orientation by way of developing a phenomenological conception of feeling at home in navigating social space, but also to contribute to the philosophical scholarship on the phenomenology of home more generally.

2.1. The Turn to Home

As we saw in Chapter One, prominent scholars of metaphorical disorientation, like Harbin and Ahmed, evoke feeling at home to capture the phenomenal character of what it is like subjectively to feel orientated in navigating social space, where its experiential absence amounts to an experience of metaphorical disorientation. Recall that Harbin characterises the relevant type of experience to ‘involve feeling deeply out of place, unfamiliar, or not at home’,² while Ahmed proclaims: ‘The question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we “find our way” but also how we come to “feel at home”.’³ Indeed, at times, Ahmed goes as far as using orientation and home interchangeably when she notes: ‘To be orientated, or to be at home, is also to feel a certain comfort.’⁴ Other scholars follow this emphasis. Corinne Lajoie, for instance, proposes to construe ‘being at home as a particular way of *being oriented* in the world, marked by coherence and familiarity’.⁵ And Joel Krueger states that ‘A central part of its phenomenal character [of

² Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 2.

³ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 7.

⁴ Ahmed, 134.

⁵ Lajoie, ‘Being at Home’, 555, italics original.

the felt experience of metaphorical disorientation] involves not feeling at home in a particular space'.⁶

Despite this widespread commitment to a constitutive relationship between orientation and home, the phenomenology of home in general and the experience of feeling at home in particular remain surprisingly under-theorised in most available analyses of metaphorical disorientation. It can be added that this lacuna also pertains to the phenomenological scholarship at large, where the talk of “feeling at home” is rarely investigated as a phenomenon in its own right. Instead, it is typically evoked as a placeholder for several cognate affective states. This is explicitly captured in an observation put forward by Ratcliffe. He remarks:

Although I doubt that we can formulate a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as a person’s ‘home’, we can at least acknowledge various connotations that are ordinarily associated with the use of that word, including the likes of familiarity, safety, security, comfort, privacy and family.⁷

This observation speaks to two key assumptions that underlie much of contemporary phenomenological scholarship on home: (a) on the one hand, the recognition that ‘home’ has a wide range of experiential manifestations, where this may call into question the possibility of any continuity between different first-personal instances of feeling at home; and (b) on the other hand, the attempt to theorise the phenomenology of home in relation to the positively valenced experience of being at home that is accompanied by a host of emotive intentional attitudes like familiarity, safety, or comfort, as the above quotation exemplifies.⁸

⁶ Krueger, ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’, 23.

⁷ Matthew Ratcliffe, ‘Emotional Intentionality’, *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 85 (July 2019): 259, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246118000784>.

⁸ One proviso: there is another broad type of conceptualisation of “feeling at home” in the philosophical scholarship that I shall not consider here. On this view, the talk of ‘feeling at home’ is

It is certainly important to acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of feeling at home. Even so, for the turn to home to do the kind of phenomenological work required for developing a satisfying answer to the DP, I submit that we must provide a phenomenological characterisation that can identify something that underlies many experiential manifestations. And for this, I submit that we need to give a more detailed description of how the relevant type of experience occurs and what its structure amounts to.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to this two-fold task. I begin here by clearing the ground in introducing a phenomenological distinction between *two broad and importantly different types* of emotional responses to navigating social space in which a positively valenced experience of a sense of home can be said to be present: I shall call them (1) *being at home* and (2) *feeling at home* respectively. The first type of home-presence employs the literal sense of home as domestic space, whereas the second type of home-presence turns on the metaphorical sense of home as belonging regardless of

employed to capture a general feeling of being-in-the-world that is marked by ‘the character of the normal, unapparent, things-as-usual ways of everyday life’ (Fredrik Svenaeus, ‘Illness as Unhomelike Being-in-the-World: Heidegger and the Phenomenology of Medicine’, *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (August 2011): 337, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-010-9301-0>). See also Fredrik Svenaeus, *The Hermeneutics of Medicine and the Phenomenology of Health: Steps towards a Philosophy of Medical Practice*, Softcover repr. of the hardcover 1. ed. 2001, International Library of Ethics, Law and the New Medicine 5 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publ, 2011), 90–93. In a similar vein, see furthermore e.g., Dylan Trigg, ‘From Anxiety to Nostalgia: A Heideggerian Analysis’, in *Existential Medicine: Essays on Health and Illness*, ed. Kevin Aho, New Heidegger Research (London Lanham (Md.): Rowman & Littlefield international, 2018), 48; Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass Dritter Teil: 1929-1935*, ed. Iso Kern, Den Haag: Dordrecht, 1973; Anthony J. Steinbock, *Home and beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1995); Thomas Fuchs, ‘Vertrautheit Und Vertrauen Als Grundlagen Der Lebenswelt’, *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, 2015, 101–17. This type of conceptualisation captures a central background attunement, or *existential feeling*, that underlies most people’s typical everyday engagement in and with the world; cf. Matthew Ratcliffe, ‘The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling’, in *Feelings of Being Alive*, ed. Joerg Fingerhut and Sabine Marienberg (DE GRUYTER, 2012), 23–54, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110246599.23>. For present purposes, however, it does not specifically zoom in on the more localised and temporally confined experience of feeling at home in a concrete situation and, as such, presents a too broad view of the phenomenon. And notice further that a person’s felt lack of home in navigating social space need not be accompanied by nor grounded in a disruption to, and disturbance, of the everyday familiarity of the world.

physical space. I contend that this phenomenological distinction is crucial for investigating the phenomenology of home, making possible a phenomenologically more discerning characterisation of the relevant type of experience. This is for the reason that, even though being at home and feeling at home are often used interchangeably, these two types of home-presence can, and often do, come experientially apart. To provide some initial motivation, consider the following two scenarios: (scenario₁) being at home but not feeling at home, and (scenario₂) feeling at home but not being at home.

Scenario₁ is commonly evoked by feminist scholars who stress the normatively charged and politically contested, and worse, exclusionary nature of home as domestic space. As Luna Dolezal observes,

Home is a highly politicized and fraught concept in feminist philosophy. Feminist thinkers have identified the values associated with home, such as privacy, safety, and individuation, as potentially limiting to women, where dwelling in patriarchally imagined domestic spaces can lead to oppression, exclusion, and confinement. Home can be a site of powerlessness, abuse, and psychological oppression, where the potential for the unspeakable to happen is realized in the private spaces behind closed doors.⁹

Like any other social space (cf. Ahmed's analysis of social space in the previous chapter), the domestic space of one's home is not neutrally arranged but always already socio-normatively structured in specific ways, where this shapes if, and the extent to which, a person can come to feel at home in being at home. This also means that there exists the very real possibility of being literally at home while feeling unsafe or even abused, and as such not feeling at home at all.¹⁰

⁹ Luna Dolezal, 'Feminist Reflections on the Phenomenological Foundations of Home', *Symposium* 21, no. 2 (2017): 103, <https://doi.org/10.5840/symposium201721222>.

¹⁰ For more feminist critiques of "home" as domestic space, see e.g., Ortega, *In-Between*; Bernice Johnson Reagon, 'Coalition Politics: Turning the Century', *Feministische Studien* 33, no. 1 (1 May 2015): 115–23, <https://doi.org/10.1515/fs-2015-0115>; Lynne Segal, *What Is to Be Done about the Family?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with the Socialist Society, 1983);

Scenario₂ is attested by many everyday examples. Consider moving to a new environment, where you nonetheless feel at home in the presence of your best friend. Whereas the presence of a stranger might reinforce the feeling of unfamiliarity in this new environment, your best friend is likely (though, of course, not always) to make you feel at home in navigating social space for the reason that you experience a sense of belonging with your best friend regardless of physical space. This does not only indicate the manifold and dynamic ways in which a person can emotionally respond to navigating social space but also, crucially, that one's emotional response is significantly shaped by interpersonal and social relations in navigating social space.¹¹

Already, these initial remarks begin to put pressure on the second key assumption identified above: namely, that the relevant type of experience is best characterised in relation to the experiential and conceptual terrain of being at home. In order to identify a common phenomenological structure to various experiential manifestations without losing sight of the vast applicability of “home”, I argue that *we need to critically revise the second assumption*. It is therefore instructive to examine more closely this second assumption that underlies what I call *the standard view of feeling at home*, to which I now turn.

Julia Wardhaugh, ‘The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity’, *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 1 (February 1999): 91–109, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00164>; Young, *On Female Body Experience*. I share this feminist commitment to probing the sacred image of home. For a complementary critique that focuses on issues surrounding commodification of housing and material precarity as detrimental to, even ruling out, the possibility of feeling at home in being at home, see Erik Bormanis, ‘Spaces of Belonging and the Precariousness of Home’, *Puncta* 2, no. 1 (29 October 2019): 19–32, <https://doi.org/10.5399/PJCP.v2i1.2>.

¹¹ Compare J. H. Van den Berg's comparative observation: ‘We all know people whose company we would prefer not to go shopping, not to visit a museum, not to look at a landscape, because we would like to keep these things unharmed. Just as well as we all know people in whose company it is pleasant to take a walk because the objects encountered come to no harm.’ (J. H. Van den Berg, *A Different Existence: Principles of Phenomenological Psychopathology* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1972), 65; quoted in Matthew Ratcliffe, *Experiences of Depression: A Study in Phenomenology*, International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 214).

2.2. The Standard View

While the talk of “feeling at home” is commonplace, I have already suggested that there is surprisingly little phenomenological research that investigates the phenomenon in its own right. It is not uncommon to take “feeling at home” to mean simply “feeling at home like one feels at home in one’s home”, where this then amounts to, and is captured in, the second assumption identified above. From this perspective, an analysis of the phenomenology of feeling at home puts emphasis on understanding the positively valenced experience of being at home. Indeed, most available phenomenological discussions of feeling at home take place in the context of exploring the experience of home as domestic space.¹² I call this *the standard view of feeling at home*, on which feeling at home becomes associated with a sense of space-familiarity constitutive of the positively valenced experience of being at home. In what follows, I provide an outline of the standard view of feeling at home before I then, in the next section, turn to a critical assessment.¹³

¹² See e.g., Dolezal, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Phenomenological Foundations of Home’; Kirsten Jacobson, ‘A Developed Nature: A Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home’, *Continental Philosophy Review* 42, no. 3 (August 2009): 355–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-009-9113-1>; Kirsten Jacobson, ‘The Experience of Home and the Space of Citizenship’, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48, no. 3 (September 2010): 219–45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-6962.2010.00029.x>; Helen Ngo, *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment*, Philosophy of Race (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017); Young, *On Female Body Experience*.

¹³ There are some discussions that do not easily fit this classification of the standard view of feeling at home. For example, see Erik Dzwiza-Ohlsen, ‘Going Home Alone?’, *Metodo* 10, no. 1 (2022): 109–44, <https://doi.org/10.19079/metodo.10.1.109>. Dzwiza-Ohlsen develops a view of feeling at home in relation to the experience of togetherness. While I believe this shift in emphasis to be an important corrective, his construal of the affective phenomenology of togetherness, as operative in episodic experiences of feeling at home, remains indexed to characteristics he takes to be present in being at home. Another example is Lajoie, ‘Being at Home’. Lajoie takes a critical stance towards phenomenological accounts that model feeling at home on what it is like subjectively for non-marginalised, dominant bodies to feel at home: ‘In describing the difficulties of finding my place in the world, I discussed [1] alternatives to the ideal of seamless body-world compatibility and complicity. Although changes, breakdowns, or disruptions in the course of experience highlight the contingency of embodied experience, they also offer valuable opportunities to transform familiar assumptions and develop [2] new ways of being at home.’ (‘Lajoie, ‘Being at Home’, 562). While she provides important insights on (1), unfortunately Lajoie does not go into much detail on (2). And notice that appealing to the existence of non-dominant ways of

Although proponents of the standard view diverge in their conceptual and critical intents, they broadly all share the same commitment: namely, that there exists some kind of *phenomenological equivalence* between feeling at home and being at home, where this is premised on taking the positively valenced experience of feeling at home in domestic space as the paradigm case for feeling at home and, by implication, in spatialising the metaphorical sense of home.¹⁴ Dolezal quite explicitly states:

The phenomenology of home is, in part about feeling *at home*; it is about belonging: a deep and often unnoticed familiarity that binds one to kin and community. When we are ‘at home’ we feel more grounded, safe, secure, and in tune with our surroundings. Home is the place where, as the philosopher Agnes Heller contends, ‘no footnotes are needed’; one can speak to others without needing to provide any background information; the body moves through space with a native ease ... Being ‘at home,’ both literally and figuratively, invokes this feeling of security, ease, comfort, and privacy.

When we are ‘at home,’ both literally and figuratively, the body moves through space with a native ease, there is a ‘passionate liaison’ (PS, 36) between one’s body and the space of one’s first home, or in other words, between one’s motor skills and the affordances of the material environment.¹⁵

navigating social space is not sufficient (as she seems to take it to be) for establishing that these come with ‘new ways of being at home’ exhibiting a different phenomenological structure.

¹⁴ Two comments on this spatialising tendency: (1) Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is particularly present in the philosophical scholarship on metaphorical disorientation that, recall, commits to the view of a constitutive relationship between orientation and home. As we saw in Chapter One, most discussions on metaphorical disorientation adopt a spatialising strategy, so, that there are good reasons to interpret the spatialising of home to be an extension of and subset of the spatialising strategy for theorising metaphorical disorientation. (2) It is also present in other disciplines, notably the cross-disciplinary body of housing studies. L. McCarthy observes: ‘While much has been written on the *unheimlich* seeping into the familiar space of the domestic house (Kaika, 2004; Stivers, 2005; Vidler, 1996), less attention has been paid to travel in the opposite direction: when the familiar moves beyond its usual habitus of the domestic house (i.e. when the tropes of ‘home’ are performed outside of the private sphere).’ (L. McCarthy, ‘(Re)Conceptualising the Boundaries between Home and Homelessness: The *Unheimlich*’, *Housing Studies* 33, no. 6 (18 August 2018): 964, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1408780>).

¹⁵ Dolezal, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Phenomenological Foundations of Home’, 104–5, italics original, 109.

As we saw in 2.1., Dolezal shares the feminist commitment to probing the sacred notion of home (cf. scenario₁). So, it is perhaps surprising that both passages explicitly state that ‘home’ in its literal sense (being at home) and its metaphorical sense (feeling at home) exhibit the same characteristics. Rather than taking the possibility of a disjunct between being at home and feeling at home as a reason against spatialising the metaphorical sense of home, Dolezal here specifically argues for a phenomenological equivalence between both types of home-presence. On her view, they both come with the same kind of physical and practical familiarity with the given surroundings (‘the body moves through space with a native ease’) as well as emotional familiarity with the given surroundings (‘feeling of security, ease, comfort, and privacy’). Dolezal is not alone in such a conceptual move. To give another example, consider Jacobson’s much-cited phenomenological exploration of home in distinctively spatial terms.¹⁶ Not only does she characterise feeling at home in terms of ‘our habitual ways of being at home’, but she also argues that a sense of familiarity, as grounded in one’s foundational experience of home as domestic space, makes possible the very experience of feeling at home elsewhere.¹⁷ Though her primary focus is on one’s home-place as the experiential background from which to navigate social space, Jacobson, too, zooms in on space-familiarity as constitutive of being at home in order to then export this to feeling at home as such.

What emerges here, I believe, is the constitutive role that proponents of the standard view typically ascribe to a sense of space-familiarity for feeling at home. As such, this suggests the following characterisation of the relevant type of experience:

¹⁶ Jacobson, ‘A Developed Nature’; Jacobson, ‘The Experience of Home and the Space of Citizenship’.

¹⁷ Jacobson, ‘A Developed Nature’, 306.

(Def) Feeling at home: A positively valenced experience of a sense of home that is attributable to a sense of physical, practical, and emotional familiarity with the given surroundings.

Notice that, on this standard view, a sense of space-familiarity, as modelled on the positively valenced experience of being at home, is constitutive of feeling at home *both inside and outside domestic space*. This also means that feeling at home becomes conceptually conditional on being at home. Let me therefore zoom in on being at home and outline in some more detail what the relevant sense of space-familiarity (physical, practical, and emotional) is usually taken to involve.

Characteristic of being at home is, first, the acquisition and habituation of a bodily practical know-how to skilfully respond to the solicitations of the given surroundings, where this brings about and actualises in a relatively spontaneous and unhindered movement in one's domestic space. As Casey puts it: 'Getting orientated', which he understands as the experience of one's surroundings as familiar or homelike, 'is to learn precisely which routes are possible, and eventually which are most desirable, by setting up habitual patterns of bodily movement.'¹⁸ But this alone is not sufficient for feeling at home in one's domestic space, as seen *a contrario*: living out in the streets and having familiarised oneself with one's surroundings whilst painfully lacking a sense of home.¹⁹

¹⁸ Casey, *Remembering*, 151.

¹⁹ Empirical studies report a strong sense of longing for home as typical of many homeless people's experiences of living out in the streets; cf. McCarthy, '(Re)Conceptualising the Boundaries between Home and Homelessness'. But importantly, this is not to suggest that there exists a principal dichotomy between being homeless and feeling at home. As McCarthy highlights, there is increasing body of empirical data that homeless people can, and often do, manage to establish a sense of home in and through the presence of other people. The importance of other people for a person's emotional response in navigating social space, both inside and outside domestic space, is in keeping with the overall argument of this chapter: namely, that home as belonging regardless of space-familiarity is at the heart of feeling at home. Already note that I shall develop this thesis in detail from 2.3. onwards.

As proponents of the standard view emphasise, second, being at home furthermore involves a sense of emotional familiarity with the given surroundings. Two points are important here: for one, this involves the experience of domestic space as a ‘site of respite, safety, and shelter’, ‘one feels sheltered from the outside intrusions and considerations, and given a place to recollect oneself in a space of familiarity’.²⁰ For another, it involves the materialisation of one’s identity in the sense that one’s surroundings become imbued with personal meaning and significance.²¹ Indeed, this is what people typically evoke by the talk of “my home”.

The perhaps most prominent elaboration of this latter aspect can be found in the work of Iris Marion Young.²² Developing a phenomenological comparison between being at home and being in a hotel room, she asks: ‘Why, then, does one not feel at home in a hotel room?’²³ Drawing on the psychologist D. J. Van Lennen, Young gives the following reply: ‘Because there is nothing of the self, one’s life habits and history, that one sees displayed around the room’; quite the opposite, ‘The arrangement is anonymous and neutral, for anyone and no one in particular’.²⁴ Young identifies the material arrangement of the given surroundings in specific ways suited to oneself (e.g., one’s idiosyncratic tastes, desires, habits, and routines) as constitutive of being at home, as a result of which the given surroundings not only reflect but also support oneself. This process of homemaking transforms the given surroundings into a space of personal meaning and significance, so that one attains affective ownership over the given surroundings: ‘these items have

²⁰ Dolezal, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Phenomenological Foundations of Home’, 105; Jacobson, ‘A Developed Nature’, 359.

²¹ Cf. Olli-Pekka Paananen, ‘Affective Familiarity and the Experience of Home’, *Metodo* 10, no. 1 (2022): 79–108, <https://doi.org/10.19079/metodo.10.1.79>.

²² Young, *On Female Body Experience*, in particular 123–54.

²³ Young, 139.

²⁴ Young, 139.

meaning primarily for me, accompany my actions and only secondarily those of others'.²⁵ It can be added that this process of homemaking further strengthens one's ability to feel at ease and sheltered in those surroundings, which in turn opens up new possibilities for making oneself at home therein.²⁶

While there is much more that could be said about the phenomenology of home as it pertains to the literal sense of home as domestic space, my focus here has been primarily on outlining the standard view of feeling at home. Hence, I have limited my phenomenological description to the sense of space-familiarity as it operates in being at home and is exported to feeling at home. In concluding this outline, therefore, let me flag three things that follow from the preceding characterisation: (1) on the standard view, physical and practical familiarity are not sufficient for the experience of feeling at home to occur. (2) It is only if a person comes to establish a sense of emotional familiarity with those surroundings that they come to experience a sense of home. (3) What is more, we can now specify that this emotional familiarity is to be understood in *affective personal terms*. Affective because it captures feeling at home's associated feelings like comfort, ease, safety, and security. And personal because it indicates the closed-attuned connection between location and a person's identity, where the given surroundings come to reflect and

²⁵ Young, 157. Paananen also picks up on this but talks of “feeling of ownness” instead of “ownership”, a term employed by Young. According to him, this term better captures the personally significant dimension of home: ‘home is essentially a place which we feel as our own’ (Paananen, ‘Affective Familiarity and the Experience of Home’, 102). For related discussion, see also the philosophical scholarship on scaffolding, in particular on niche construction. For example, Giovanna Colombetti and Joel Krueger examine various ways in which people, in everyday life, engineer their material environment to amplify and regulate – i.e., scaffold – their affective life. Engineering the material environment of one's domestic space in order for it to support and reflect oneself is effectively to construct a self-styled affective niche, where this amplifies and regulates one's sense of home in domestic space. See Giovanna Colombetti and Joel Krueger, ‘Scaffoldings of the Affective Mind’, *Philosophical Psychology* 28, no. 8 (17 November 2015): 1157–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2014.976334>.

²⁶ Expanding on Young's comparative phenomenological analysis, Ngo describes this as a reciprocal dynamic between homemaking and feeling restful: ‘The familiarity of the home puts us at ease, or said differently, our habituation to it opens up the possibility of restfulness. ... And yet at the same time, it is also the case that we *can* cultivate bodily habits in the home precisely *because* it is a place for rest’ (Ngo, *The Habits of Racism*, 101, italics original).

support meaningful patterns of navigating social space that are specific to oneself. In the words of Jacobson: ‘To be at-home is to find ourselves reflected in our setting and our situation and to experience this reflection as giving us a place where we can be ourselves.’²⁷

2.3. A Phenomenological Critique

In this section, I now develop a phenomenological critique of the standard view of feeling at home. I argue that the standard view of feeling at home does not succeed in providing a phenomenologically adequate conception of the relevant type of experience. There are two reasons for this: (1) the standard view fails to account for important types of feeling at home, where home is taken in its metaphorical sense of belonging regardless of physical space. As a consequence, I argue that (2) the standard view obscures the relevant phenomenology by construing feeling at home primarily as a matter of a sense of space-familiarity.

2.3.1 The Case of ACT UP

To develop my phenomenological critique, I now introduce a variation of scenario₂ as introduced in 2.1. (feeling at home but not being at home): the ACT UP activist Ferd Eggan. Before I proceed, three provisos: (a) this example is particularly helpful in demonstrating that a person can feel at home in navigating social space, where one’s emotional response to navigating social space is accompanied by a relative absence of space-familiarity. (b) Further, it constitutes what I take to be a paradigmatic example of an important

²⁷ Jacobson, ‘The Experience of Home and the Space of Citizenship’, 224.

type of feeling at home: namely, feeling at home *despite* not fitting the dominant social norms governing social space. Considering that prominent proponents of the standard view, like Dolezal, share the feminist commitment to questioning the sacred image of home for its exclusionary character, therefore, this type of feeling at home should be expected to be accounted for by the standard view of feeling at home. (c) Last but not least, this example will provide a principal orientating point for the remainder of my phenomenological investigation into metaphorical disorientation in this thesis.

With that in place, let me develop this case study in some detail. In March 1987, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was formed in New York City. Through various forms of activism, including demonstrations, protest actions, and die-ins, ACT UP sought to pressure the Reagan Administration to take action and fight the exploding AIDS crisis. The first extensive account of ACT UP's history is provided by Deborah B. Gould in her book *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*.²⁸ For present purposes, this book is particularly relevant because of its focus on the importance of *emotion* for the movement's development in the fight against AIDS. Much of her book concerns the pleasures of participation in protest, where this opens up a critical avenue for thinking through the relationship between feeling at home and being at home. Let me quote one such example of the pleasures of participation in protest at length:

Ferd Eggen, for example, recalls being awash with feelings of “solidarity, comfort, and belonging” when he joined other people with AIDS in the civil disobedience action at the Supreme Court as part of the 1987 March on Washington. “In the midst of those kinds of mobilizations, it’s possible for me to feel angry. Angry at the government, *but also sort of buoyed up by this feeling of connection, of solidarity*. . . . (I was) swept up into the power of this immense group of people. It

²⁸ Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009).

was a great feeling. It's a terrific feeling to be surrounded by this sea of humanity who are doing what you're doing" (Eggan 1999).²⁹

Ferd Eggan is one of the many ACT UP activists interviewed by Gould who testify to the orientating force of the collective struggle for Lesbian and Gay Rights. He participated in protesting the Supreme Court of the United States ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, upholding the criminalisation of sodomy between two consenting men in the privacy of the home in October 1987, as part of the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. In this context, Eggan reports various emotions he felt during this action: including *anger* at the government, *solidarity* with fellow protestors, *anguish* in the face of police brutality (up to 600 activists were, partly brutally, arrested), and *hope* for a different future.

What is more, Eggan experiences a sense of feeling at home in and through the presence of his fellow protestors. He explicitly states that he feels 'sort of buoyed up by his feeling of connection, of solidarity'. And he is not the only one. According to Gould:

People *lived* ACT UP, and one reason was that the movement gave many people a sense of belonging, perhaps for the first time. David Barr walked into his first ACT UP/NY meeting in May 1987 and said to himself, "Oh my God, I'm home. ... I had been waiting for this. ... I thought, 'Finally, I've been looking for this all my life.' *I really felt like I was home*" (Barr 2002).³⁰

This emergence of a sense of home is a common theme amongst ACT UP activists.³¹ I submit this type of home-presence does not turn on the literal sense of home in that the

²⁹ Gould, 207, italics added.

³⁰ Gould, 184–85, first italics original, second italics mine.

³¹ See also Gould's reflections on her own involvement in ACT UP: 'Such affective experiences were self-reproducing in that they created a strong desire to feel those feelings again. And they invigorated and reinvigorated sentiments of solidarity by creating a desire to be proximate to others who were feeling those feelings and creating conditions for you to feel them. Being in the streets and getting arrested together, making demands and forcing change together, creating queer culture together, imagining and attempting to build a new world together – all of those practices

shared protest-space does not constitute home as domestic space, but it turns on the metaphorical sense of home in that participation in this shared protest brings about and actualises in a sense of belonging with others regardless of physical space.

From the preceding characterisation of the case study, I think it is fairly uncontroversial to claim that Eggan's experience of home is *not* phenomenologically equivalent to the positively valenced experience of being at home. This is for the reason that his experience of being at this protest is not accompanied by the relevant space-familiarity. He has neither established, as Jacobson stipulates for being at home, 'certain patterns of regularity here that ... are to [him] sites of familiarity',³² nor imbued the given surroundings with personal meaning. To be clear, this is not to suggest that Eggan's experience of the given surroundings does not involve a degree of familiarity. Think of the everyday norms and practices of attending a protest in the United States (including the do's and don'ts) that Eggan is presumably familiar with. However, the point here is not so much whether or not his navigation of social space involves a sense of familiarity per se. This is certainly the case. My claim is that this does not amount to the sense of space-familiarity that the standard view takes to be constitutive of feeling at home both inside and outside the domestic space.

Now, I do not take this to be specific to this case study but, as visible in scenario₂ identified in 2.1., to all engagements with given surroundings that do not (yet) constitute a domestic space. But notice that Eggan's experience is not merely marked by the relative absence of space-familiarity. Specific to this case study is the fact that most social spaces at the time (and, with Ahmed's insights from Chapter One, one may add: to varying degrees, still today) did not welcome, let alone recognise, the very existence of the non-

generated affective intensities and a strong emotional identification among participants, regardless of HIV status or other identity markers.' (Gould, 335).

³² Jacobson, 'A Developed Nature', 358.

dominant, marginalised HIV-inflicted body. It is not hard to imagine that Eggan and his fellow protestors perceived the Supreme Court as a symbolisation of oppressive political practices imposed by the Reagan Administration. What is more, Eggan's experience of navigating social space is distinctively marked by violent confrontations with the police, many arrests, and a felt anguish in anticipating clashing with the police. These details are crucial. When navigating this social space, it would seem unlikely that – contra the standard view – Eggan's experience of a sense of home involves a sense of ease and fluidity in moving through social space, let alone a sense of safety and security. Recall that, on Dolezal's view, feeling at home 'invokes this feeling of security, ease, comfort, and privacy' and involves that 'the body moves through space with a native ease';³³ whereas, for Jacobson, feeling at home is to inhabit social space 'where one feels sheltered from the outside intrusions and considerations, and given a place to recollect oneself in a space of familiarity'.³⁴ While some experiential manifestations of feeling at home might involve those proposed characteristics, it is clear that Eggan's experience of a sense of home does not meet either. Quite to the contrary, I submit that this case study illustrates how one can feel at home in navigating social space even when social space is structured in ways exclusionary of oneself, both socio-normatively but also affectively.

With this case study, I have provided an example of feeling at home that does not meet the proposed characterisation of the standard view of feeling at home. If my phenomenological characterisation is correct, it turns out that the standard view cannot adequately account for the positively valenced sense of home operative in Eggan's experience. In putting pressure on the view that there is a phenomenological equivalence between feeling at home and being at home, I believe this case study points to the need to

³³ Dolezal, 'Feminist Reflections on the Phenomenological Foundations of Home', 105, 109.

³⁴ Jacobson, 'A Developed Nature', 358.

critically revise the second assumption that underlies much of contemporary phenomenological scholarship on home: namely, that the relevant type of experience is best characterised in relation to the experiential and conceptual terrain of being at home. This is because a sense of space-familiarity as operative in being at home turns out to be a *contingent* characteristic of feeling at home only, which has become salient in the preceding characterisation of the ACT UP activist Eggan.

2.3.2. Possible Replies

Let me consider two possible ways of replying to my phenomenological critique that the standard view of feeling at home is insufficient for identifying and characterising the phenomenology of feeling at home as common to various experiential manifestations, including the case of ACT UP activist Eggan. They are: (1) to simply concede that the account is not all-encompassing while casting doubt on the possibility of identifying a single unifying phenomenological structure; and (2) to narrow the account to a sense of *home-presence qua location* and argue that Eggan's experience does not qualify as such. In what follows, I examine both and focus in particular on the second response. This is because it brings into light a more fundamental worry for the standard view of feeling at home: namely, that it obscures the relevant phenomenology by characterising the phenomenon primarily as a matter of space-familiarity.

First: proponents of the standard view may grant that the account does not apply to all experiential instances of feeling at home, where this however does not amount to a problem. Quite to the contrary, they may refer back to the first key assumption underlying much of contemporary phenomenological scholarship on home that I identified in 2.1.: namely, the recognition that 'home' has a wide range of experiential manifestations. They

may take this as an explicit reason to question whether there is any continuity between different first-personal instances of feeling at home, and instead endorse some sort of conceptual pluralism. Along these lines, they may emphasise that their account leaves room for complementary conceptualisations in order to try and make sense of other types of feeling at home.

As I said before, I certainly acknowledge the heterogeneity of feeling at home, and yet, I find this response unsatisfactory. For one, proponents of the standard view, like Dolezal, explicitly commit to some kind of phenomenological equivalence between feeling at home and being at home, so, that their account should arguably be expected to also account for the metaphorical sense of home. For another, the option of endorsing some sort of conceptual pluralism is not easily available to them. This is because it would suggest to leave behind their commitment to taking the positively valenced experience of being at home as the *paradigm case* for feeling at home, which however is methodologically core to the standard view. In other words, moving away from the idea of spatialising the metaphorical sense, as premised on being at home, would ultimately amount to abandoning the standard view of feeling at home altogether.

Second: proponents of the standard view may narrow their account to *home-presence qua location* and argue that Eggen's metaphorical sense of home does not qualify as such. Characterising the domestic home as the foundational background from which to experience feeling at home elsewhere – recall Jacobson: 'we can travel to what is ostensibly a new place, but fail to experience it as new, because we have retained our habitual ways of living, our habitual ways of being at home'³⁵ – they may argue that home-presence *qua* location covers the following instances of feeling at home only: (1) where a person's engagement with the given surroundings is meaningfully grounded in one's

³⁵ Jacobson, 'A Developed Nature', 369.

habitual ways of being at home and (2) that involve the possibility of transforming the given surroundings into a second, extended home away from one's domestic home. Eggan's sense of home does not seem to meet either requirement: considering that many ACT UP activists had never experienced such a sense of home before (recall: 'I thought, "Finally, I've been looking for this all my life." I really felt like I was home'), it seems to be less about the continuation but more about the emergence of a sense of home; and, as touched upon in 2.3.1., it does not seem to involve (quite the contrary, the situation explicitly rules out) the possibility of transforming the given surroundings into one's home. Without any strong rootedness in the given surroundings or worse, one's domestic home, proponents of the standard view may push back against my case study. Specifically, they may worry not only that Eggan's sense of home is fleeting and unstable, but also, that it would commit to falsely classifying other things like e.g., taking drugs and feeling some empty pseudo-connection with other party folks, as instances of feeling at home. Along these lines, they may conclude that my case study should instead better be characterised as an episodic feeling of belonging (recall: Eggan explicitly talks about 'belonging' and relatedly of 'solidarity'), where this constitutes a discrete phenomenon from the more stable and enduring sense of feeling at home characterised as home-presence *qua* location.³⁶

In response, I begin by agreeing that Eggan's sense of home constitutes an episodic feeling that does not (yet) carry the same sense of stability and duration operative in feeling at home in being at home. As the reply rightly identifies, this is because it does not qualify as an instance of home-presence *qua* location but, instead, constitutes a newly, and long wished for, experienced sense of home in and through the presence of fellow

³⁶ To avoid any confusion: 'Home-presence *qua* location' is related to but not identical with 'being at home'. Whereas 'being at home' is restricted to feeling at home in being at home, where 'home' is taken in the literal sense as domestic space, here I introduce 'home-presence *qua* location' to capture a sense of home inside and outside the domestic space as grounded in being at home.

protestors. However, I believe this fails to focus on the key issue: the question is not whether Eggan's sense of home differs from those instances of home-presence *qua* location (again, it certainly does), but whether this observation should lead to the suggestion that his sense of home does not qualify as an experience of home proper. From this perspective, I worry that this second line of reply turns on a too narrow understanding of home-presence *qua* location, where this risks imputing a false dichotomy between feeling at home and feeling a sense of belonging. To see this, let us take another look at the positively valenced experience of being at home. As widely noted, there is a principal distinction to be drawn between 'home' and 'house'. To quote Easthope:

A person's home is usually understood to be situated in space (and time). However, it is not the physical structure of a house, nor is it the natural and built environment of a neighbourhood or region that is understood to make a home. Rather, it is when such spaces are inscribed with meaning that they also become homes.³⁷

As we saw in 2.2., the standard view characterises this process of homemaking primarily in affective personal terms, where the focus is on the relationship between location and a person's sense of identity. But, of course, this process should not be understood in purely individualistic terms, which would be to ignore the many ways in which meaningful relations to other people (notably, one's primary caregivers) enable and shape one's positively valenced experience of being at home. As Szanto emphasises: 'Places we feel at home or familiar with in the proper sense of feeling belongingness are *shared* places'.³⁸ I doubt that proponents of the standard view would disagree. In fact, this phenomenological insight seems to motivate the feminist commitment to probing the sacred image of the

³⁷ Hazel Easthope, 'A Place Called Home', *Housing, Theory and Society* 21, no. 3 (1 September 2004): 135, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036090410021360>.

³⁸ Thomas Szanto, "Feelings of Belonging and Feeling Solidarity: Two Forms of Social Cohesion?," in *The Phenomenology of Belonging*, ed. Luna Dolezal and Danielle Petherbridge (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, forthcoming), 7, italics original.

home. Recall Dolezal: ‘Home can be a site of powerlessness, abuse, and psychological oppression, where the potential for the unspeakable to happen is realised in the private spaces behind closed doors.’³⁹ What this suggests, however, is the importance of experiential access to home as a shared place for the positively valenced experience of being at home to occur as well as to uphold. Contra the second line of reply, then, a sense of home-presence *qua* location should not be neatly separated from a sense of belonging in relation to other people with whom one inhabits such a shared place. I suggest that they should rather be considered as two inextricable aspects of the larger experience of feeling at home in being at home. What emerges as an episodic feeling in and through others may turn into a more enduring and stable sense of home, depending on the possibility of self-realisation within one’s domestic space. From this perspective, Eggan’s sense of home should not be regarded a sense of home improper. Quite to the contrary, I believe his sense of belonging regardless of space-familiarity provides important phenomenological insights into the larger structure of feeling at home, which I shall investigate in the remainder of this chapter.

2.4. An Alternative Conception: Simon May

From my critique of the standard view, there are two requirements for a phenomenologically satisfying conception of feeling at home: (1) it must do justice to the fact that not all instances of feeling at home are attributable to a sense of space-familiarity, and, for this, (2) it must fully appreciate the phenomenological distinction between feeling at home and being at home. In order to prepare for this task, in this section I appeal to a conception of home in and through love put forward by Simon May in *Love: A New Conception of An*

³⁹ Dolezal, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Phenomenological Foundations of Home’, 103.

Ancient Emotion.⁴⁰ In this book, May is concerned with developing a philosophical theory of love that breaks with hitherto existing conceptions of love. What is interesting for present purposes is that, in developing such a theory, May introduces an alternative way of thinking about ‘home’ in the context of love, where this turns on the metaphorical sense of home. In my critical reconstruction and assessment of May’s account, I am exclusively concerned with developing a distinctively phenomenological interpretation of this conception of ‘home’ as it concerns the first-personal experience of home in and through love. Note that I shall therefore leave aside for now whether May’s conception of love *as* love is itself justified and broadly assume for the sake of argument.⁴¹

2.4.1. Love’s Promise of Home

I begin by providing a general outline of May’s conception of love. His central thesis is follows: love is one’s joyful response to whatever offers the promise of what he names ‘ontological rootedness’, that is, ‘a *home* in a world that we supremely value’.⁴² On May’s view, we love someone or something in light the promise of home that they provide.⁴³

⁴⁰ May, *Love*.

⁴¹ For a critical review of May, see Errol Lord, review of *Love: A New Understanding of an Ancient Emotion*, by Simon May, *European Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (March 2022): 440–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12771>. Let me already flag that I shall identify one central limitation to May’s conception of love as love in 2.5., which raises doubts about the limited scope of May’s conception of love. Even so, I remain broadly sympathetic to May’s view of construing the phenomenology of love as an inherently intersubjective but ultimately self-regarding phenomenon, where this yields important phenomenological insights for my own project. I shall come back to this point in 2.4.2.

⁴² May, *Love*, xii, italics added.

⁴³ Notice the two ontological premises that underlie May’s view: (1) we, as humans, can never be truly ontologically rooted in the world; and (2) ontological rootedness is one of greatest of all goods and human needs. This leads May to conclude that, (3) we, as humans, desire to attain this ontological rootedness even if it can never be fully fulfilled (1, 2). Since my own project of advancing a phenomenological interpretation of the first-personal experience of home in and through love does not hinge on either premise, I shall aside whether or not these are justified.

May goes on to elaborate on this promise by identifying four ways in which the lover experiences the beloved. I quote him at length:

First, we discover in them a source of life, a very particular lineage or heritage or origin (which needn't be our own), with whose sensibilities we deeply identify.

Second, we have the sense that they offer us an ethical home: that they embody supreme values and virtues that echo our own, or that we would like to make our own, *and* that we believe we can attain only in and through them.

Third, we feel that they possess decisive power to deepen our sense of existing – power to intensify the reality and vitality, and therefore the validity, of our existence, as we experience it. ...

And fourth, we experience them as calling us to our so far un-lived life or destiny.⁴⁴

On May's proposal, therefore, the beloved provides (a) a source of personal identity, (b) a shared ethical home, (c) the power to intensify one's existence, and (d) a calling to a shared meaningful future. Taken together, these four qualities of the beloved capture what it means to experience someone or something as providing a promise of home. Let me elaborate on this by identifying and discussing in some more detail three characteristics of this promise of home that follow from May's characterisation of the beloved's four qualities. They are (1) the promised home as a particular way of life, (2) the promised home as indexed to the beloved's presence, and (3) the promised home as inherently intersubjective. These three characteristics are crucial in paving the way for my phenomenological assessment of May, as I articulate it in the next subsection.

First: the promise of home operates with a unique model of 'home' that, I argue, stands in direct contrast to the standard view of feeling at home. To see this, consider the following passage:

⁴⁴ May, xiv, see also 39-65.

This rootedness or home that grounds love in my conception of it is nothing like a domestic cocoon that shuts out the world and in the particular the public space. On the contrary. ...

Such a home, is therefore, not akin to a protected sphere of childrearing that we abandon in early adulthood, but is rather a habitat that we might spend our whole life seeking to discover, reach, and make our own. Thus, I characterize relationships of love in terms of *inhabiting*, rather than, as more traditionally, in terms of either possessing or submitting.⁴⁵

In this passage, May makes explicit that ‘home’ is neither to be taken in the literal sense as domestic space, nor in the sense of home-presence *qua* location. Whereas proponents of the standard view emphasise space-familiarity as constitutive of one’s experience of home, here the relevant type of ‘home’ defies any characterisation in terms of a set of spatial references. Note that the strange thing about the ‘home’ evoked by May is that one does not have it yet but is in fact continuously striving towards it: ‘the promised home is necessarily one that we haven’t fully attained’.⁴⁶ As the talk of ‘promise of home’ (instead of just ‘home’) indicates, this home is constitutively futural and is so in a radical sense: not only because it points towards a future that is not yet and will never fully be, but also because it points towards a future that does not rely on anything previously experienced. Capturing love’s rapturous force, May thus stresses: ‘Love, in its very structure, is directed at one who breaks into life from outside and who is the origin of the promise that we cannot make to ourselves: ... transcending the current borders that we take our life to have.’⁴⁷

On May’s conception, therefore, ‘home’ does not refer to a particular space that one has become physically, practically, and/or emotionally familiar with and, in the process, imbued with personal meaning and a sense of futural possibilities based on past and

⁴⁵ May, xv–xvi, italics original.

⁴⁶ May, 42.

⁴⁷ May, 137.

present experiences in and with that particular space. On the contrary, I interpret ‘home’ to refer to a *particular way of life* that comes into view in and through the beloved, in which one yearns to be rooted because it is in this way of life that one experiences ‘the real field of possibilities for our flourishing’.⁴⁸

Second: this promise of home is constitutively indexed to the presence of the beloved. May explicitly states that ‘love is a relation to such a grounding presence, which promises us a home’, that ‘it is always their *presence to us* that seemly deeply to ground us’.⁴⁹ The presence of the beloved is, therefore, conditional for the promise of home both to occur and to uphold. It is important to note that, by ‘presence to us’, May does not merely have in mind the literal presence of the beloved. Whether ‘in face-to-face reality; in imagination; in our memory’, I take May’s point to be that, as long as the beloved has an affective experiential hold on the lover (in line with the four qualities identified above), the beloved can be said to be experientially present to the lover.⁵⁰

Third: this promise of home does not correspond to (most) ordinary uses of ‘promise’. May does not spell out the distinctive character of the relevant type of promise as grounded in the beloved’s presence. But from his above characterisation of love, it seems clear that ‘promise’ is employed in a more metaphorical sense than in many cases of someone promising *x* or *y* to someone else. Take the example of promising your friend to be on time, where you are (at least typically) in control of delivering the outcome by your own powers. In contrast, not only can the promise of home never be fully attained, but

⁴⁸ May, 39. Undeniably, this idea of ‘real flourishing’ risks importing a normatively charged conception of authenticity, according to which (i) there exists an ‘authentic self’ and, by implication, (ii) only in a loving relationship do we become our real, authentic self. While a critical discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter, let me at least flag that May himself is quite critical of tying authenticity to the idea of the romantic love only. He explicitly suggests that love comes in many forms, where this also suggests that one can come to realise oneself in many types of relationships of love. I shall return to this claim about love’s variety in 2.5., but for now, note that I believe this to at least deflate some of the potential worries that may emerge here.

⁴⁹ May, xv, 5, italics original.

⁵⁰ May, 93.

the working towards its realisation can also not be delivered by any person alone. May writes: ‘But if the promise of home that we glimpse in the loved one is to be richly developed, this ecstasy that they inspire in us must animate relationship.’⁵¹ Even though the source of the promise of home is to be located in the beloved, strictly speaking, it is through love that that the promise of home is delivered. But, of course, love is not an agent but by definition intersubjective, which suggests that it is only in and through the relevant relationship of love that the working towards the realisation of the promise of home can take place.⁵²

With these three characteristics in place, we arrive at a fuller picture of May’s model of the promise of home in and through love. I have suggested that May provides us with a unique conception of home as a “promised home”, which (1) refers to a particular way of life in and through the beloved, (2) is conditional on the beloved’s presence, and (3) is inherently intersubjective and cannot be developed outside a set of meaningful relations to the beloved. May’s conception thus presents a clear alternative to the literal sense of home as domestic space that operates in the standard view of feeling at home. The task now is to assess its usability for a phenomenological conception of feeling at home, with a particular focus on the metaphorical sense of home as belonging regardless of physical space. And for this, I submit that we need to address two central concerns:

Q₁: If home is constitutively a *promise*, does one ever feel at home anywhere?

⁵¹ May, 69.

⁵² Contrasting the promise of home to ordinary uses of ‘promise’ is not to import a strict dichotomy between May’s use and all other, everyday uses. For example, the promise of marriage (as perhaps most visibly articulated in giving the marital oath) will most certainly also require continuous work and commitment on *both* sides so as to ensure a shared meaningful future as a married couple. For a related discussion on the temporality of intimacy, with particular focus on promises and their futural character, see Kirsten Jacobson, ‘The Temporality of Intimacy: Promise, World, and Death’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 13 (November 2014): 103–10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2013.08.006>.

Q₂: If the promise of home is conditional on the beloved's presence, how (if at all) can this conception of home be transported to other contexts that are *not* one of love?

The first question is about the distinctive temporality of this home, whereas the second question concerns the modality and scope of May's conception. In the next two subsections, I address the first question before I, then, turn to the second question in 2.5.

2.4.2. A Phenomenological Reading

To develop an answer to Q₁, over the next two subsections, I move to develop a critical discussion of one of May's own examples. Early on in his book, May introduces Walter Benjamin's aphorism "First aid" (*erste Hilfe*),⁵³ which he takes this to be an illustration of what it is like subjectively to experience a promise of home. Contra May, I argue that (1) this example makes it in fact hard to see how, on May's reading, the promise of home is first-personally experienced in the present. I further argue that (2) May's reading points to a tension inherent to his account more generally that concerns the possibility of the first-personal experience of obtaining the promise of home in the present. To resolve this tension, I develop a phenomenological reading of the promise of home, according to which *the promise can not only affectively manifest in the present but also has a regulative function*. I demonstrate that this reading yields a phenomenologically discerning

⁵³ Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street", *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).

characterisation of feeling at home as grounded in love's promise of home and, by implication, a positive answer to Q₁.

But before I proceed, let me be clear about the scope of my answer to Q₁ that I develop in the next two subsections. While Q₁ is about the distinctive temporality of the promise of home, being constitutively futural, my concern here is primarily with showing that the promise of home, while constitutively futural, can nonetheless actualise in a first-personal experience of a positively valenced sense of home in the present. As such, I shall leave aside for now an in-depth examination of the broader temporal horizon with which the promise of home comes. I shall return to this in Chapter Three, where I identify and articulate in detail the temporal orientation towards the future that is operative in the promise of home.

I begin by turning to "First aid". In this aphorism, Benjamin describes a scenario in which the presence of a beloved person makes one experience a neighbourhood in a new light. To quote him:

A highly confusing neighborhood, a network of streets that I had avoided for years, was clarified for me at a stroke, when one day a beloved person moved in there. It was as if a searchlight was set up in his window and dissected the area with clusters of light.⁵⁴

According to May, this aphorism is a clear example of 'how someone can instantly give us orientation in a place that has long remained strange to us'.⁵⁵ Two things are important here. On May's reading, first, the presence of the beloved provides a promise of home that is first-personally experienced as orientating for the lover. And second, this sense of orientation does not solely pertain to the physical space of the neighbourhood but to

⁵⁴ Benjamin, 'One-Way Street'; quoted in May, *Love*, 40.

⁵⁵ May, 40.

navigating life in relation to the beloved more generally. Following Benjamin in taking the literal activity of way-finding in a city to be an instructive metaphor for thinking about one's orientation in life as such, May suggests:

So the loved one, in Benjamin's aphorism, might be not merely providing orientation in an actual city; rather, he is 'at a stroke' orienting the lover in 'the sphere of life' as such. He is illuminating neighborhoods in which his lover feels called to live – neighborhoods that, until the moment he appeared, she had 'avoided,' finding them 'confusing,' unclear, and shrouded in darkness.⁵⁶

To experience the love's promise need neither entail that the lover now knows their way around this neighbourhood, nor that this neighbourhood now constitutes a domestic space for them. Instead, I take May's key point to be that what it means for the lover to first-personally experience love's promise of home in navigating this neighbourhood in the present is to experience this neighbourhood as a possible home for their flourishing in the future. As May explicitly states, it is in and through the presence of the beloved that the lover 'feels called to live' in this neighbourhood. A central implication of this reading, in line with May's strong emphasis on the constitutively futural character of love's promise as identified in 2.4.1., is that the lover does not yet enjoy this home – i.e., a particular way of life in this neighbourhood – but seeks to reach and make it their own. This means that the lover has not yet appropriated the new possibilities for their flourishing in this neighbourhood, opened up by love's promise, as their own.

Now, I find it phenomenologically convincing to suggest that the beloved's presence is experienced as a source of orientation, and that those positive futural possibilities that are bound up with the inhabitation of this neighbourhood as a possible home take the

⁵⁶ May, 40. See also 'I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map' (Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', *Reflections: Essays, Aphorism*; quoted in May, *Love*, 40).

experiential form of a “not yet”. But the central question is whether this is all there is to the first-personal *experience of love’s* promise of home, where the emphasis on ‘experience of’ serves to capture how love’s promise becomes emotionally salient to the person in the present. And from this perspective, I worry that the Benjamin example in general and May’s reading in particular are misleading for doing justice to the phenomenology of experiencing love’s promise of home. This is because, in foregrounding the issue of inhabiting this neighbourhood as a possible home in the future, May’s reading obscures what he elsewhere deems central to the experience of love’s promise of home in the present. As quoted in 4.2.1., on May’s view, ‘love is a relation to such a *grounding presence*, which promises us a home’, in fact that ‘it is always their presence to us that seems deeply to ground us’.⁵⁷ And later on, he adds: ‘to feel grounded through love is to feel that, in and through our loved one, we belong, or are blessed with a promise of belonging, to a supremely valued world in which we year to make our home’.⁵⁸ But taking love’s relation to the grounding presence of the beloved seriously, I submit, is to acknowledge that the first-personal experience of love’s promise of home does not merely involve a positive anticipation of a particular way of life. Importantly, it also points to the affectively charged grounding effect of love’s promise of home in the present.

To bring out this point, let me introduce the following scenario: imagine experiencing mental health problems for the first time, where this leaves you worried that your romantic partner may leave you. But to your relief, your partner’s response consists in promising you not to leave your side but to provide continuous support and care, however long or difficult your mental health problems may become. In this scenario, I suggest that, while your partner’s promise is clearly futural, receiving such a promise has a comforting,

⁵⁷ May, xv, 5, italics original.

⁵⁸ May, 129.

reassuring effect on you in the present. It would seem phenomenologically inaccurate to describe the phenomenal character of the experience of receiving such a promise to be exclusively about the opening up of new positive futural possibilities. Instead, I submit that the phenomenal character centrally involves a host of emotive intentional attitudes towards your partner in the present. Notably, you no longer worry about the possibility of being left, but instead experience a strong sense of feeling at home with your partner in the present.

In introducing this scenario, I do not wish to suggest that your partner's promise and love's promise of home can be treated as identical. This is not only because love's promise of home is clearly not reducible to such a specific promise that comes with a comparatively circumscribed content. But this is also because love's promise of home need not necessarily come in the form of an explicit utterance. As Jacobson observes in the context of analysing intimate relationships:

Indeed, while it may be most obvious to think first and foremost of a promise as the sort of thing that arrives in a specific and explicit utterance, it is arguably the case that an underlying and much more ambiguous promise of simply 'being there' or of 'showing up for' or 'standing by' someone is the guiding structure that must exist for any particular pledge of promise to be both articulable and trusted.⁵⁹

In taking the above scenario as one instantiation of and part of the content of the larger guiding structure of love's promise of home, I interpret it to bring out a more general

⁵⁹ Jacobson, 'The Temporality of Intimacy', 104. Note that Jacobson's analysis of the significance of 'promise' in intimate relationships does not concern the home-conferring character that I take to be central to love's promise of home. Even so, it is worth noting that Jacobson does not limit her analysis to the context of the intimacy of (romantic) love: as such, she considers the promise of marriage or the promise of a parent to care for a child, but also the promise of a caregiver to tend to a patient. For present purposes, her recognition of the centrality of the promise in all kinds of intimate relationships may be taken to provide at least initial motivation for the view that the promise of home is transportable to other contexts than that of love; cf. Q₂. As aforementioned, I shall address this question in 2.5.

characteristic of the experience of love's promise of home: namely, that it has an *affective grounding effect* in the present. By this, I mean that the first-personal experience of love's promise of home affectively manifests in a positively valenced sense of home in and through the presence of the beloved in the present. More specifically, it is in light of love's promise of home that one is able to experience one's current second-person interactions with the beloved as yielding a positively valenced sense of home in the present.

2.4.3. A Tension

At this point, one may worry about the mode of generality of my preceding analysis. This is because your partner's promise takes place in the context of an already established relationship of love. In such a case, one may argue that presumably you have already established a relatively strong and enduring sense of home living together with your partner, where this serves as a condition of the possibility for your partner's promise to have an affective grounding effect in the present and thus to experience the promise as partly fulfilled. Indeed, May himself gestures towards such a reading, as illustrated by passages like 'all mutual relationships of love, all home that is jointly constructed, is marked by the intertwining of two lives', or 'if she is to seize this promise – if she is to be able to inhabit the new home to which the loved one points'.⁶⁰ Returning to the Benjamin example, however, May is clear that the promise of home is yet to be seized. What is more, he elsewhere suggests that the initial experience of love's promise of home, as for instance in the Benjamin example, 'uproots us from where we are, from how we now love, in order to root us more fully in the place to which the promise beckons', and he adds that 'In order to (re-)discover our true home, we must lose our accustomed habits – our habitual

⁶⁰ May, *Love*, 70, 72.

mode of living'.⁶¹ In light of these remarks, then, one may concede, first, that there is the first-personal possibility of a sense of arriving at the promise of home in the present, but that this is dependent on an already established relationship of love being in place. But one may also press that, precisely because of being experienced as uprooting, the initial experience of love's promise of home cannot plausibly be also experienced as 'rooting' one in the present, that is, making one feel at home in the present. In closing my phenomenological answer to Q₁, in this subsection I carefully examine this objection, with a view to resolving a tension inherent to May's account that concerns the possibility of the first-personal experience of obtaining the promise of home in the present.

In response, it is certainly right that there is a phenomenological distinction to be drawn between (1) the experience of love's promise of home as an initial rupture (cf. the Benjamin example) and (2) the experience of love's promise of home in a relationship of love (cf. my example of your partner's promise). This is because only the latter arises against a backdrop of a relatively sedimented, habitual mode of living together in an established relationship of love. Consequently, it would also be phenomenologically implausible to maintain that your partner's promise is first-personally experienced as 'uprooting'. But importantly, I do not think that this should be taken as a reason to construe (1) and (2) as promise-experiences that are different in kind. In what follows, I argue that there are reasons for thinking that what shows up as a tension inherent to May's own account in fact captures the complex phenomenology of experiencing love's promise of home.

First, while my analysis of your partner's promise has foregrounded its affective grounding effect in the present, note that it is still futural. But this means that the outcome of your partner's promise is not yet decided in the present (in fact, if it was, it would no

⁶¹ May, 42.

longer constitute a promise in the here relevant sense). An implication of this, I submit, is that the temporality of your partner's promise constitutively involves an openness to different temporal unfoldings of how the content of this promise may (or may not) be filled in. As such, the outcome is not exhausted by your experience of your partner's promise in the presence but can develop differently, which in turn will affect and shape the meaning of your partner's promise as well as your experience of the promise in relation to your partner. As Ratcliffe notes in his analysis of the phenomenology of interpersonal experience, to experience another person involves a distinctive type of indeterminacy:

An openness to possibilities that does not compromise the integrity of an experienced situation, but instead constitutes a sense that “this is not all there is”, that “things could change for better or worse in ways not specified by the situation as it is currently experienced”.⁶²

Taking this phenomenological insight seriously, I submit, points to a phenomenological distinction between two different types of ‘uprooting’ (to stay with May’s language): (a) the first-personal experience of being uprooted in the present, and (b) uprooting as a constitutive characteristic of the temporal unfolding of the promise of home spanning across time. While (1) constitutively involves (a), both (1) and (2) constitutively involve (b) and can, by implication, be characterised phenomenologically as taking the form of a “not yet”.⁶³

⁶² Ratcliffe, 'Towards a Phenomenology of Grief: Insights from Merleau-Ponty', 664.

⁶³ Of course, depending on the specific promise that is articulated at a certain point in time in the context of your relationship of love, it may also involve (a). Imagine telling your partner that you have been thinking about moving to another country for a long time. Now, if your partner were to promise you to move with you in the new year, this would most likely also be experienced as uprooting – for example, in making you now feel more certain about the likelihood of moving, it may bring to your explicit attention what such a choice would entail (like leaving your friends and family behind). But the important point is that, unlike the experience of love's promise as an

Second, I submit that this brings an important implication for assessing the phenomenological plausibility of the claim that the experience of love's promise of home as an initial rupture could not be understood as simultaneously rooting one in the present. I argue that this *seemingly* paradoxical moment is in fact quite common to interpersonal experience and speaks to the emotional complexity of the relevant phenomenology. Consider the early stage of dating. Being in the presence of someone you fancy may quite understandably make you feel nervous, to the point that you are no longer able to be the confident person you usually are when meeting people for the first few times. But importantly, it may also be accompanied by a warm feeling and a sense of comfort, indeed, you may even tell your friends "I can't quite tell you why, but they make me feel at home!" For present purposes, two things follow: first, this example demonstrates the compatibility of the first-personal experience of being uprooted and simultaneously feeling rooted in the present. But more importantly, second, I contend that it conveys a positively valenced sense of home in and through someone else's presence, where this is grounded in a temporal openness towards the possibility of a shared future together (cf. b). This temporal openness serves as an implicit reason for both, feeling uprooted *and* experiencing the current second-person interactions in such a meaningful way. In the words of May, 'Love ... is born at the moment when we glimpse in the other a promise, which they might be unaware of'.⁶⁴

Thus, I submit that there *is* the possibility of the first-personal experience of a sense of obtaining the promise of home in the present. While the relevant type of experience is certainly shaped by how cultivated love's promise of home already is in the present, the possibility of its emergence does not hinge on this. This brings an important

initial rupture, (a) is only *contingently* involved in the experience of love's promise in a relationship of love.

⁶⁴ May, *Love*, 115.

implication for theorising the promise-character of love's promise of home. While May's own reading puts a strong emphasis on the unfulfillability of the promise of home, I suggest that the promise-character might better be regarded as having a *regulative* function.⁶⁵ On this reading, the promise of home is not meant to be ever fully attained but rather provides (i) a background orientation as to what one's feeling at home with the beloved in navigating social space should involve in the present and thus (ii) a standard by which to gauge one's current second-person interactions with the beloved in the present. There are two central upshots to this reading. First, it can account for and does justice to the first-personal sense of arrival that I have identified above. But, second, it can also allow for the phenomenological observation that not all relationships of love, simply by virtue of being grounded in a promise of home, amount to either a sense of feeling at home with the beloved or a sense of feeling at home in the loving relationship at *all times*.

Consider the case of a violent romantic relationship. On this point, May suggests: 'For as long as the lover sees in the loved one a promise of ontological rootedness love cannot die, no matter how loathsome, indifferent, treacherous, ugly, or evil he finds her.'⁶⁶ Now, I would be cautious about assuming that love will endure against anything. But let us grant for the sake of this example that the victim of domestic violence still sees a promise of home in their violent partner. In such a case, it would certainly be phenomenologically implausible to maintain that they reflectively experience an unequivocal and enduring first-personal sense of home in the context of their relationship. While there may

⁶⁵ Cf. 'On this picture, home – being at home – is no fixed terminus, let alone one that can be specified in advance, but is a place that is progressively revealed; an opening for groundedness in the world that ... we might spend our whole life searching for and attaining to habit.' (May, 68) I find this passage revealing because it illustrates a tendency in May's work: namely, to shift from a phenomenological into an ontological register that concerns the impossibility to ever be fully grounded in the world. In my view, it is this shifting between registers – while ultimately collapsing the former into the latter, as indeed suggested by his talk of 'the promise of *ontological* rootedness' – that underlies and partly explains the tension inherent to his work that I have identified in this subsection.

⁶⁶ May, 79.

be episodic experiences of feeling at home with their partner, those violent second-person interactions presumably will be experienced, against the backdrop of their promise of home, as undermining the possibility of a sense of home at the time of the experience.⁶⁷

To conclude, more can and should be said about the phenomenological structure of the promise of home, with a particular focus on the mode of futurity operative in the promise and, thus, the distinctive temporal horizon that accompanies the promise. I shall attend to these points in Chapter Three, where I develop a detailed phenomenological characterisation of the temporal orientation towards the future operative in the promise of home. For now, I want to close this section by returning to Q₁: *If home is constitutively a promise, does one ever feel at home anywhere?* From my findings in the preceding subsections, we are now in the position to provide the following phenomenological characterisation of love's promise of home that serves to answer Q₁:

(Def) Love: Feeling at home = A positively valenced experience of home in relation to the beloved, where this is (a) grounded in love's promise of home that provides (b) a background orientation as to what one's feeling at home with the beloved in navigating social space should involve and thus (c) a standard by which to gauge one's current second-person interactions with the beloved. This felt sense of home is (d) ongoing and dynamic and can turn from a sense of home with the

⁶⁷ There is a substantial body of empirical studies focused on conflicting feelings that victims of domestic violence report towards their violent partner. For example, consider the following two first-personal testimonies: 'How can anyone so kind and gentle like Mike, that I could love so much and who could love me so much do this to me? I just don't understand.' (Lenore E. Walker, *The Battered Woman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 92). And: 'It was like a pendulum. He'd swing to the extreme both ways. He'd get drunk and beat me up, then he'd get sober and treat me like a queen. One day he put a gun to my head and pulled the trigger. It wasn't loaded. But that's when I decided I'd had it. I sued for separation of property. I knew what was coming again, so I got out. I didn't want to. I still loved the guy, but I knew I had to for my own sanity.' (Kathleen J. Ferraro and John M. Johnson, 'How Women Experience Battering: The Process of Victimization', *Social Problems* 30, no. 3 (1983): 331, <https://doi.org/10.2307/800357>).

beloved to a sense of home in the relationship of love, where this may, but need not, be accompanied by a sense of feeling at home together.

In other words, on this interpretation, the promise of home does bring about and actualises in the first-personal experience of feeling at home, even if it is and remains constitutively a promise.

2.5. Feeling at Home Re-Visited

Having addressed Q₁, in this final section I move to address Q₂ with the aim of arriving at a phenomenologically discerning alternative to the standard view. Recall Q₂:

Q₂: If the promise of home is conditional on the beloved's presence, how (if at all) can this conception of home be transported to other contexts that are *not* one of love?

This question is central because the possibility of identifying a common phenomenological structure to various experiential manifestations of feeling at home by way of drawing on May's promise of home hinges on a positive answer to this question. In this section, I make a phenomenological case for such a positive answer and argue that the conception of home, as developed in the previous section, is applicable to other contexts that are not one of love. This is because, contra May, (1) the promise of home is not specific to love but (2) sufficiently conditional on the experience of being in the presence of other people who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself.

2.5.1. What Got Love to Do with It?

I begin by taking a closer look at what animates Q₂. Notice that there is a principal assumption underlying the issue of applicability: namely, that Eggan's sense of home emerges in a 'context that is not one of love', where this is premised on, and ascribes to May, a restrictive notion of love as romantic love only. Yet, May is explicit on the point that his conception of love covers all those cases in which someone or something provides a promise of home. To quote him at length:

This very particular ground of love [i.e., the promise of home] – this very particular structure of experience and intentionality – can be found in the widest variety of bonds, from friendship to romance, from parental love to filial love, from kindness to a stranger to other relationships of altruism, from unrequited love to unrequitable love such as for art or nature or vocation or country. Yet all of these relationships can also have nothing to do with love: a colleague might be a model of altruism and yet not love us; a parent (or child) might be cruel and deeply love us; a romance might be energized by the life-giving joys of sex, but be empty of love; or it might be empty of sex and yet express the love of both partners' lives.⁶⁸

On May's view, love's specificity consists in the promise of home, for which there can be a plurality of sources. But this also means that many things can be candidates for love, so long as they provide a promise of home in light of which a person loves them. In fact, I interpret May to identify the promise of home as love's formal object, by which love can be distinguished from other related emotive intentional attitudes or comportments. To quote him once more:

for of all the emotions – including emotions that are often conflated with love, as if they were just different words for it, such as benevolence and devotion and

⁶⁸ May, *Love*, 194.

intimacy and sexual desire – love alone has the drive to respond to the pain of exile by rooting our lives in relation to a world that we supremely value.⁶⁹

What emerges here, I submit, is what I call a “May-inspired deflating strategy” for addressing Q₂, according to which love comes in many forms, where this can include the possibility of Eggan’s sense of home qualifying as such. Although I think this strategy rightly brings out love’s variety, note that May is equally clear on the fact that love is a *rare* phenomenon: ‘we will be fortunate enough to find, throughout our lives, just one or a few people in whom we discover a powerful promise of ontological rootedness’.⁷⁰ Yet, this claim about love’s rarity amounts to an immediate challenge for pursuing the May-inspired deflating strategy. This is because, in case Eggan’s sense of home can be regarded as attributable to a promise of home (already note: I shall make this case in 2.5.2.), proponents of this strategy are left with one of the following two options: either (a) to accept the claim about love’s rarity and, by implication, commit to classifying Eggan’s sense of home as an extraordinary experience; or (b) to challenge the claim about love’s rarity and, by implication, commit to classifying every sense of home as grounded in a promise of home as an instance of love. For my purposes, I find both options unsatisfactory: (a) would be in strong tension with my phenomenological claim that Eggan’s experience is not extraordinary but an illustration of the metaphorical sense of home in general, whereas (b) would risk yielding a highly deflationary conception of love, where one is left wondering if there remains anything specific about love at all and worse, as a phenomenological account, would need to argue that people reporting a sense of home in the absence of love are simply failing to see things correctly.⁷¹

⁶⁹ May, 102.

⁷⁰ May, xv.

⁷¹ Following May’s suggestion that ‘vocation’ can be a candidate for love, Errol Lord gives the example of Pete who is an extremely talented pianist. While Pete may find a promise of home in being a pianist, Lord notes that ‘it is easy to imagine that he fails to love’ the life of a pianist.

Yet, I submit that there is a possible way out of this dilemmatic worry: namely, to challenge the constitutive link between love and promise of home that operates in May's work. This would allow for the possibility of showing Eggan's sense of home to be attributable to a promise of home, where this however does not require committing to viewing his experience as an instance of love. While there may be cases in which the experience of a promise of home is accompanied by love, challenging the constitutive link would lead to the suggestion that there only is a contingent link between love and promise of home and, as such, that the latter need not be accompanied by the former. It is this strategy that I pursue in the remainder of this section.⁷²

To do this, I now turn to a phenomenological objection that is articulated in Eric J. Silverman's review of May's book.⁷³ In this review, Silverman worries that May conceptualises love in too narrow terms, where this leaves 'inadequate room in his account

(Lord, 'Love', 442). Now, proponents of the May-inspired deflating strategy may push back and suggest that, in finding a promise of home in being a pianist, Pete's experience still qualifies as an instance of love, irrespective of whether or not Pete first-personally takes such an attitude towards being a pianist. Of course, this may be an option. But notice that, on such a third-person interpretation, the first-person perspective in general and the phenomenal content of the experience of love in particular risk completely dropping out of the analysis. This is worrisome for the reason that, I submit, any phenomenological account must account for and integrate the felt phenomenology of the relevant type of experience. In fact, I interpret the example of Pete to point to a possible disjunction between love and the promise of home. As Lord suggests, 'there is a difference between finding something that promises rootedness and loving something in virtue of this promise' (Lord, 'Love', 442). It is this possibility of a disjunct that I shall shortly go on to explore in depth.

⁷² One may rightly observe that there is at least one other option available to proponents of the May-inspired deflating strategy: it may seem tempting to specify certain characteristics that must be in place for the promise of home to be accompanied by love. This would allow proponents to establish a taxonomy of different kinds of love, where the promise of home becomes associated with certain kinds of love only. Along these lines, they may defend a modified version of May's account and conclude that the constitutive claim between love and the promise of home still holds, provided that it is indexed to certain kinds of love only. But notice: Not only is the primary target phenomenon of my analysis the promise of home and not love. But also, so long as I succeed in establishing that e.g., Eggan's sense of home is attributable to a promise of home, I submit that nothing hinges on whether or not this experience may - in an additional move - be plausibly viewed as a certain kind of love (such as love in the Aristotelian sense of *philia*). Most importantly, however, such modification would still be vulnerable to the phenomenological challenge raised in (b), see also fn. 72.

⁷³ Eric J. Silverman, 'Review of Love: A New Understanding of an Ancient Emotion', 5 January 2020, <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/love-a-new-understanding-of-an-ancient-emotion/>.

for disappointed love, love despite distance and flaws, or unrequited love'.⁷⁴ His focus is in particular on May's assertion that, in line with the beloved's second quality identified in 2.4.1., love constitutively involves finding 'shared values' with another person. Silverman asks: 'Is there really no way to truly love someone whose values differ from us?'.⁷⁵ He provides the example of a child who rebels against their parents' values. This example serves him to illustrate that, notwithstanding one's differences in values, the parents would most likely still love their child (or, so he would hope). On Silverman's view, therefore, love need not involve any essential connection between the lover's and the beloved's values. Whereas May emphasises love's self-interested nature – he explicitly states: 'if love is a joy at glimpsing a promise of ontological rootedness in another then it is necessarily self-interested (though not selfish)'⁷⁶ – Silverman's objection points to a characterisation of love as a primarily other-directed attitude: that is, as primarily concerned with the beloved's well-being for the beloved's own sake. Even though the parents might struggle to establish a relationship of love with their child as anchored in shared values (i.e., establishing what May calls 'a shared ethical home'), they would nonetheless love their rebellious child and want the best for them.⁷⁷ My question is, though: *would the parents feel at home in the presence of their rebellious child?*

⁷⁴ Silverman, para. 14.

⁷⁵ Silverman, para. 14.

⁷⁶ May, *Love*, 93.

⁷⁷ Love as a primarily other-directed attitude is a common view in the philosophical scholarship on love, where this is typically characterised in terms of a disinterested concern for the beloved. Perhaps most prominently, Harry Frankfurt writes: 'In active love, the lover cares selflessly about his beloved. It is important to him for its own sake that the object of his love flourish; he is disinterestedly devoted to its interests and ends.' (Harry Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, Transferred to digital print (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 135). To be clear: I am not suggesting that Silverman would necessarily subscribe to this disinterested concern view of love, but I do think that his phenomenological objection at least indicates a degree of conceptual proximity. For a critique of the disinterested concern view of love, see Monique Wonderly, 'On Being Attached', *Philosophical Studies* 173, no. 1 (January 2016): 223–42, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-015-0487-0>; Wonderly, 'LOVE AND ATTACHMENT', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1 July 2017): 235–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/44982141>. Turning to attachment theory, Wonderly articulates a positive role for self-interestedness in (romantic) love. Her argument can broadly be summarised as follows: (1) The lover experiences the

The answer to this question, I submit, is ‘not necessarily’. Demonstrating why this is the case yields important phenomenological insights for addressing Q₂. Consider the opposite perspective: anyone who has ever had a difficult relationship with their parents will know that one can experience love towards them while lacking a sense of home in their presence. In such social configurations, it is often the case that one’s parents do not provide a context for acting in light of what one is deeply committed to, not to mention for the possibility of realising oneself in light of one’s own practical self-understanding. Take the following example as a particularly effective illustration of the deeply conflicting emotions that often can and do emerge in the context of parental love: imagine having queerphobic parents who are fundamentally opposed to their child’s deep personal commitments and yet express (some kind of) love towards their child. From a May-inspired perspective, I submit that it would be phenomenologically implausible to claim that the relevant kind of love comes with a felt promise of home. Quite the opposite: considering that the queerphobic parents do not ‘embody supreme values and virtues that echo our own, or that we would like to make our own, *and* that we believe we can attain only in and through them’,⁷⁸ it would seem highly unlikely that, *contra* May, the queerphobic parents’ loving response to their queer child would involve an opening up of a horizon of meaningful possibilities that the queer child could identify with and by which they would feel invigorated and affirmed in their own deep personal commitments.

From this phenomenological characterisation, three things follow for addressing Q₂: *contra* May, (a), not every kind of love, as clearly seen in the example of the queer child, is a joyful response to, and grounded in, a promise of home. This suggests that, (b), the promise of home is not specific to and, therefore, constitutive of the general

beloved as an object of attachment. (2) Attachment constitutes a distinctive form of needing a person (i.e., self-interested) that both shapes and positively contributes to the relationship with that person. (3) Self-interestedness in the form of attachment plays a positive role in love (1, 2).

⁷⁸ May, *Love*, xiv, italics original.

phenomenon of love. And since the queer child does not experience a promise of home in and through the presence of their queerphobic parents, (c), the experience of being in the presence of others who share the relevant deep personal commitments specific to oneself turns out to be a necessary condition for the promise of home to occur.

2.5.2. Deep Personal Commitment

From the preceding analysis, it becomes clear that, in order to develop a phenomenological characterisation of feeling at home as grounded in the promise of home, we need to pay closer attention to the constitutive role of deep personal commitments that must be shared in order for the promise of home to occur. Guided by the case of the queer child, my characterisation has so far established such sharing to be a necessary condition. The next task, therefore, is to demonstrate that it is also a sufficient condition, where this can serve as philosophical justification for the applicability of the conception of the promise of home to other contexts that are not one of love.

To begin, recall the four qualities of the beloved as articulated by May that, taken together, yield a promise of home. As outlined in 2.4.1., to experience someone as providing a promise of home is to experience them as providing (a) a source of personal identity, (b) a shared ethical home, (c) the power to intensify one's existence, and (d) a calling to a shared meaningful future. I argue that (1) Eggan's experience meets all four proposed conditions, where this is due to (2) being in the presence of others who share his deep personal commitment to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Let me begin with motivating (1) before I then unpack (2).

Considering that I have established Eggan's emotional response to navigating the ACT UP protest to be centrally about the emergence of a sense of home he had so long

wished for, I submit that, (1), the relevant type of experience can be characterised phenomenologically as bringing into view a promise of home: that is, a particular form of life that emerges in relation to his fellow protestors and which is he striving towards for the reason that it opens up a horizon of meaningful possibilities for his self-realisation as a person living with AIDS. This interpretation is supported by what ACT UP scholar Gould, who herself was immensely involved in the ACT UP movement, has to say about participation in such protests. To quote her:

ACT UP, filled with people fighting for their lives and their community, was emotionally intense; participants felt a strong sense of urgency and solidarity, meetings were heady and affectively rousing, the movement enticed through its sexual and creative atmosphere. Itself a project in world-making, participation in ACT UP was life-affirming and engendered optimism that activists might be able to stop the AIDS crisis and save lives.

In addition to filling our lives with intensity and a sense of meaning and purpose, the exciting swirl of ACT UP's protest actions and meetings allowed us to reinvent ourselves, to carve out a place where we could be angry, oppositional, defiant, hopeful, sexual, and happy, a place where we could engage in collective projects of world-making.⁷⁹

I interpret Gould's suggestion of social movements as a site for collective world-making as one powerful articulation of the promise of home: promising us, to quote May, a 'home in that *particular* world in which we yearn to be grounded – that very particular world in which we feel we can most vividly exist', that 'only in and through the loved one can the world in which we yearn to be rooted come into clear view'.⁸⁰ Following Gould's emphasis, Eggan's experience of partaking in this protest can be characterised phenomenologically as a localised process of collective 'homemaking': in and through the presence of

⁷⁹ Gould, *Moving Politics*, 192, 223.

⁸⁰ May, *Love*, 39, italics original.

his fellow protestors a particular future, in which his own deep personal commitment to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights finds a meaningful place, comes into view.

Importantly, I submit that Eggan experiences his fellow protestors as providing such a promise of home *because*, (2), they share his commitment to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights. This is clearly seen *a contrario*: imagine a protest-bystander who is not deeply committed to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights but simply cares for the well-being of HIV-inflicted people, where this is due to having a different set of deep personal commitments specific to them. In such a case, I submit that it would be phenomenologically plausible to claim that their emotional response to this protest would likely involve *other-regarding* responses (e.g., promoting the protestors' interest), but where this does not come with the *self-regarding* response of feeling at home in and through the presence of the other protestors. In light of diverging deep personal commitments, the presence of those others would not come with a promise of home and therefore not provide a source of orientation for the protest-bystander's practical self-understanding.⁸¹

If this holds true, it turns out that the conception of promise of home *is* applicable to other contexts that are not one of love. This positive answer to Q₂ suggests the following characterisation of the phenomenological structure of feeling at home in navigating social space *irrespective* of whether or not the relevant type of experience arises in the context of love:

⁸¹ At this point, one may worry that this characterisation renders feeling at home a *too self-absorbed* experience and point out that, in doing so, this stands in tension with my overall emphasis on the interpersonal and social dimensions of the phenomenology of home as captured in the sense of belonging regardless of physical space. In response, let me reiterate that Eggan's sense of home is *constitutively social*: it is in and through the presence of his fellow protestors – in particular, the essential connection between his and their deep personal commitment – that he comes to experience a promise of home. But from its social dimensions, it does not follow that the relevant type of experience is not self-regarding. For ultimately, feeling at home is about finding and making one's own home (in relation to others and thus as shared) in the world.

(Def) Feeling at home = Promise of home that actualises in a positively valenced sense of home in relation to others/social space, where this is due to the sharing of the relevant deep personal commitments specific to oneself.

On this proposal, therefore, the promise of home is not conditional on the beloved's presence in particular (whatever 'love' is taken to mean exactly) but on anyone (whether 'loved' or not) who shares the relevant deep personal commitments in general. Since this characterisation of feeling at home shifts the conceptual focus from 'love' to 'deep personal commitment', let me close this section by unpacking in some more detail what I take the relevant type of commitment and the relevant sharing to involve.⁸²

By 'deep personal commitment', I mean that the relevant type of commitment is neither superficial nor tangential to one's practical self-understanding but deeply informs who one takes oneself to be and wants to become. In introducing this notion, I draw on Harry Frankfurt's work on care as constitutive of a person's identity.⁸³ Frankfurt characterises 'caring' as distinct from both desiring something and taking something to be intrinsically valuable. This is because, in contrast to caring, neither pro-attitude need involve a first-personal identification with it, where this would bring about and manifest in a longer-term investment in it through which 'our individual identities are most fully expressed and defined'.⁸⁴ Frankfurt writes:

That a person cares about or that he loves something that has less to do with how things make him feel or with his opinions about them, than with the more or less

⁸² It should be clear that I understand the relationship between 'deep personal commitment' and 'love' not in terms of a necessary entailment: that is, while the former may be accompanied by and turn into the latter, it need not be the case. In contrast, the latter necessarily entails the former while, it should be added, not being reducible to the latter either.

⁸³ Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition, and Love*; Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 4. print., and 1. paperback print, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006).

⁸⁴ Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 50.

stable motivational structures that shape his preferences and that guide and limit his conduct. What a person loves helps him to determine the choices that he makes and the actions he is eager or unwilling to perform.⁸⁵

As a motivational structure, a person's set of cares operates as an experiential background against which certain possibilities become experientially salient and which shapes how to respond accordingly. Importantly, what one cares about, Frankfurt emphasises, may neither be immediately available to the person (it may, in fact, remain hidden from them altogether), nor the result of their reflective deliberation and authorisation. Even so, it is reflected in the ways a person is pre-reflectively motivated and moved to act. I suggest that 'deep personal commitment' can be helpfully characterised as one such mode of caring: that is, guiding Eggon in navigating this protest, where this serves as a condition of possibility for finding a promise of home and, by implication, having the self-regarding response of feeling at home in and through his fellow protestors.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, 129.

⁸⁶ The characterisation of 'one such mode of caring' is deliberate. This is because it demarcates its conceptual boundaries in relation to other possible modes of caring in the context of Frankfurt's work:

(1) While I regard deep personal commitments as constitutive of a person's practical self-understanding, I do not find it phenomenologically plausible to maintain that, as Frankfurt at times suggests, all caring is constitutive of a person's sense of identity. Frankfurt explicitly states: 'Needless to say, what it is in particular that we care about has considerable bearing upon the character and quality of our lives.' (Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 17). Consider one of Frankfurt's own examples: caring about a concert. Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, 161. While you may care about it in Frankfurt's sense (i.e., viewing it as important to yourself, being committed to ensuring that your desire to attend the concert will be maintained and be obtained), I doubt that it will always and necessarily be conferring meaning to your life in any strong sense.

(2) Throughout his work, Frankfurt emphasises the involuntary character of caring, as perhaps most explicitly articulated in his concept of "volitional necessity". While there will certainly be things that people care about without having actively decided to do so (Frankfurt takes parental love to be a particularly illustrative example of this), he tends to downplay the more active, reflective elements that may feature in coming to care about certain things and thus the extent to which certain caring can be subjected to reason. I submit that deep personal commitments should not be exclusively construed as volitional necessities.

(3) Frankfurt considers love to be the most important mode of caring, which he distinguishes from other modes of caring by three characteristics: namely, that love is always (a) disinterested, (b) particular, and (c) involuntary. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 79-80. Even if deep personal commitments may meet characteristics (b) and (c), in my view, they are always self-interested and, therefore, do not meet characteristic (a). This is in keeping with my May-inspired phenomenological characterisation of the promise of home as a self-regarding phenomenon.

With this in place, I now move to clarify the structure of ‘sharing the relevant deep personal commitment(s)’. Let me draw attention to four central points.

(a) Such sharing takes the form of a first-personal experience: as part of the larger experience of being in the presence of other people, it involves the subjective experience of those others *as* sharing the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. This means that finding a promise of home in and through them does not hinge on either whether or not one actually shares the relevant deep personal commitment(s) or, by consequence, whether the felt sharing is actually given. All that is initially required, I submit, is navigating social space in which one’s is navigating social space in which one’s second-person interactions yield the first-personal experience of being socially recognised in one’s deep personal commitment(s); that is, not merely in the sense of being cognised as the bearer of such commitment(s) but in the sense of being accorded social validity with respect to such commitment(s), so, that one experiences those other people/social space as both reflecting and supporting one’s practical self-understanding.⁸⁷ Yet for the experience of an emerging promise of home to translate into a more enduring and stable sense

⁸⁷ Here, I am drawing on Axel Honneth when he writes: ‘While by cognizing a person we mean an identification of him as an individual that can gradually be improved upon, by “recognizing” we refer to the expressive act through which this cognition is conferred with the positive meaning of an affirmation. In contrast to cognizing,. Which is a non-public, cognitive act, recognizing is dependent on media that express the fact that the other person is supposed to possess social “validity”.’ (Axel Honneth and Avishai Margalit, ‘Recognition’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 75 (2001): 115). See also Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 1st MIT Press ed, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996). There, Honneth develops a framework of three foundational types of recognition – love-based recognition in the family, rights-based recognition in the law, and solidarity-based recognition in the civil society – according to which the relevant type of experience of social recognition can broadly be understood in relation to solidarity-based recognition. According to Honneth, solidarity-based recognition emerges in ‘networks of solidarity and shared values within which the particular worth of individual members of a community can be acknowledged’. (Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, xii). For a discussion of recognition in relation to autonomy-based vulnerabilities, see Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth, ‘Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice’, in *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism: New Essays*, ed. John Christman and Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127–49.

of home in and through those others, such sharing has to become reciprocally experienced, where this makes possible and can actualise in a ‘we’ -experience.⁸⁸

(b) The awareness of such sharing may either remain pre-reflective or can become an explicit object of our awareness and thus become reflective. This will depend on the content of the experience, including how central the relevant deep personal commitment(s) is to one’s practical self-understanding and the extent to which the relevant deep personal commitment(s) is reflectively accessible to one.

(c) Such sharing need not be experienced in relation to all of one’s deep personal commitments but only in relation to the deep personal commitment(s) relevant to the situation, against the experiential background of which one experiences and responds to navigating social space. As the colloquial saying ‘opposites attract’ conveys, one can and does feel at home with – even romantically attracted to – people who are different from oneself. This is not to say that one does not need to have anything in common at all in order to feel at home with one another. My claim is more modest: one can also feel at home with others who are different to one in at least some (sometimes also important)

⁸⁸ Cf. Szanto, ‘Feelings of Belonging and Feeling Solidarity: Two Forms of Social Cohesion?’. Szanto writes on feelings of group-belonging: ‘Indeed, the formal object [of feelings of group-belonging] is a *quality of the reciprocal relation* holding between the subject and the group, namely *the value of their commonality or the congruence*. More precisely, it is the positive value of the congruence between one’s own beliefs, experiences, values, customs, or one’s overall habitus, and those of the group members or the shared ‘ethos’ of the group as such. Note that the formal object is not the wish or need to belong. Episodes of feeling belonging are, as we heard, manifestations of these wishes being fulfilled and consequently affective experience of being valued and potentially needed.’ (Szanto, 10, italics original). Importantly, the conditions for an experience to qualify as a sense of group-belonging are more demanding than for an experience to qualify as a sense of belonging regardless of physical space (i.e., my primary target phenomenon here). After all, Eggan can feel at home with the ACT UP fellow protestors without yet feeling belongingness to the group of ACT UP. As Szanto rightly observes, feeling group-belongingness turns on ‘a *reciprocity* between one’s own and others’ sense of belongingness’ (Szanto, 8, italics original), which I claim does not initially need to be present at the time of experiencing a sense of belonging regardless of physical space as grounded in a promise of home.

respects, so long as one experiences them as sharing the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself.⁸⁹

(d) Such sharing need not necessarily entail a deep personal commitment to those others who one experiences as sharing the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. As indicated by our example of the victim of domestic violence, one can feel at home with someone while having conflicting feelings towards them.⁹⁰

Let me conclude this section by highlighting that the here proposed conceptual shift from ‘love’ to ‘deep personal commitment’ is not subject to the challenge that the claim about love’s rarity presents for pursuing the May-inspired deflating strategy. This is because, as I hope to have demonstrated, the promise of home is sufficiently conditional on the presence of others who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. Not only is such sharing not restricted to the context of love, but also, it can and frequently does take place in navigating social space more widely.

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made a phenomenological case for an alternative way of theorising the phenomenology of feeling at home. I have proposed a phenomenological conception of feeling at home via the concept of promise of home, where this has allowed me to identify and characterise what underlies feeling at home in its various experiential

⁸⁹ On a more general note, I believe it to be phenomenologically dubious to think that one’s first-personal experience of feeling at home could ever be adequately accounted for by providing a list of shared characteristics, just as I do not think our reason(s) as to why we feel at home with certain others could ever be fully exhausted by such a list. It is precisely here where I see one of the central upshots of a May-inspired conception of feeling at home: The model of promise of home allows us to bring into view the phenomenological structure of feeling at home without having to specify exactly which and how many characteristics have to be shared in common.

⁹⁰ Cf. Szanto, 11.

manifestations. Let me close by considering three implications of my proposed characterisation.

First: the phenomenological category of feeling at home is constitutively *social*. Feeling at home, on my proposal, is attributable to a promise of home, where this is due to the experience of being in the presence of other people who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. Hence, there must be a necessary affective-interpersonal fit for the relevant type of experience to occur. But this also means that, as long as this fit is given, a person can feel at home *irrespective* of the extent to which they are physically, practically, and/or emotionally familiar with the given surroundings. Contra the standard view, therefore, I argue that there exists no essential relationship between home and space-familiarity. Consequently, I submit that my proposed characterisation can meet both requirements for a phenomenologically satisfying conception of feeling at home: (1) it can account for the fact that not all instances of feeling at home are attributable to a sense of space-familiarity due to (2) fully appreciating the phenomenological distinction between feeling at home and being at home, where this is made possible by the appeal to the conception of promise of home.

Second: given such a strong emphasis on the social in general and the sharing of relevant deep personal commitment(s) in particular, a central concern emerges. One may object that, in meeting both requirements (1) and (2), the here proposed category of feeling at home ends up rendering the conditions for an experience to count as an instance of feeling at home *both too demanding and too narrow*. This is because it identifies the sharing of relevant deep personal commitment(s) as a condition of possibility for an experience of the relevant type to emerge. Yet one may worry that doing so ultimately stipulates a shared identity as necessary for feeling at home with others (i.e., too demanding)

and, conversely, fails to account for more banal but common cases of feeling at home (i.e., too narrow), like feeling at home in a coffee shop because one likes the aesthetic.

It is certainly right that, on my proposal, a person's sense of home is constitutively bound up with a person's practical self-understanding. As I mentioned above, I follow Frankfurt in taking a person's set of deep personal commitments to be constitutive of their practical self-understanding, where this shapes their experience of and response to navigating social space. This also means that a person's set of deep personal commitments and, by implication, their practical self-understanding is a determining factor for whether they experience other people in such a way that they come to feel at home in and through their presence. However, the question remains whether this conceptual analysis renders my phenomenological category of feeling at home both too demanding and too narrow. The answer to this question, I submit, is no.

Let me begin with the 'too demanding' charge. I think it turns on an equivocation of two different senses of a "person's identity": (1) a person's social identity, where the focus is on the third-personal perspective of counting as part of a certain social category; and (2) a person's practical identity, where the focus is on the first-personal perspective of understanding oneself to be at issue. To be clear, I do not wish to reduce a person's social identity to the third person only. After all, my social identity as a queer person involves a self-understanding of myself as queer based on my membership to the social category "queer". But the point here is that a person's practical identity – i.e., their practical self-understanding that centrally consists in a set of deep personal commitments specific to their life – is neither fully exhausted by nor need it align with their social identity. Take the example of internalised homophobia, where a person's practical identity may in fact oppose their social identity as a homosexual (e.g., through holding a deep personal commitment to living a heterosexual life). While certainly a worrisome case of self-

oppression, this example illustrates the psychological possibility of (1) and (2) coming apart. Yet taking this insight seriously, I submit, brings two central implications: (a) the possibility of sharing relevant deep personal commitment(s) depends on a person's practical self-understanding *whether or not* this aligns with their social identity. And (b) since a person's practical self-understanding need not align with their social identity, therefore, the sharing of relevant deep personal commitment(s) does not hinge on having a shared social identity either. While a shared social identity might be partly constitutive of feeling at home, it would be wrong to infer that it is a necessary feature of that experience and thus, that one could only feel at home with those others who are like oneself.⁹¹

I now turn to the 'too narrow' charge. I think that it is itself premised on a *too narrow* understanding of the relationship between home and deep personal commitment. It construes this relationship in terms of a *direct* link between the emotional experience of home in response to *x* and having a deep personal commitment to *x*, and thereby reduces deep personal commitments to mere first-order desires. But this is to ignore the many ways in which deep personal commitments (indirectly) operate as higher-order desires. As indicated by my evocation of Frankfurt's conception of care as a motivational structure, a person's deep personal commitment to *x* can manifest in various ways, including the first-order desire for *y* as an expression of, and contribution to realising, their deep personal commitment to *x*. With this in mind, let us take a closer look at the example of feeling at home in a coffee shop because one likes the aesthetic. Imagine a left-wing activist entering a coffee shop, where the walls are fully decorated with posters of left-wing demonstrations. If their experience of this coffee shop were to be marked by a

⁹¹ In their systematic overview of phenomenological approaches to personal identity, Jakub Čapek and Sophie Loidolt make the complementary point that, *only* in the sense of counting as a member of a certain social category, 'identity is something that different persons can *share*'. (Jakub Čapek and Sophie Loidolt. 'Phenomenological Approaches to Personal Identity', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 20, no. 2 (April 2021): 219, italics original, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-020-09716-9>).

positively valenced sense of home, I think it is phenomenologically plausible to suggest that such an emotional response would be grounded in their deep personal commitment to e.g., left-wing politics more generally. In fact, it is precisely this interplay between first-order and higher-order desires that my proposed characterisation of a promise of home in 2.4. as both, (i) a background orientation as to what one's feeling at home should involve and thus (ii) a standard by which to gauge one's current experiences, can bring into view and capture. Accordingly, feeling at home in a coffee shop could still be said to involve a person's deep personal commitments without requiring a deep personal commitment to the aesthetic of the coffee shop itself.⁹²

Third: I do think that my proposed category of feeling at home is demanding in a different sense. The phenomenological reality of deep personal commitments presupposes as a condition of intelligibility an understanding of oneself as a *temporally extended, diachronic person*. This is because deep personal commitments are, by their very nature, longer-term investments in relation to which various first-order desires are mediated across time. This requires what Mackenzie and Poltera identify as 'the descriptive narrative thesis', that is, "that the self-experience of persons is diachronically structured".⁹³ Without having a sense of diachronic continuity of oneself across time, therefore, the very possibility of having deep personal commitments specific to one's own life is simply not intelligible. This point is extremely important because it makes clear to whom the phenomenological category of feeling at home (and, by implication, metaphorical (dis-)orientation) is applicable and has phenomenological reality for. Let me emphasise two points here: (1) if one experiences a promise of home in and through the presence of

⁹² Compare Frankfurt's earlier paper 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', where he explicitly characterises what I call deep personal commitments as 'desires of the second or of higher orders'. (Harry G. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (1971): 17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2024717>).

⁹³ Catriona Mackenzie and Jacqui Poltera, 'Narrative Integration, Fragmented Selves, and Autonomy', *Hypatia* 25, no. 1 (2010): 34, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01083.x>.

others who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s), then, one must be committed to the descriptive narrative thesis. This becomes perhaps most visible in the context of love: not only does the initial experience of love's promise of home presuppose a sense of the non-immediate, longer future, but furthermore does the experience of being in a relationship of love clearly involve a sense of diachronic continuity for it to qualify as a relationship of love (as opposed to, let's say, a momentary encounter of infatuation). (2) Importantly, this is not to suggest that each and everyone does, and must, experience a promise of home. For example, consider Peter Strawson's infamous *episodic*, that is, someone who 'does not figure oneself, considered as a self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future'.⁹⁴ Since their self-experience is not diachronically structured, an episodic is likely to never experience a promise of home. Allowing for the possibility of such a self-experience as a non-pathological way of existence (though I actually doubt this possibility as a non-pathological way to be common, nor in fact to be phenomenologically intelligible as a non-pathological way of self-experience) therefore, my central point is rather that one does experience a promise of home if and only if one is broadly a narrativist.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Galen Strawson, 'Against Narrativity', *Ratio* 17, no. 4 (December 2004): 430, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9329.2004.00264.x>.

⁹⁵ The qualifier "broadly a narrativist" is deliberate. There is no single consensus on how best to conceptualise a narrativist conception of identity. In their reply to Strawson's critique of narrativist conceptions of identity, Mackenzie and Poltera distinguishes between five different theses:

- (i) that the self-experience of persons is diachronically structured (the descriptive narrative thesis);
- (ii) that having a self-narrative is essential for a flourishing life (the ethical narrative thesis);
- (iii) that self-understanding requires actively and self-consciously seeking patterns of coherence in one's life as a whole, or at least significant parts of it (form-finding);
- (iv) that self-interpretation involves thinking of "oneself and one's life as fitting the form of some recognized narrative genre" (Strawson 2004, 442) (story-telling; and
- (v) that self-interpretation is a reconstructive process (revision). (Mackenzie and Poltera, 'Narrative Integration, Fragmented Selves, and Autonomy', 34–35).

While I do not have space here to discuss these five theses in much detail, let me briefly flag two points: (1) The narrativist conception of a person's practical self-understanding that operates in the background of my phenomenological category of feeling at home needs to be committed only to theses (i) and (v), both of which I take to be phenomenologically uncontroversial. (2) Pace

Frankfurt and thesis (iii), I neither think that a person's set of deep personal commitments necessarily bring about and ensures "thematic unity or coherence in our desires or in the determination of our will" (Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 16), nor that a high degree of thematic unity or coherence should be the ideal for what it means to live a flourishing life, where all one's deep personal commitments (and desires subsumed thereunder) need to be aligned in meaningful ways. For similar doubts about the importance of thematic unity and coherence in Frankfurt's conception of care, see Richard Moran, 'Review Essay on *The Reasons of Love* *', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74, no. 2 (March 2007): 470, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2007.00032.x>.

CHAPTER THREE

Inhabiting the Future

In Chapter Two, I have developed a phenomenological critique of the standard view of feeling at home, with a view to clearing the way for an alternative conception of the phenomenological category of feeling at home *qua* promise of home. Specifically, I have argued that (1) in order to feel at home in navigating social space, one needs to be grounded in a promise of home in and through the presence of other people who one experiences as sharing the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. I have further argued that, contra the standard view, (2) this experience of home can and does emerge *irrespective* of the extent to which one is physically, practically, and/or emotionally familiar with the given surroundings.

In identifying the *necessary affective-interpersonal fit* required for feeling at home, therefore, I have focused primarily on the social in general and the sharing of deep personal commitment(s) in particular. But there is another crucial and inextricably related dimension: the temporal structure of home. In this chapter, I examine in detail the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home, where my focus is on characterising the distinctive mode of futurity operative in the promise of home and the exercise of agency involved in being thusly orientated towards the future.

In 3.1., I begin by bringing into view the future-directed character of feeling at home as grounded in the promise of home. In 3.2., I then propose a comparative phenomenological strategy of thinking together the promise of home and hope. I establish that hope is analytically included in the promise of home and clarify the relevant types of propositional hope that are of interest in pursuing this comparative phenomenological strategy: strong hope₁, strong hope₂, and hope against hope. In light of this, in 3.3. and

3.4., I develop a detailed discussion of Cheshire Calhoun’s model of “the phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success”, which serves her as an interpretive framework for characterising the temporal orientation towards the future involved in all of these three types of propositional hope.¹ I argue that Calhoun’s model presupposes a degree of agency that proves to be incompatible with hope against hope. I call this *the agency problem*, which will serve me a two-fold purpose: first, it helps to uncover, and make phenomenologically salient, that the underlying structure of the phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success is more complicated than Calhoun’s model can bring into view. Second, it helps to clarify *a contrario* the exercise of agency in the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. Based on this, in 3.5., I propose a phenomenological characterisation of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home as grounded in one’s subjective sense of one’s own agency as one of empowerment. In the process, I also address the relationship between the promise of home and hope and establish, that while the promise of home is compatible with strong hope₁ and strong hope₂, it is incompatible with hope against hope. In 3.6., I then conclude by identifying two further questions that my analysis raises and that shall guide me in the subsequent chapters.

3.1. Home is Temporal

From the commitment to space-familiarity as a constitutive characteristic of feeling at home, it is perhaps no surprise to observe that proponents of the standard view of feeling at home tend to focus on two features as central to home’s temporality: namely, (a) feeling

¹ Cheshire Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time: The Present, the Future, and Meaningful Living* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

at home takes time and takes place over time, and (b) to sustain a sense of home across time requires continuous engagement with the given surroundings. Thus, there is a focus on what I call *a sense of temporal familiarity* with the given surroundings, which is perhaps most clearly articulated by Young.² Young distinguishes between two models of temporality and their correlative types of work, both of which she deems necessary for the process of homemaking as it concerns the literal sense of home as domestic space. They are (1) the temporality of rupture that is operative in constructing a home and (2) the temporality of recurrence that is operative in preserving a home. Young writes:

The temporality of preservation is distinct from that of construction. As a founding construction, making is a rupture in the continuity of history. But recurrence is the temporality of preservation. Over and over the things must be dusted and cleaned. Over and over the special objects must be arranged after a move. Over and over the dirt from winter snows must be swept away from the temples and statues, the twigs and leaves removed, the winter cracks repaired. The stories must be told and retold to each new generation to keep a living, meaningful history.³

As implicit in her impressionist description, Young holds a feminist commitment to valourising the work of preservation that is typically carried out by women, however rarely acknowledged as such. I certainly follow Young in her feminist commitment as well as in her emphasis on home as a dynamic and ongoing temporal process, if an emerging sense of home is to turn into a more stable and enduring sense of home. That said, this very commitment leads Young to focus primarily on the temporality of preservation and ‘the connection of the past to the present in light of new events’.⁴ As a result, she leaves undertheorised the temporal dimension of the future in home. Yet, that feeling at home has the

² Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: ‘Throwing like a Girl’ and Other Essays*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³ Young, 143.

⁴ Young, 144.

character of a *promise* clearly indicates that the future plays a principal role for feeling at home in navigating social space in the present. And as we saw in Chapter Two, the promise of home is typically not the outcome of a process of habituation but, centrally, involves a distinctive mode of futurity.

In order to account for the structure of the temporal experience of home as grounded in the promise of home, therefore, it is crucial to move beyond a characterisation in terms of temporal familiarity. The task must be to develop a sufficiently discerning and encompassing phenomenological characterisation of the temporal experience of home as grounded in the promise of home, which can integrate the metaphorical sense of belonging *regardless* of an established sense of temporal familiarity over time.

3.2. The Turn to Hope

I propose that one possible strategy for developing such a phenomenological characterisation is to adopt a comparative phenomenological strategy of thinking together the promise of home and hope. In adopting this strategy, firstly, I assume that a careful analysis of the temporal orientation towards the future in hope enables us to identify the phenomenological structure of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. And secondly, I restrict my comparative phenomenological strategy to propositional hopes for oneself, i.e., taking the form of “I hope that *p* in my own future”.⁵ In this section, I motivate and outline this comparative phenomenological strategy.

⁵ Of course, propositional hopes can also be about the past or the present. But since my concern is to bring out the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home through an analysis of hope, I focus on specifically future-directed propositional hopes. But let me also add that I take the paradigmatic object of propositional hope to be about the future.

3.2.1. Why Hope?

I begin by identifying two central reasons for considering the turn to hope to be promising: one structural and one conceptual. First, the promise of home and hope bear *structural* similarities. According to what is considered the “orthodox definition”,⁶ propositional hope involves at least (i) the desire for the hoped-for outcome, and (ii) a belief that this outcome is possible but not certain. In addition, hoping involves (iii) an investment in one’s personal future in the sense that one prefers the realisation of the hoped-for outcome to the realisation of other possible futural states-of-affairs (for, otherwise, one would not hope for it but remain indifferent to it). From my characterisation of the promise of home in Chapter Two, the following seems clear: while it is a larger and more complicated phenomenological structure, the promise of home matches these three characteristics. This is because (i) it involves a desire for a certain future (since this future holds a meaningful place for one’s deep personal commitments and practical self-understanding), (ii) this future is possible but not certain, and (iii) it involves a distinctively first-personal concern for the future.⁷

In addition to this structural reason, there is another and more important, *conceptual* reason. I submit that the promise of home constitutively involves the (pre-) reflective experience of hope, where this can actualise in various propositional hopes for the realisation of desired futural states-of-affairs as grounded in, integral to, and implicated by the

⁶ Adrienne M. Martin, *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁷ Wolfgang Carl helpfully distinguishes between a third-person external perspective on the future and a first-person self-concerned perspective. Concerning the latter, he writes: ‘My future is the correlate of my current interest in it, and whatever belongs to it, is only what has to do with the fulfilment or otherwise of my current attitudes towards it ... Only beings that are concerned with their future have a future which is their own future.’ (Wolfgang Carl, *The First-Person Point of View* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 154, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110362855>). And it may be added that, as we saw in Chapter Two, only people that understand themselves as temporally extended, diachronic persons have a (longer-term) future which is their own future.

promise of home. To provide initial motivation for this view, consider what Rebecca Solnit has to say on the importance of hope in politically turbulent times. To quote her:

And then every now and then, the possibilities explode. In these moments of rupture, people find themselves members of a “we” that did not until then exist, at least not as an entity with agency and identity and potency; new possibilities suddenly emerge, or that old dream of a just society re-emerges and – at least for a little while – shines.⁸

Solnit is clear that hope’s importance does not consist in ‘a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative’.⁹ Even so, she locates in hope a profoundly orientating force as it can emerge in partaking in social movements. Her observation has deep resonances with ACT UP scholar Gould’s suggestion that social movements function as a site for collective world-making, which, recall Chapter Two, I have characterised phenomenologically as one powerful experiential manifestation, and thus articulation, of the promise of home.

These resonances are not coincidental, but bring out the constitutive relationship between promise of home and hope. Returning to May, he himself is quite explicit on this point:

In responding to the loved one’s promise, as the lover sees it, love reveals a trajectory toward a new sense of home – a trajectory that is a source of powerful hope. However fulfilled love is in the present, it is always directed to a future created by that promise ... the promise – in other words, this future, and the hope that we have of attaining it.¹⁰

⁸ Rebecca Solnit, “Hope Is an Embrace of the Unknown”: Rebecca Solnit on Living in Dark Times’, *The Guardian*, 15 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/15/rebecca-solnit-hope-in-the-dark-new-essay-embrace-unknown>.

⁹ Solnit.

¹⁰ May, *Love*, 41.

I follow May and interpret the promise of home and the hope for attaining the promised home as co-primordial. By this, I do not wish to suggest that hope is always accompanied by the promise of home. My claim is instead that, when we experience a promise of home, we also experience hope. This is because I take hope to be *analytically included* in the promise in the specific sense of May's usage. Recall Chapter Two, where I have argued that the promise of home does not correspond to (most) ordinary uses of 'promise.' This is because, unlike ordinary promises, typically both the realisation and the keeping of the promise of home is not fully in one's control. But since it is not fully in one's control, therefore, one cannot expect but only hope for obtaining the promise of home.¹¹

3.2.2. Which Hope?

Having motivated the turn to hope, I provide a preliminary clarification as to which hope I have in mind. "Propositional hope for oneself" is no homogenous phenomenological category, so that we should not take for granted that all types of propositional hope for oneself will be equally informative for identifying the phenomenological structure of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. For present purposes, it is helpful to distinguish between four different types, while acknowledging that there are further phenomenological distinctions that could be drawn. I understand these four types as follows:

¹¹ In contrast, consider once more the example of an ordinary promise introduced in Chapter Two: promising your friend to be on time. In this case, you are (at least typically) in control of delivering the outcome by your own powers, where this rules out the possibility of hoping for its realisation.

- 1) *Weak hope*: a hope that comes with a (relatively) weak intensity. Typically, this is somewhat proportional to the (relatively) low significance of the object of one's hope.

E.g., I hope that the public library in Berlin, where I am currently writing this chapter, will serve falafel tomorrow. I do not care that much and I also know that there are plenty of falafel shops in walking distance.¹²

- 2) *Strong hope*₁: a hope that comes with a (relatively) strong intensity and the hoped-for outcome comes with a (relatively) high subjective probability assignment. Here, one's strong hope comes with, and is grounded in, a (relatively) high subjective probability assignment that serves as a (relatively) good epistemic warrant for believing that the hoped-for outcome may realise.

E.g., I hope that I will give a good philosophy talk. Since I have given this talk before and I have received good feedback, I think that it is likely I will give a good philosophy talk. But, of course, I am not expecting it (who knows who will be in the audience!), so it is a case of hope.

¹² The qualifier “typically” is deliberate here. In the majority of cases, the *significance of the object of hope* and the *intensity of the desire* are somewhat proportional. This need not always be the case: I may strongly hope for the falafel (intensity), but also understand this to be not really important at all (significance). Cf. Andrew Chignell, ‘The Focus Theory of Hope’, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1 December 2022): 45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pq/pqac010>. But note that, if there is a (relatively) high significance attached to the object of the hope, typically this serves as a reason to hope for it with (relatively) strong intensity. Henceforth, when I talk of a (relatively) strong intensity, I assume that the object of the hope is also of (relatively) high significance.

- 3) *Strong hope₂*: a hope that comes with a (relatively) strong intensity, however the hoped-for outcome comes with a (relatively) low probability assignment. Here, one's strong hope does not come with, and is not grounded in, a (relatively) high subjective probability assignment that would serve as a (relatively) good epistemic warrant. Instead, what makes it strong is that one hopes *in spite of* the (relatively) low subjective probability assignment.

E.g., I strongly hope that the German political party *Alternative for Germany* will not win in the upcoming elections of the federal state of Thuringia. In light of the current polls, I think that, while not certain, it is quite unlikely that they will not win.

- 4) *Hope against hope*: a hope that comes with a very strong intensity, however the hoped-for outcome comes with an incredibly low subjective probability assignment, yielding hardly any epistemic warrant.

E.g., I hope that my best friend will survive a life-threatening surgery with very low chances of success. If I do hope and not despair, I hope against hope.¹³

¹³ Cf. Martin's often-cited definition of hope against hope: 'hope for an outcome that, first, amounts to an overcoming or at least abiding some profound challenges to one's values or welfare; and, second, it is an extremely improbable hope' (Martin, *How We Hope*, 14). While the above characterisation may suggest that there is a continuity between strong hope₂ and hope against hope – just involving a lower probability assignment –, the relationship between these two types of hope is considerably more complicated. For one thing, the relevant probability assignment is *subjective*, where this makes it unclear at which degree exactly strong hope₂ would turn into hope against hope. For another, and more importantly, a mere appeal to the relevant probability assignment might assume that the relevant phenomenology operating in each type of hope is equivalent. In my view, this obscures what I take to be a distinguishing feature of hope against hope: namely, *a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness* to bring about the hoped-for outcome. I shall return to this point in 3.4.

From my characterisation of the promise of home in Chapter Two, the following seems clear: while type (1) may very well be involved in the promise of home, this hope is *trivial* to the promise. This is because the promise of home opens up a future that holds a meaningful place for one's deep personal commitments and practical self-understanding. But this also means that the hope to obtain those positive futural possibilities that are bound up with one's deep personal commitments comes with a (relatively) strong intensity, inasmuch as those possibilities are integral to who one takes oneself to be and wants to become. This shows, conversely, that the relevant type of hope that will be informative for theorising the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home is a hope for an object that is of personal significance to one, where this serves as a reason for that hope to come with a (relatively) strong intensity.

Thus, going forward, I shall restrict my comparative phenomenological strategy to types (2)-(4), given that they all meet this requirement of personal significance. What is more, note that these three types of hope are often said to carry motivational powers (to varying degrees) that help the hoper to keep going in situations of perceived uncertainty. McGeer writes, 'hoping always has an aura of agency around it because hoping is essentially a way of positively and expansively inhabiting our agency', that is, 'even under circumstances where we cannot affect the relevant ends'.¹⁴ As McGeer implies, this seems particularly relevant for type (3) and type (4), where the low probability assignment would appear, at least psychologically, to serve as a reason not to hope. From this perspective, the question about whether each of these three types of hope can make the person first-personally feel orientated going forward arises, given that all three types are ascribed certain motivational powers. As my analysis in this chapter advances, it will turn

¹⁴ Victoria McGeer, 'The Art of Good Hope', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592, no. 1 (March 2004): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203261781>.

out that hope against hope is in fact not sufficient for the person to feel orientated going forward, where this is for reasons that enable us to recognise the relevant exercise of agency that is constitutive of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. But for now, my concern is with getting clear on the temporal orientation towards the future involved in these three types of hope.

3.3. Calhoun's Model of the Phenomenological Idea of the Future

To do this, in this section, I turn to the work of Cheshire Calhoun.¹⁵ Calhoun is concerned with developing a conception of hope, where her focus is on addressing what she calls *the motivational problem*: namely, how hope can play a motivational role that exceeds the desire that the hoper has for a particular outcome. What is interesting for present purposes is that, in pursuing this argument, Calhoun pays particular attention to hope's temporal orientation towards the future. She does so by introducing the model of "the phenomenological idea of the future", which serves her as an interpretive framework for recognising the phenomenological complexity of 'what living temporally amounts to'.¹⁶ In this, Calhoun's work forms an exception to the contemporary scholarship on hope that has been predominantly concerned with developing the orthodox definition of hope.¹⁷ In my critical reconstruction and assessment of Calhoun's position, I shall follow Calhoun's focus on the temporal-futural dimension of hope and examine her model with a view of

¹⁵ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*.

¹⁶ Calhoun, 85.

¹⁷ As widely noted, one of the central problems of the orthodox definition is that it cannot adequately distinguish between hope and despair. This is because it is possible for two people to have equivalent desires for p and the same probability assessment that p , while one person hopes that p and the other despairs that p . It follows that, if both hope and despair involve the desire for p and the belief that p is possible but not certain, there is something missing in the orthodox definition. Cf. Ariel Meirav, 'The Nature of Hope', *Ratio* 22, no. 2 (June 2009): 216–33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9329.2009.00427.x>.

developing a phenomenological characterisation of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home.

3.3.1. Which Hope?

I begin by clarifying which hope Calhoun herself is interested in. Her principal concern is to analyse “practical hope”:

As agents, the hope that matters most is what I call practical hope – hope for success in the pursuits of ends we value. Practical hope is often thought to play a motivationally critical role when our pursuits of ends is unlikely to meet with success or we need to be able to pick ourselves up from setbacks and continue striving to succeed.¹⁸

Practical hopes, on Calhoun’s view, are those propositional hopes that contribute to the realisation of those ends that are set by, and part of, one’s practical pursuits in relation to one’s longer-term (deep) personal commitments. This means they concern those futural states-of-affairs that are (relatively) strongly desired because they are of personal

¹⁸ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 69. Calhoun contrasts “practical hopes” with “basal hopefulness”, by which she means pre-intentional hope. Calhoun, 74. It is worth noting that Calhoun intends her model of the phenomenological idea of the future also to pertain to and explain pre-intentional hope. While beyond the scope of this chapter, I think that ultimately Calhoun here runs into some difficulties. As I demonstrate in this section, a core characteristic of Calhoun’s model of the phenomenological idea of the future is that it is *determinate*, that is, it involves a degree of determinacy as to what the hoped-for content is about. But characteristic of pre-intentional hope is precisely the fact that there is no clear conceptual content as to what the hoped-for outcome is about. I submit that this leaves Calhoun with the following dilemma: (1) either Calhoun could grant that her model does not apply to pre-intentional forms of hope. This response is unsatisfactory, however, inasmuch as she seeks to account for those as well. (2) Or she could drop the degree of determinacy as a defining mark of the phenomenological idea of the future. In fact, she seems to favour this point in her analysis of Jonathan Lear’s discussion of radical hope; cf. Calhoun, 75. But this poses a different problem: if pre-intentional forms of hope do not involve a phenomenological idea of the *determinate* future (which I think is right), the talk of a phenomenological *idea* of the future (that is, employing a conceptual and explicit register) loses its plausibility. That is, it is no longer apparent as to why to hold onto the language of *idea* when there is no determinate content involved.

significance to one's practical self-understanding. But as the second part of the above quotation indicates, Calhoun takes a particular interest in a specific subset of practical hopes: namely, practical hopes under very difficult circumstances. She calls them "substantial practical hope". Here, she explicitly borrows from Pettit's discussion of "substantial hope" that, in contrast to what he calls "superficial hopes", covers cases where one strongly desires p but takes the probability for p to be so low that one risks '[losing] heart and [ceasing] to exercise agency effectively'.¹⁹ Calhoun provides various examples of substantial practical hope, including one of the scholarship's standard examples of hope against hope: 'the cancer patient's belief that her odds of recovering from advanced pancreatic cancer are minuscule'.²⁰

Thus, in turning to practical hopes in general and substantial practical hopes in particular, Calhoun provides a conception of practical hope that is intended to cover all three types of hope of interest to us: strong hope₁, strong hope₂, and hope against hope. This point is important because it provides the standard by which I will critically examine her model of the phenomenological idea of the future in the next section, as it proves relevant for present purposes.

3.3.2. Practical Hope

Having clarified the scope of her conception, let me outline her characterisation of practical hope. Calhoun gives the following definition:

¹⁹ Philip Pettit, 'Hope and Its Place in Mind', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592, no. 1 (March 2004): 157, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203261798>.

²⁰ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 75. See also e.g., Pettit, 'Hope and Its Place in Mind', 7. Pettit provides the example of substantially hoping to *survive* an illness with incredibly low chances of success.

Hope, I propose, is a *belief* that success in a pursuit is possible, a *preference* that success is what actually materializes in the temporal unfoldings of events, and a *phenomenological idea of the determinate future whose content includes success*.²¹

The first two features are a variation of the orthodox definition of hope; it is the third feature that is my focus. Calhoun distinguishes the phenomenological idea of the future from what she calls “the planning idea of the future”. This is the view from which we make plans for the future that are rooted in ‘reflectively held and well-grounded beliefs about what the future will most likely be like’.²² In contrast, the phenomenological idea of the future is intended to capture ‘primarily our sense of the future, rather than our beliefs about or a conceptualization of the future’.²³ Calhoun understands it as our contentful anticipation of a certain kind of future – as opposed to our *prediction* of the future – that serves as a ‘background to our propositional states’ and is typically nonreflective but can become, as in cases of strong hope more generally, the object of conscious reflection.²⁴ Centrally, it is about ‘inhabiting the future’, which we do in hope ‘by being drawn to previsage a particular future in our imagination’, namely, one in which our practical pursuits succeeds (more on this shortly).²⁵

Turning to the motivational problem, Calhoun now argues that while practical hope can help us stay motivated in our practical pursuits under (very) difficult circumstances, it does not do so by removing the belief in low odds from our planning idea of the future. If this were the case, we would end up distorting our deliberate reasoning by ignoring the low odds.²⁶ Her central claim is, instead, that as practical hoppers we live and

²¹ Calhoun, 86, italics original.

²² Calhoun, 74.

²³ Calhoun, 72.

²⁴ Calhoun, 73.

²⁵ Calhoun, 73-74.

²⁶ Calhoun, 81.

act in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success, which prevents us from seeing ‘one’s current activity as wasted effort whose costs will not be redeemed’.²⁷

3.3.3. The Temporality of Practical Hope

With this conception practical hope in place, we are now in a position to turn to Calhoun’s characterisation of the temporality of practical hope. In developing her model of the phenomenological idea of the future, Calhoun draws on Richard Wollheim’s term of “previsaging”.²⁸ Wollheim theorises previsaging in relation to actively remembering the past and suggests that, conversely, by imaginatively previsaging a certain future we do two things: (1) we envisage what we believe to be doing at time t , and (2) we envisage what we believe to be feeling in doing at time t .²⁹ For present purposes, centring this notion in her model brings an important implication: namely, that Calhoun renders the practical hoper’s temporal orientation towards the future an *explicit imagining of a positive future*. The

²⁷ Calhoun, 72. In developing her central notion of the phenomenological idea of the future, Calhoun elaborates what I identify as five characteristics: (1) it has both a content (‘much of which is unreflective’) (Calhoun, 74), and a qualitative character; (2) it ‘operates as background to our propositional states’ (Calhoun, 73); (3) the idea’s content – ‘who we will be and what life circumstances we find ourselves in’ (Calhoun, 66) – has a plurality of psychological sources; ‘Some people, for example, have the good fortune to have had their low-odds pursuits regularly succeed. They become habituated to a successful future’ (Calhoun, 86); (4) our idea of the future ‘may neither be part of conscious awareness nor readily accessible to conscious awareness’ (Calhoun, 72); and (5) having such an idea of the future is ‘a matter of inhabiting the future’, which we partly do ‘by being drawn to envisage a particular future in our imagination’ and partly ‘by living under an unreflective sense of what the future will be like’ (Calhoun, 72). But as will become clear shortly, in the context of practical hope, she foregrounds its *cognitive and reflective* features.

²⁸ Calhoun, 8-9.

²⁹ Wollheim writes: ‘When I envisage an event in my life, I shall tend to envisage myself not only doing what I believe I shall do, but also thinking, feeling, or experiencing, what I believe I shall think, feel, or experience. I shall do so liberally and systematically. And if I do envisage myself thinking, feeling, experiencing, as well as doing, what I believe I shall, then I shall tend to find myself in the very condition in which these thoughts, feelings, and experiences are likely to leave me.’ (Richard Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*, The William James Lectures 1982 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 262–63).

practical hoper imaginatively projects themselves into – that is, previsions – a future in which the hoped-for outcome has realised. Calhoun explicitly writes:

Those who hope, despair, and merely fret may differ not in their probability assessments of what the future will be but, rather, in how they fill in the content of the determinate future that they previsualise in reflective imagination and that operates as a background idea of the future. Those who hope use the desired successful future to fill in the content of the determinate future.³⁰

Calhoun provides a principal example that guides much of her discussion: the example of Okonkwo, the main character of Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. After becoming the wealthiest and most respected warrior in his village, Okonkwo ends up killing a clansman's son and is consequently exiled for seven years. Despite being in exile, Okonkwo does not lose hope but instead, as Calhoun notes, '[imagines] a future in which he not only regains his place but achieves even greater honor'.³¹ To illustrate this, Calhoun goes on to provide the following passage from the novel:

He knew that he had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new region. ... He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan. But some of the losses were not irreplicable. He was determined that his return should be marked by his people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the seven wasted years. ... (T)he first thing he would do would be to rebuild his compound on a more magnificent scale. He would build a bigger barn that he had before and he would build huts for the two new wives. Then he would show his wealth by initiating his sons into the *ozo* society. Only the really great men in the clan were able to do this. Okonkwo saw clearly the high esteem in which he would be held, and he saw himself taking the highest title in the land.³²

³⁰ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 85.

³¹ Calhoun, 68.

³² Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 171–72; quoted in Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 68–69.

This passage brings into view three characteristics of the explicit imagining of a positive future that, I argue, are at the heart of Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the future as it pertains to practical hope:³³ (1) the explicit imagining of a positive future is *distinctively first-personal*. Okonkwo experiences the imagined future from a first-person perspective. Not only is he the person who imaginatively projects himself into a positive future, but this future centrally involves him experiencing the hoped-for outcome.³⁴ (2) The explicit imagining of a positive future has a *positive qualitative character*: 'Okonkwo previsages with pleasure regaining his place in the clan and his clansmen's esteem, the magnificent new compound he will build, and instating his sons into *ozo* society.'³⁵ And (3) the explicit imagining of a positive future has a *narrative structure* in that the practical hoper tells a story about their future, where this makes up the

³³ *Prima facie*, these three characteristics look similar to Martin's account of the activity of "fantasizing" which she takes to be central to hope. In developing her account, Martin engages with an earlier draft version of Calhoun's theory of hope and concludes: 'What I have called "fantasies" are essentially the same as Calhoun's "imaginative projections," taking account also of the hope "narratives" she mentions – we agree that hoping for an outcome involves a disposition to imagine ways the outcome might actualize.' (Martin, *How We Hope*, 86). Since then, Calhoun has revised her draft version and specifically identifies in the published version two central differences between Martin's and her view: (1) unlike Martin, she is explicitly concerned with a view of the future in which the hoped-for outcome is not only possible but *has realised*; and (2) she denies that the hopeful idea of the future can play any role in deliberation. Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 87-88.

³⁴ Note that, of course, this only applies to propositional forms of hope that take the form of "hoping that *p* in my own future" that I am concerned with in this chapter. This imaginative projection from my actual first-person point of view contrasts with what Velleman refers to as the "notional" first-person perspective where I imagine what a possible future would be like for someone else. J. David Velleman, 'Self to Self', *The Philosophical Review* 105, no. 1 (January 1996): 39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2185763>. See also Catriona Mackenzie, 'Imagination, Identity, and Self-Transformation', in *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Kim Atkins, Digital printing, Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy 14 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 123–27. For instance, consider you are dying but imagine a possible future where your child is happy. Of course, while you still see your child as being happy from your own point of view, there is a sense in which this experience is not actually first-personal but only notionally first-personal: after all, in the future you imagine, you are dead.

³⁵ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 73, italics original.

‘determinate’ content of their future. Okonkwo imagines in great detail the hoped-for future and how we will get there.³⁶

With these three characteristics in place, we arrive at a fuller picture of Calhoun’s model of the phenomenological idea of the future as it pertains to practical hope. I have suggested that it is an explicit imagining of a positive future, which (1) is first-personal, (2) involves a positive qualitative character, and (3) has a narrative structure.

3.4. A Phenomenological Critique

In this section, I critically assess Calhoun’s model of the phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success. In order for Calhoun’s model to be employed in the service of elucidating the phenomenological structure of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home, it is crucial to examine its phenomenological plausibility. In what follows, I pursue an immanent critique. I argue that Calhoun’s model of the phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success presupposes a degree of agency that is incompatible with hope against hope.³⁷ I call this *the agency problem*, which serves me a two-fold purpose: for one, it uncovers, and makes phenomenologically salient, that the underlying structure of the phenomenological idea of the

³⁶ Cf. Peter Goldie, ‘One’s Remembered Past: Narrative Thinking, Emotion, and the External Perspective’, *Philosophical Papers* 32, no. 3 (November 2003): 301–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568640309485129>, who identifies imaginative projection as a species of narrative thinking. This third characteristic marks a central difference to Bovens’s account of hope involving “mental imagining”; see Luc Bovens, ‘The Value of Hope’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59, no. 3 (September 1999): 667, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2653787>.

³⁷ The limitation of Calhoun’s account with respect to hope against hope has also mentioned briefly by Carl-Johan Palmqvist, ‘Analysing Hope: The Live Possibility Account’, *European Journal of Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (December 2021): 691, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12584>. He states: ‘I do not think it is far-fetched to interpret the notion of “hope against hope” as exactly a hope against all expectation, including one’s phenomenological idea of the future.’ But in making this point, Palmqvist does not address the *agential structure* underlying Calhoun’s model that, however, explains phenomenologically the incompatibility with hope against hope.

determinate future containing success is more complicated than Calhoun's focus on explicitly imagining such a positive future can bring into view. For another, it clarifies *a contrario* the exercise of agency operative in the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home, to which I shall turn in 3.5.

3.4.1. The Agency Problem

To bring out the agency problem, let me carefully develop a counterexample – *the queer child* – to Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the future as it pertains to hope against hope. Before I proceed, two provisos: (a) I understand cases of hope against hope like the queer child to be the type of hope where the motivational problem most forcefully kicks in. This is because they constitute what Calhoun describes as 'cases where motivational help is most needed – namely, where all the options for reasonable odds are depressingly low'.³⁸ Considering that Calhoun introduces the model of the phenomenological idea of the future into the definition of hope precisely to address the motivational problem, this type of hope should be expected to be accounted for by Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the future. (b) The case of the queer child will play a central role in the remainder of this thesis, so that, in providing a close reading of this example vis-à-vis Calhoun's model here, I also intend to identify several important phenomenological themes that will be central to my phenomenological analysis in the subsequent chapters.

With this in place, think back to the example I have introduced in Chapter Two: having queerphobic parents who are fundamentally opposed to their child's deep personal commitments and yet express (some kind of) love towards their child. In Chapter Two, I

³⁸ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 80.

have argued that, from the perspective of the child, such kind of love would presumably *not* come with a felt promise of home and thus *not* involve an opening of a horizon of meaningful possibilities that the child could identify with and by which they would feel invigorated and affirmed in their own deep personal commitments. Now imagine the following scenario:

The queer child is in a loving relationship with someone. The two of them have started building a wonderful life together. It is through their partner's love that the child is becoming increasingly more comfortable in their own queer identity, as well as beginning to understand what is truly important to them going forward in life. Recently, the child has even met their partner's parents. Getting to know the parents is a big step in their relationship. The child feels included in important areas of their partner's life and anticipates many happy years to come. After being introduced to their partner's parents, the child is now contemplating introducing their partner to their own parents. But this would also mean to disclose their queer identity – a simply terrifying thought. For years, they had actively tried to hide their queerness in front of their parents and to push away even thinking about this possibility. And now they cannot let go of this thought. The child and their partner have lots of conversations. Their partner keeps emphasising that it is entirely their decision and that, no matter what, their partner would be by their side. At the same time, their partner carefully suggests that the situation might not be that bleak; after all, it is still their parents. And while confiding in their parents would certainly not solve all the difficulties in their parent-child relationship, let alone ensure feeling at home in their parental home, it would for sure take a big burden off their shoulders. These encouraging conversations notwithstanding, the child does not manage to feel particularly hopeful. The odds just seem way too low and worse, they cannot help but worry about the possibility of being kicked out and of all familial ties being cut. While they do not fall into despair, the child hopes against hope that their parents might undergo a change of heart that would make them accept a queer child and, by implication, open up a possible future in which the child might start to feel at home with their parents and even introduce their partner to their parents.

Before I begin with my analysis, let me make explicit one central assumption. For the sake of simplicity, I assume that the child has already shared their queer identity in other spaces and navigates those spaces in relation to their social identity as queer. If the child

were yet to disclose their queer identify for the first time, the question of if, and the extent to which, the child could explicitly imagine a positive future in which their parents would accept a queer child would become even more pressing. This is because the imaginative projection of possible future selves would play a pivotal role in the process of reflection by which the child may (at least partly) constitute and revise their social identity, especially in a situation that involves such a self-transformative and world-transformative decision.³⁹

Turning to the queer child, I now argue that – contra Calhoun - the child cannot be characterised phenomenologically as explicitly imagining a positive future in which the hoped-for outcome *has* realised. As Béatrice Han-Pile argues, hope against hope constitutively involves ‘a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness’, that is, ‘we are both convinced and aware that there is nothing that we could do to bring about the desired outcome’.⁴⁰ Han-Pile argues further that this experience of powerlessness is accompanied by intense feelings of vulnerability and anxiety:

The low probability assignment will by *itself* make the hoper explicitly aware of the perceived unlikelihood of the outcome being realized, and thus how vulnerable she is. This, in turn, makes anxiety in hoping both manifest and very difficult, if not impossible to ignore.⁴¹

³⁹ See Mackenzie, ‘Imagination, Identity, and Self-Transformation’. Mackenzie provides an account of the imaginative projection in the construction of our narrative self-conceptions, with a particular focus in its role in self-transformative decisions

⁴⁰ Béatrice Han-Pile, ‘Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency’, *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 41, no. 1 (September 2017): 180, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misp.12069>.

⁴¹ Han-Pile, ‘Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency’, 183, italics original. Han-Pile’s phenomenological analysis of hope forms an exception to the contemporary scholarship on hope that renders the phenomenon into a predominantly *active* and *positive* exercise of agency (where the influence of positive psychology looms large). In contrast, Han-Pile foregrounds perceived powerlessness as central to hope: ‘hope involves a (pre-) reflective experience of powerlessness, relative or absolute, both in relation to the realization of the hoped-for outcome and to hoping itself.’ (Han-Pile, 183). My own understanding of the phenomenon, in particular of hope against hope, is indebted to Han-Pile’s phenomenological analysis.

The child's hope against hope involves an explicit intentional awareness of their radical powerlessness, accompanied by the first-personal reflective experience of vulnerability and anxiety about what may happen if their parents will not accept a queer child. Importantly, this is not to say that, objectively, there is nothing that could contribute to the realisation of the hoped-for outcome. For instance, their partner might think that the way the child would comport themselves towards their parents (e.g., avoiding an overly emotional speech in the second-person interaction with their parents) might make a small difference to the likelihood of realising the hoped-for outcome. But the central point is that, from the perspective of the child, nothing is first-personally experienced as contributing to its realisation (i.e., taking the form of '*I cannot do anything*'). Hence, the relevant type of experience is to be understood as *subjective*, where this does *not* hinge on, and need *not* correspond to, an objective assessment of the situation. In addition, note that the child feels radically powerless *only in relation to the hoped-for outcome*. While their powerlessness is perceived as hard to bear, perhaps even to the point that 'nothing else matters' at the time of the experience, it does not compromise their agency altogether. As the above scenario indicates, the queer child retains the ability to e.g., turn to their partner for support in navigating these dire circumstances.

From this phenomenological characterisation, two things follow for analysing the child's temporal orientation toward the future operative in their hope against hope: first, while the child takes seriously the futural possibility that the hoped-for outcome *might* realise (if they thought it was impossible, they could not hope against hope for its realisation), it is clear that their hope does not take the form of living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success – but, only, containing *the possibility of success*. While they imaginatively project themselves into a future containing the possibility of success, they do this first-personally in the present

with a completely unfulfilled – i.e., not even partly fulfilled – desire for the hoped-for outcome that is accompanied by a painful awareness that the hoped-for outcome is out of reach and will most likely *not* realise.

But second, this is not because they are incapable of explicitly imagining a positive future in which their parents accept them. Although the very low probability assessment presumably makes it psychologically very difficult to imagine a positive future, the child does not lack the conceptual resources to imagine such a possible future. Nor is there anything conceptually impossible about the parents undergoing a change of heart, which would prevent the child from being capable of imagining such a future.⁴² The important point is rather that this imagined futural possibility, while theoretically and conceptually available to the child, does not present itself as *a first-personal possibility for the child* in the given situation (i.e., taking the form of ‘I can see it but not for me’). It is therefore to be understood as a matter of *practical concern* in the sense that this imagined futural possibility does not present itself as a viable way of moving forward.⁴³ By this, I mean that it cannot be meaningfully integrated in the child’s experience of the given situation that is marked by their subjective sense of their own agency as one of radical powerlessness.⁴⁴ The child finds themselves in a social situation that does not support but, to

⁴² In fact, I would think that the only possible scenario in which this imagined futural possibility can be said to be intrinsically impossible is in case their parents were already dead. In such a case, the realisation of the child’s desire that their parents would have accepted them as a queer child, if they were still alive, is intrinsically impossible as a *futural* possibility. This is because this futural possibility would no longer be physically possible but, I submit, take the form of retrospective wishful thinking instead.

⁴³ I here echo Lear’s important clarification (although in a different context) to distinguish between being unable to go forward theoretically understood vs ‘practically understood: that is, as a way of going forward.’ (Jonathan Lear, ‘Response to Hubert Dreyfus and Nancy Sherman’, *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 144, no. 1 (2009): 86). I shall return to this point in Chapter Five in my analysis of Lear’s case study of the Crow Nation.

⁴⁴ It should be clear that, only if the imagined futural possibility is of first-personal importance to oneself (as in our case study), is the manner in which it is experienced as ‘I can see *x* but not for me’ accompanied by an experience of powerlessness leading to either hope or despair. After all, I can imagine the futural possibility of becoming a hedge fund manager but not for myself, where

the contrary, blocks off any activity that is meaningfully relevant to making their parents accept them as a queer child, such that this futural possibility becomes experientially present in its absence precisely as a blocked-off future.⁴⁵

With this case study, I have provided an example of hope against hope that does not meet Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the future. From my phenomenological characterisation, it turns out that hope against hope does not lend itself to living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success. This is because it constitutively involves the subjective sense of one's own agency as one of radical powerlessness that is incompatible with living and acting in the present under such a positive idea of the future, which has become salient in the preceding characterisation of the queer child. In other words, Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the future presupposes a degree of agency that the queer child does not have at the time of hoping against hope.

3.4.2. Two Possible Responses

There are at least two possible ways of pushing back against my argument that cases of hope against hope, like the queer child, do not fit Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the future: (1) to argue that the child's hope could involve an explicit imagining of a positive future containing success if only they were totally invested in this future;

this does not amount to an experience of powerlessness due to the fact that I could not care less about pursuing such a career. I shall take up and elaborate on this point in Chapter Four.

⁴⁵ Cf. Fuchs on the relation between implicit and explicit temporality. He notes: 'However, this changes when a gap arises between need and satisfaction, desire and fulfillment, or plan and execution. Now the future appears as a "not yet" or "yet to come," experienced as the temporality of awaiting, striving, or longing for. Time is felt as passing by and refusing the desired fulfillment; it becomes conscious or *explicit*.' (Thomas Fuchs, 'Implicit and Explicit Temporality', *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 12, no. 3 (September 2005): 195, italics original, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2006.0004>).

and (2) to question the child's hope as a case of practical hope. An examination of both responses will help refine Calhoun's model, and will prepare my phenomenological characterisation of the temporal orientation towards the future in the next section.

First: Calhoun may argue that, while the queer child's hope, as I articulate it, does not involve a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success, it *could* involve such an idea if they were "totally invested" in a positive future in which their hope has realised. If we turn to her principal case study of Okonkwo, for example, Calhoun explicitly states that he is able to explicitly imagine a positive future containing success under such dire circumstances *because* he is "totally invested" in this future: 'Those who totally invest themselves in a practical pursuit typically think that no future is acceptable other than one where the pursuit succeeds.'⁴⁶ Okonkwo does not *want* to imagine any other possible future and takes his total investment in the hoped-for outcome as a reason to be, and continue to be, hopeful.

Now, while there may be cases like Okonkwo where the total investment makes possible the explicit imagining of a positive future containing success, I submit that this is neither psychologically feasible in cases of hope against hope like the queer child, nor phenomenologically compatible with the relevant agency involved.⁴⁷ This is perhaps

⁴⁶ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 83, italics original.

⁴⁷ While not directly relevant for present purposes, let me at least note: in the case of Okonkwo, in my view, his total investment in fact renders his hope a form of *unwarranted optimism*. While this is not because of intentionally distorting the low odds (i.e., strong form of self-deception) by e.g., ignoring the obstacles and setbacks he encounters (he is quite aware of them), he does fail to take them as epistemic reasons against thinking that the hoped-for outcome will realise (i.e., mild form of self-deception). To be clear, this is not to suggest that it presents itself to Okonkwo as unwarranted optimism. Quite the opposite, unwarranted optimism 'must present itself as hope (for otherwise it would be self-defeating)'. (Beatrice Han-Pile and Robert Stern, 'Is Hope a Secular Virtue? Hope as the Virtue of the Possible', in *Hope: A Virtue*, ed. Nancy Snow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in press), 22. This brings an interesting implication: namely, that, in presenting itself as hope, from the first-personal perspective, unwarranted optimism appears to be compatible with the promise of home and, by implication, feeling orientated in navigating social space. This points to a possible *disjunction* between the first-personal experience of feeling orientated *qua* unwarranted optimism but self-presenting as hope and the third-personal analysis of the relevant type of experience as grounded in unwarranted optimism and uncovered as unwarranted optimism.

most visible if we attend to the problematic implications this line of response would have for the queer child. Calhoun would be committed to the view that the child is not totally invested in a future in which their parents would accept a queer child, and it is this lack of total investment that can ‘explain’ the child’s difficulty of explicitly imagining a positive future containing success and of sustaining it along the way. Arguably, however, it is precisely because of their strong desire for such a future, that the child feels so painfully powerless in this situation. Indeed, if we take seriously Han-Pile’s insight into the phenomenological and psychological dimensions of hope against hope,⁴⁸ the following should be clear: the more invested the child would be in such a future, the more powerful would be the experience of powerlessness and its associated emotions of vulnerability and anxiety, and therefore, the greater the sense of the fragility of the future preventing the child from explicitly imagining a positive future containing success.

Second: Calhoun may argue that the child’s hope does not really qualify as a practical hope. Characterising practical hope as ‘hope for success in pursuits of ends we value’,⁴⁹ she may emphasise that practical hopes only cover those hopes (1) where our own activity is meaningfully relevant to realising the hoped-for outcome and (2) that motivate the kind of action that would help us realise the hoped-for outcome. Accordingly, Calhoun may press if I am really talking about *practical* hope given that the child’s hope that constitutively involves a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness; recall Han-Pile’s characterisation: ‘we are both convinced and aware that there is nothing that we could do to bring about the desired outcome’.⁵⁰ The child’s hope does not seem to meet either requirement: as touched upon in the previous subsection, it neither involves (quite the contrary, the situation explicitly rules out) action that contributes to the

⁴⁸ Han-Pile, ‘Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency’, 185–88.

⁴⁹ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 69.

⁵⁰ Han-Pile, ‘Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency’, 180.

realisation of the hoped-for outcome, nor does it motivate any such action (except, she may concede, helping to stave off despair). Along these lines, Calhoun may argue that the child's hope against hope is one where one cannot explicitly imagine a determinate future containing success but nevertheless hopes for its realisation; she might call this "impractical hope".

It is certainly right that the child's hope does not motivate any action that directly contributes to the realisation of the hoped-for outcome. However, this reply ultimately turns on a too narrow understanding of "practical". It construes "practical" in terms of a *direct* link between action and the realisation of the hoped-for outcome, and thereby ignores the many ways in which the child's hope can play a practical (however indirect) role in structuring the child's comportment. For instance, the child's hope may express itself in the way the child feels reassured in their own queer identity, or may enable them to focus on happy moments in their relationship with their parents. Accordingly, the child's hope can still be said to be practical without being directly linked to whether or not it promotes the hoped-for outcome.

But even if we were to grant that her account is restricted only to those practical hopes that meet this narrow understanding of "practical", the question about whether her characterisation of the phenomenological idea of the future is phenomenologically sufficient remains. And from this perspective, the case study of the queer child helps to uncover, and make phenomenologically salient, the underlying structure of living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success – precisely because the queer child does not fit Calhoun's model. I submit that, contra Calhoun, living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success is neither simply nor primarily matter of, as Calhoun

suggests, ‘being drawn to previsualise a particular future in our imagination’.⁵¹ From my preceding analysis, it seems clear that what is central to the relevant phenomenology is not the exercise of imaginative capacities per se. It is instead the exercise of imaginative capacities as part of the larger experience of exercising one’s agency in circumstances that (a) are first-personally experienced as at least partly enabling one’s practical pursuit of the hoped-for outcome, where this allows for (b) the imagined futural possibility to show up as a first-personal possibility for oneself and, by implication, (c) an explicit imagining of a positive future containing success and the upholding of such positive imagining. Interestingly, I take Calhoun to be implicitly gesturing towards this agency requirement in a manuscript draft of her chapter on hope, when she attends to the relationship between the imaginative projection into a future containing success and the practical pursuit of such a positive future. She writes:

Hopers inhabit their hoped future. Imaginative projection of themselves into the hoped for future is constitutive of the *way* they pursue their ends. Hopeful inhabitation of a future consists in part precisely in the formation of attitudes and plans that are consistent with giving credence to the possibility of a future in which one’s hopes are realized.⁵²

But note that, for the relevant activity to be first-personally experienced as consistent with the explicit imagining of a future containing success, the hoper cannot experience their own agency as one radical and reflective powerlessness. To the contrary, it requires experiential access to meaningful activity that is directly relevant to the realisation of the hoped-for outcome and, by implication, a degree of agency that is incompatible with

⁵¹ Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time*, 72.

⁵² Cheshire Calhoun, ‘Chapter Five: Hope (Unpublished Manuscript)’ (typescript, 2013), 23, italics original, <https://cheshirecalhoun.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Ch5Hope.doc.pdf>.

hoping against hope that, recall, constitutively involves a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness.

3.5. The Temporality of the Promise of Home

At this point, let me provide an overview of my argument so far. My guiding assumption in this chapter has been that a careful analysis of the temporal orientation towards the future in hope enables us to identify the phenomenological structure of the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. In 3.2., I have established that hope is analytically included in the promise of home and have clarified the relevant types of propositional hope for oneself that are of interest in pursuing this comparative phenomenological strategy: strong hope₁, strong hope₂, and hope against hope. In 3.3., I have appealed to Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success, which serves her as an interpretive framework for characterising the temporal orientation towards the future involved in all of these three types of propositional hope for oneself. In 3.4., I have then argued that Calhoun's model presupposes a degree of agency that has proven to be incompatible with hope against hope. The agency problem has allowed me to complicate Calhoun's model by bringing out, and making phenomenologically salient, the underlying structure of living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success. I have demonstrated that Calhoun's own focus on explicitly imagining such a positive future obscures what is central to the relevant phenomenology: namely, that the hoper must be able to engage in at least some meaningful activity that is directly relevant to the realisation of the hoped-for outcome, where this serves as a condition of possibility for explicitly imagining a positive future containing success and upholding such positive imagining.

Where does this leave us? In this final section, I bring my comparative phenomenological analysis to a close. I begin by employing the agency problem to clarify *a contrario* the relevant exercise of agency involved in the promise of home before I, then, draw out what follows for characterising the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home in relation to hope.

3.5.1. A Sense of Empowerment

From my critical engagement with Calhoun's model based on the case of hope against hope, it has become clear that being temporally orientated towards a positive future comes with certain agential requirements: such a temporal orientation is premised on the exercise of one's agency in circumstances that are experienced as at least partly enabling one's practical pursuit of such a positive future, and, therefore, incompatible with a subjective sense of one's own agency as one of radical and reflective powerlessness. As we saw, the temporal orientation towards the future in hope against hope does not fulfil these agential requirements. The queer child finds themselves in circumstances – having queerphobic parents who are fundamentally opposed to their deep personal commitments – that are perceived to rule out any meaningful activity directly linked to the strongly desired future.

This, I submit, stands in stark contrast with the experience of the promise of home. Recall my characterisation in Chapter Two, where I have established that the promise of home emerges in and through the presence of other people who are experienced as sharing the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself. This point of contrast is important because it helps to bring into view the kind of agency involved in the promise of home, and why it is incompatible with hope against hope. To develop this, let me return to a central case study of Chapter Two: participation in ACT UP. In Chapter Two, I have

demonstrated that being in the presence of fellow activists who share the deep personal commitment to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights opens up a promise of home, where this brings about and actualises in a positively valenced sense of home in the present. Now, consider the following first-personal testimony of HIV-positive activist Billy McMillan from ACT UP/Chicago:

I felt a sense of connection to the people I was working with, and I felt that we were going to create a change, that we were really going to change the world. And, being involved in ACT UP made me feel like I wasn't going to die yet. (McMillan 2000).⁵³

Although just one example, McMillan here speaks to a common theme among many first-personal testimonies of participation in ACT UP: *a sense of empowerment*. 'The movement's actions were not always successful, but', as ACT UP scholar Gould stresses in her in-depth study of the movement, 'even then, they fostered a sense of power and hope.'⁵⁴ Being in the presence of other people who share the relevant deep personal commitments is perceived as empowering. This is because it enables experiential access to meaningful activity that is directly linked to the realisation of a future that one strongly desires because it holds a meaningful place for one's deep personal commitments, and because it generates hope that motivates the kind of action that helps realise this desired future. There are four important aspects to this sense of empowerment in relation to the realisation of the desired future:

(a) The experience of empowerment is subjective. At the time of the experience, all that matters is that, from the perspective of the person experiencing the promise of home, one has experiential access to meaningful activity that is perceived to be directly relevant to contributing to the realisation of the desired future. This holds true regardless

⁵³ Gould, *Moving Politics*, 187.

⁵⁴ Gould, 400.

of whether or not the relevant activity actually does contribute to the realisation of the future.

(b) The experience of powerlessness is relative. One believes that one has at least some control over the desired future, as reflected in one's practical pursuit of the desired future in navigating social space in the present. But one is also aware that one cannot ensure the realisation of this desired future by the powers of one's own agency alone. In case the possibility of realising the desired future comes with a (relatively) high probability assignment, this awareness may remain pre-reflective, otherwise it will be reflective. This means that, although one feels empowered, one's subjective sense of one's own agency is not one of control, where this would take the form of expecting to obtain the desired future.

(c) In spite of one's (pre-) reflective awareness that bringing about the desired future exceeds one's own agential powers, the experience of empowerment makes possible to focus on the possibility that the desired future will obtain. At the time of experiencing the promise of home, one sees the desired future from the perspective of the possibility of success, rather than the possibility of failure.

(d) The experience of empowerment is intersubjective in the sense that it is grounded in the presence of those others who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s). Their presence is perceived as reflecting and supporting one's practical pursuit of the desired future and thus operates as an enabling condition: it makes possible to experience the desired future as a first-personal possibility for oneself (taking the form of 'I can see *x* and for me') and, by implication, as a viable way of going forward in navigating social space.

What emerges here, I submit, is the experience of empowerment as constitutive of one's subjective sense of one's own agency in experiencing the promise of home. The

phenomenology of the promise of home involves a temporal orientation towards a future that one strongly desires, that one perceives to be possible but not certain, *and* that one perceives to be at least partly realisable by one's own powers. But this also means that it is incompatible with a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness in relation to the realisation of the promise of home and, by implication, hoping against hope for its realisation. Again, the case of the queer child works as a contrast case. At the time of hoping against hope, the child feels radically powerless to bring the desired futural state-of-affairs of being accepted as queer. While their hope against hope might help staving off despair and might, in this sense, be perceived as empowering, it does not yield – but explicitly rules out – the here relevant sense of empowerment to bring about the desired futural state-of-affairs.⁵⁵ Yet, this sense of empowerment is required in order to *live and act* in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future in which they are accepted as a queer child. It follows that the queer child does not have a promise of home in relation to their parents, but can only hope against hope for obtaining it.

Importantly, while this experience of empowerment is incompatible with a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness, this incompatibility claim does not extend to the experience of powerlessness *simpliciter*. From my preceding analysis, it should be clear that it turns out to be not only compatible with but also accompanied by a degree of powerlessness. Recall that the promise of home can only take place in and through dependence and reliance on other people, so that one cannot expect but only hope for the realisation of the desired future; hence, it is only partly within one's own agential powers

⁵⁵ Let me be absolutely clear here: In drawing such a phenomenological distinction, I do *not* deny that hope against hope is perceived as empowering. It clearly is and is one of the features that distinguishes hope against hope from despair in response to the same low probability assignment that too comes with a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness. My point is simply that the sense of empowerment involved in hope against hope does not attach to the possibility of bringing about the hoped-for outcome partly by one's own powers. This is precisely because one is aware that there is nothing one can do to bring about the hoped-for outcome at the time of hoping against hope.

and control. But since it is in the foreground of one's own experience of navigating social space at the time of experiencing the promise of home, in my analysis I have focused on the experience of empowerment rather than its counterpart of a degree of powerlessness.

3.5.2. Inhabiting the Promise of Home

Having established a sense of empowerment as constitutive of the exercise of agency in the promise of home and having demonstrated its incompatibility with hope against hope, the next task is to address what follows for the relationship between the promise of home and strong hope₁ and strong hope₂. Doing so will in turn clear the way for articulating the phenomenological structure underlying the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home.

I begin by demonstrating that, while not compatible with hope against hope, the experience of empowerment involved in the promise of home *is* compatible with both types of strong hope. It is not hard to imagine how someone may strongly hope₁ for the next protest action to become as successful as previous one and believing this to be very probably, where this positive futural possibility is opened up in and through the presence of fellow activists that is perceived as empowering. As for the compatibility with strong hope₂, it is instructive to return to the example of McMillan as introduced in the previous subsection. The probability assignment for the possibility of not dying from AIDS soon is presumably quite low, considering that most people inflicted with AIDS were destined to die during these times. Even so, his testimony ('being involved in ACT UP made me feel like I wasn't going to die yet') indicates that he is at least able to live and act in the present under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future in which he *will* get better (in contrast to *going to* get better). To be clear, the content of his strong hope₂ is

certainly shaped by the low probability assignment. However, despite the agential constraints that may follow from this, he is able to explicitly imagine the futural possibility that he will get better as a first-personal possibility for himself, where this is premised on his subjective sense of his own agency as one of empowerment in relation to bringing about this specific futural possibility.

What this makes salient, I submit, is that this experience of empowerment makes it psychologically possible for the person who has the promise of home to explicitly imagine a positive future containing the promised home and to uphold such positive imagining. Returning to our case study of ACT UP, such positive imagining is repeatedly identified as one of the central outcomes of participation in the movement. Gould states:

In addition to filling our lives with intensity and a sense of meaning and purpose, the exciting swirl of ACT UP's protest actions and meetings allowed us to reinvent ourselves, to carve out a place where we could be angry, oppositional, hopeful, sexual, and happy, a place where we could engage in collective projects of world-making.⁵⁶

To be clear, I do not want to suggest that the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home always takes such an explicit and reflective form, where the person imaginatively projects oneself into the desired future. My point is rather that it can take such explicit imagining, and that it does at the time of its emergence and strongly hoping₁₊₂ for obtaining the desired future. Here, it is helpful to introduce a phenomenological distinction between (a) hoping that p and (b) feeling hopeful about p . Whereas (a) covers propositional hopes (like strong hope₁ and strong hope₂) that are reflective, (b) refers to the background experience of hopefulness that need not rise to the level of conscious reflection. I follow Han-Pile and Stern who characterise hopefulness as follows:

⁵⁶ Gould, *Moving Politics*, 210.

Hopefulness can be characterized as a subjectively warranted background trust that at least some goods can obtain, where typically hopefulness is pre-reflective and therefore not propositional, although it can be put in propositional form.⁵⁷

This phenomenological distinction helps to capture the dynamic character of the temporal unfolding of the promise of home in relation to hope. Once the promise of home has emerged and is cultivated, its temporal orientation towards the future takes the form of a subjectively warranted background trust in obtaining the promise, where this makes possible to live and act more firmly under a phenomenological idea of the desired future. An implication of this, which further complicates Calhoun's own model of the phenomenological idea of the future, is that this sense of hopefulness in obtaining the promise of home does not require a 'determinate idea' of the future. This is because it need not, and typically does not, actualise in an explicit imagining of such a positive future, unless, for example, 'past future' anticipations come to one's explicit awareness in being disappointed or those providing the promise explicitly re-articulate the promise. The difference to such explicit imagining is that the sense of hopefulness in obtaining the promise of home captures a more general temporal orientation towards the future in which one's deep personal commitments find a meaningful place.

From the preceding phenomenological analysis, we are now in the position to provide the following phenomenological characterisation of the temporal orientation (TO) towards the future in the promise of home:

(Def) TO: Promise of home = Living and acting under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future – involving (a) positive futural possibilities that

⁵⁷ Han-Pile and Stern, 'Is Hope a Secular Virtue? Hope as the Virtue of the Possible', 2.

come into view in and through the presence of others who share the relevant deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself, and (b) strong hope₁ and strong hope₂ for realising those possibilities – in which, (c) in situations of perceived uncertainty about the realisation of such a positive future, (d) those possibilities bound up with one's deep personal commitment(s) find a meaningful place as first-personal possibilities for oneself, as premised on (e) a subjective sense of one's own agency as one of empowerment. As such, these possibilities (f) are constitutive of one's practical pursuit of such a positive future as reflected in one's navigation of social space in the present.

In short, on this proposed characterisation, what it is like to (pre-) reflectively experience the promise of home is to inhabit a personal future in which one's deep personal commitment(s) specific to oneself find a meaningful place. Let me highlight two points. First, the content of the promise of home can neither be fully articulated in advance (being inherently intersubjective and, by implication, as dependent on the contribution of those providing the promise as one's own), nor can it ever be fully exhausted (being constitutively futural and, by implication, pointing to new futural possibilities that do not yet exist); hence, its relatively determinate character. This marks a central difference to propositional hope for oneself, where the object of hope is comparatively determinate and can be attained at a determinate point in time. And second, since the promise of home always unfolds in situations of perceived uncertainty, it brings about and actualises in either strong hope₁ or strong hope₂ for the realisation of the desired futural states-of-affairs as part of the content of the promise of home, and may even yield a more general sense of hopefulness in obtaining the promise of home.

3.6. Conclusion

Let me conclude by comparative phenomenological inquiry into the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home in relation to hope by drawing attention to two questions. Both of these questions follow from my analysis in this chapter and serve as a point of orientation for the next chapters. First, my proposed characterisation has made clear that, in order to inhabit the promise of home, one requires experiential access to wider possibilities that makes possible to experience the positive futural possibilities that come into view as first-personal possibilities for oneself. The question therefore is what exactly this relationship between positive futural possibilities and wider possibilities consists in. In the next chapter, I go on to explore this phenomenologically by turning to the negative counterpart to feeling at home in navigating social space, where this helps to uncover and make salient the relevant phenomenology of this structure. And second, my proposed characterisation has made clear, that in order to inhabit the promise of home, one cannot feel radically powerless to bring about the positive futural possibilities that come into view. This in turn raises the question of whether the presence of such powerlessness is sufficient for bringing about and actualising in a sense of not knowing how to go on, or whether the relationship between perceived powerlessness, temporal experience, and metaphorical disorientation may in fact turn out to be more complicated. This shall be my concern in the fifth and final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Two Senses of Home-Absence

Building on my phenomenological elucidation of feeling at home in Chapters Two-Three, the aim of this chapter is to provide a phenomenological analysis of the negative counterpart to feeling at home in navigating social space. My focus is on introducing and elaborating the phenomenological category of *feeling not at home* as central to the phenomenology of social disorientation.

In 4.1., I begin by providing an overview of my findings of the phenomenological structure of feeling at home before I then, in 4.2., draw out the ambiguities underlying the notion of home-absence that run through prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation. To resolve those and thereby fulfil the requirements for a satisfying conception of social disorientation via an analysis of home, I introduce a central phenomenological distinction between *two broad and importantly different types* of emotional responses to navigating social space in which the positively valenced experience of a sense of home can be said to be *absent*: I shall call them (1) *not feeling at home* and (2) *feeling not at home* respectively. In 4.3., I begin by turning to the first type of home-absence. I introduce this phenomenological category to capture experiential manifestations of *home-negation* that actualise in a mere felt difference between oneself and other people/social space. I demonstrate that a negation of home does not actualise in a felt lack of home that would leave a person at a loss as to how to navigate social space. In 4.4., I turn to the second type of home-absence, where this phenomenological category captures experiential manifestations of *home-privation* that actualise in a first-personal experience of lacking a positively valenced sense of home in and through the presence of other people/social space. I propose to understand this phenomenologically in terms of the experiential

inaccessibility of one's promise of home and argue that social disorientation is constitutively attributable to this experience.

In advancing this argument, I hope to make a case for the relevance of this phenomenological distinction not only for clarifying the negative counterpart to feeling at home operative in social disorientation, but also for contributing to philosophical scholarship concerning home-absence more generally.

4.1. Overview

So far, we have established that a phenomenologically productive conception of social disorientation has to resolve the designation problem. From my critique of prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation, it has to meet two requirements: (a) it must get clear on the distinctive phenomenology of loss (i.e., loss *of* orientation) that is operative in social disorientation; and for this, (b) it must get clear on the *felt phenomenology* of what I call "social orientation" via the notion of home so as to take seriously the view that there is a constitutive relationship between feeling at home and feeling orientated in navigating social space. Building on this, the previous two chapters were dedicated to elucidating the phenomenology of social orientation by way of developing a phenomenological conception of feeling at home in navigating social space.

In Chapter Two (*The Promise of Home*), I began by identifying several shortcomings of standard accounts of feeling at home before I then argued that feeling at home can be helpfully re-conceptualised by drawing on Simon May's account of love as grounded in the promise of home. I specifically developed a two-fold argument: (1) in order to feel at home in social space, we need to be grounded in a promise of home in and through the presence of other people with whom we share the relevant deep personal commitment(s)

specific to oneself. (2) This sense of what I call *feeling at home with*, or *sense of belonging*, is irrespective of the extent to which we are physically, practically, and/or emotionally familiar with the given surroundings. On this conception, therefore, there exists no essential relationship between home and space-familiarity.

In Chapter Three (*Inhabiting the Future*), I shifted my analytical focus away from the necessary *affective-interpersonal fit* to the necessary *futural-agential fit* that is required in order to feel at home in navigating social space. Here my argument developed in three stages: (1) to bring into view the *promise*-character of feeling at home and thus the distinctively *futural orientation*, I proposed a comparative phenomenological analysis with the closely related phenomenon of hope. (2) Engaging with Cheshire Calhoun's model of the phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success to characterise hope's futural orientation, I demonstrated that her model presupposes a degree of agency that is incompatible with hope against hope. (3) Yet I also argued that this agency problem serves to clarify *a contrario* the exercise of agency in the temporal orientation towards the future in the promise of home. Based on this, I established what it means to experience a promise of home is to live and act under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which one's deep personal commitments find a meaningful place, and that the promise of home, while compatible with strong hope₁ and strong hope₂ forms of hope, is incompatible with hope against hope.

Considering the findings of Chapter Two and Chapter Three, we arrive at the following conception of feeling at home in navigating social space in the here relevant sense: feeling at home is constitutively grounded in both (a) a promise of home in and through the presence of other people with whom we share any number of deep personal commitments and (b) a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which those commitments find a meaningful place. The right affective-interpersonal fit (cf. a) and the

right futural-agential fit (cf. b) are two inextricable aspects of the phenomenological structure of feeling at home. Whereas my phenomenological discussion on love (Chapter Two) has foregrounded the affective-interpersonal aspects of feeling at home in navigating social space, my phenomenological discussion on hope (Chapter Three) has put emphasis on its futural-agential aspects.

In identifying the necessary conditions for feeling at home in navigating social space, I have been concerned with phenomenological descriptions of feeling at home and have focused upon how feeling at home in navigating social space is constitutively bound up with the phenomenon of social orientation. Along the way, I have only made some occasional remarks about emotional responses to navigating social space in which a positively valenced experience of a sense of home is *absent*, which I have so far dubbed “not feeling at home”. I have done so primarily for the purposes of contrasting it with, and bringing out features of, feeling at home operative in social orientation. Now, one might think that the negative counterpart to feeling at home in navigating social space exhaust the phenomenological category of home-absence, where this would render the need for further phenomenological analysis of “not feeling at home” unnecessary.

But note that it is far from the phenomenologically self-evident what the negative counterpart to feeling at home amounts to. First, while it seems clear that what I have so far referred to as “not feeling at home” constitutes an emotional response to navigating social space in which a positively valenced experience of a sense of home is *absent*, it is much less clear what exactly this *home-absence* involves. Second, it seems phenomenologically doubtful that a category as broad as that of home-absence does not accommodate different types that may further resist a unifying treatment, where this then raises the question of which type of home-absence actually is operative in social disorientation.

Prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation do not address these concerns. As identified in Chapter Two, while they begin theorising the phenomenon from the view that there is a constitutive relationship between feeling at home and feeling orientated in navigating social space, there is a conceptual lacuna surrounding the phenomenology of home as employed in their work.¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, it can be observed that the negative counterpart too remains critically underdeveloped; and it can be added that this reflects a broader gap in the phenomenological scholarship.² A recent instantiation of this tendency can be found in the article ‘Finding (and losing) one’s way: autism, social impairments, and the politics of space’ by Joel Krueger.³ In the next section, I take a closer look at Krueger’s account. My aim is (1) to bring out the shortcomings of prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation via the notion of home and, in doing so, (2) to identify the requirements for a satisfying conception.

¹ Cf.: ‘to be orientated, or to be at home, is also to feel a certain comfort ... to be so at ease with one’s environment that it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins’ (Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 134). Disorientations ‘often involve feeling deeply out of place, unfamiliar, or not at home’ (Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 2). ‘When we are oriented, we are helped and supported by spaces that feel “like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body”.’ (Lajoie, ‘Being at Home’, 557). Or: ‘The disorientation I have in mind here ... involves a *felt sense* that one is no longer finding one’s way. A central part of its phenomenal character involves not feeling at home in a particular space.’ (Krueger, ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’, 23).

² One notable exception is Matthew Ratcliffe, ‘Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging’, in *Phenomenology of Belonging*, ed. Luna Dolezal and Danielle Petherbridge (Albany NY: SUNY Press, forthcoming). I will discuss his account at length in 4.4.2.

³ Krueger, ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’; see also Krueger, ‘Agency and Atmospheres of Inclusion and Exclusion’, in *Atmospheres and Shared Emotions*, ed. Dylan Trigg, *Ambiances, Atmospheres and Sensory Experiences of Spaces* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 117–27.

4.2. Joel Krueger

Building on Ahmed's work on disorientation,⁴ Krueger is concerned with challenging a predominant understanding of social impairments in Autistic Spectrum Disorder as exclusively neurocognitive deficits. His central argument is that the nature and character of neurotypical spaces can play a significant regulatory role in shaping how autistic people can inhabit and navigate those spaces, often yielding a sense of disorientation that can inform and intensify some of their social difficulties. For present purposes, my interest lies in his conception of metaphorical disorientation via the notion of home that underlies his argument; I quote him at length:

The disorientation I have in mind here involves more than just getting lost because one lacks the relevant information needed to find one's way. It involves a *felt sense* that one is no longer finding one's way. A central part of its phenomenal character involves not feeling at home in a particular space, or relatedly, feeling bodily out of synch with, or affectively unsettled within or impeded by, wherever one happens to be. I discuss a number of examples in more detail below. For now, we can simply note that this experience can arise from feeling that the people we share space with are somehow indifferent, unfriendly, or hostile to us; or, that the space itself is set up in ways that are not designed to accommodate or be responsive to our specific values, interests, and needs. The important point for what follows is that this felt loss of at-home-ness is an experiential cue that one is no longer finding one's way.⁵

In agreement with prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation, Krueger considers what he calls "felt loss of at-home-ness" to be central to the first-personal experience of metaphorical disorientation. He provides three different approximations of its experiential profile – 'not feeling at home', 'feeling bodily out of synch', and feeling

⁴ See in particular Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

⁵ Krueger, 'Finding (and Losing) One's Way', 23, italics original.

‘affectively unsettled’ – that, taken together, can be understood as characterising the negative counterpart to feeling at home that is operative in metaphorical disorientation.⁶ In a footnote to the passage, he goes on to elaborate that it ‘arises precisely because individuals recognize that they inhabit a shared (i.e., social) world that is nevertheless somewhat bodily inaccessible to them in a way that is not the case for others’.⁷ On Krueger's view, therefore, the felt loss of at-home-ness centrally involves the recognition that, in navigating social space, one does not have experiential access to certain social possibilities that others have access to and, therefore, involves a felt difference between oneself and others/social space.

I understand Krueger's remarks to point towards the complexity of the phenomenon, consisting of spatial, social, and affective aspects. In particular, he allows us to identify (1) lack of access, (2) social possibilities, and (3) felt difference to be central to relevant type of experience. Unfortunately, however, he does not develop these remarks in any more depth, where this renders his conception of felt loss of at-home-ness ambiguous. To begin, it is not clear how the three different approximations of its experiential profile provided by Krueger actually relate to one another. Do they pick out three different aspects of a unitary phenomenon, as his remarks would suggest? Or do they designate three

⁶ That said, there are two different positions on the relation between “felt loss of at-home-ness” and “disorientation” to be identified throughout his article: (1) at times, he considers the felt loss of at-home-ness to be a constituent component of the larger phenomenon of metaphorical disorientation. One illustration of this can be found in the above passage, when he writes: ‘a central part of its phenomenal character involves not feeling at home’ (Krueger, 23). (2) Other times, however, he uses them interchangeably for what appears to be the same phenomenon. In a footnote to the above passage, he responds to a reviewer’s objection in emphasising that the felt loss of at-homeness is not to be described ‘as an experience of radical *alienation* ... that’s not what I mean by “disorientation”’ (Krueger, 23, fn. 5, italics original). The fact that he elides the difference between these two positions – even within the very same passage – can in part be explained, I suspect, with reference to the lack of systematic analysis of felt loss of at-home-ness; and it can be added that this ambiguity runs through prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation via the notion of home more generally. I shall return to this ambiguity in 4.4.4.

⁷ Krueger, 23, fn. 5.

discrete phenomena that may resist a unifying treatment? More would have to be said to understand the nature of the phenomenon.

This connects with another ambiguity. Not all emotional responses that involve lack of access to certain social possibilities and thus a felt difference between oneself and others/social space necessarily amount to a felt loss of at-home-ness, where the emphasis on ‘felt’ is understood to mark the distinctive phenomenal character of the first personal experience of lacking, or having lost, a sense of home. From this perspective, Krueger’s suggestion that sharing social space with another person who remains ‘indifferent to us’ amounts to a felt loss of at-home-ness loses its force. For it could equally amount to, let’s say, feeling shy or feeling self-conscious instead. Importantly, my point here is not to suggest that these cannot be contingently related to the negative counterpart to feeling at home operative in metaphorical disorientation, but that we need to specify what is distinctive about “felt loss of at-home-ness”.⁸

These ambiguities feed into a broader issue that relates to Krueger’s conception of metaphorical disorientation, to which I turn now. Throughout his study, he employs the term to capture a remarkably vast range of affective experiences of navigating social space. Notice that they differ significantly not only in degree – from the relatively trivial (e.g., ‘forced to work in a colleague’s office for the day while mine is being repaired’) to the more severe (e.g., ‘non-white bodies ... stopped by the police’) – but also in the level

⁸ In a recent interesting article, Lucy Osler and Tom Roberts introduce the phenomenological category of “social doubt” to capture a broad range of affective experiences involving a disruption to a sense of social certainty that usually lies in the background of our dealings with others: ‘Feelings of shyness, self-consciousness, and embarrassment lie at one end of this spectrum; more significantly negative experiences such as social anxiety, culture shock, and depression, lie at the other.’ (Lucy Osler and Tom Roberts, ‘Social Doubt’, *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 10, no. 1 (March 2024): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2022.40>). Some of the affective experiences that Krueger subsumes under “felt loss of at-home-ness” (and, consequently, “disorientation”) might be better captured in terms of social doubt, where this phenomenon is only contingently related to (i.e., depending on the particular manifestation and degree of social doubt) felt loss of at-home-ness.

of awareness – from being felt at a pre-reflective bodily level (e.g., ‘*slows her down* as she finds her way through the world’ due to being marked as a possible Muslim terrorist) to registering at a reflective level (e.g., ‘be aware of this feeling if, say, I visit my former place of worship’ after losing one’s religious faith).⁹ However, this raises the question of the ways, if any, in which these various different phenomena involve a felt loss of at-home-ness, where this would further exhibit a common structure. Without an answer to this question, it moreover remains unclear what specifically makes these phenomena experiences of metaphorical *disorientation*. The appeal to the very vague criterion of “losing one’s way”, which is, in following Ahmed, consistently evoked throughout Krueger’s study (both literally in terms of physical space and metaphorically in terms of social space), is not sufficient. Hence, this ambiguity brings us back to *the challenge of the designation problem* with which we began Chapter One, namely:

Q^{DP}: Is there merely a *terminological unity*, or a more *substantive kind of unity* between these seemingly distinct and heterogeneous phenomena?

The above list is not only broad and covers various phenomena that pull into substantially different directions. But it also brings out a particular articulation of the designation problem that emerges from theorising social disorientation via the notion of home: namely, that we risk rendering metaphorical disorientation indistinguishable from any emotional response to navigating social space in which a positively valenced sense of home is simply absent. To defuse this worry, we need a firmer grasp of the negative counterpart to feeling at home operative in metaphorical disorientation that, as Krueger rightly notes, is an experiential cue for metaphorical disorientation.

⁹ Krueger, ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’, 10, 11, 12, 8, italics original.

Before I conclude this section, let me make the following three clarifications concerning my critical engagement with Krueger's account of metaphorical disorientation that is representative of prominent conceptions (in particular, those who follow Ahmed): (1) I do not wish to deny that social disorientation can come in differing degrees, nor that in certain cases one may only retrospectively become aware of having been disorientated. For example, one may be inclined to view oneself as feeling orientated in the midst of a bad breakup with an abusive partner (e.g., to convince oneself that leaving this relationship is the right decision), and only recognise after some time that one has been disorientated.¹⁰ (2) In addition, the relevant awareness operative in occurrent manifestations is complex and likely to operate at different levels, including pre-reflectively affecting how one bodily discloses and navigates social space. (3) Lastly, there are certainly also cases of social disorientation that are so enduring and persistent that they yield 'a perpetual *bodily disorientation*', as Krueger puts it,¹¹ where this has a lasting constraining effect on one's pre-reflective felt sense of bodily agency, including one's capacities for movement, expression, and action. Those who follow Ahmed's conception of metaphorical disorientation, of which Krueger's exploration of social impairments in Autistic Spectrum Disorder is a paradigmatic example, tend to focus on such cases. They emphasise how much more difficult it is for marginalised groups of people to feel at home in navigating certain social spaces because they are perceived not to fit due to their social position in relation to the dominant norms of said spaces, where this brings about a pervasive sense of

¹⁰ Harbin provides a number of reasons that can get in the way of seeing oneself as feeling disorientated: 'I may fear being disoriented, I may need to be present myself as feeling oriented in order to continue in my life (e.g., to keep my status as good employee or parent), or I may be convinced that wallowing in difficult experiences will only make things worse. In fact, as we will see, the way agents in the midst of serious disorientations are often treated can give them good reason to want to avoid seeing themselves as disoriented.' (Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 14–15).

¹¹ Krueger, 'Finding (and Losing) One's Way', 26, italics original.

disorientation.¹² At the same time, I have my doubts about whether it is phenomenologically feasible to consider those cases of pre-reflective metaphorical disorientation (either temporary or persistent) as experiences of metaphorical disorientation if they do not, at least at some point in time, involve some awareness of a felt loss of at-home-ness and thus become emotionally salient to the person as feeling at a loss as to how go on in navigating social space. And recall that Krueger himself suggests early on in the article that the phenomenon ‘arises precisely because individuals *recognize* that they inhabit a shared (i.e., social) world that is nevertheless somehow bodily inaccessible to them in a way that is not the case for others’.¹³

¹² One example of this view can be found in trans* theorist Malatino’s engagement with Ahmed’s notion of disorientation, where they identify the experience of persistent disorientation as an inevitable feature of trans* lives: ‘I wager that most trans folks can articulate a veritable literary of disorientations: the moments wherein we’re referred to by the wrong name, the wrong pronoun, the wrong honorific; the moments when our bodies are referred to with language that registers dissonantly, inaccurately; the moments wherein we are touched in ways that trigger rage, sadness, dysphoria, self-hatred, self-harm, where our bodies are being interacted with as if they were something other than how we understand and inhabit them. In each of these moments, which are so routine as to constitute a trans genre of misrecognition, we experience some form of disorientation.’ (Malatino, *Side Affects*, 52).

Another and rather explicit articulation of this view can be found in Lajoie’s exploration of the lived experience of disability in ableist social worlds, which she argues is marked by ongoing and lasting disorientation experiences: ‘Many disabled people come to expect that they will be excluded from certain spaces due to lack of access, such that they learn to anticipate these exclusions. But the “ordinariness” of disablist exclusion does not make it any less disorienting, first, because one can be disoriented by something that she anticipated (e.g., the death of a loved one in palliative care) and, second, because however predictable they may be at a reflexive level, the disorientations that I am describing are initially felt at a pre-reflexive, bodily level.’ (Lajoie, ‘The Problems of Access’, 332).

¹³ Krueger, ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’, 23, fn. 5, italics mine. Next to this phenomenological consideration, it should be emphasised that there is also a *methodological* consideration against treating those phenomena unequivocally under the header of ‘disorientation’. Proponents of prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation (including Krueger who explicitly states this) broadly situate themselves in the *critical* phenomenological tradition, as suggested in the introduction and Chapter One. An important aspect of the critical phenomenological project is the questioning of taking the so-called “average” body capable of seamlessly and harmoniously extending into the world as a universal starting point for phenomenological research, as it is for instance allegedly taken to be the case in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of embodiment. See e.g., Lisa Diedrich, ‘Breaking Down: A Phenomenology of Disability’, *Literature and Medicine* 20, no. 2 (September 2001): 209–30, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lm.2001.0019>. One reason often given is that this misses other different, often deemed ‘deviant’, ways of bodily inhabitation in the world that are marked by a disharmonious interaction between body and world. From this perspective and perhaps surprisingly, a possible methodological tension (in line with my argument in Chapter One) emerges with the claim that those who are perceived not to fit undergo a felt loss

To conclude: while I acknowledge the diversity of experiences of social disorientation, I hope to have demonstrated that the simple appeal to the negative counterpart to feeling at home operative in social disorientation comes with central ambiguities. From the preceding analysis, it is clear that a discerning conception of social disorientation needs to address and resolve those. In particular, such a conception must satisfy the following requirements: namely, to provide a phenomenologically discerning characterisation of the relevant type of home-absence in social disorientation, which identifies and articulates its distinctive structure in contrast to other emotional responses to navigating social space (a) in which a positively valenced sense of home is absent and (b) that also involve lack of experiential access to certain social possibilities and thus a felt difference between oneself and others/social space. And to do this, I submit that we need to give a detailed answer to three central questions on what Krueger has dubbed “felt loss of at-home-ness”:¹⁴

Q₁: How do such experiences occur?

Q₂: What is the structure of these experiences?

Q₃: How can such experiences amount to a sense of social disorientation?

of at-home-ness and thus disorientation, because it risks closing down conceptual space for thinking about the possibility of having one’s pre-reflective felt sense of bodily agency restricted while still first-personally feeling at-home and thus orientated in navigating certain social spaces and thus finding one’s way. See also Rodemeyer, ‘Husserl and Queer Theory’ for related methodological concerns.

¹⁴ In formulating these questions, I borrow from Louise Richardson, ‘Absence Experience in Grief’, *European Journal of Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (March 2023): 170, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12778>. She helpfully distinguishes between three different questions that need to be addressed in order to bring into view and clarify the distinctive character of absence experiences in grief that concern the experience of oneself as incomplete and missing something. She formulates these three questions as follows: ‘How do such experiences occur?’, ‘What is the nature of these experiences?’, and ‘How can such experiences amount to ones of emptiness and diminished selfhood?’.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to answering these three questions. I begin here by clearing the ground in introducing a phenomenological distinction between *two broad and importantly different types* of emotional responses to navigating social space in which a positively valenced experience of a sense of home can be said to be *absent*: I shall call them (1) *not feeling at home* and (2) *feeling not at home* respectively. The first type of home-absence captures experiential manifestations of *home-negation* that actualises in a mere felt difference between oneself and others/social space, whereas the latter captures experiential manifestations of *home-privation* that actualises in a felt lack of home (which, note, corresponds to what Krueger dubs “felt loss of at-home-ness”).¹⁵ In construing (1) as negation and (2) as privation, I broadly draw on the Aristotelian distinction between negation as the simple absence of something in the person and privation as the absence of something in the person that should be present and is therefore lacking. This suggests that feeling at home is something that one should feel – at least in relation to some people in some places at some point in time. But let me be absolutely clear here that, while endorsing the normative view that feeling not at home thus amounts to a deficient mode of navigating social space, I do *not* locate this deficiency within the person feeling not at home. As my analysis of the phenomenological distinction between (1) and (2) advances, it will become clear that this deficiency is exclusively to be located in those social relations that prevent the person from feeling at home in navigating social space.¹⁶

¹⁵ Of course, it only corresponds to those experiential manifestations of what Krueger subsumes under the header of “felt loss of at-home-ness” that concern the first-personal reflective experience of lacking a sense of home. The phenomenon of concern to me here therefore does not correspond to those experiential manifestations of interest to Krueger that operate at a purely pre-reflectively, bodily level.

¹⁶ The *locus classicus* can be found in e.g.: ‘We say that that which is capable of some particular faculty or possession has suffered privation [*sterêsis*] when the faculty or possession in question is in no way present in that in which, and at the time in which, it should be naturally present. We do not call that toothless which has not teeth, or that blind which has not sight, but rather that which has not teeth or sight at the time when by nature it should.’ (Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, ed. and trans. J. Ackrill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), *Cat.* 12a28-33). In locating the deficiency not within the person but social relations, I do *not* commit to a possible reading of

I contend that this phenomenological distinction is crucial for investigating the phenomenology of home-absence. It is required to clearly mark out the differences between two broad types, where the first type of home-absence is characteristic of a broad range of affective experiences that involve the experiential inability to access certain social possibilities that remain accessible for others, while being importantly distinct from the second type of home-absence actualising in a felt lack of home. Hence, this distinction clears the way for a satisfying conception of social disorientation via the notion of home, where the target space of the relevant type of experiences becomes more clearly demarcated.

Before I proceed with this phenomenological distinction, two important provisos: first, there may be some doubts concerning my introduction of *feeling not at home* as a type of home-absence for the reason that I index the relevant type of experience to *lack* of home. This will become clearer in 4.4., but let me already briefly flag here: what one is lacking experiential access to at the time of the experience becomes experientially present in its absence; it is in this sense that it too constitutes a type of home-absence.

Second, I want to highlight the conceptual focus on *types of emotional responses*. In introducing this phenomenological distinction, I do not wish to suggest that, literally, there are only *two* possible emotional responses to navigating social space in which a positively valenced sense of home is absent. Both (1) and (2) are to be understood as phenomenological structures that underlie various different emotional responses.¹⁷ For example: some might experience a sense of excitement in the company of other people who are unlike themselves, pointing to new possibilities for learning and self-

Aristotle's example, according to which being blind may be understood as a deficient mode of existence in and of itself.

¹⁷ This formulation is borrowed from Ratcliffe's when he characterises loneliness as a 'phenomenological structure common to a range of other emotional experiences'. (Ratcliffe, 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging, 2).

development; whereas others might experience a sense of disdain when encountering other people who disagree with their own core commitments. However, inasmuch as we either *feel at home* with other people in a given situation or *do not*, I submit that various emotional responses to navigating social space in the latter case (of which the aforementioned experiential manifestations of excitement and disdain are just two examples) will incorporate either type (1) or type (2).

4.3. Not Feeling at Home

In investigating the phenomenology of home-absence, it is important to acknowledge the following: while we often navigate social spaces in which a positively valenced experience of a sense of home is absent, this does not always actualise in a first-personal experience of lacking a sense of home. To appreciate this experiential dimension of navigating everyday social life, I introduce the phenomenological category of *not feeling at home* that forms the first type of home-absence:

(Def) H-A¹: Not feeling at home = Negation of home that actualises in a mere felt difference between oneself and others/social space.

I characterise this first type of home-absence as *negation of home* for the reason that, in navigating social space in which a positively valenced sense of home is absent, what the person lacks experiential access to is not constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to their own set of deep personal commitments. Instead, this home-absence amounts to a mere felt difference between oneself and others/social space, where this does not actualise in a felt lack of home in the presence of other people/in navigating social

space. To see this, consider the example of the protest-bystander which we already encountered in Chapter Two.¹⁸

Recall: I introduced the protest-bystander as someone attending an ACT-UP protest who (a) is *not* deeply committed to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights but instead (b) simply cares for the well-being of HIV-inflicted people. This is because, (c), they have a different set of deep personal commitments specific to them. My contention was that it would be phenomenologically plausible to claim that their emotional response to this protest would likely involve *other-regarding* responses (e.g., promoting the protestors' interest), but where this does not come with the *self-regarding* response of feeling at home in and through the presence of other protestors. In light of diverging deep personal commitments, I concluded that those others would *not* provide a promise of home and therefore *not* provide a source of orientation for the protest-bystander's practical self-understanding.

Considering that they do not have a self-regarding response to the presence of the other protestors, I argue that it would be phenomenologically wrong to characterise the protest-bystander as undergoing a first-personal experience of lack of home. The example makes clear that the type of home-absence operative in their experience amounts to a *negation of home* in the straightforward sense that a positively valenced sense of home is simply not present. However, this is not to suggest that a negation of home does not come with its own experiential profile: central to the protestor-bystander's emotional response to navigation social space is a *felt difference* between themselves and other people.¹⁹ It is

¹⁸ In turning to this example, my primary focus going forward is on analysing the emergence of particular manifestations of the first type of home-absence in response to interacting with other people. However, the subsequent analysis does also extend to those manifestations in response to navigating social space where, to recall Krueger, 'the space itself is set up in ways that are not designed to accommodate or be responsive to our specific values, interests, and needs' (Krueger, 'Finding (and Losing) One's Way', 23).

¹⁹ As will become clear shortly, if there was no felt difference, there would not be a negation of home. But notice that this is not to imply that a felt difference always brings about a negation of

instructive to examine this more closely. For one thing, it spells out why Krueger's emphasis on (1) lack of access, (2) social possibilities, and (3) felt difference as discussed in 4.2. is not sufficient to capture the second type of home-absence. This is because these three characteristics are similarly involved in the first type of home-absence. Secondly, it sharpens the target space for our phenomenological inquiry into the second type of home-absence that will concern us in 4.4. Let me therefore draw attention to four central points:

(a) This felt difference takes the form of "they can versus I cannot", where the person lacks experiential access to possibilities that other people are either perceived to be able to engage in or to be actually engaging in.²⁰ It is important to emphasise that what they lack experiential access to has *no direct bearing* on whether or not (i.e., in an *enabling* or *disabling* manner) they can engage in any meaningful actions bound up with their own set of deep personal commitments; note that I characterise the first type of home-absence as negation of home precisely for this reason. For instance, the protest-bystander might experience themselves as unable to talk about certain topics that concern the first-personal experience of being HIV-inflicted which in turn could contribute to a sense of interpersonal connection; however, where this possibility is *not* bound up with their own

home. This is because we may also experience a felt difference between ourselves and those people in and through whose presence we feel at home, where the felt difference however does not attach to possibilities of personal importance, that is, bound up with one's own deep personal commitments.

²⁰ Cf. Ratcliffe 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging', 4. Note that this characterisation should not be understood solely in relation to *what* possibilities are experienced as accessible. For instance, this is where Ratcliffe seems to put his emphasis on, as suggested by his choice of examples like 'when one is the only person in a given social situation who cannot drive, dance, play football, speak German, or eat peanuts' (Ratcliffe, 5). Such examples are certainly helpful in illustrating a widespread type of felt difference. However, it is important to not overlook an arguably more subtle but also more vicious (precisely in being subtle and thus often unnoticed) type of felt difference: namely, when a person experiences a sense of difference *despite* having experiential access to the same possibilities in a given situation, where it is primarily a matter of *how* possibilities are experienced. I emphasise this type of felt difference to acknowledge that this is disproportionately often the case for those who are perceived not to fit. It is not uncommon for marginalised people to continue experiencing a felt difference *despite* having unlocked social access to previously blocked off possibilities and social spaces; cf. Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

set of deep personal commitments. I take this to be a more general phenomenon that permeates our everyday experiences of navigating social space inasmuch as we often encounter other people with whom we do not have certain things in common.

(b) In being first-personal, this felt difference is subjectively experienced *irrespective* of whether or not other people can actually engage in certain possibilities. Hence, the felt difference does not hinge on whether it will uphold over time and thus turns out to be objectively the case. Considering the dynamic and relational nature of second-person interactions, we might eventually overcome this felt difference; however, this does not matter at the time of the experience.

(c) The awareness of this felt difference may either remain pre-reflective or can become an explicit object of our awareness and thus become reflective. This will depend on the content of experience, including the degree to which the relevant subject matter of difference is experienced. However, note that the reflective experience of a felt difference between oneself and others does not necessarily yield a sense of lack of belonging with those others, as exemplified by our example of the protest-bystander.

(d) The felt difference can come with a range of different emotional attitudes, including both positively and negatively valenced emotional responses to experiencing a sense of difference in relation to others in navigating social space. In the case of our protest-bystander, it might amount to e.g., either social discomfort or admiration, to name just two possible emotional responses.

I want to conclude this section by flagging three points concerning the first type of home-absence as *negation of home* that have come into view through our phenomenological analysis of the protest-bystander's emotional response to navigating social space: (1) not feeling at home centrally involves the absence of a positively valenced sense of home, where this does not actualise in a felt lack of home. This is because what one is

lacking experiential access to is not constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to oneself. (2) This sense of being experientially unable to access certain social possibilities that remain experientially accessible to others takes the form of mere felt difference between oneself and others. (3) Particular manifestations and degrees of not feeling at home are characteristic of a range of affective experiences of navigating social space in which a positively valenced sense of home is absent and where this absence comes with being experientially unable to access certain social possibilities. Hence, it can come with both positively and negatively valenced emotional responses to this felt sense of difference, including phenomena such as social doubt or discomfort.

Any satisfying conception of social disorientation that seeks to build on the view that there is a constitutive relationship between home and orientation must be able to distinguish the negative counterpart to feeling at home from this first type of home-absence. The first type of home-absence as negation of home does not come with the distinctive phenomenal character of lacking a sense of home, which however, to recall Krueger (cf. “felt loss of at-home-ness”), is an experiential cue for occurrent manifestations of social disorientation. Indeed, it does not seem phenomenologically plausible to characterise the protest-bystander as feeling disorientated in and through the presence of the other protestors, precisely because the relevant home-absence operative in our example actualises in a mere felt difference between themselves and others that does *not* give rise to a felt sense of not knowing how to go on. Although the protest-bystander is just one example, let me conclude this section by emphasising that it is quite common type of experience of navigating social space: namely, to find oneself in a social situation in which one does not feel at home but a sense of difference between oneself and

others/social space, where this neither actualises in a felt lack of home nor, consequently, in social disorientation.²¹

4.4. Feeling Not at Home

So far, I have made a distinction between two broad and importantly different types of home-absence and have analysed the first type of home-absence. I now move to analyse the second type of home-absence. In this section, I develop a phenomenological characterisation of the negative counterpart to feeling at home operative in social disorientation – which I call *feeling not at home* (in contrast to *not feeling at home* that forms the first type of home-absence) –, which answers the questions we would want a satisfying conception of social disorientation via the notion of home to answer. These questions, recall from 4.2., are:

Q₁: How do such experiences occur?

Q₂: What is the structure of these experiences?

Q₃: How can such experiences amount to a sense of social disorientation?

²¹ E.g., consider being the only person at a work dinner who does not speak Italian. Your emotional response to navigating social space involves a reflective experience of a felt difference between yourself and others. What becomes emotionally salient to you is a sense of exclusion from those parts of the dinner conversation taking place in Italian (taking the form of ‘they can vs. I cannot’), coupled with the associative emotive feeling of e.g., temporary boredom. However, since you attend this dinner for the sole reason that it is a compulsory work dinner, your experience of a felt difference does not leave you feeling disorientated in navigating social space.

4.4.1. Privation of Home

I begin with Q₁: *How do particular manifestations of feeling not at home occur?* Recall that according to Krueger, the relevant type of experience (what he dubs “felt loss of at-home-ness”) arises because one recognises that one does not have experiential access to certain social possibilities that however remain accessible to others. Yet also recall that I have argued that such an account needs to be further complicated. This is because particular manifestations of not feeling at home are also accompanied by being experientially unable to access certain social possibilities. Here, what one lacks experiential access to is not constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to oneself, which is why I characterised the first type of home-absence as a negation of home. To answer Q₁, therefore, we need to identify what it is that we recognise as lacking experiential access to at the time of feeling not at home, where this is *distinctive of* the second type of home-absence. The answer, I suggest, lies in the phenomenal character of feeling not at home that consists in the first-personal experience of a *felt lack of home*. What it reveals, I suggest, is that the second type of home-absence also involves a negation of home, but not in the simple sense that a positively valenced sense of home is absent (cf. the first type of home-absence) but rather in the sense that a positively valenced sense of home becomes experientially present in its absence as *lack of home*. On this specific type of negation, it is helpful to turn to Heidegger’s phenomenological rendering of the Aristotelian notion of privation in his discussion of the phenomenon of health. Addressing medical professionals, Heidegger says in *Zollikon Seminars*:

If we negate something in the sense that we do not simply deny it, but rather affirm it in the sense that something is lacking, such negation is called a *privation*.

It is remarkable fact that your whole medical profession moves within a negation in the sense of a privation. You deal with illness. The doctor asks someone who comes to him, “What is wrong with you?” The sick person is *not healthy*. This being-healthy, this being-well, the finding oneself well is not simply absent but is disturbed. Illness is not the pure negation of psychosomatic state of health. Illness is a phenomenon of privation. Each privation implies the essential belonging to something that is lacking something, which is in need of something.²²

On Heidegger’s view, illness is the privation of health. It is not simply the absence of a healthy body but amounts to a ‘mode of existing in privation’.²³ What is interesting is that Heidegger construes the privation of health specifically in terms of ‘a constriction of the possibility for living’,²⁴ that is, constraining the possibilities for living that one has experiential access to at the time of being ill. Likewise, I propose to characterise feeling not at home as a *privation of home*. I understand it as a “privative” phenomenon for the reason that the social possibilities one lacks experiential access to in navigating social space are constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home that is specific to one’s own set of deep personal commitments.²⁵ This is how particular manifestations of feeling not at home occur, namely, due to a privation of home:

²² Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters*, ed. Medard Boss, SPEP Studies in Historical Philosophy (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 46, italics original.

²³ Heidegger, 47.

²⁴ Heidegger, 157.

²⁵ For a different Heideggerian approach to the phenomenology of home, see Fredrik Svenaeus, ‘The Body Uncanny - Further Steps towards a Phenomenology of Illness’, *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2000): 125–37, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009920011164>; Fredrik Svenaeus, ‘Das Unheimliche - Towards a Phenomenology of Illness’, *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2000): 3–16, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009943524301>; Svenaeus, ‘Illness as Unhomelike Being-in-the-World’; Svenaeus, *The Hermeneutics of Medicine and the Phenomenology of Health*; Svenaeus, ‘Naturalistic and Phenomenological Theories of Health: Distinctions and Connections’, in *Phenomenology and Naturalism: Examining the Relationship between Human Experience and Nature*, ed. Havi Carel and Darian Meacham, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 72 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 221–38. Appealing to the account of Dasein as being-in-the-world in the work of Heidegger, Svenaeus characterises illness as an unhomelike being-in-the-world. He does this because in illness the homelike mode of being-in-the-world characterised by the taken-for-granted and transparent character of everyday activities is disrupted: ‘To be ill means to be not at home in one’s being-in-the-world, to find oneself in a pattern of disorientation, resistance, helplessness, and perhaps even despair, instead of in the homelike transparency of healthy life.’ (Svenaeus, ‘Naturalistic and Phenomenological Theories

(Def) H-A²: Feeling not at home = Privation of home that actualises in a felt lack of home in relation to others/social space.

Let me illustrate this by appealing to the example of the queer child which we already encountered in Chapter Three, before I then go on to provide a more specific characterisation of this privation of home, with a view to answering Q₂ (“What is the structure of these experiences?”).²⁶

Recall: I introduced the queer child as someone who is hoping against hope that their queerphobic parents might undergo a transformation of heart that would allow the child to start feeling at home in and through their presence. My focus was on elucidating two features of the child’s hope: (a) Following Han-Pile, I identified an explicit intentional awareness of their perceived powerlessness as a constitutive feature of the child’s hope in that there is nothing the child can do to bring about the desired futural state-of-affairs. (b) Based on this insight, I zoomed in on the child’s temporal orientation towards

of Health: Distinctions and Connections’, 232). However, this needs to be distinguished from the phenomenon of feeling not at home that concerns the felt lack of a distinctively social sense of belonging with others/in social space *irrespective of* the extent to which we are physically, practically, and/or emotionally familiar and thus immersed with the given surroundings. See also Chapter Two for a discussion of the two broad camps on theorising the phenomenon of home to be found in the scholarship and how they relate to my own conception.

²⁶ Notice that, by pursuing this line of characterisation, I rule out another possible characterisation of feeling not at home. *Prima facie*, it may seem tempting to distinguish feeling not at home from not feeling at home by characterising the former as a *negatively valenced absence experience of a sense of home*. This would locate the relevant type of experience as part of the family of *emotions of absence*, alongside other emotions such as homesickness, loneliness, or nostalgia. Emotions of absence are typically understood as involving a two-component structure: (i) a pro-attitude towards x and (ii) an awareness that x is absent. Cf. Tom Roberts and Joel Krueger, ‘Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence’, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 59, no. 2 (June 2021): 185–204, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12387>. Now, while feeling not at home exhibits both components, this alone is not sufficient to distinguish it from not feeling at home. As the example of the protest-bystander has demonstrated in 4.3., we can experience a certain difference between ourselves and other people and wish that this was not the case (thus involving both a pro-attitude towards a certain kind of interpersonal connection and an awareness that this is currently not possible), without such a felt difference translating into a felt lack of belonging. Hence, feeling not at home cannot be exclusively identified by virtue of being an absence emotion. More needs to be said, which is precisely my concern going forward in spelling out the second type of home-absence as privation of home.

the future operative in their hope and argued that *pace* Calhoun, they cannot be said to live and act under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success, but only containing the possibility of success.

I consider this to be an example where the phenomenon of privation of home becomes particularly salient: the experience of lacking access to social possibilities that are constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to oneself takes the explicit intentional form of hoping against hope. The child is strongly desiring a future in which they are accepted as a queer child which they take to be central to and a pre-requisite of feeling at home with their parents, however there are painfully aware that there is nothing they can do to bring about this desired futural state-of-affairs. They lack experiential access to possibilities (e.g., talking to their parents about their queer identity) that are directly bound up with their own set of deep personal commitments and would enable the child to move towards the realisation of such a future. The presence of their queerphobic parents results in those possibilities not presenting themselves as *first-personal possibilities for the child*, where this takes the form of ‘I can see *x* but not for me’.²⁷ This is precisely because the child finds themselves in a situation in which those possibilities

²⁷ Two provisos are in order:

(1) Compare this to particular manifestations of not feeling at home that take the form of ‘they can vs. I cannot’. One may worry that the content difference between the two formulations is not obvious for the reason that ‘they can vs. I cannot’ may turn out to be equivalent to ‘I can see (that they can do) *x* but not for me’. But that would be to suggest that the person has a self-regarding emotional response, where the experiential emphasis is on lacking experiential access to social possibilities of relevance to *oneself*. Yet we have seen that this is precisely not the case in not feeling at home.

(2) The here given characterisation parallels that of the child’s hope against hope, specifically their imagined futural possibility of being accepted as a queer child, as developed in Chapter Three. This is a deliberate choice. For, I understand the presence of their hope against hope as a *phenomenological indicator* for the experiential inaccessibility of those possibilities that would otherwise enable them to move towards the realisation of this desired futural state-of-affairs; in that case there would be no reason to hope against hope. On a more general note, it should be clear that which possibilities are experienced as within reach in the present will affect one’s experience of futurity, including how certain futural state-of-affairs will present themselves to one: i.e., either as first-personal possibilities for oneself or not. Already note that I shall return to this point in Chapter Five.

cannot be meaningfully integrated into their experience of navigating the given situation that is marked by their subjective sense of their own agency as one of radical powerlessness when conversing with their parents about their queer identity.

With the phenomenon of privation of home in view, the next task is to address Q₂ (“What is the structure of the experience?”) before then turning to Q₃ (“How can such experiences amount to a sense of social disorientation?”). In order to prepare an answer to both questions, in the next subsection I engage with a model of experiential inaccessibility put forward in a forthcoming chapter by Matthew Ratcliffe, entitled ‘Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging’.

4.4.2. Matthew Ratcliffe

In this article, Ratcliffe is concerned with developing a phenomenological conception of interpersonal loneliness, where his focus is on identifying a sense of detachment from social space as a central characteristic of interpersonal loneliness. But note that, in pursuing this argument, Ratcliffe treats interpersonal loneliness and a felt lack of belonging (corresponding to the phenomenal character of feeling not at home identified in 4.4.1.) *interchangeable*.²⁸ In my reconstruction and critical assessment of Ratcliffe’s position, I shall follow his treatment and focus exclusively on the phenomenon of felt lack of belonging, as it proves relevant for the purposes at hand. Note that I therefore leave aside

²⁸ Cf.: ‘In what follows, I will focus on something that is common to and central to *many* of those predicaments referred to as “loneliness”, although perhaps not all: a distinctive sense of detachment from social situations. This can be equally described in terms of the absence of something else – a sense of belonging to something, feeling part of something. ... where a sense of belonging does concern something that is *social* in nature, loneliness is incompatible with it.’ (Ratcliffe, ‘Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging’, 1, italics original).

for now whether such a treatment is justified. I shall come back to this point later; for now, my concern is with drawing upon Ratcliffe's conception to develop an answer to Q₂.

On Ratcliffe's conception, a felt lack of belonging differs from a mere felt difference in that it constitutively involves the lack of experiential access to second-person interactions – notably, 'characterized by a sense of comfort, ease, spontaneity, and sharing' – that could cultivate a sense of belonging with other people.²⁹ However he also notes that the phenomenological structure turns out to be more complex. Ratcliffe goes on to identify that the aforementioned experiential inaccessibility is due to the lack of experiential access to wider social possibilities that are a pre-requisite for accessing the here relevant second-person interactions. I quote him at length:

But loneliness [i.e., felt lack of belonging] is not a simple matter of its inaccessibility. Rather, it involves the absence of wider possibilities for social participation that are ordinarily a prerequisite for experiencing another person in the relevant way. In brief, one lacks access to a "we" experience that constitutes the potential for a certain kind of "I-you" experience.³⁰

Turning to our example of the queer child, Ratcliffe's model of a two-partite structure of experiential inaccessibility yields the following characterisation of privation of home that is constitutive of feeling not at home: (A) it involves the child's experiential inaccessibility of those second-person possibilities that could cultivate a sense of belonging with their parents. (B) This is in turn due to lacking experiential access to wider shared social

²⁹ Ratcliffe, 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging', 6. Perhaps surprisingly, the exact nature of these second-person interactions remains underdeveloped in Ratcliffe's article, beyond the here-cited approximation. Ratcliffe explicitly states that he 'will not characterize these in detail here' (Ratcliffe, 5). As will become clear shortly, my critical assessment of Ratcliffe's conception suggests that we do need a more precise characterisation that, once provided, pushes us towards a more refined conception of feeling not at home than the appeal to Ratcliffe's model suggests.

³⁰ Ratcliffe, 6.

possibilities that would unlock access to the former, by virtue of being a queer person navigating a queer-exclusionary social space.

The central upshot of Ratcliffe's model lies precisely in this emphasis on the interplay between (A) social possibilities for interpersonal connection in the given situation and (B) wider social possibilities that would unlock experiential access to the former. Feeling not at home in navigating social space is a constitutively *social phenomenon*: as Ratcliffe identifies, what can make the experience first-personally so isolating, even painful, is a sense in which certain interpersonal and social possibilities appear experientially inaccessible to oneself but not to others at the time of the experience.³¹ Adequately capturing this experiential dimension necessitates accounting for the wider social possibilities that could enable a sense of belonging. Those possibilities are typically taken-for-granted and go often unnoticed in everyday navigation of social space, but can become salient in undergoing a felt lack of home in navigating social space. And it should be added that this is particularly the case for those people whose social position aligns with the predominant norms of social space, as I have argued at length in Chapter One.

At the same time, his model faces a central worry that concerns the characterisation of Part (A) of the structure of experiential inaccessibility operative in privation of home. I submit that, without further phenomenological specification, it blurs the conceptual and experiential distinction between negation of home and privation of home and consequently risks obscuring what is distinctive of a felt lack of belonging. A close examination of this issue does not only prepare an answer to Q₂, but it also allows me to introduce a further phenomenological distinction that will prove relevant to answering Q₃.

³¹ Ratcliffe, 4.

Consider a variation of the protest-bystander example which I previously introduced as our guiding example for the first type of home-absence as negation of home:

Attending an ACT-UP protest for the first time, the protest-bystander has an interaction with a fellow protestor who is HIV-positive. Distressed by internal conflicts within ACT-UP about whether to centre stage the voices of those who are HIV-positive at the expense of other queer activists' voices also deeply committed to the fight of the AIDS crisis, the fellow protestor feels uncomfortable to learn about the protest-bystander's HIV-negative status. Though civil in nature, their interaction is not particularly easy. While appreciating the protest-bystander's support, the fellow protestor cannot help but interact in ways that close off meaningful possibilities for interpersonal connection.³²

Recall that, following Ratcliffe's model, privation of home involves (A) being cut off from social second-person possibilities that could cultivate a sense of belonging due to (B) lacking experiential access to wider social possibilities that are specific to oneself and would enable experiencing other people in the relevant ways. The protest-bystander's experience of navigating this social space meets both criteria: their second-person interaction with the fellow protestor is unlikely to be characterised 'by a sense of comfort, ease, spontaneity, and sharing' which however Ratcliffe argues is required for cultivating a sense of belonging;³³ and this is (largely) due to the fact that they are HIV-negative and thus lack experiential access to a certain 'we'-experience with the fellow protestor. Whereas the protest-bystander would therefore have to be characterised as experiencing a felt lack of belonging due to the privation of home, this does not seem

³² In line with my construction of the initial version of the example in Chapter Two, this scenario draws on Gould's account of the internal tensions arising within ACT UP from the late 1980s onwards. Gould traces how identity categories, in particular, being HIV-positive versus being HIV-negative, took on a divisive importance, yielding an (at least perceived) internal division amongst 'those focusing on AIDS drugs research – who called themselves 'treatment activists' – [who] were primarily HIV-positive, white, gay men, and ... those who came to be called the 'social activists' (who) were primarily HIV-negative, white lesbians along with people of colour, some of whom were HIV-positive' (Gould, *Moving Politics*, 340).

³³ Ratcliffe, 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging', 6.

phenomenologically conclusive. If my analysis in 4.3. has been successful, it seems that it will depend on whether the protest-bystander is deeply committed to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights, in which case their emotional response would involve a self-regarding response of feeling at home/feeling not at home in and through the presence of the fellow protestors. But notice that in the above scenario, they are precisely not deeply committed.³⁴

What emerges, therefore, is the need for a more refined phenomenological characterisation of the structure of experiential inaccessibility that concerns the privation of home that is constitutive of feeling not at home. This is because even though the protest-bystander in the above scenario lacks experiential access to social possibilities for interpersonal connection, it does not necessarily follow that they will therefore experience a felt lack of belonging due to a privation of home. While it seems right to suggest that if one has experiential access to such possibilities, one cannot experience a felt lack of belonging,³⁵ the preceding analysis has suggested that the reserve does not necessarily hold true. I aim to have demonstrated that lacking experiential access to social possibilities for interpersonal connection turns out to be *necessary but not sufficient* for the occurrence of feeling not at home due to a privation of home. While appealing to Ratcliffe's model of a two-partite structure of experiential accessibility can be seen as a move in the right direction, for present purposes, it does not meet the requirements for a satisfying conception of feeling not at home *qua* privation home that can distinguish it clearly and consistently from not feeling at home *qua* negation of home.

³⁴ An example for those who were deeply committed to the fight for Lesbian and Gay Rights but, as a result of internal conflicts within ACT UP, felt not at home any longer can be found in Gould's account of the sexism discussion that took place in September 1989 within ACT UP/Chicago, where lesbian women criticised gay men for their sexism within the Chicago chapter. Gould writes: 'We wanted to feel "mutual solidarity and respect," but the men's failure to recognize us exacerbated *our sense of unbelonging* and insignificance.' (Gould, *Moving Politics*, 343, italics mine).

³⁵ Ratcliffe, 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging', 6.

At this point, there are at least three ways of responding to my phenomenological critique: (1) to emphasise that the distinctive character of social possibilities for interpersonal connection has been under-explored; (2) to limit Ratcliffe's conception to interpersonal loneliness and argue that my critique only pertains to felt lack of belonging but not interpersonal loneliness; and (3) to defuse my challenge by identifying the target phenomenon of my analysis to be narrower than what Ratcliffe is after. Let me address each response, with a particular focus on the third one. Not only does a close examination of the third response help clarify the target space of our phenomenological inquiry, but it also clears the way for a conception of the phenomenological structure of privation of home in terms of the experiential inaccessibility of promise of home that can provide a satisfactory answer to Q₂.

First: Ratcliffe may reiterate that he has not characterised the nature of the relevant social possibilities for interpersonal connection in much detail. He may therefore argue that the force of my critique is contingent on how exactly one is to characterise those possibilities. Recall that, beyond an emphasis on their distinctive second-person nature, Ratcliffe explicitly acknowledges that 'I will not characterize these in detail here'.³⁶ But for present purposes, this response is unsatisfactory precisely for the reason that it serves to show that more needs to be said. In addition, Ratcliffe himself begins his study with the observation that, compared to existing conceptions of interpersonal loneliness,³⁷ more must be said for a phenomenologically discerning characterisation of the relevant type of experience 'which distinguishes it from other emotional experiences of being unable to access desired social goods'.³⁸ That his model of experiential inaccessibility risks blurring

³⁶ Ratcliffe, 5, see also fn. X.

³⁷ He refers to Tom Roberts and Joel Krueger, "Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 59, no. 2 (June 2021): 185–204, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12387>.

³⁸ Ratcliffe, 'Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging, 2.

the phenomenological distinction between negation of home and privation of home amounts to a challenge that by his own considerations has to be taken seriously. And let me also emphasise here that our aim has precisely been to develop a phenomenologically discerning characterisation of the relevant type of home-absence operative in social dis-orientation, which identifies and articulates its distinctive structure in contrast to other emotional responses to navigating social space (a) in which a positively valenced sense of home is absent and (b) that also involve lack of experiential access to certain social possibilities and thus a felt difference between oneself and others/social space.

Second: Ratcliffe may limit his phenomenological analysis to interpersonal loneliness only. Accordingly, he may depart from his assumption that interpersonal loneliness and felt lack of belonging can be treated interchangeably and argue that my critique only pertains to felt lack of belonging but not interpersonal loneliness. Even if we were to grant this teasing apart of interpersonal loneliness and felt lack of belonging (and note: I believe there to be good reasons for doing so however contingently related the two phenomena may be), this response too would ultimately be unsatisfactory. To see why this is the case, recall the variation of the protest-bystander that I introduced earlier. It does not seem phenomenologically self-evident that their emotional response to navigating social space would include the first-personal reflective experience of feeling lonely. In fact, I believe it to be a quite common experience to be interacting with other people with whom one does not establish an emotional rapport, where this excludes the possibility for interpersonal connection, without this absence of a positively valenced sense of home actualising in an occurrent manifestation of feeling lonely (nor, as already established, in an occurrent manifestation of feeling not at home). If I am broadly right on this point, this would further reinforce the limitations of Ratcliffe's conception for our purposes that I have already identified in relation to felt lack of belonging: namely, that his characterisation works best

understood in negativist terms, i.e., identifying the conditions when an experience of the relevant type does not occur, but not in positivist terms, i.e., identifying the conditions when an experience of the relevant type does occur.

Third: Ratcliffe may scrutinise the target phenomenon of my analysis and point to a possible *discrepancy* between the relevant type of experience of concern to me and what he subsumes under the header of ‘felt lack of belonging’. Characterising a sense of detachment as a central characteristic of felt lack of belonging, he may emphasise that felt lack of belonging covers all those instances (1) where this sense of detachment simply is present and thus (2) where one is experientially unable to feel at home in navigating social space. Recall: this is what his characterisation of experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities for interpersonal connection operative in felt lack of belonging serves to capture. Accordingly, Ratcliffe may press if we are really talking about the same phenomenon. After all, the guiding example of feeling not at home meets both requirements: the queer child’s experience centrally involves a sense of detachment from social space, and it is marked by a first-personal reflective awareness that they are experientially unable to feel at home in and through the presence of their queerphobic parents. Hence, it would seem that the conditions for the child to experience a sense of feeling not at home due to a privation of home turn out to be *stricter* than for an experience of felt lack of belonging to occur and, therefore, the formal object of feeling not at home *narrower*. Along these lines, then, Ratcliffe may refute my critique and conclude that the variation of the protest-bystander *does* qualify as an instance of felt lack of belonging.

In response, I begin by noting that appealing to a sense of detachment from social space is certainly not sufficient to fully make sense of the example of the queer child. This is because this same sense of detachment can be present in a range of different circumstances (e.g., think back to the variation of the protest-bystander) that do not involve

the type of self-regarding emotional response characteristic of the child's experience of navigating social space. Hence, I am in agreement with the claim that the conditions for feeling not at home (at least as operative in the child example) must be stricter and the formal object narrower. However, the question remains whether it is phenomenologically feasible to characterise a sense of detachment from social space in terms of 'felt lack of belonging'. I think it depends on what role the talk of 'felt lack of belonging' is meant to serve in capturing emotional responses to navigating social space in which a positively valenced sense of home is absent and that accompany being unable to access certain social possibilities.

Consider the everyday statement "I don't belong here". I contend that it can convey two *different* types of emotional experience that must be distinguished: (1) a sense of detachment from social space ("I don't belong *here*"); and (2) a sense of detachment from social space that further incorporates the experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities that are constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to one's own set of deep personal commitments ("I don't belong here"). In both cases, the sense of detachment from social space involves the experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities for interpersonal connection, where this is the effect of a felt difference between oneself and other people/social space. However, only in the latter case does the felt difference amount to a privation of home, where this involves the experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities that are constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to one's own set of deep personal commitments.³⁹ To illustrate this admittedly fine-grained distinction, take the following example: there is a difference between being in room full of strangers, where I feel too socially awkward and shy to talk to them, and being in a room full of

³⁹ From the perspective of the phenomenal content of the experience, the first type of felt detachment involves the experience of absence of home, whereas the second type of felt detachment involves the experience of lack (or loss) of home.

strangers, where I am confronted with hostility when talking about things of personal importance (such as in our example of the queer child feeling unable to talk about being queer with their queerphobic parents). In response, one may think of both in terms of “felt lack of belonging” and suggest that this brings out the heterogenous nature of the phenomenon involving different depths. On another reading, the second type of felt detachment from social space amounts to an instance of felt lack of belonging, where the focus is on the phenomenal character of *lack* (or loss) of home, for the reason that it involves a privation of home. In light of my distinction between negation of home and privation of home, I believe the second reading to be phenomenologically more discerning, whilst acknowledging that the first type of felt detachment from social space also involves an alteration of one’s sense of social possibilities in navigating social space that may be psychologically disturbing. More specifically, I believe this first type of felt detachment from social space to point to an important further phenomenological distinction between two different subtypes of not feeling at home as introduced in 4.3.:

(Def) H-A¹: Not feeling at home *milder* = Negation of home that actualises in a mere felt difference between oneself and others/social space. Such *milder* manifestations may remain pre-reflective.

(Def) H-A¹: Not feeling at home *stronger* = Negation of home that actualises in felt difference between oneself and others/social space. However, it comes with the experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities for interpersonal connection, where this brings about a felt detachment from social space that has the phenomenal content of experiencing the absence of home. Such stronger manifestations are reflective.

I shall return to some of the implications of the phenomenological distinction between the two types of felt detachment, as well as the phenomenological distinction between two subtypes of not feeling at home, in 4.5. For now, the important point is that the occurrence of a sense of detachment from social space *per se* is not sufficient for the occurrence of feeling not at home and thus a felt lack of belonging, where this is due to a privation of home. And regardless of which reading one prefers to take, it remains the case that there is an important difference between these two types of felt detachment from social space.

4.4.3. Experiential Inaccessibility of Promise of Home

To recap, I have considered Ratcliffe's model of the two-partite structure of experiential inaccessibility, according to which privation of home can be characterised as follows: (A) it is due to being experientially cut off from social possibilities for interpersonal connection, where (B) this in turn is due to lacking experiential access to wider social possibilities that are specific to oneself and that would enable experiential access to the former. My argument has been that, whilst Part (B) of this model yields an important insight, ultimately Part (A) requires further phenomenological specification. This is because lacking experiential access to social possibilities for interpersonal connection *per se* is not necessarily a cause of felt lack of home. Guided by these findings, I now move to address Q₂: *What is the structure of feeling not at home?*

To do this, let me appeal once more to the example of the queer child. This is because it can make phenomenologically salient that privation of home concerns the lack of experiential access to social possibilities for interpersonal connection that, going

beyond Ratcliffe, are distinctively *future-directed*.⁴⁰ By this, I do not simply refer to the fact, as already identified in 4.4.1., that what appears experientially inaccessible are social possibilities for interpersonal connection, like talking to their parents about their queer identity, that would contribute towards the realisation of a significant futural possibility: namely, being accepted by their parents as a queer child. The central point is that this significant futural possibility is grounded in and integral to their promise of home, where it is for this reason that the child undergoes a felt lack of home. To substantiate this claim, it is instructive to recapitulate the characterisation of promise of home put forward in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

Recall: in referring to promise of home, I am concerned with a particular form of life that comes into view in and through the presence of someone with whom we share any number of deep personal commitments and who points us towards a shared future in which our own commitments have a meaningful place. It operates as a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future – involving various related possibilities that are strongly desired, strongly hoped for, imagined, as well as anticipated to differing degrees – that provides (i) a background orientation as to what one’s feeling at home with other people in navigating social space should involve and thus (ii) a standard by which to gauge one’s current second-person interactions with others.

⁴⁰ However, note that in related work on grief, where experiences of lack of belonging certainly play a central role in one’s emotional response to the loss of one’s loved one, Ratcliffe explicitly attends to the loss of future possibilities and how they impact present possibilities in navigating social space, as well as one’s experience of the past. See e.g., Matthew Ratcliffe, ‘Relating to the Dead: Social Cognition and the Phenomenology of Grief’, in *The Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the ‘We’* (London: Routledge, 2015), 202–15; Ratcliffe, ‘The Phenomenological Clarification of Grief and Its Relevance for Psychiatry’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology*, ed. Giovanni Stanghellini et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 537–51, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803157.013.58>; Ratcliffe, ‘Towards a Phenomenology of Grief: Insights from Merleau-Ponty’; Ratcliffe and Richardson, ‘Grief over Non-Death Losses’. See in particular Ratcliffe and Richardson, ‘Grief over Non-death Losses: A Phenomenological Perspective’, where they characterise the phenomenology of grief centrally in terms of the loss of futural possibilities. See also Mehmel ‘Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity’.

In lacking experiential access to possibilities such as talking to their parents about their queer identity, therefore, the child recognises that they are experientially unable to inhabit their promise of home in and through the presence of their parents, where this affects how they emotionally experience and respond to navigating the given social situation: namely, actualising in a felt lack of home. This is clearly seen *a contrario*: (a) if the child did not desire this futural state-of-affairs *and* (b) if this was not integral to their promise of home, the experience of this possibility being currently being out of reach would not be a cause of felt lack of home but, instead, amount to a negation of home. In case (a), it would bring about a mere felt difference between themselves and their parents (cf. weaker manifestation of not feeling at home), whereas in case (b) it would bring about a felt detachment from social space, possibly involving a sense of social discomfort and taking the form of “I don’t belong *here*” (cf. stronger manifestation of not feeling at home). However, in neither case would it amount to a privation of home due to the experiential inaccessibility of living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which their own deep personal commitments find a meaningful place.⁴¹

What emerges from this, then, is the following characterisation of the phenomenological structure of feeling not at home in navigating social space:

⁴¹ As a point of clarification, notice that I distinguish between (a) the child’s desire for this futural state-of-affairs and (b) the grounding of this futural state-of-affairs in their promise of home for analytical purposes only. Experientially, they are of course interrelated in how the child emotionally responds to navigating social space. My reason for this analytical distinction has to do with a background phenomenological commitment: namely, that, as human beings, we are temporally-oriented, specifically future-directed in the sense that our ways of being in the present are constitutively shaped by how we relate to the future (may it be e.g., in thoughts, implicit expectations, etc.) For a paradigmatic articulation of this position, see Heidegger’s account of originary temporality in Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. What follows from this commitment is the acknowledgement that desiring certain futural state-of-affairs (cf. a) is nothing distinctive but a defining feature of human existence. It therefore does not suffice for differentiating both types of home-absence. If and only if this futural state-of-affairs is directly bound up with one’s own set of deep personal commitments and part of the content of one’s promise of home (cf. b), does its experiential inaccessibility actualise in a felt lack of home that forms the second type of home-absence.

(Def) H-A²: Feeling not at home = Privation of home that actualises in a felt lack of home in relation to others/social space, where this is due to (a) the experiential inaccessibility of distinctively future-directed social possibilities for interpersonal connection due to (b) the experiential inaccessibility of wider social possibilities that are a pre-requisite for unlocking experiential access to the former.

4.4.4. Feeling Not at Home and Social Disorientation

In closing this section, I now turn to Q₃: *How can such experiences amount to a sense of social disorientation?* I have argued that a person's felt lack of home is due to the privation of home, where this comes with the experience of lacking experiential access to distinctively future-directed social possibilities for interpersonal connection that are grounded in and integral to one's promise of home. In feeling not at home in navigating social space, therefore, a person experiences themselves as unable to move towards the realisation of significant futural possibilities integral to their promise of home. This experience, I submit, is what brings about and actualises in a sense of *feeling at a loss as to how to go on* in navigating social space. As Ratcliffe puts it, one's own experience of futurity is shaped by 'a sense of the ongoing projects and commitments that render things significant to us' and, importantly, 'constitute a sense of working towards something, a teleological direction'.⁴² Lacking experiential access to those possibilities that are integral to one's promise of home, one comes to experience one's personal future as directionless for the reason that one is prevented from living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which one's deep personal

⁴² M. Ratcliffe, 'Varieties of Temporal Experience in Depression', *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (1 April 2012): 122, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmp/jhs010>.

commitments find a meaningful place. The meaningful futural possibilities that do remain experientially accessible do not allow for the inhabitation of one's promise of home, to the effect that one feels disorientated in going forward.⁴³ As the presence of hope against hope makes salient, the queer child is painfully aware and convinced that there is nothing they can do to bring about their desired futural state-of-affairs of being accepted as a queer child.

On this proposed conception, social disorientation is constitutively attributable to feeling not at home in navigating social space, where the relevant type of experience is (1) radically first-personal, (2) distinctively social, and (3) comes with its own temporal horizon. Disorientation is *first-personal* in the sense that the person is the subject undergoing this experience. But it is *radical* in being first-personal in the sense that, in feeling disoriented, the person experiences themselves as confronted by the first-personal reflective experience of feeling not at home.⁴⁴ And importantly, it is *distinctively social* in the sense that, in feeling disoriented, the person experiences themselves as confronted by the first-personal reflective experience of navigating social space as in important ways experientially inaccessible to oneself but not to (certain) others. At the time of the experience, they cannot draw upon interpersonal and social regulatory resources for feeling at home that would contribute to their sense of feeling orientated in navigating social space. As a result, their experience takes place within a *distinctive temporal horizon* in that they are

⁴³ See Mehmel, 'Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity'.

⁴⁴ I here reuse a formulation of the *distinctively first-personal* character of the disorientation of profound interpersonal grief as described in previous work: 'Disorientation is *first-personal* in the sense that the bereaved is the subject who is undergoing the experience, and it is *radical* in being first-personal in the sense that, in not knowing how to go on and feeling directionless, the bereaved experiences themselves as confronted by the experiencing of losing a loved one.' (Mehmel, 'Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity', 995, italics original). But note that the here-proposed characterisation elaborates on and further spells out my previous thinking in paying attention to the relationship between metaphorical disorientation experiences and experiences of feeling not at home. This is also the reason why the relevant type of experience is not simply to be understood as radically first-personal (cf. my previous work) but also *distinctively social*, where this also has consequences for understanding its *temporal profile*.

prevented from living and acting under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which their deep personal commitments do find a meaningful place.⁴⁵ From a phenomenological perspective, the phenomenology of social disorientation thus reveals ‘social sensitivity’ to the experience of orientation as an underlying condition of navigating social space:⁴⁶ i.e., if and the extent to which one comes to feel orientated in social space depends on (a) how one finds oneself socially situated (centrally including one’s own set of deep personal commitments) in relation to (b) other people whom we depend upon and (c) surrounding spaces that are always already socially structured in specific ways.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Compare Jonathan Lear’s description of irony: ‘In a nutshell, the experience of irony is a peculiar experience that is essentially first-personal: not simply in the sense that all experience is the experience of some I, but that in having an experience of irony I experience myself as confronted by that very experience.’ Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 9. But note that there are two principal differences: (1) On Lear’s view, irony is experienced as yielding a sense of direction that is forward-moving. In contrast, social disorientation constitutively involves a sense of not knowing how to go on, which I shall develop in detail in Chapter Five. (2) Irony is experienced as profoundly calling into question one’s everyday existence, which can happen to one at any time. Whereas Lear does not explicitly locate the source of this destabilisation in the interpersonal and social realm, but instead traces it back to the inner workings of the human psyche and as such identifies it as a central human condition, social disorientation results from distinctively interpersonal and social dynamics and cannot be adequately understood without paying attention to these dynamics.

⁴⁶ The term ‘social sensitivity’ is borrowed from Ward’s phenomenological analysis of socially specific breakdown experiences and what they make phenomenologically salient; cf. Ward, ‘Standpoint Phenomenology’. See also 0.1., where I introduce and engage with Ward’s methodological approach.

⁴⁷ Note that this brings us back to the conception of social orientation as characterised with respect to these three features in Chapter One. It is worth recalling that the talk of “how one finds oneself socially situated” is deliberate: (a) it does not refer to a fixed placement within social space, but to a person’s self-understanding as occupying a certain social position relative to other people and the social norms governing shared social space; (b) it is not adequately captured by appealing to some fixed sense of identity (including identity markers), but centrally involves a set of deep personal commitments and thus a degree of self-identification against the backdrop of whatever identity one is perceived to occupy and treated accordingly; and (c) it is sensitive to the exercise of agency involved in navigating social space.

4.5. Conclusion

Much more can and should be said about the phenomenological structure of social disorientation, with a particular focus on (1) the mode of futurity operative in social disorientation and thus the distinctive temporal horizon that accompanies social disorientation, and (2) the question of the different types of social disorientation. I shall attend to these and related points in the next chapter, where I elaborate on the here-proposed conception. For now, let me close this chapter by attending to one dilemmatic worry that concerns the conceptual relation between feeling not at home and social disorientation as put forward in this chapter.

The worry has it that my conception of social disorientation may be confronted with the following dilemma: (A) one may object that in positing a *constitutive relation* between feeling not at home and social disorientation, my conceptual framework equivocates what appears to be two discrete notions and thus rendering the language of ‘disorientation’ obsolete. Along these lines, one may press that it is no longer immediately clear which notion (“home” or “(dis-)orientation”) ends up being the primary phenomenon of investigation and whether ‘social disorientation’ might better be simply re-described in terms of ‘lack of belonging’ – or other relevant cognates such as ‘exclusion’ – instead of warranting a discrete notion and analysis. This worry brings us back to an ambiguity that has already emerged in our critical discussion of Krueger’s work as representative of prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation in 4.2., where I identified the tendency to use disorientation and the negative counterpart to feeling at home interchangeably.⁴⁸ (B) Conversely, if these two notions refer to two discrete phenomena

⁴⁸ Note that this worry is particularly pressing for proponents of prominent conceptions of metaphorical disorientation as discussed in 4.2. for the reason that they do not distinguish between

and feeling not at home proves to be but *one core characteristic* of social disorientation, one may object that my conception shows to be incomplete and in need of other characteristic(s) for a phenomenologically discerning conception of social disorientation as a *distinct* phenomenon.

To address this dilemmatic worry, it is instructive to return to the phenomenological distinction between two different types of felt detachment from social space, introduced in 4.4.2. Recall that I distinguished between (1) a sense of detachment from social space (“I don’t belong *here*”) that involves the experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities for interpersonal connection, and (2) a sense of detachment from social space (“*I* don’t belong here”) that also involves the experiential inaccessibility of social possibilities for interpersonal connection that however are constitutive of a positively valenced sense of home specific to one’s own set of deep personal commitments. In introducing this distinction, I identified the formal object of the phenomenological category of feeling not at home to be narrower and the conditions for an experience of the relevant type to be stricter than what Ratcliffe designates with “felt lack of belonging”. Consistent with the phenomenological distinction between negation of home and privation of home, I suggested that only the second type of felt detachment from social space amounts to an instance of felt lack of belonging, where the focus is on the phenomenal character of *lack* (or loss) of home, for the reason that it involves a privation of home. In contrast, I suggested that the first type of felt detachment may better be characterised as a stronger instantiation of the phenomenological category of not feeling at home, where the focus is on the phenomenal character of *absence* of home, for the reason that it involves a negation

different types of home-absence, where this results in the tendency of using disorientation and home-absence *per se* interchangeably.

of home in that others/social space do neither enable nor disable a positively valenced sense of home.

Now, I acknowledge that this phenomenological distinction will not always correspond to all everyday uses of the English language term “lack of belonging”. This is because both types of felt detachment from social space may very well be expressed as an experience of “lack of belonging”. Even so, or rather precisely because of this, I suggest that this helps defuse the dilemmatic worry raised above. Concerning the first horn of the dilemmatic worry, it makes salient that a simple appeal to “lack of belonging” does not adequately bring into view the phenomenon of social disorientation that is constitutively attributable to feeling not at home in navigating social space. Hence, social disorientation cannot adequately be redescribed in terms of “lack of belonging”. And concerning the second horn, it demonstrates that while “lack of belonging” and “social disorientation” are discrete phenomena, appealing to the narrower category of feeling not at home makes possible a phenomenologically discerning conception of social disorientation as a distinct phenomenon, with particular focus on its interpersonal-affective dimensions and the futural-agential dimensions. Reflecting on the English language term “orientation” in its pre-twentieth century uses, Cressida J. Heyes notes: ‘to be oriented is to be located relative to a field (spatial or semiotic) and along a vector (an orientation suggests not only where I am now but where I am going in the future.’⁴⁹ The here-proposed conception of social disorientation via feeling not at home pays attention to both: how one experiences navigating social space in the here and now but also how this affects one’s experience of futurity going forward in navigating social space.

⁴⁹ Cressida J Heyes, ‘Dislocation and Self-Certainty’, *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (23 June 2018): 8, <https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2018.2.3485>.

CHAPTER FIVE

Temporal Experience, Powerlessness, and Social Disorientation

In Chapter Four, I have established that social disorientation is constitutively attributable to the privation of home, where this brings about and actualises in the experience of not knowing how to go on in navigating social space. In this final chapter, I examine in detail what this experience of a “sense of not knowing how to go on” consists of, with a particular focus on its temporal character.

In 5.1., I begin by clarifying the target phenomenon that concerns the first-personal experience of one’s personal future as directionless. I then, in 5.2., turn to the most prominent temporal model to make sense of this mode of futurity operative in social disorientation. I call this the “disappointed-anticipation model”, according to which a sense of not knowing how to go on is associated with the disappointment of a particular set(s) of anticipations as grounded in habitual patterns of navigating social space. In 5.3., I argue that this model cannot sufficiently account for the altered sense of futurity operative in metaphorical disorientation. Instead, in 5.4., I develop the position that the relevant phenomenology is primarily attributable to a perceived lack of agency over one’s personal future. I further demonstrate that such powerlessness takes a distinctively social form as the direct result of feeling not at home in navigating social space. In 5.5., I bring my discussion to a close and propose a unifying phenomenological structure, *social disorientation*, where the relevant type of experience consists in a constitutive relationship between feeling at home and perceived lack of agency over one’s personal future. I submit that a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation as social

disorientation can not only avoid the shortcomings of the spatialising strategy introduced in Chapter One, but it can also provide a satisfying answer to the DP.

5.1. The Phenomenon in Question

In this section, I clarify my target phenomenon: that is, the relevant type of experience that I shall consider and analyse under the header of a “sense of not knowing how to go on”. This clears the way for the subsequent two sections, in which I shall canvass and critically examine the most prominent interpretation of this experience.¹

With the publication of Harbin’s *Disorientation and Moral Life*, the talk of a “sense of not knowing how to go on” has become increasingly prominent in philosophical scholarship.² This talk is typically evoked to zoom in on the phenomenal character of metaphorical disorientation, where it serves to capture what it is like subjectively to undergo a disorientation-inducing experience. As Harbin observes, such experiences ‘prompt a particular question in response: *How can I go on?*’.³ Recall that, for Harbin, metaphorical disorientations are ‘sustained, difficult experiences that make it hard to go on’.⁴ They stand in contrast with merely disruptive experiences that Harbin characterises as ‘passing, momentary flashes of unease quickly followed by a return to feeling fine’.⁵ According to Harbin, therefore, metaphorical disorientation experiences have a

¹ There are, of course, different ways to articulate the target phenomenon, including (but not limited to) “feeling at a loss as to how to go on” and “feeling/being without direction”. Unless otherwise stated, I treat these articulations interchangeably.

² For example, see Henk Van Gils-Schmidt, Clinton Peter Verdonschot, and Katrien Schaubroeck, eds., ‘Special Issue The Value of Disorientation’ 23, no. 3/4 (August 2020). All the articles emerged out of a workshop on Harbin’s work at the University of Antwerp in May 2018. All authors in this issue explicitly follow Harbin and, it may be added, uncritically accept her characterisation.

³ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, xii, italics original.

⁴ Harbin, 17.

⁵ Harbin, 18.

temporally-extended, diachronic character. While I share this emphasis on diachronic temporality, more needs to be said so as to single out what is distinctive of temporal experience in metaphorical disorientation in contrast to other emotional experiences of upheaval in navigating social space across time. For example, training for a marathon would certainly amount to a significant challenge for me, making my life much more difficult, if not miserable for a considerable period of time. But it would not amount to metaphorical disorientation. This makes salient that a ‘sense of not knowing how to go on’ operative in metaphorical disorientation is not sufficiently characterised as a mere personal challenge across time. Instead, I submit that it articulates a distinctive mode of futurity that concerns a phenomenological alteration in *how one’s personal future is experienced: namely, as directionless*. In this concluding chapter, my concern is exclusively with this altered sense of one’s personal future. Two points are important to clarify in this respect.

First: I do not intend to develop an all-encompassing account of every change to futurity in metaphorical disorientation, nor of the relationship between temporal experience and metaphorical disorientation in general. Note that a ‘sense of not knowing how to go on’ can encompass a variety of changes to temporal experiences in metaphorical disorientation. In particular, the disoriented person may experience a change in the flow of time (e.g., our queer child may experience time as painfully slow when interacting with their queerphobic parents, but, by contrast, as exhilaratingly fast when interacting with fellow queer folks), or even a felt suspension of time altogether (e.g., the experience of being catapulted out of time with the death of a loved one).⁶ I interpret such changes to

⁶ The theme of suspended time is well documented in first-personal reports of profound interpersonal grief. One prominent example is Riley’s account of losing her adult son, which she recounts as leading to the ‘acute sensation of being cut off from any temporal flow’ and a ‘freezing of time’ (Denise Riley, *Time Lived, without Its Flow*, Revised edition (London: Picador, 2019), 7). Note that Velasco et al. pick up on this theme, alongside five other themes (temporal rift, temporal vertigo, impoverished time, tunnel vision, spatial and social scaffolding of time). See Velasco et al., ‘Lost in Pandemic Time’. They identify these six themes as part of their empirical study on temporal disorientations during the COVID-19 pandemic. For present purposes, the temporal

temporal experience in metaphorical disorientation as both (1) the effect of feeling not at home in navigating social space (e.g., the queer child experiences a slowing down of time in virtue of feeling not at home with their queerphobic parents) and (2) a symptom of a more general, overarching sense of one's personal future as directionless. In what follows, I focus on (2) and argue that it is attributable to (1). As I suggested in Chapter Four in my preliminary answer to Q₃: *How can such experiences [i.e., feeling not at home] amount to a sense of social disorientation?*, in feeling not at home, a person is experientially unable to move towards the realisation of one's promise of home, where this amounts to a sense of not knowing how to go on.

Second: our target phenomenon must be clearly and consistently distinguished from both a 'sense of not knowing *what* to do' and a 'sense of not knowing *how* to do x'. Both of these renderings of 'sense of not knowing how to go on' concern situations in which a person lacks the relevant epistemic and/or practical resources to make a decision and/or implement a decision made. I consider them both broadly as *epistemic forms of metaphorical disorientation*, where the person lacks the relevant knowledge to

disorientation of tunnel vision corresponds most closely to our target phenomenon. To quote them: "Just like with suspended time, *tunnel vision* leaves people unable to go on. They cannot imagine future state of affairs, and this difficulty in looking ahead means that one is adrift, unable to orient oneself forward in time' (Velasco et al., 1133, italics original). While it is correct to pick up on this alteration to futurity in metaphorical disorientation, I believe that Velasco et al. provide a phenomenologically inaccurate characterisation. When their interviewee states that they 'feel unable to project myself' (Velasco et al., 1133), contra the authors, I do not think that this should be interpreted literally. This is for the reason that the interviewee is not only still capable of imagining the future but is also sensitive to better or worse futural states-of-affairs. Notice that the interviewee is quite explicit about the future that they can imagine: namely, one "where I cannot do anything productive for several days' (Velasco et al., 1144). In making this point, I follow Owen et al.'s phenomenological interpretation of the statement 'I see no future' that is often reported by depressed people, where this, so they identify, need not be incompatible with but often involves 'the recognition of *normatively significant differences* among different yet-to-be-realised futures' (Gareth S. Owen et al., "Temporal Inabilities and Decision-Making Capacity in Depression," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 14, no. 1 (March 2015): 176, italics original, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-013-9327-x>). Part of this chapter is to cultivate the interpretive difficulty of what such a phenomenological alteration to futurity in metaphorical disorientation does and does not consist of. For now, it suffices to refer back to the findings of Chapter Three, which point to the following, alternative interpretation: certain imagined futural possibilities no longer present themselves as *first-personal possibilities for the disoriented person*.

successfully navigate social space. Importantly, this need not involve feeling not at home, which I have established as constitutive of our target phenomenon. Of course, it may involve this emotional response to navigating social space. Imagine losing your previous job that had provided you with a promise of home. In this case, epistemic disorientation may involve or be accompanied by social disorientation, which in turn may augment or be augmented by it. But the central point is, I submit, that there is *no essential relation* between epistemic disorientation and social disorientation. Already note that I shall return to this issue later on for the reason that the scholarship does not always fully appreciate this phenomenological distinction.⁷

5.2. The Disappointed-Anticipation Model

With our target phenomenon in view, the next task is to get clear on its phenomenological structure: what does this altered sense of futurity involve? While the talk of a “sense of not knowing how to go on” is becoming commonplace, the phenomenology of futurity in metaphorical disorientation has remained surprisingly under-researched. There is the tendency to render “not knowing how to go on” into “no longer going on as usual”, where

⁷ This phenomenological distinction is also made by Krueger ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’, 20–33. He notes that epistemic disorientation need not involve a sense of ‘*not at home* in the spaces I inhabit and the people I interact with’ (Krueger, 24, italics original). Krueger motivates this distinction by way of considering what it is like to lose one’s religious faith. *Pace* Krueger, I do not think that losing one’s religious faith is a straightforward example of epistemic disorientation. Quite to the contrary, I believe it to exhibit a remarkably social character: it is likely to be accompanied by a profound and far-reaching sense of lack of belonging in relation to one’s religious community, one’s religious institution, etc. For a more clear-cut example of epistemic disorientation, see “disorientations in thinking” in Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*. One example here is acquiring new knowledge about forms of injustice and oppressive structures that in turn may impact the ways one thinks about e.g., justice, fairness, or equality. See also Lian Ben-Moshe ‘Dis-Orientation, Dis-Epistemology and Abolition’, *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (23 June 2018), <https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2018.2.3491>. and Stephen Calme ‘White Fragility as White Epistemic Disorientation’, *Journal of Moral Theology* 9, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 136–52 - interestingly, both cited by Krueger ‘Finding (and Losing) One’s Way’, 24, fn. 7 - for related discussions on epistemic disorientations, race, and activism.

this in turn yields a strong focus on theorising the relevant type of experience in terms of the disruption to previous patterns of navigating social space. Such a temporal model is broadly operating in most proposed characterisations of metaphorical disorientation.⁸ I call this *the disappointed-anticipation model*, on which the sense of not knowing how to go on becomes associated with the disappointment of a particular set(s) of anticipations as grounded in habitual patterns of navigating social space. In what follows, I provide an outline of the disappointed-anticipation model as it prevails in the scholarship before I then, in the next section, turn to a critical assessment.⁹

Proponents of the disappointed-anticipation model diverge on whether disappointed anticipations cause a sense of not knowing how to go on, or whether they are a core characteristic of a sense of not knowing how to go on.¹⁰ Yet, they all share the view

⁸ This includes the work of e.g., Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; Stefan Berg, *Spielwerk: orientierungshermeneutische Studien zum Verhältnis von Musik und Religion*, Religion in philosophy and theology 60 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Casey, *Remembering*; Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*; Joseph Keeping, 'The Time Is Out of Joint: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Grief', *Symposium* 18, no. 2 (2014): 233–55, <https://doi.org/10.5840/symposium201418226>, Stegmaier, *Philosophy of Orientation*; Van Gils-Schmidt, 'Practical Disorientation & Transformative Experiences as a Framework for Understanding & Exploring the Covid-19 Pandemic's Impact'; Hartmut von Sass, 'Orientation, Indexicality, and Comparisons', *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (25 September 2020): 219–42, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jtph-2020-0007>; Velasco, 'Disorientation and GIS-Informed Wilderness Search and Rescue'; Velasco, 'Disorientation and Self-Consciousness: A Phenomenological Inquiry'; Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, 'The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis'; Velasco et al., 'Temporal Disorientation and the Covid-19 Crisis: Present Episodic Confusion, Past-Oriented Sustained Disbelief, and Future-Oriented Anxiety Are the Three Main Ways in Which People Were Temporally Disoriented during the Pandemic'; Velasco et al., 'Lost in Pandemic Time'; Velasco and Casati, 'Subjective Disorientation as a Metacognitive Feeling'; Velasco and Casati, 'The Many Faces of Disorientation: A Response to Daniel R. Montello'; Velasco and Casati, 'Making and Breaking Our Shared World: A Phenomenological Analysis of Disorientation as a Way of Understanding Collective Emotions in Distributed Cognition'.

⁹ One may be surprised that I refer to this temporal model as *the disappointed-anticipation model* rather than, let's say, *the disrupted-habits model*. As suggested by the assumption identified above, the focus of most proponents tends to be past-directed, while little is explicitly said about futurity. But notice that, of course, this past-directed characterisation comes with a certain temporal account of futurity. Habit-disruption and anticipation-disappointment should not be regarded as two separate phenomena but, instead, as two inextricably related dimensions of temporal experience in metaphorical disorientation. And since my concern in this chapter is with the future more so than the past, I talk of the disappointed-anticipation model.

¹⁰ In identifying this ambiguity, I draw on Stockdale, 'Moral Shock', 500. In the context of the phenomenon of moral shock, she observes that the philosophical literature does not always appreciate 'the difference between what shock is and what causes it'. I shall return to Stockdale in

that not knowing how to go on is an emotional response to navigating social space, where a particular set(s) of anticipations, as grounded in habitual patterns of navigating social space, is disappointed. Present disorientation experiences, on this model, are construed in terms of a mismatch between past and future. To give just two examples: it is widely agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has been so disorientating precisely because of ‘disrupting routines and projects that give meaning and purpose to our lives’,¹¹ because it has ‘doubtlessly destabilized the habituality of our social world’ where ‘the disintegration of our habitual frames of reference in a multitude of dimensions (social, temporal ...) often leaves us unable to go on’.¹² In the context of profound grief, a similar line of explanation can be identified: ‘I suggest that the disorientating quality results from the discord between the world that we affectively inhabit and the world in which we currently find ourselves’, ‘in grief, all the future-directed intentions that involve the loved one lost, whether posited or implicit, find cruel refutation’,¹³ or ‘grief thus disorients us inasmuch as patterns of feeling and acting with which we are familiar are no longer available to us. Our lives cannot proceed in precisely the same manner as they did before’.¹⁴

5.3.1. Turning to the phenomenon of metaphorical disorientation, examples for the former are Luckner, *Klugheit*: (Berlin: DE GRUYTER, 2005), 11, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110898309>. or Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 90, whereas for the latter see Harbin *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 99. or Keeping ‘The Time Is Out of Joint: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Grief’, 244. Although the phenomenological critique I put forward in 5.3. applies to both readings, my focus in providing an outline of the disappointed-anticipation model is on the latter. This is because I consider it to be the most plausible version: presenting a phenomenological (as opposed to merely causal) explanation of the relevant type of experience. In construing a sense of not knowing how to go on as an emotional response about disappointed anticipations (rather than merely the result of), I submit that it can better account for the phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation. This is because, from the perspective of lived experience, the conceptual distinction between the cause of and the emotional response to emotional upheaval is not clear-cut but blurred. In particular, this is the case for temporally-extended, diachronic experiences, of which metaphorical disorientation is a prime example.

¹¹ Van Gils-Schmidt, Verdonschot, and Schaubroeck, ‘Editorial “the Value of Disorientation”’, 1.

¹² Velasco, Perroy, and Casati, ‘The Collective Disorientation of the COVID-19 Crisis’, 456.

¹³ Keeping, ‘The Time Is Out of Joint’, 244, 246.

¹⁴ Michael Cholbi, ‘Finding the Good in Grief: What Augustine Knew That Meursault Could Not’, *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 3, no. 1 (2017): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2017.15>. As I have argued elsewhere, this is this is a common position in the scholarship on grief, however obscures what grief is centrally about: not the disappointment

Guided by these examples, we can formulate a more formalised characterisation of the disappointed-anticipation model:

(Def) D-A: Not knowing how to go on = Emotional response to navigating social space, where (a) a particular set of anticipations, as grounded in habitual patterns specific to one's life, is disappointed. (b) The felt disappointment of such anticipations brings about and actualises in an uncertainty as to how to go on because things no longer go on as usual, where (c) this is accompanied by a negative evaluation of one's personal future.

Let me highlight two points. On this model, first, there is an *essential relation* between metaphorical disorientation and disappointed anticipations (and, by implication, disrupted habits). A sense of not knowing how to go on is an emotional response to navigating social space that is centrally about disappointed anticipations. On this model, second, the relevant type of experience is typically construed as a matter of *what is anticipated*. The disruption to habitual patterns of navigating social space amounts to a change in the content of anticipation, where the uncertainty as to how to go on is accompanied by a negative evaluation of one's personal future.

of past habits but the experience of a foreclosed future that holds *irrespective* of the extent to which there is a breakdown of formerly shared practices and habitual patterns of navigating social space. See Mehmel, 'Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity'; see also 'Ratcliffe and Richardson, 'Grief over Non-Death Losses'. The phenomenological critique I develop from 5.3. onwards builds on, complicates, and broadens this argument.

5.3. A Phenomenological Critique

In this section, I move to develop a phenomenological critique of the disappointed-anticipation model. To be clear: past-directed breakdowns will of course affect how the future is experienced in the present. This is because past, present, and future cannot be regarded as independent temporal dimensions but are part of the same experiential structure of temporality. However, I argue that the altered sense of future in metaphorical disorientation is considerably more complex than the disappointed-anticipation model, with its past-directed emphasis, can account for. This is because (1) important types of metaphorical disorientation are not attributable to the disappointment of a particular set of anticipations in navigating in social space. I further argue that (2) the disappointed-anticipation model obscures the relevant phenomenology by construing the altered sense of future in metaphorical disorientation primarily as a matter of what is anticipated.

5.3.1. Confirmed Anticipations and Disorientation

I begin by returning to our principal case study of the queer child. This example serves to illustrate that a person can feel disorientated in navigating social space, where one's anticipations about how things will go are confirmed. Further, it constitutes a paradigmatic example of an important type of metaphorical disorientation which Harbin names "disorientations of ill fit", that is, 'disorientations of having an identity and a way of being that is *poor fit* with other people's lives and plans'.¹⁵ Whether or not we regard this notion of "disorientations of ill fit" as phenomenologically helpful (already note that I shall shortly question this), this type of metaphorical disorientation must therefore be accounted for in

¹⁵ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 110, italics original.

order for any philosophical account of the temporal structure of ‘sense of not knowing how to go on’ to be adequate to metaphorical disorientation.

In Chapter Three, I argued that, in the presence of their queerphobic parents, the child cannot be said to live and act under a phenomenological idea of the determinate future containing success, but only the possibility of success. Importantly, I emphasised that this does *not* mean that they are incapable of imagining a positive future in which they are accepted as a queer child, which is also why their phenomenological idea still contains the possibility of success. But this imagined futural possibility, while theoretically available to the child, does not present itself as a *first-personal possibility for the child* in the given situation (i.e., taking the form of ‘I can see x but not for me’).

From this phenomenological characterisation, two things follow for analysing the child’s experience of futurity operative in their disorientation experience: (a) their anticipation about how things will go clearly involves the expectation that their queerphobic parents will not accept them, for they would otherwise not hope against hope for the futural possibility of being accepted as a queer child. And (b) since there is nothing intrinsically impossible about the parents undergoing a change of heart, the child’s assessment of the situation must be grounded in, and directly correlate with, previous second-person interactions with their parents in which they had to experience their parents’ queerphobia. When interacting with their parents, therefore, it would seem unlikely that – contra the disappointed-anticipation model – the child’s sense of not knowing how to go on is centrally about the disappointment of a particular set(s) of anticipations. Quite to the contrary, I submit that this case study illustrates how one can feel disorientated even when one’s anticipations about how things will go, as grounded in previous experiences, are confirmed. This felt confirmation of anticipations brings about and actualises in an experience of uncertainty for the queer child as to how to go on precisely *because* the second-

person interactions with their queerphobic parents proceed as usual, where their experience of the situation is marked by their subjective sense of their own agency as one of radical powerlessness.

With this case study, I have provided an example of metaphorical disorientation that does not meet the proposed characterisation of the disappointed-anticipation model. If my phenomenological characterisation is correct, it appears that the disappointed-anticipation model cannot adequately account for the temporal experience operative in the child's metaphorical disorientation. What is more, I believe this case study to put pressure on the view that there is an essential relation between disorientation and disappointed anticipations. This is because the disappointment of a particular set(s) of anticipations turns out to be a *contingent* characteristic of metaphorical disorientation only, which has become salient in the preceding characterisation of the queer child. Though the queer child case is just one counterexample, let me emphasise that this type of metaphorical disorientation is neither rare nor insignificant: as repeatedly demonstrated throughout this thesis, marginalised people disproportionately often feel disoriented by virtue of not matching the dominant norms of the social world, where this can become both a regular and expected part of their reality.

5.3.2. Two Possible Responses and Radical Disorientation

Proponents of the disappointed-anticipation model may reply to my critique in at least two possible ways: (1) to narrow the account to the specific type of “disorientations of interruption” only and argue that the child's experience does not qualify as such, and (2) to refute my line of criticism by showing that my critique turns on a too reductive

understanding of anticipation. In this subsection, I closely examine both responses, with a view of further elaborating my critique of the disappointed-anticipation model.

First: proponents of the disappointed-model may try and defend their model by narrowing it to the type of “disorientations of interruption” only and argue that the queer child’s experience does not qualify as such. The category of “disorientations of interruptions” is taken from Harbin who distinguishes it from the previously mentioned category of “disorientations of ill fit”.¹⁶ On Harbin’s view, the former category of metaphorical disorientation is about ‘becoming disoriented when life has not gone according to plan’.¹⁷ Informed by this typology, proponents may emphasise that their model only covers those cases of metaphorical disorientation where one experiences a significant disruption to one’s habitual patterns of navigating social space.¹⁸ Accordingly, proponents may rightly point out that the child’s sense of not knowing how to go on does not meet this requirement, precisely because it is centrally about the confirmation of anticipations. Along these lines, they may conclude that their analysis targets a different *explanandum* of disorientation, in which case my critique would miss its target.

From the perspective of the DP, I believe such a line of defence to be unsatisfactory inasmuch as one would expect any attempt to make sense of a ‘sense of not knowing how to go on’ to identify a core structure underlying various metaphorical disorientation experiences. In addition, recall that at least some proponents of the disappointed-

¹⁶ Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 110-24.

¹⁷ Harbin, 99.

¹⁸ Cf.: ‘Unexpected events regularly throw a wrench into one’s plans for how one’s day-to-day life would go, as when I lose my voice the day I need to give a talk, or when traffic is delayed the morning I need to be at work early. These kinds of minor interruptions can be irritating without being disorientating. When more substantial events occur, one is likely to be disoriented’. (Harbin, 99) However intuitive this distinction may seem, Harbin does not identify a principled way by which to distinguish minor interruptions from disorientating interruptions. From the argument developed in this thesis, my proposal would be to suggest that disorientating interruptions involve the loss of possibilities that are bound up with one’s deep personal commitments and are therefore integral to a sense of who one is.

anticipation model like Velasco et al. explicitly aim to provide a unified theory of metaphorical disorientation (cf. Chapter One). But let us take a closer look at this modified version and examine its plausibility. Note that its success is contingent on the plausibility of the distinction between “disorientations of interruption” and “disorientations of ill fit”, so that proponents could clearly rule out the queer child as an instance of disorientations of interruption. I find the plausibility of this distinction to be problematic for conceptual and phenomenological reasons.

To begin, note that Harbin’s distinction is motivated primarily by the observation that there are two broad and generally different types of sources for feeling disoriented: ‘Distinct from the disorientations of having one’s life and plans interrupted are the disorientations of having an identity and a way of being that is a *poor fit* with other people’s lives and plans.’¹⁹ I think it is important to acknowledge a plurality of sources, which, it can be added, animates the significant difficulty that the DP presents for any philosophical conception of metaphorical disorientation. But the central question is whether this difference in source brings about a difference in phenomenological structure, so, that the plausibility of the distinction could be maintained. And from this perspective, what may have appeared intuitive at first is no longer self-evident. In fact, I understand the goal of (classical) phenomenological research precisely to consist in identifying a common phenomenological structure whilst acknowledging a plurality of sources for the relevant type of experience to occur. Take the example of Ratcliffe’s study of interpersonal loneliness as discussed in the previous chapter.²⁰ Ratcliffe seeks to demonstrate that loneliness can and does arise due to various circumstances (may it be e.g., because of moving to another city

¹⁹ Harbin, 110, italics original.

²⁰ Ratcliffe, ‘Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging’.

or losing a loved one) but also that there is nonetheless a phenomenological structure common to many such loneliness experiences.

In addition to not being self-evident, I also believe this distinction to be misleading in the sense that it turns on a too narrow understanding of the social. The emphasis on interpersonal and social dynamics as the distinguishing characteristic of disorientations of ill fit (recall, ‘distinct ... is a *poor fit* with other people’s lives and plans’) may suggest that only this type of disorientation is constitutively bound up with inhabiting social space that appears in important ways inaccessible to one but not others. This, however, would be to ignore the interpersonal and social dimensions that are also central to disorientations of interruption. Imagining the disorientation following the death of one’s lifelong partner, it would seem unlikely that the relevant type of experience is not also about ‘a way of being that is a *poor fit* with other people’s lived and plans’. As Ratcliffe identifies, it is a common theme in first-personal testimonies that the bereaved experiences a non-localised sense of being cut off from the social world, which becomes salient in questionnaire responses like ‘Everything goes on as normal and you feel detached from it, isolated and lonely even in a crowd’ or ‘You feel separate from it ... everything is going on as normal for them but your world has shattered the worst ever!’²¹ For present purposes, it suffices to note that the bereaved’s way of being-in-the-world was so dependent on their relationship with their loved person that their death yields a sense of no longer being part of an otherwise shared social world.

What Harbin herself considers to be a clear example of disorientations of interruption,²² therefore, turns out to be not only an emotional response to a sudden event dramatically changing one’s course of life but also, and centrally, exhibiting what is

²¹ Ratcliffe, 8.

²² Cf. Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 52.

allegedly distinctive of disorientations of ill fit: namely, a poor fit with the social world. Importantly, I do not wish to claim that the experiential content of disorientations of ill fit (e.g., due to marginalisation because of one's social identity in relation to the dominant norms) and that of disorientations of interruption (e.g., due to losing one's loved one) are identical. But from the perspective of the relevant phenomenology, I interpret both to be an emotional response to navigating social space, in which one feels not at home due to lacking experiential access to wider social possibilities that are required for feeling at home with other people and in social space in orientation-conferring ways (cf. Chapter Four). Consequently, it would be mistaken to construe a too stark contrast between disorientations of interruption and disorientations of ill fit, but rather think of the latter as making particularly salient interpersonal and social dynamics operating in metaphorical disorientations more widely.²³

Second: proponents of the disappointed-anticipation model may try and defend their model by pushing back against my characterisation of the queer child's experience. Recall that I emphasised that the child's anticipation about how things will go clearly involves the expectation that their queerphobic parents will not accept them. This served me as a reason to argue that the child's sense of not knowing how to go on is not about the disappointment but confirmation of what is anticipated in navigating this situation.

²³ Next to (a) not being self-evident and (b) misleading vis-à-vis the social (and, by extension, being experientially not as clear-cut as suggested by Harbin), let me briefly flag two additional worries here. They both concern the category of disorientations of ill fit: (c) I worry that the description of "ill fit" (as well as "poor fit") obscures the explicitly political, structural dimensions (e.g., racism, queerphobia etc.) that underwrite and shape those cases of metaphorical disorientation of interest to Harbin, where marginalised bodies are often explicitly and deliberately excluded from "fitting". As Springer remarks: "'ill-fit" is still an oddly depoliticized way of marking such social realities' (Springer, 'review of *Disorientation and Moral Life*, by Ami Harbin', para. 9). And (d) I worry that, without further clarification, such a characterisation may suggest that one comes to feel disorientated simply by virtue of one's social identity in relation to the dominant norms of social space. But as I have argued throughout this thesis (see, in particular, Chapter One), this view is problematic for both phenomenological-descriptive and phenomenological-critical reasons.

Now, proponents may object that this turns on too reductive understanding of the content of the child's anticipation: namely, as *fully determinate*. As generally noted, 'the content of what is anticipated ... may be more or less determinate', that is, not fully determinate and therefore leaving room for the indeterminate.²⁴ However, once this is acknowledged, it is no longer self-evident as to why the child's more or less determinate content of anticipation may not, after all, involve the felt disappointment of particular anticipations.

In a recent paper on the phenomenon of *moral shock*, Stockdale anticipates a similar defence in response to her critique of the standard model of moral shock as an emotional response to something contrary to one's expectations.²⁵ Her critique is that not all cases fit this model, such as when you are shocked viewing your neighbour watching porn, even though you know (and therefore expect) that they do this every day at the same time in public. In defence of the standard model, she then anticipates that proponents may argue that 'the vagueness of our expectations leaves open the possibility that the *way* in which they are confirmed is unexpected'.²⁶ Applying such a reasoning to our case study, therefore, proponents of the disappointed-anticipation model may suggest that the child, although generally anticipating their parents will not accept them as a queer child, may be taken back by specific details of either content (e.g., exclaiming they would disown their own child if it was queer) or form (e.g., being even more forceful and aggressive than usual) of their parents' queerphobia. Along these lines, proponents may argue that our case study can still meet the proposed characterisation of the disappointed-anticipation model.²⁷

²⁴ Matthew Ratcliffe, Mark Ruddell, and Benedict Smith, 'What Is a "sense of foreshortened future?" A Phenomenological Study of Trauma, Trust, and Time', *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (17 September 2014): 5, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01026>.

²⁵ Katie Stockdale, 'Moral Shock', *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 8, no. 3 (September 2022): 496–511, <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2021.15>.

²⁶ Stockdale, 502, italics original.

²⁷ Notice that, with this line of response, the relevant type of experience as characterised by the disappointed-anticipation model no longer takes the form of "x but not x", where one's

In response, let me begin by agreeing that the child's content of anticipation is not fully determinate. It seems phenomenologically implausible and, indeed, even megalomaniac to assume that one is capable of completely exhausting the content of x before x has actually occurred. Not to mention that one's anticipation of things often operates in the background of experience and is neither fully nor immediately available to conscious reflection and articulation. As Stockdale puts it: 'Except for fictional characters with psychic powers, none of us live our lives forming intricately detailed expectations about how people will behave and how events will unfold.'²⁸ But proponents of the disappointed-anticipation model are mistaken, I submit, in taking this as a reason against my critique. In the analogous case of moral shock, Stockdale observes that such a line of reply is confronted with the challenge 'to explain what about the porn viewer scenario you did not expect after all'.²⁹ Although this is true, I believe both the proponents' line of reply and Stockdale's own observation turn on a too stark contrast between what is expected and what is unexpected. To motivate this, let me briefly turn to Edmund Husserl's study of anticipation, where my concern is exclusively with his remarks on "open possibilities".³⁰

Husserl employs the term of "open possibility" to refer to the *mode of anticipation* in which one vaguely anticipates x where the content of x is not yet fully determinate but remains relatively general. Husserl illustrates this with the example of a coloured object. Seeing the front of the object in colour, one may anticipate the back to be also in colour, without anticipating it to be a specific colour. As this example implies, for Husserl, anticipating in the mode of open possibility does not mean that any present experience of x

anticipation of x is disappointed, but " x but y ", where one is confronted with something unexpected. That said, the content difference between these two formulations should not be overstated: for something to be experienced as unexpected, one's anticipation of x still must be disappointed in the sense of not occurring.

²⁸ Stockdale, 502.

²⁹ Stockdale, 502

³⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgement*, ed. James S. Churchill, trans. Karl Ameriks (London: Routledge, 1948), 105–8.

amounts to a fulfilment of the anticipation of x : “But this uncertainty has the special characteristic that the color contingently given in it is precisely one that is contingent, for which nothing chosen arbitrarily can be substituted, but only some color or other.”³¹ Only if x turns out to be with colour, therefore, can one’s anticipations of x be regarded as confirmed.

Guided by Husserl’s remarks, I propose that what Stockdale describes as ‘an element of the unexpected’ cannot be put into such a neat opposition with what the queer child does anticipate (or, in her language, expects).³² In our case study, it seems phenomenologically more plausible to construe the element of the unexpected as an actualisation of an open possibility. The queer child must have had many painful second-person confrontations with their parents’ queerphobia, for, again, otherwise they would not hope against hope but simply hope for being accepted as a queer child. Taking this seriously, however, it would seem unlikely that the relevant ‘element of the unexpected’ does not broadly concord with the child’s general horizon of experience in navigating this situation. If I am broadly right on this, the child’s sense of not knowing how to go on should arguably be characterised not so much as an emotional response to the disappointment of a particular (set of) anticipations but, instead, to the confirmation of a general set of anticipations.³³

³¹ Husserl, 107.

³² Cf. Stockdale, 502.

³³ My point is not to suggest that there is altogether no difference between the expected and the unexpected, nor that it is impossible for the child to experience something as genuinely unexpected. For instance, imagine the parents undergoing a change of heart, which, as aforementioned, is not theoretically impossible. But, at this point, I submit that the queer child could no longer be characterised as feeling disorientated in the here relevant sense. This is for the reason that the child would no longer feel not at home, recall, by virtue of (b) lacking experiential access to wider shared social possibilities (i.e., no longer navigating a queer-exclusionary social space). Recall further that it is this experiential access that is the precondition for (a) the experiential access to distinctively future-directed social possibilities for interpersonal connection (i.e., that make them feel at home with their parents). I emphasise this here for two reasons: (1) Gaining experiential access to (b) does not mean that the child will immediately be able to seize (a). This is because the process of re-orientation takes time and effort. (2) Disorientation and orientation should be

Of course, proponents of the disappointed-anticipation model may object that this characterisation downplays the extent to which the child's sense of not knowing how to go on may, after all, be specifically attributable to being taken back by the element of the unexpected, *irrespective* of whether or not it is in line with the child's general set of anticipations. Even if one were to grant this for the sake of argument, the proponents of the disappointed-anticipation are faced with another challenge that strikes at the heart of their conception. I argue that their focus on the *what of anticipation* (i.e., its noematic aspect) obscures the relevant phenomenology, where this becomes particularly salient when we turn to another type of metaphorical disorientation. For this, I move to consider Jonathan Lear's much discussed study of the cultural annihilation and, by extension, 'massive disorientation' of the Crow Nation.³⁴

Lear traces how the Crow Nation was moved to a colonial settlement by the United States. Being forced to give up their entire way of life as Crow, they faced a collapse in both world- and self-understanding; to quote Lear on this point:

Insofar as I am a Crow subject there is nothing left for me to do; and there is nothing left for me to deliberate about, intend, or plan for. Insofar as I am a Crow subject, *I* have ceased to be. All that's left is a ghostlike existence that stands witness to the death of the subject. Such a witness might well say something enigmatic like "After this, nothing happened."³⁵

This passage painfully captures the profound sense of despair that the Crow Nation was likely to experience. As Huber writes: 'Without explicit reference to the notion, Lear

characterised not so much as two dichotomous states but rather along a continuum with two different poles. This is because gaining experiential access to (b) is likely to involve both orientating and disorientating experiential aspects. That said, the important point here is that, at the time of gaining experiential access to (b), the child is no longer experiencing their personal future as directionless; however, this is precisely my target phenomenon.

³⁴ Lear, *Radical Hope*, 27.

³⁵ Lear, 49–50, italics original.

describes the Crow as in a state of despair, unable to imagine or see a way forward to living a good life in the future.’³⁶ But there is more to this passage. Recall that the queer child’s sense of not knowing how to go on is experienced in relation to the imagined futural possibility of being accepted as a queer child. In contrast, this passage reveals that the here relevant type of experience does not have a clear intentional object. I submit that the Crow Nation’s sense of not knowing how to go on is experienced as far-reaching and global. But more so, it is experienced as comprehensive in that, at the time of feeling disoriented, the Crow Nation is confronted with the loss of intelligibility of an entire system of meaning, including all meaningful anticipations as Crow (i.e., neither merely this or that particular anticipation, nor this or that particular set of anticipations). In a reply to critics of his study, Lear emphasises that ‘I can make no sense of my past, or my people’s past, or my culture’s past *practically understood: that is, as a way of going forward* in my deliberations, choices, actions, aspirations and identifications’.³⁷ This means that the Crow Nation experiences a radical form of metaphorical disorientation, where this constitutively involves the experiential inability to meaningfully anticipate anything in particular *as* Crow.³⁸

³⁶ Jakob Huber, ‘Hope from Despair’, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (March 2023): 92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12283>.

³⁷ Jonathan Lear, ‘Response to Hubert Dreyfus and Nancy Sherman’, 86, italics original.

³⁸ To avoid any possible misunderstandings, let me make clear that my focus of analysis here exclusively concerns the Crow Nation. I am *not* concerned with Plenty Coups, the chief of the Crow Nation, who sets out to lead his tribe through this period. This is because, following Lear’s interpretation, Plenty Coups received a visionary dream that allowed him to see a possible Crow future, however vague. Most important for present purposes is the fact that this dream served him as a source of orientation, such that Plenty Coups did feel that there were things he had to do to navigate the situation, notably to “adhere to the virtues of the chickadee”, (Lear, *Radical Hope*, 47) and also things not to do. This central difference in emotionally responding to the cultural annihilation goes largely unnoticed in the scholarship. For instance, Christman takes Lear’s case study to be a prime example of “social disorientation”, where his own focus is ‘in particular the motives and experiences of Chief Plenty Coups who led them for a generation’ (Christman, ‘Autonomy and Social Disorientation’, 33). Contra such a reading, I would suggest that only the Crow Nation’s emotional response unequivocally qualifies as an experience of ‘massive disorientation’.

The preceding phenomenological characterisation of the Crow Nation's experience presents a serious challenge for the disappointed-anticipation model. The relevant type of experience cannot be adequately brought into view if we restrict our conceptual focus to the *content of what is experienced* and thus the *object of anticipation* (i.e., its noematic aspect). This is the case because the Crow Nation's sense of not knowing how to go on does not involve the anticipation of anything meaningful, in particular, where the relevant type of experience would come from the disappointment of a particular set(s) of anticipation. It instead concerns the very condition of intelligibility for any such content to be either disappointed or confirmed, which is no longer intact. It is therefore important to introduce a phenomenological distinction between two broad and importantly different types of experiences of one's personal future as directionless:

(Def) MD: Sense of not knowing how to go on *relative* = Disappointment *or* confirmation of a particular set(s) of anticipations, which actualises in a localised experience of one's personal future as directionless. Importantly, this experience arises against, and presupposes for its intelligibility, a stable backdrop of one's phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which one's deep personal commitments find a meaningful place.

(Def) MD: Sense of not knowing how to go on *radical* = Loss of intelligibility of one's phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which one's deep personal commitments find a meaningful place, which actualises in a radical experience of one's personal future as directionless.

Shortly, in 5.4., I shall return to some of the implications of the phenomenological distinction between the two types of a sense of not knowing how to go on. For now, the important point is that we need to look *beyond* the object, and content, of anticipation if we are to give a phenomenologically adequate account of temporal experience in metaphorical disorientation inclusive of various metaphorical disorientation experiences. This specifically requires identifying and making sense of the temporal experience associated with both relative experiences of not knowing how to go on that are about the confirmation of a particular set(s) of anticipations (cf. the queer child) *and* radical experiences of not knowing how to go on that are neither about the disappointment nor confirmation of a particular set(s) of anticipations (cf. the Crow Nation).

5.4. Temporal Experience and Perceived Powerlessness

In the previous section, I have demonstrated that the disappointed-anticipation model cannot adequately capture the phenomenological structure of a 'sense of not knowing how to go on'. This is because important types of metaphorical disorientation are not attributable to the disappointment of a relatively determinate set of anticipations in navigating social space. To be clear: in articulating this phenomenological critique, I do not wish to suggest that disappointed anticipations never feature in metaphorical disorientation. Not only is this frequently the case, but it can also add to and exacerbate the relevant experience. Just think of the severe disruptions to many people's daily routines during the COVID-19 pandemic that were integral to many people's disorientation experiences at the time. But the disappointed-anticipation model is wrong in assuming an essential relation between disorientation and disappointed anticipation, where this posits the disappointment of a

relatively determinate set of anticipations as an essential, core characteristic of a sense of not knowing how to go on.

Let me close my critique, here, by noting that the shortcomings of the disappointed-anticipation model can ultimately be located in the construal of the relevant phenomenology as *a matter of uncertainty going forward*. In focusing on the disappointment of, and thus disturbance to, the content of what is anticipated, on this model, the relevant type of experience amounts to the personal challenge of forming and carrying out new intentions that are subjectively deemed appropriate for the changing circumstances. In her most recent paper on metaphorical disorientation, Harbin is explicit on this point. She writes: ‘Less metaphorically, to be disoriented is to have difficulty making plans, feeling secure and confident in one’s actions, or being able to go about one’s daily life with ease.’³⁹ Leaving aside that these three approximations are not necessarily congruent, what interests me here is the following: Harbin seems to suggest that the disoriented person is best characterised as incapable of rising to the challenge of the given situation (which presumably may take one of three forms mentioned in the quotation). In fact, she introduces a constitutive link between feeling disorientated and lacking ‘a feeling of “resolve”’, characterised in earlier work in terms of being incapable to ‘*resolve how to act* (in the sense of judging how to act)’ and to ‘*act with resolve* (in the sense of acting decisively, with determination, and confidence)’.⁴⁰ Returning to our queer child, it is clear that they do not meet either proposed condition. This is because, at the time of feeling disorientated, the queer child is still capable of exercising the appropriate epistemic and practical skills required to know what to do. In characterising ‘sense of not knowing how to go on’ as a matter of uncertainty going forward, therefore, the disappointed-

³⁹ Ami Harbin, ‘Inducing Fear’, 503.

⁴⁰ Harbin, 506; Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 41, italics original.

anticipation model ultimately fails to appreciate the phenomenological distinction between epistemic and social disorientation that I introduced in 5.1. The queer child's experience of disorientation cannot be captured primarily in epistemic terms. Quite to the contrary, it makes phenomenologically salient the following: a sense of not knowing how to go on is first and foremost about the perceived impossibility to bring about one's personal future, where this holds *irrespective* of whether or not one knows what to do. In other words, a sense of impossibility to bring about one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation can exist *independently* of an epistemic sense of metaphorical disorientation.

What emerges here, I submit, is the centrality of *perceived lack of agency over one's personal future* for experiencing one's personal future as directionless. The task, therefore, is to get clear on this phenomenon and how it relates to a sense of not knowing how to go on in navigating social space. To achieve this task, I engage with the work of Han-Pile and try to zoom in on the relevant phenomenology.⁴¹ I begin by critically examining two possible hypothesis before, I then, develop my own proposal.

5.4.1. The Simple Powerlessness Hypothesis

First, I turn to what I call "the simple powerlessness" hypothesis. One might note that much of everyday navigation of social space does not involve reflective self-consciousness of oneself as the agent doing the navigation, where this is partly made possible by a felt confidence in one's own agential powers to navigate social space successfully.⁴² Han-Pile observes:

⁴¹ Han-Pile, 'Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency'.

⁴² The claim (1) that much of everyday conscious immersion in the world does not involve reflective self-consciousness is a widely accepted claim in the phenomenological tradition. Somewhat

In a very large number of everyday situations, such as navigating my lived-in space or performing well known tasks, my subjective sense of my own agency is one of empowerment and control: I do not hope but expect to be able to move around or to perform these tasks successfully, and would be taken back if I didn't. It is usually in situations of disorientation or breakdown, for example, if we feel lost or if our mobility or our skills are impaired by circumstances, that this implicit and habitual sense of control is eroded and that we have an experience of powerlessness.⁴³

Although Han-Pile here does not specify whether the talk of 'disorientation' here concerns the literal and/or metaphorical sense, this passage suggests that the disturbance of transparent, smooth activity in navigating social space is accompanied by a diminished sense of agency, involving a shift from a typically pre-reflective sense of habitual confidence in navigating social space to a subjective sense of one's own agency as one of powerlessness. Notice further that this diminished sense of agency comes with a change in how one relates to the future, where what is typically implicitly anticipated becomes conspicuous in its experiential inaccessibility. Along these lines, one may propose the following hypothesis concerning temporal experience (TE) in metaphorical disorientation:

(Def₁) TE: A sense of not knowing how to go on = Perceived lack of agency over one's personal future is attributable to an experience of powerlessness, where this is due to the experiential inaccessibility of one's personal future.

more controversial is another claim that is often considered to go hand-in-hand with the first one: namely, (2) that all conscious experience involves pre-reflective self-consciousness (where this can, but need not, shift to reflective self-consciousness). For the interpretive view that (2) unites all major figures in the phenomenological tradition, see Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective*, 1. MIT Press paperback ed, A Bradford Book (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008). For disagreement with, and critique of, Zahavi, see Schear 'Experience and Self-Consciousness', *Philosophical Studies* 144, no. 1 (May 2009): 95–105, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-009-9381-y>.

⁴³ Han-Pile, 'Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency', 181.

In other words, on this hypothesis, the disoriented person experiences a lack of agency over their personal future in virtue of being confronted with their own agential limitations to bring about their personal future. While this hypothesis rightly identifies a diminished sense of agency involved in metaphorical disorientation, it requires further phenomenological specification. This is because, on this hypothesis, perceived powerlessness is rendered the simple counterpart to perceived empowerment in metaphorical orientation. Yet, matters are more complicated. Not only is perceived powerlessness not always accompanied by metaphorical disorientation, but notice that it can also be constitutive of agency in emotional experiences that are notably orientation-conferring. To see this, let me return to the initial version of the ACT UP protestor as discussed in Chapters Two – Three, and begin bringing together previous findings on the temporal orientation towards the future in hope with the temporal orientation towards the future in metaphorical disorientation.

Recall: there I demonstrated that, in and through the presence of fellow protestors, the ACT UP protestor receives a promise of home that involves hope for a better future: that is, a future in which marginalised social identities, like being gay and/or HIV-positive, find a meaningful place. Now, unless they were to act in self-deception (for instance, by being unwarrantedly optimistic), the ACT UP protestor is surely aware of and acknowledges the fact that that they are not in full control of this desired outcome (neither individually nor collectively). But notice also that they nonetheless feel that certain things can be done that may contribute to the likelihood of realising the desired outcome, where one such example is precisely coming together and joining forces in a collective protest movement. As I have argued in Chapter Three, a sense of empowerment is constitutive of the exercise of agency involved in experiencing a promise of home.

For present purposes, this re-telling of the ACT UP protestor case study clearly brings out the shortcoming of the simple powerlessness hypothesis. First, it makes clear

that a person can feel relatively powerless over their personal future and, at the same time, orientated in navigating social space as premised on their subjective sense of their own agency as one of empowerment. This is because the ACT UP protestor is not only enabled but also supported in engaging in meaningful actions that are directly bound up with their own set of deep personal commitments. Second, it makes clear that strong hope and perceived powerlessness (insofar as hope constitutively involves perceived powerlessness for it to be hope) are analytically included in the promise-character of home that, importantly, is a pre-condition for metaphorical orientation. As we saw in Chapters Two – Three, the promise of home is constitutively intersubjective. This means that, by definition, no single person alone can deliver the outcome. Quite the opposite, I have demonstrated that it can only take place in and through the dependence and reliance on other people, so, strictly speaking, one cannot expect but only hope for the realisation of the promise of home. But this also means that there will always be a degree of powerlessness over the desired future involved in metaphorical orientation.

5.4.2. The Revised Powerlessness Hypothesis

From my criticism of the simple powerlessness hypothesis, a phenomenological characterisation of perceived lack of agency over one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation must meet two requirements: (a) it must single out and specify the relevant type of perceived powerlessness in metaphorical disorientation and, in doing so, (b) it must allow for the fact that certain forms of perceived powerlessness are compatible with, even constitutive of, metaphorical orientation.

To fulfil both requirements, it is instructive to take a closer look at Han-Pile's study of the constitutive relationship between hope and perceived powerlessness. My

focus here is specifically on her phenomenological distinction between two types of perceived powerlessness and their correlative types of hope. Han-Pile distinguishes between (1) relative and (pre-) reflective experiences of powerlessness that are constitutive of agency in hoping, and (2) radical and reflective experiences of powerlessness that are constitutive of agency in hoping against hope (and, it can be added, despair). I quote her at length:

If we hope for something over which we believe we have no control at all [cf. 2], such as a loved one surviving a difficult surgical procedure carried out by someone else, this experience of powerlessness is radical and reflective: we are both convinced and aware that there is nothing that we could do to bring about the desired outcome. By contrast, if we hope for something over which we believe we have some, but not total, control [cf. 1] (such as winning a race), our experience of powerlessness is relative and may remain pre-reflective: we feel that there are intentions we can form (such as training harder) but that the resulting actions would not suffice on their own to bring about the desired outcome.⁴⁴

Drawing on Han-Pile's phenomenological distinction, I suggest that we can begin to clarify the specific sense of perceived powerlessness involved in metaphorical disorientation. Consider the following two scenarios: (scenario₁) having an argument with your partner, where you both feel hurt but hope for it to be resolved, and (scenario₂) having an argument with your partner, where your partner breaks up with you and you fall into despair. There seem to be at least two possible readings. According to the first one, one might think of both scenarios in terms of 'sense of not knowing how to go on', for the reason that they both involve an experience of powerlessness over the future of your relationship, and explain the difference in terms of degree of metaphorical disorientation. By contrast, on the second reading it is only scenario₂ that amounts to an instance of perceived lack of agency over one's personal future attached to metaphorical disorientation, where the

⁴⁴ Han-Pile, 'Hope, Powerlessness, and Agency', 180.

focus is on the phenomenal character of one's personal future as directionless, for the reason that it involves a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness. In light of Han-Pile's phenomenological distinction between the two types of perceived powerlessness, the second reading seems to me to be phenomenologically more convincing. Although scenario₁ involves an alteration of what is anticipated, you can still form certain intentions that may contribute to the desired future of solving the argument, where the resultant actions may carry a forward-moving sense of direction. In contrast, in scenario₂, you feel that there is nothing to be done to move towards the realisation of the desired future of coming back together.

These considerations suggest another, second hypothesis of how best to construe perceived lack of agency over one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation. I call this "the revised powerlessness" hypothesis:

(Def₂) TE: A sense of not knowing how to go on = Perceived lack of agency over one's personal future is attributable to (a) a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness due to the experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future by the exercise of one's own agency, which contrasts with (b) a relative and (pre-) reflective experience of powerlessness due to the experiential inability to bring about one's personal future by the exercise of one's own agency.

While this hypothesis meets both requirements of (a) and (b) identified above, it faces a central problem. This is, I submit, because it cannot adequately distinguish metaphorical disorientation from other emotional responses to upheaval in navigating social space that, too, are accompanied by a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness to bring about one's personal future.

To bring out this point, let me introduce another scenario: (scenario₃) imagine that you are still, and happily, together with your partner but that they are diagnosed with an incurable cancer. While your partner is given a few more years, you are painfully aware that there is nothing you can do to ensure that your partner will be cured. Now, the central question here is: does this experience of radical and reflective powerlessness necessarily entail that you feel disorientated in navigating this situation and, therefore, experience your personal future as directionless? Such a diagnosis will certainly have an impact on your shared future together and, by implication, your experience of your personal future as grounded in your partner's promise of home. For example, certain joint activities may no longer be possible, requiring a change in your relationship in keeping with your partner's diagnosis. But as long as you retain a sense of home with your partner, where this allows you to live and act in the present under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future (even if changed) in which your relationship finds a meaningful place, I submit that the answer to the above question is far from obvious. When asked, you may say that you experience a profound sadness over this diagnosis, even struggle to adjust to the new life together, but maybe also that this diagnosis has strengthened your bond with your partner. Of course, the specifics of your emotional response will be shaped by a number of empirical considerations, including, for example, your psychological constitution to cope with such situations without, let's say, falling into a paralysing form of despair. But notice: appealing to radical powerlessness over your partner's future and, by implication, your personal future in relation to your partner cannot, alone, be sufficient for demonstrating that you experience your personal future as directionless. In other

words, a more discriminating understanding of perceived lack of agency over one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation is required, to which I turn next.⁴⁵

5.4.3. The Social Powerlessness Hypothesis

The solution, I propose, lies in attending to the distinctively *social character* of perceived lack of agency over one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation. Specifically, I propose the following, third hypothesis:

(Def₃) TE: A sense of not knowing how to go on = Perceived lack of agency over one's personal future is attributable to a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness due to the experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future by the exercise of one's own agency, where such powerlessness is experienced as *total* due to its *socially privative character*.

I call this “the social powerlessness” hypothesis. I propose that this modified version can meet the requirements for a successful conception of the phenomenology of perceived

⁴⁵ Harbin appeals to a related example where someone close to you is being diagnosed with a medical condition: ‘a close friend tells you he has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. You express concern immediately through your body language, your changed way of listening to him, and your words. Over a longer period of time, you respond continually to him, making space for him to talk about his experiences, anticipating, perceiving, and fulfilling his needs, and allowing your relationship to change in keeping with his circumstances. But from the moment of your first conversation, throughout the length of the illness, you do not feel you know what to do – you simply act. ... You do not know what to do, and yet you are continuing to act.’ (Harbin, *Disorientation and Moral Life*, 40). Harbin here identifies an important aspect of the larger experience of being in such a situation, namely, lacking a feeling of resolve in response to the changing circumstances. But, if my above analysis is broadly correct, this alone does not tell us much about how one's personal future is experienced in response to someone close to you being diagnosed with a medical condition, that is, beyond a change in what is anticipated. Prying apart epistemic and social disorientation, the following should be clear at this point: as much as the trans child can have a feeling of resolve and still feel disorientated, in scenario₃ you can lack a feeling of resolve and still feel orientated. This is to say that I believe the disjunction to work both ways.

lack of agency over one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation. The strength of this proposal, I submit, lies in drawing out the constitutive relationship between perceived powerlessness and privation of home in metaphorical disorientation. For as we saw in Chapter Four, it is the experience of privation of home that amounts to and actualises in a sense of not knowing how to go on. Let me therefore begin by briefly revisiting the phenomenological conception of privation of home as developed in Chapter Four. Against this backdrop, I then move to characterise perceived powerlessness' 'total experiential form' and 'socially privative character' as it operates in, and is constitutive of, metaphorical disorientation.

Recall: in referring to "privation of home", I am concerned with the experience of lacking experiential access to social possibilities that are constitutive of a positively balanced sense of home specific to one's own set of deep personal commitments. This amounts to what I call "feeling not at home" and comes with a complex phenomenological structure. Specifically, it involves (a) the experiential inaccessibility of distinctively future-directed social possibilities for interpersonal connection that are grounded in and integral to one's promise of home, where this is due to (b) the experiential inaccessibility of wider social possibilities that are a pre-requisite for unlocking experiential access to the former.

With this in mind, let us turn to the two characteristics that bring out the distinctive phenomenological structure of perceived powerlessness in metaphorical disorientation. By 'socially privative character', I mean that perceived powerlessness in metaphorical disorientation is the direct outcome of privation of home; hence, its socially privative character. This means that its radical and reflective character is the result of, and directly corresponds to, feeling not at home in navigating social space, where this also serves as a reason for such powerlessness to take a 'total experiential form'. By this, I mean that

perceived powerlessness in metaphorical disorientation is premised on the experiential inaccessibility of wider social possibilities, where this rules out the experiential possibility of (re-)turning to a sense of home at the time of the experience; hence, its total experiential form. Importantly, by this I do not mean that such powerlessness underwrites all desired-futural states-of-affairs *simpliciter*; it only underwrites those desired futural states-of-affairs that are grounded in, integral to, and implicated by one's promise of home.

Let me unpack this in some more detail, with explicit reference to my conception of privation of home, by revisiting scenario₁ and scenario₂ introduced earlier. By way of contrast, I begin with scenario₁. Even if it can make salient the contingency and vulnerability of your sense of home with your partner, I argue that scenario₁ does not amount to privation of home.⁴⁶ This is because you still have experiential access to wider social possibilities, in particular, a 'we' experience with your partner (cf. b). This in turn makes possible forming certain intentions (e.g., reaching out to your partner and talking things through) and engaging in resultant future-directed second-person interactions that you experience as contributing to the possibility of resolving the argument (cf. a).⁴⁷ So, although you feel relatively powerless in this situation (for, the desired outcome will, of course, also depend on your partner and their willingness to resolve the argument), your powerlessness remains *limited* (in contrast to 'total'). In retaining experiential access to a 'we' experience with your partner, your perceived powerlessness arises in the context of social relations where your dependence and reliance on your partner to bring about the

⁴⁶ Appealing to the phenomenological distinction between 'not feeling at home' *qua* negation of home and 'feeling not at home' *qua* privation of home, as introduced in Chapter Four, it could be further specified that scenario₁ amounts to a negation of home only.

⁴⁷ The proviso of 'experiencing *as* contributing' is important. This is because reaching out to your partner is certainly also available to you in the second scenario, where the ability to do so remains intact. However, only in the first scenario do those actions appear to you as contributing to the realisation of the desired futural state-of-affairs. Let me therefore reiterate that my concern is with one's *subjective* sense of one's own agency that is about one's first-personal experience of one's own agential powers, irrespective of whether or not one's subjective experience is objectively warranted.

desired futural state-of-affairs still comes with *a sense of the possible*: while you implicitly experience your sense of powerlessness as ineliminable at the time of navigating this situation, your emotional response to navigating this situation is grounded in your (pre-)reflective awareness of this futural possibility as a first-personal possibility for you (i.e., taking the form of ‘I can see *x* and for me’) inasmuch, *and as long as*, it can be meaningfully integrated into your ‘we’ experience with your partner. Hence, the experience of your personal future is marked by a “not yet, but possible”.⁴⁸

In contrast, scenario₂ does amount to a privation of home. This is because the break-up renders experientially inaccessible the relevant ‘we’ experience with your (ex-) partner (cf. b), which however is required to unlock experiential access to future-directed second-person interactions for interpersonal connection that may directly contribute to the realisation of your desire to continue the relationship (cf. a). This means that you can no longer retain a sense of home with your partner, where this prevents you from living and acting in the present under a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future in which your relationship finds a meaningful place. Notice the constitutive relationship between perceived powerlessness and privation of home that operates in this scenario, which serves as a principled way by which to distinguish the relevant type of

⁴⁸ At this point, one may object: one cannot possibly take the experience of powerlessness to bring about one’s personal future as ineliminable but also experience the possibility to bring about one’s personal future as a first-personal possibility for oneself. If the possibility to bring about one’s personal future does not show up as a mere theoretical option but viable way of going forward, how can one be said to experience one’s powerlessness as ineliminable? And if one cannot be said to experience one’s powerlessness as ineliminable, ultimately, how can one be said to feel powerless at all?

But note that it is a quite common experience to become aware of one’s own agential limitations in bringing about *x* while also experiencing *x* as a first-personal possibility for oneself. Take the following example: I have been on a few dates with someone that have gone surprisingly well, pointing towards the ever-growing possibility of a shared future. I am quite aware that I do not have total control over this outcome, even though I can make sure e.g., to continue being an active listener, acting with care and so forth. Now, I find it phenomenologically plausible that, while my hope for this shared future involves a relative and reflective sense of powerlessness, my second-person interactions with this date are grounded in my experience of this futural possibility as a first-personal possibility for me; in fact, this may quite explicitly serve as a reason for me to continue investing in this dating experience.

powerlessness from that in scenario₁ and scenario₃. Unlike in both scenarios, your sense of powerlessness arises precisely because you are losing experiential access to a ‘we’ experience with your (ex-) partner as the source of your promise of home. This is the reason for becoming painfully aware that there is nothing to be done to move towards the realisation of coming back together and, by implication, re-gaining experiential access to your promise of home as grounded in your (ex-) partner’s love. Due to its socially privative character, therefore, your sense of powerlessness remains neither merely limited (scenario₁) nor merely radical (scenario₃). Instead, I submit that this radical and reflective type of powerlessness takes on a *total experiential form*. This is because it arises in a social context where your dependence and reliance on your ex-partner to come back together comes with *a sense of the impossible*: your emotional response to this situation is grounded in your painful and reflective awareness of this futural possibility as a mere theoretical possibility (i.e., taking the form of ‘I can see x but not for me’). While it is not unimaginable that your ex-partner may revise their decision to break up, it does not present itself as a viable way of going forward for you at the time of the experience. Hence, the experience of your personal future is marked by an “impossible”. Only under conditions of privation of home, therefore, does perceived powerlessness amount to an experience of one’s personal future as directionless in the here relevant sense.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ One may be concerned about characterising the experience of total powerlessness in such reflective terms, worrying that this may render social disorientation an overly intellectualist phenomenon. Let me therefore emphasise that I do *not* understand the relevant reflectivity to amount to an explicit thematic awareness of the complexity of the situation, including a reflective understanding of specific configurations of social possibilities that block one from having experiential access to one’s personal future. Given its debilitating character, I suggest that it instead amounts to the reflective awareness that one is lacking experiential access to a certain futural state-of-affairs, but in such a way that one cannot get a full grip of it.

5.4.4. An objection

To recap: I have identified what an adequate conception of perceived lack of agency over one's personal future in metaphorical disorientation needs to achieve. The relevant phenomenology can neither be merely understood in terms of an experiential inability to bring about one's personal future (hypothesis₁) nor in terms of an experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future (hypothesis₂). Developing *the social powerlessness hypothesis*, I have argued that it is instead attributable to a radical and reflective experience of powerlessness due to the experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future by the powers of one's own agency, where such powerlessness is experienced in *total* due to its *socially privative character*.

At this point, let me consider one possible objection to my phenomenological conception of experiential impossibility in metaphorical disorientation. My suggestion has been that the experiential impossibility consists in one's subjective sense of one's own agency as one of total powerlessness. But there may be another, narrower and more radical reading: namely, *that the experiential impossibility attached to metaphorical disorientation is premised on the (subjective) probability assignment of a degree of probability of 0 to the desired futural state-of-affairs*. One may think this because of powerlessness's total character, where this would ultimately rule out any reasons one may have for believing this desired futural state-of-affairs to remain >0 . After all, you fall into despair about your partner's break-up in scenario₂ precisely for the reason that you cannot explicitly imagine a positive future in which you come back together. Along these lines, therefore, one may conclude that a sense of not knowing how to go on is always an emotional response about despairing about a situation of (perceived) certainty.

From the perspective of the DP, I take this to be a serious worry for my proposed conception: if true, it would suggest that my phenomenological case of metaphorical disorientation risks excluding emotional responses about situations of perceived uncertainty in navigating social space that we might typically recognise as disorientation experiences from the category of metaphorical disorientation.⁵⁰ In closing this section, therefore, let me closely examine this objection. This will further clarify the core phenomenological structure of experiential impossibility attached to metaphorical disorientation. And in doing so, it will also introduce an important phenomenological distinction between broadly two different kinds of experiential impossibility associated with a sense of not knowing how to go on.

To begin, I do not find it to be unimaginable that, in scenario₂, one may have reasons for believing in the slightest (however unlikely) possibility of coming back together (e.g., taking into account that your partner is generally quite impulsive in their decision-making, yielding premature decisions), where the unlikelihood of its realisation serves as a reason to despair. Despair does not always arise only in situations of (perceived) certainty; certain forms of despair can also arise in situations of perceived uncertainty, where the desired futural state-of-affairs is subjectively assigned a degree of probability between 0 (excluding 0) and 1 (excluding 1).

However, it is true that there are cases of metaphorical disorientation, where one's perceived lack of agency over one's personal future is grounded in, and correlates with, the unobtainability of a desired futural state-of-affairs that is (subjectively) assigned a degree of probability of 0.⁵¹ In such cases, the disoriented person is likely to fall into

⁵⁰ This worry brings us back to the worry, as discussed in 0.2. with explicit reference to Burch, concerning the legitimacy of identifying a unifying phenomenological structure, if it fails to account for important type(s) of experiences from consideration as metaphorical disorientation. See Burch, 'Phenomenology's Place in the Philosophy of Medicine', 213-214.

⁵¹ From my phenomenological distinction between relative and radical types of a sense of not knowing how to go on in 5.3., here it could be further distinguished between (1) the

“resignative despair” if they do despair, that is, ‘a kind of painful longing for the impossible [in the sense of being assigned a degree of probability of 0 and thus distinct from other types of despair] that goes along with a sense of frustration and inner conflict’.⁵²

One particularly painful and phenomenologically clear-cut example is the metaphorical disorientation of interpersonal grief, where the bereaved’s experience of their personal future as directionless is premised on their impossible desire to have the loved one back.⁵³

As Michael Kelly puts it, “[the] griever, seeing the world as a world in which his deep love finds its object no longer, puts the past *before*, in front of, himself” (2016: 176; italics original). This is best seen *a contrario*. Consider the following two cases:

Case (1): The bereaved reaches a point in their grieving process where they stop despairing about the impossibility of having their loved one back. They begin to resign themselves to the unfulfillability of this desired future, where this opens up new agential possibilities like seeking out a self-help group for bereaved people.

unobtainability of a desired futural state-of-affairs that is integral to one’s promise of home and (2) the unobtainability of a desired futural state-of-affairs that is the condition of intelligibility for one’s promise of home. Examples of each of these cases are as follows: (1) my desire for my loved one to survive a terminal illness will not obtain, where this may (but need not) bring about and actualise in a relative sense of not knowing how to go on (relative as long as this terminal illness diagnosis does not render the promise of home in and through my partner practically unintelligible for me at the time of the experience). (2) My desire for my loved one to come back to life will not obtain, where this may bring about a radical sense of not knowing how to go on (radical as their death renders the promise of home practically unintelligible for me).

⁵² Huber, ‘Hope from Despair’, 85. Huber here paraphrases Han-Pile and Stern who characterise despair as follows: ‘the despairing person keeps desiring the good but without being able to act to bring it about because they think it is unobtainable, or that it cannot obtain on its own. Their desire is therefore experienced as a painful longing for the (subjectively) impossible, brought on by the inner conflict’ (Han-Pile and Stern, ‘Is Hope a Secular Virtue? Hope as the Virtue of the Possible’, 17). While Huber rightly identifies a distinct subtype of despair, namely resignative despair, I am not sure he is right in ascribing this view to Stern and Han-Pile. This is for the reason that they clearly allow for the possibility of despairing even when the probability assignment is >0 , as evidenced by their discussion of the problem of the orthodox definition of hope to differentiate between hope and despair (cf. Han-Pile Stern, 7, fn. 20)

⁵³ See Mehmel, ‘Grief, Disorientation, and Futurity’.

Case (2): The bereaved reaches a point in their grieving process where they stop despairing about the impossibility of having their loved one back. They come to terms with the death of their loved one, where this brings about an openness to the possibility of experiencing new romantic desires for other people that may serve as a reason to hope for a better future.

Of course, case₁ and case₂ illustrate just two possible responses to the certainty of the situation.⁵⁴ Yet they both serve to demonstrate the constitutive relation between the bereaved's experience of disorientation and their impossible desire to have their loved one back. In fact, notice that once their desire for the impossible is given up, the bereaved's subjective sense of their own agency is no longer one of total powerlessness arising from privation of home in metaphorical disorientation. For, at that point, they begin (however slowly) to open up to the possibility of gaining experiential access to a new promise of home, where this may bring about a sense of orientation in relation to a transformed sense of their personal future, that is, one no longer marked by a sense of "impossible".

⁵⁴ Following Han-Pile and Stern, case₁ may be characterised as an example of *resignation*, whereas case₂ as an example of *redirection of desire*. Note that they also mention another possible response: namely, (3) some extreme form of despair, where one no longer despairs about the impossibility of realising a desired futural state-of-affairs but is altogether incapable of forming any meaningful desires for one's personal future, 'such as the apathy of depression, where no desires can register significantly on the individual, so that they are deprived of agency in this respect' (Han-Pile and Stern, 15, fn. 35). While these experiences may similarly be conveyed in terms of a sense of not knowing how to go, where this is an emotional response about (3), I shall leave them aside here. This is for the reason that my thesis is exclusively concerned with, and limited to, cases of metaphorical disorientation, where experiential impossibility does *not* involve the deprivation of agency altogether.

To avoid any possible objection of inconsistency here, let me also clarify that I do not think of the Crow Nation's sense of not knowing how to go on, as discussed in 5.3., as an emotional response about (3). While their experience centrally involves the experiential inability to anticipate anything meaningful as Crow, this is not because they lose the capacity to form any meaningful desires but because they lose the intelligibility of their entire system of meaning as Crow. Cf. Ratcliffe & colleagues who draw a similar distinction between the Crow Nation's experience of foreclosed future and that of people suffering from trauma: 'In the type of case Lear describes, an open and meaningful future remains; what is lacking is a more determinate sense of which meaningful possibilities that future includes. However, for some, even this much is lost.' (Ratcliffe, Ruddell, and Smith, 'What Is a "sense of Foreshortened Future?"', 3).

Thus, experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future attached to metaphorical disorientation can take the form of desiring a certain futural state-of-affairs that is (subjectively) assigned a degree of probability of 0. But it need not. For present purposes, I submit that we must distinguish between two general forms:

1. Experiential impossibility to bring about a desired futural state-of-affairs that is (subjectively) assigned a degree of probability of 0.
2. Experiential impossibility to bring about a desired futural state-of-affairs that is subjectively assigned a degree of probability between 0 (excluding 0) and 1 (excluding 1).⁵⁵

Construing experiential impossibility exclusively in terms of (2) does not only ignore (and, by implication, exclude from the category of metaphorical disorientation) those types of a sense of not knowing how to go on, like the queer child's experience, where the desired futural state-of-affairs is (1) very unlikely, however not impossible. But crucially, it also misconstrues what is central to the total character of perceived

⁵⁵ Of course, this phenomenological distinction could be further complicated. Consider cases of radical metaphorical disorientation, where one is confronted with the loss of intelligibility of one's promise of home. In such cases, (1) would be accompanied by *the experiential inability to experience any meaningful future-directed desires that would allow for one's self-realisation in relation to one's promise of home*. As we saw with profound interpersonal grief, the bereaved's sense of not knowing how to go on involves, and is premised on, the unobtainability of having their loved one back. Inasmuch as their loved one was a condition of intelligibility for their promise of home and, therefore, a particular way of life, the bereaved undergoes a radical experience of their personal future as directionless: they are no longer experientially able to form or experience any meaningful futural possibilities that could be integrated into the particular way of life that they had hitherto inhabited and are still committed to, is, however, no longer possible. Another example, where this becomes phenomenologically salient, is the radical disorientation of the Crow Nation as discussed in 5.3. But notice that I consider the loss of intelligibility involved in the Lear example to be more robust. This for the reason that it concerns an entire world horizon of possibilities that is neither exhausted by a psychological relation to a particular person nor the system of possibilities arising out of this relationship. See Lear, 'Response to Hubert Dreyfus and Nancy Sherman' on the distinctive type of loss of intelligibility that his target phenomenon.

powerlessness attached to metaphorical disorientation, which underlies *both (1) and (2)*. Experiential impossibility due to total powerlessness does *not* suggest that the disorientated person cannot see the desired futural state-of-affairs as >0 , where one's epistemic reasons subjectively rule out the possibility that the desired-futural state-of-affairs may obtain. The disorientated person cannot see any possibilities directly linked to the realisation of the desired futural state-of-affairs as first-personal possibilities for them, even when one's epistemic reasons subjectively allow for the possibility that the desired futural state-of-affairs may obtain with a probability assignment between 0 (excluding 0) and 1 (excluding 1). This means, therefore, that experiential impossibility does not hinge on whether or not the desired futural state-of-affairs must be *epistemically* ruled out as impossible. Indeed, the disorientated person may have epistemic reasons for believing in the possibility of its realisation. But what has become *experientially* impossible is how to move towards this desired futural state-of-affairs by the exercise of one's own agency in the context of specific social configurations; hence, its socially privative and total experiential character.

This also means that total powerlessness attached to metaphorical disorientation does not imply that a sense of not knowing how to go is always an emotional response about despairing about a situation of (perceived) certainty. While total powerlessness works as a constraint on the affective orientation towards one's personal future, it does not follow that despair is the only possible option. As we saw, depending on the type of experiential impossibility attached to metaphorical disorientation, total powerlessness over one's personal future may be accompanied either by hope against hope, despair, or resignative despair.

5.5. The Category of Social Disorientation

Up to this point, I have demonstrated that there exists a phenomenological unity to various experiential manifestations of ‘sense of not knowing how to go on’. As we saw, the relevant type of experience comes with an altered sense of one’s personal future as directionless, where this makes phenomenologically salient a distinctive mode of futurity operative in metaphorical disorientation. Building on my critical engagement with the disappointed-anticipation model of metaphorical disorientation, I have proposed the social powerlessness hypothesis to make sense of and adequately capture the relevant phenomenology. I have argued that it is attributable to a perceived lack of agency over one’s personal future, where such powerlessness takes a distinctive experiential form: not solely radical and reflective but, crucially, also total. This is due to its socially privative character insofar as a sense of not knowing how to go on directly is the result of, and directly corresponds to, feeling not at home in navigating social space. Importantly, this perceived lack of agency can, but need not, be accompanied by the disappointment of a set of relatively determinate anticipations, as grounded in habitual patterns of navigating social space, in relation to one’s promise of home.

In this final section, I want to bring my discussion to a close by addressing two interrelated questions: what are the implications of this conception, drawing a constitutive link between privation of home and temporal experience, for the phenomenological category of “social disorientation”? Can this conception of metaphorical disorientation *as* social disorientation resolve the DP, with which we began our philosophical inquiry? To answer these questions, let me begin by revisiting the DP:

Q^{DP}: Is there merely a *terminological unity*, or a more *substantive kind of unity* between seemingly distinct and heterogeneous phenomena that fall under the umbrella of ‘disorientation’ in its metaphorical use?

Recall that, in Chapter One, I identified the DP as a significant challenge for any conception of metaphorical disorientation. This is, I argued, because so long as the concept of “disorientation” is extended from the literal to the metaphorical realm, one must address the question as to what exactly is meant by this metaphor. Recall further that I identified two underlying concerns that are in dialectical tension with each other, which a satisfying answer to the DP must not only take seriously but also keep in balance. These are (a) the concern for heterogeneity of everyday uses of “disorientation” and (b) the concern for conceptual distinctiveness of “disorientation” in contrast to other related phenomena.

Two things should be clear by now. First, I believe a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation to be a strong contender for resolving the DP. By identifying something that underlies the relevant type of experience in its various instantiations, it can meet requirement (a); and in distinguishing it from other related emotional experiences of upheaval in navigating social space, it can meet requirement (b). With this, second, I believe such a phenomenological conception to make a significant advance on the most common contender for resolving the DP that, recall, consists in spatialising metaphorical disorientation in relation to the literal case of disorientation in navigating physical space. As I demonstrated at length in Chapter One, both strong and weak articulations of the spatialising strategy, while possibly meeting requirement (a), fail to meet requirement (b). In taking literal disorientation to be the paradigmatic case for theorising metaphorical disorientation, Velasco et al. cannot account for the distinctive type of phenomenological disturbance in metaphorical disorientation. Whereas literal disorientation

involves a destabilisation of one's capacity for self-location in physical space, I demonstrated that metaphorical disorientation involves a destabilisation of one's capacity for self-realisation in relation to oneself, others, and the social world. And in taking literal orientation to be an instructive metaphor for theorising metaphorical disorientation as a matter of extension into social surroundings, Ahmed ends up lacking the relevant phenomenological resources to distinguish between different emotional responses to the disharmonious interaction between lived body and social world. As I argued, non-extension into social surroundings due to the socio-normative architecture of the social world is *per se* no reason for an experience of metaphorical disorientation to occur. Hence, both Velasco et al.'s and Ahmed's models of metaphorical disorientation, as two chief articulations of the spatialising strategy, cannot sufficiently bring into view and account for the distinctive phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation.

Building on my findings of the previous chapters, I now suggest a third claim that concludes my phenomenological investigation into metaphorical disorientation: I believe that a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation *as* social disorientation is the best contender out of the existing ones for resolving the DP. Emotional responses to experiences as varied as misfitting the social norms (cf. our queer child), forced migration (cf. the Crow Nation), or break-up and profound interpersonal grief (cf. our scenarios and case studies in this chapter) can not only all be articulated in terms of the everyday language of "disorientation" and, by implication, "not knowing how to go on". But, I propose, they are also all instances of a unifying phenomenological structure, which can be characterised as follows:

(Def) MD: Social disorientation = Emotional response to navigating social space in which one feels not at home due to privation of home, where this brings about

a perceived lack of agency over one's personal future that actualises in a sense of not knowing how to go on.

On this proposal, "social disorientation" designates a phenomenological structure that underlies various experiences typically subsumed under the header of "disorientation" in the metaphorical sense. It consists in the constitutive relationship between feeling not at home and perceived lack of agency over one's personal future, where this relationship is grounded in privation of home. I submit that this framework can not only avoid the shortcomings of the spatialising strategy raised above, but it can also provide a satisfying answer to the DP. Let me begin by saying a bit more about this constitutive relationship before I then draw out three central implications of this proposed conception.

By 'constitutive relationship', I mean that metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation consists in the relationship between a distinctive set of affective-interpersonal possibilities and a distinctive set of futural-agential possibilities. That is, metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation involves both, a distinctive experience of navigating social space in the here and now and a distinctive experience of futurity going forward in navigating social space:

Affective-interpersonal: at the time of feeling disorientated, a person lacks experiential access to one's promise of home for the reason that social space is in important ways experientially inaccessible to oneself but not to (certain) others.

Futural-agential: at the time of feeling disorientated, a person cannot live and act in the present under their promise of home for the reason that they experience a

perceived lack of agency over enacting their promise of home in and through the presence of (certain) others.

While a phenomenological investigation into metaphorical disorientation experiences may either focus on the affective-interpersonal or on the futural-agential, it should be clear by now that they are inextricably connected. This is precisely for the reason that they are both constitutively grounded in privation of home, that is, privation of home brings about and actualises in both feeling not at home in the present and experiencing one's personal future as directionless going forward. This grounding conditional is central. This is because it marks the conceptual boundaries of my proposed phenomenological category of social disorientation. I consider privation of home to be *both a necessary and a sufficient condition* for an experience of metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation to occur.

Privation of home is a necessary condition for the reason that, without lacking experiential access to wider social possibilities enabling one to move towards the realisation of one's promise of home, a person can still draw upon interpersonal and social regulatory resources for feeling at home that may contribute to a sense of orientation in navigating social space. Think back to scenario₃, where your continuous, albeit changing, sense of home with your incurably ill partner can help ward off metaphorical disorientation in navigating these challenging circumstances. Privation of home is also a sufficient condition for the reason that the relevant type of experience need not also (though, of course, it may) involve the disappointment of a particular set of anticipations as grounded in habitual patterns of navigating social space and, by implication, lack of relevant epistemic and/or practical resources required for knowing what to do in navigating changing

circumstances at the time of feeling disorientated. This is particularly visible in our queer child example, where their sense of disorientation does not involve either.

This proposal of metaphorical disorientation *as* social disorientation has three central implications. On my proposal, first, social disorientation cannot arise without a chronologically prior promise of home. It is a condition of intelligibility for the occurrence of privation of home, without which a person does not undergo the relevant type of experience in navigating social space. As seen in Chapters Two-Three, a promise of home operates as a phenomenological idea of a relatively determinate future – involving various related possibilities that are strongly desired, strongly hoped for, imagined, as well as anticipated to differing degrees – that provides (i) a background orientation as to what one’s feeling at home with other people in navigating social space should involve and thus (ii) a standard by which to gauge one’s current second-person interactions with others. It is only against this experiential backdrop that a person can come to feel not at home in relation to other people/social space, where one’s promise of home is experienced as inaccessible and, consequently, one’s personal future as directionless.

Two points are worth noting here: for one thing, this claim of chronological priority does not rule out other, notably epistemic forms of metaphorical disorientation. Those can and often do occur in response to changing circumstances, where the content of what is changed is not subjectively experienced as integral to one’s promise of home. Let us take once more the example of losing your job. Imagine your emotional response to this loss involves a general sense of not knowing how to go on. Unless this job was either a source for, or part of, your promise of home, this general type of experience may take a merely epistemic form that concerns the challenge of dealing with the disruption of job-related habitual patterns of navigating social space.⁵⁶ For another, it does not rule

⁵⁶ Consider the following three examples as illustration:

out that there can also be instances in which a person is no longer capable of experiencing a promise of home. Whereas my analysis has been concerned with cases in which a person is still capable of experiencing other people as holding the potential to open up meaningful futural possibilities, there will be cases in which this is no longer possible at all. For example, Susan Brison depicts in painful detail how her own experience of a nearly fatal sexual assault brought about ‘a sense of betrayal by – and inability to trust – one’s fellow human beings’, leaving her unable to feel at home in the world.⁵⁷

On my proposal, second, social disorientation is not constitutively attributable to a disruption to, and loss of, habitual patterns of navigating social space. I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that there is neither an essential relation between home and familiarity with one’s surroundings (Chapter 2), nor an essential relation between privation of home and disappointment of anticipations grounded in past habits (Chapter 5). Loss of familiarity, whether characterised in spatial or in temporal terms, is not only just contingently related to social disorientation, but it is also involved in other emotional

(1) Imagine losing your job as a union organiser that had instilled your life with a sense of purpose you were so desperately longing for after a series of unfulfilling office jobs. Becoming a union organiser had opened up a horizon of meaningful possibilities that you could identify with and by which you felt invigorated in your sense of self, bringing forth new ways of connecting with other people and appropriating your social world in meaningful ways.

(2) Imagine losing your job as a union organiser that you considered a central part of your fight for a better and more just world, as grounded in your deep personal commitments as a political activist.

(3) Imagine losing your office job at a workplace that you had experienced not only as deeply alienating but where you were also confronted with frequent discrimination by your co-workers.

⁵⁷ Susan Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, 3. print. and 1. paperback print (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), 139. For a detailed analysis of the relationship between trauma, interpersonal trust, and a sense of foreshortened future, see Ratcliffe et al. ‘What Is a “Sense of Foreshortened Future?”’. See also fn. 52. Notice that, of course, there can be also other, non-pathological conditions in which a person can lose their capacity to experience a promise of home. For an overview of a number of internal and external background frames of agency, that must be in place in order to take an interest in one’s personal future and, by implication, be open to the possibility of receiving a promise of home, see Cheshire Calhoun, ‘Losing One’s Self’, in *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Kim Atkins, Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy 14 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 193–211.

responses to upheaval in navigating social space that do not amount to social disorientation.

On my proposal, third, social disorientation marks a deficient social relation. It is deficient in the sense that social disorientation amounts to a destabilisation of one's capacity for self-realisation in relation to one's promise of home. But crucially, this deficiency does not imply that social disorientation constitutes a failure condition, where the disorientated person fails to orientate by socio-normatively shared standards of success and failure. Quite to the contrary, my proposal locates 'the failure to orientate' exclusively in interpersonal and social relations that prevent a person from enacting their promise of home and, therefore, from exercising their capacity for self-realisation in relation to their promise of home.

CONCLUSION

How to Go On?

This thesis has been a phenomenological exploration of metaphorical disorientation experiences. I have examined in detail what it is like first-personally to experience metaphorical disorientation in navigating social space, with the view of yielding a philosophically satisfying response to the DP. As I have demonstrated, any successful solution to the DP must identify what underlies the relevant type of experience(s) and, in doing so, appreciate what is distinctive of the relevant type of experience(s) in contrast to other types of experiencing emotional upheaval in navigating social space. Over the course of five chapters, I have developed and defended the phenomenological category of social disorientation, arguing that a phenomenological conception of metaphorical disorientation as social disorientation can fulfil these requirements and provide a philosophically satisfying response to the DP.

How to go on? In closing this thesis, let me draw out two sets of implications, one more phenomenological and one more critical in nature. First: in developing a response to the DP, my focus has been to argue for a *phenomenological unity* to paradigmatic experiences of metaphorical disorientation. But of course, the phenomenological structure that I have identified can take different forms. I have already drawn a phenomenological distinction between relative and radical experiences of social disorientation, as well as between two general forms of experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future attached to social disorientation (Chapter Five). Yet there are further phenomenological distinctions that could be drawn. There is one question in particular that follows from my proposal however not explicitly addressed here. It concerns the temporal depth of social disorientation: are there phenomenological differences in experiencing one's

personal future as impossible to bring about in social disorientation, as it relates to e.g., the short-term, medium-term or long-term future? For instance, when social disorientation becomes a regular and expected part of one's social reality, as it is often reported by marginalised people due to not matching the dominant social norms, the relevant type of experience may ultimately be experienced as far as extending into the long-term future. When exclusion from those wider social possibilities required for accessing one's promise of home is experienced as unlikely to change anytime soon, experiential access to one's promise of home may be experienced not merely as a theoretical possibility in the present (taking the form of 'I can see x but not for me'). But, more debilitatingly, it may be experienced as a theoretical possibility that is in fact quite remote from where one is now in the present (taking the form of 'I can see x but not for me now, nor in y future'). From this perspective, an analysis of the accessibility relation to one's promise of home, with a particular focus on the temporal depth of remoteness from the present, could elaborate my proposal in phenomenologically productive ways. For it is undeniable that there are more or less transient configurations of wider social possibilities blocking experiential access to one's promise of home, which the methodological appeal to socially specific experience can uncover.¹

¹ Building on this methodological insight *qua* socially specific experience, there is a growing body of work on the lived time of marginalisation and oppression within late-stage capitalism. See e.g., Alia Al-Saji, 'Too Late: Racialized Time and the Closure of the Past', *Insights* 6, no. 5 (2013): 1–13; Alia Al-Saji, 'A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing', in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014), 133–72; Alia Al-Saji, 'Too Late: Fanon, the Dismembered Past, and a Phenomenology of Racialized Time', in *Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 177–93; Megan Burke, *When Time Warps: The Lived Experience of Gender, Race, and Sexual Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019); Ngo, "'Get Over It'?"; Marilyn Stendera, 'Time's Entanglements: Beauvoir and Fanon on Reductive Temporalities', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 3 November 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-022-09588-7>. What unites these works is a common concern to critically interrogate the ways in which structures of marginalisation and oppression differentially permeate one's lived relation to the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future. A critical engagement with this body of work promises interesting avenues for further study on social disorientation. In particular, it points to possible ways of extending the critical analysis of the

Second: in developing a response to the DP, my focus has been primarily to *describe* the phenomenology of metaphorical disorientation. As a consequence, I have put aside more explicitly critical considerations as part of study. In the introduction to this thesis, I have identified a common way of talking about metaphorical disorientation as (a) a negative experience to be overcome as soon as possible and (b) a failure of the disoriented person to orientate properly. And I have stated my sympathy with those who have begun to challenge such a view. So, the question is: what, if anything, can my proposal contribute to such a challenge? I understand the central contribution of my proposal to consist in the commitment to understanding the relevant type of experience as constitutively social. Taking seriously this commitment rules out assumption (b) as untenable. On my view, social disorientation marks a deficient social relation. But more than this, I have made a phenomenological case against framing this deficiency as the disorientated person's failure to orientate by socio-normatively shared standards of success and failure. I have instead argued that the failure is to be located exclusively in those interpersonal and social relations that prevent someone from feeling at home in navigating social space. My phenomenological analysis has uncovered that the experience of social disorientation is constitutively attributable to specific configurations of such possibilities, yielding an experience of total powerlessness to bring about one's personal future by the powers of one's own agency alone.

At the same time, and perhaps surprisingly, taking seriously this commitment also complicates any attempt to challenge assumption (b) that seeks to resist a framing in primarily negative terms by locating a potential value in the experience itself rather than its transitional role. As suggested in the introduction, there is a growing literature that aims

differential character of the socio-normative architecture of social space, as discussed in Chapter One with appeal to Ahmed, to that of social time.

to re-evaluate metaphorical disorientation experiences, like the ones examined in this thesis. They do this by making a two-fold claim: namely that such experiences, while certainly debilitating, can at the very same time provide important insights into oneself in relation to other people and the social world. For example, they may bring to one's explicit attention what it is that matters to oneself, in what interdependencies one finds oneself with others, and how social spaces are organised in certain, often exclusionary ways. In doing so, they can not only aid the disorientated person in navigating social space but can also provide the basis for social critique and emancipatory political projects.² While I agree with the importance of such insights, I worry that locating them in the experience itself risks denaturing the phenomenon into a reflective and intellectualist exercise. On my proposal, social disorientation involves a subjective sense of one's own agency as one of total powerlessness. However, this also means that the experience of social disorientation itself does not enable a critical engagement with what the experiential impossibility to bring about one's personal future involves and turns on. While it may come with an immediate understanding that one's personal future is impossible to bring about, the potential value of social disorientation can only come into view with a certain distance from the experience that in turn enables such a critical engagement with the experience.

How this can occur defies any simple answer, let alone phenomenological analysis. But what is certain is that the demand to "get over it" does in no way aid this process. Not only does it fail to do justice to what it is like subjectively to undergo social disorientation. It also risks exacerbating its debilitating character by suggesting that all the disorientated person needs to do is try harder to move on; but recall, at the time of the experience, the disorientated person is confronted with the experiential impossibility to move

² Drawing on Harbin's study of the moral significance of metaphorical disorientation, Lajoie for instance writes: 'Disorientations *can* also function as a site of reflexive awareness that is revealing of previously unexamined relations, expectations, and discourses, thus providing key ethical import.' (Lajoie, 'Being at Home', 560, italics original).

on. But more than this, it wrongfully locates all responsibility for things to get better in the disorientated person alone. At best, this obscures the constitutively social character of the experience and, at worst, this denies any involvement in either generating and/or upholding those interpersonal and social possibilities that prevent the disorientated person from feeling at home in navigating social space.

EPILOGUE

This thesis has been deeply personal. My first experiences of profound disorientation reach too far back to date them precisely. In retrospect, experiences of disorientation had been a significant part of my social reality for a long time, ever since my childhood. So deeply anchored that they had neither been strange nor undesirable to me, but a constant all too familiar companion in my life. In 2017, I began this work as an attempt to trace this phenomenon intellectually, but without emotionally registering how familiar it had already been to me in the past, nor realising how familiar it would become in the years to follow. 2020-2022 were characterised by a profound crisis affecting all aspects of my life. I was convinced that it would never end, let alone that I could ever go back to philosophising about something so close to home. So, I am all the prouder to say that I have come out on the other side and have finally begun to shed light on what had seemed incomprehensible for all too long.

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