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On the role of expectations in experiences of alienation

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Abstract
Experiences of alienation come in a remarkable variety, but they share at least two first-personal features in common, namely, the feelings (1) that I am, to some degree, not the subject of my experience and (2) that my experience does not fully belong to me. In a word, in an experience of alienation, I feel, to some extent, like I am not myself and my experience is not mine. This article explores the hypothesis that such experiences result from a profound mismatch between our anticipatory expectations about what our experience will be like and the way our experience in fact unfolds. The analysis I offer is phenomenological—it's a study of how we constitute (or make sense of) these experiences *as* experiences of alienation. My method is also contrastive—I begin by characterizing a default condition in which I feel like I am myself and my experiences are mine, and I then use that default condition as a point of contrast to study alienation. After I sketch a phenomenology of alienation, I then show how my view might be drawn on to supplement accounts of alienation in some recent prominent work in the phenomenology of illness, grief, and mental disorder.

Keywords Phenomenology · Alienation · Illness · Grief · Mental Disorders

> "…O, how comes it,That thou art then estranged from thyself?"—Shakespeare, *A Comedy of Errors*

This paper investigates experiences of alienation from a phenomenological standpoint. To be clear from the start, we must not confuse alienation with the experience of the alien. As Waldenfels (2011) elucidates, the alien "transgresses the boundaries of every order" (p 21), bordering on unintelligible, because we cannot place it in the

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established meaning framework we rely on to make sense of things. In the experience of alienation, on the other hand, that which one ordinarily experiences as one's own is simultaneously experienced, to varying degrees, as somehow alien. That which one is alienated from, then, never becomes *fully* alien. Experiences of alienation, rather, have an uncanny, ambiguous character wherein something that ordinarily, unproblematically belongs to me retains some of its familiar character and yet, at the same time, feels partly alien, as if it's not mine.

Such experiences of alienation come in degrees, ranging across a continuum and manifesting in remarkable variety. We can feel like we are, to some extent, not ourselves in myriad ways, and we can also feel partly estranged from many of the things that normally feel like they belong to us, such as our desires, beliefs, values, thoughts, actions, possessions, work, partners, life story, and body (or some part of it). If there's something that typically feels like it belongs to us, we can also feel alienated from it, as if it to some degree does not belong to us. What's more, experiences of alienation vary in intensity between two poles: from those that barely register – "I don't quite feel like myself today" – to those that bowl us over – "I have this terrible feeling that I'm dead." Finally, such experiences vary in valence, from the extremely aversive – "Will this ever end!?" – to the downright blissful – "I hope this never ends!"

On my view, all experiences of alienation, directly or indirectly, refer to the self. Either I feel like I am to some extent not myself (or some element of my self feels partly alien); or I feel like my experience (or some element of my experience) does not fully belong to me. The first type of case directly refers to the self: my self – or some part of it – feels somehow alien. The second type refers to the self indirectly, because all experience, as I discuss below, is intrinsically indexed to the self; thus, to the extent that an experience feels like it's not mine, I also feel like I am not the subject of that experience.

My analysis in this article is phenomenological in the sense that it studies how we constitute (or make sense of) these experiences *as* experiences of alienation. Since all experiences of alienation refer to the self, I begin by sketching the theory of the self that frames my analysis, namely, a normativist theory of self. The second section uses that theory to describe what I call our default condition, i.e., a condition in which I feel like I am myself and my experiences are mine. The third section turns to the target phenomenon of alienation, exploring what happens when my default condition gets disturbed, such that I feel, to some extent, like I am not myself and my experiences are not mine. Thus, my phenomenological analysis is also contrastive, using our default condition as a point of contrast to study alienation. The fourth and final section situates my account in relation to some prominent phenomenological work on alienation. In it, I show that these authors also posit a link between alienation and the disruption of ordinary experience; however, I argue that none of them successfully explains that link. I then suggest that my approach can provide that link and thereby supplement these views without otherwise undermining them.

1 A normativist theory of self

For the normativist, selfhood is a normative status embodied by persons who can take up different normative orientations in social space. We are not born with a self; rather, we become one via socialization into the practices that make up our world.[1] The starting point for the version of normativism I endorse is a Heideggerian practice theory according to which meaning-attribution and legible action are always guided and measured by norms furnished by our everyday practices.[2] A practice, on this view, is a set of purposive activities organized around a human interest (or interests) and structured by an open-ended set of norms that are at stake and recursively worked out in those activities. Such practices tend to have loosely defined boundaries, such that they intersect with, encompass, nest in, and mutually affect other practices. And these practices function as a fundamental condition of intelligibility—every phenomenon – person, place, entity, and so on – makes sense as the determinate phenomenon it is in terms of the norms that govern our practices.

For instance, when I teach a seminar, I constitute (or make sense of) the young people present as students, the space as a classroom, and myself as a philosophy lecturer in light of the institutional norms of academic philosophy. If I oriented myself towards the same space in terms of the norms of a different practice – those of an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, say – then the people, place, and purpose of the meeting would make sense in a drastically different light. In the same way, when I cook, clean, study, parent, protest, argue, dance, or what have you, I do so in light of normative success conditions that I could, in principle, fail to meet; and this is because all these activities are embedded in norm-governed practices.[3] For the normativist, meaning is constituted and transmitted by our participation in norm-governed practices.

To be clear, we do not participate in a practice by downloading a universal, codified set of norms. The very idea is absurd, not only because the existing body of norms is typically too large for any one person to learn, but because practices often contain multiple dissenting groups with competing visions of prevailing norms. Rather than learning the entire body of norms associated with a practice, then, we participate in a practice in light of our own, sometimes idiosyncratic, take on those norms, one that typically evolves and becomes more sophisticated through experiential learning.

Here I find Wrathall's (2024) discussion of 'higher-order possibilities' helpful. Wrathall explains this Heideggerian notion roughly as follows. A first-order possibility is a particular happening that may or may not occur—something you might do that gets actualized when you do it; a higher-order possibility, on the other hand, is a way of being in the world that organizes first-order possibilities into a class, allowing me to make sense of them as a coherent set. My giving an introductory lecture

[1] The version of normativism that I defend here builds on a Heideggerian tradition of which the two most prominent representatives are Haugeland (1998, 2013) and Crowell (2001, 2013, 2019).

[2] See the first chapter of Rouse (2023) for a helpful overview of practice theory.

[3] I use the term 'normative' here in a wide sense to mean, roughly, assessable in light of a standard of success. If I can fail to ϕ appropriately, then ϕ-ing has a normative dimension in the intended sense. See Lavin (2004) for a discussion of this wide sense of normativity.

at today's undergraduate induction event is a first-order possibility; lecturing itself, however, is a higher-order possibility that organizes and allows me to make sense of the first-order possibility of delivering this afternoon's lecture. The higher-order possibility situates the first-order possibility in a wider context of significance, allowing me to connect this afternoon's lecture to my other experiences as a lecturer.

To situate this notion in practice theory, when we participate in a practice, we do so not in terms of some universally shared set of norms but rather in terms of diverse and particularized higher-order possibilities. The latter derive their normative content from our practices; but they do not encompass the entire body of norms associated with a practice. Instead, each person's understanding of a higher-order possibility seizes on a limited set of norms associated with a practice, and that set evolves through the process of experiential learning. To stick with my example, my understanding of the higher-order possibility of lecturing seizes on some of the norms at play in that practice but ignores – or remains ignorant of – others. When I constitute (or make sense of) entities, others, and contexts within that practice, then, I do so in light of that limited set of norms afforded by the practice.

For the normativist, then, we constitute an intelligible field of experience, in part, by orienting ourselves to situations in terms of the norms governing some higher-order possibility, which is itself embedded in – and derives its content from – a wider practice.[4] Thus, another key element of the view is the idea of a normative orientation, which denotes a spontaneous, dispositional responsiveness to the norms that govern higher-order possibilities. Such a normative orientation allows us to make sense of a situation and the phenomena in it in a determinate way.

Where does the self fit into this picture? The basic idea is that a normative orientation simultaneously constitutes worldly phenomena *and* the self—my normative orientation discloses a determinate situation and my self as someone occupying a position and embodying relevant intentional states and performing suitable behaviors in that situation. To extend the example from above, when I orient myself to a situation in light of the norms of lecturing, I not only constitute that space as a classroom with the relevant paraphernalia and the people present as my students; I also constitute myself as a lecturer, and the features of my being that become primary or salient in that context are the ones relevant to that higher-order possibility. Specifically, my capacities for extemporaneous speech and thought and my ability to track and adjust to student reactions in real-time occupy the center of my experience, furnishing my sense of self for that stretch of time, while other aspects of my being – e.g., desires, bodily awareness, narrative identity, and so on – drift into the background. Of course, in another context, my sense of self might shift, foregrounding other context-relevant elements of my nature. Thus, normativism sees the self as something that flexibly shifts to meet the demands changing circumstances.

Finally, I need to sketch normativism's approach to the self's temporal dimension. To illustrate by way of an example, let's say I have an appointment with a new therapist. When I arrive at the appointed time, the experience will make sense to me in terms a twofold temporal horizon. First, my being there at all makes sense in a

[4] I say 'in part' because there are other forms of normativity that I do not discuss here for reasons of space, e.g., the sort of one-dimensional biological normativity elucidated by Okrent (2017).

determinate way against the backdrop of a wider temporal context, namely, the fact that I've been struggling with life's problems to the point that I decided to seek help, made an appointment, and arrived on time. That wider temporal context sets me up with expectations that structure the experience. Repurposing a Husserlian distinction, we can call this wider temporal context the 'external' temporal horizon, because it resides outside of the present moment whose sense it informs. Secondly, the intelligibility of each moment also depends on an 'internal' temporal horizon, i.e., each moment bears within itself an intelligible relationship to what has happened so far and what I anticipate happening next.[5] Take the moment I open the door to my therapist's office. Seeing her name on the door and the correct time on my watch, opening the door makes sense as the thing to do; what's more, as I open the door, I anticipate seeing and speaking to my new therapist for the first time. The meaning of each moment thus unfolds in relation to what has happened so far and an open-ended yet determinate range of anticipatory expectations.

These expectations divide into three main types. First, I have *probabilistic expectations* about what is likely to happen based on prior experience: I smell the metallic scent of ozone released by distant lightning and expect rain; I catch my toe on the curb and brace myself for a fall; I walk into a Munich bakery and expect to hear "*Grüss Gott*"; and so on. I expect the future to resemble the past.

Secondly, I have *normic expectations* that my experience will unfold in a normal way. Normal here does not reduce to statistical frequency; rather, something is abnormal in the intended sense when it calls for "some specific *explanation*" (Ebert et al. 2020, 443, *original emphasis*). For instance, though statistically improbable, it's not *abnormal* to win the lottery: no explanation is called for; however unlikely, your numbers just came up. Alternatively, although statistically more likely, when I turn my key in my car's ignition and nothing happens, that's *abnormal*—it demands some explanation, because cars normally start when you turn the key. Normic expectations reflect our sense of what a normal world is like.

Finally, we also have *normative expectations* about how our interpersonal experience ought to unfold. Our normative expectations reflect the fact that, in the 'second-personal space' (Macarthur, 2019) where we give and ask for reasons, we hold ourselves and other norm-responsive agents accountable to the norms that govern higher-order possibilities. I expect my students to remain quiet enough during a lecture so as not to interfere with the learning of others; I expect family members to come to my aid when I need help; I expect my employer to honour my contract by paying my wages; and I expect myself to meet all the relevant reciprocal demands. These expectations are constitutive, respectively, of my understanding of teaching, family, and employment, and when they go unmet, it triggers 'reactive attitudes' (Strawson, 1962) associated with blame, guilt, and demands for justificatory reasons.[6]

There are three important things to note about these anticipatory expectations. First, I understand them here in first-personal phenomenological terms. Although

[5] For this distinction between 'internal' and 'external' horizons, see Husserl (1983, 51–52).

[6] The distinction between probabilistic and normative expectations roughly parallels Christina Bicchieri's (2017) distinction between empirical and normative expectations vis-à-vis social norms. I derive the notion of 'normic expectations' from Ebert et al.'s (2020) normic account of risk.

there might be some theoretical route to reducing these expectations to third-personal statistical estimates or representations in the brain, that is not what we're talking about here. The idea, rather, is that from the first-person perspective, our experience unfolds in light of these expectations. To be clear, this does not mean that we tend to be explicitly aware of these expectations or how they shape our experience. For the most part, they remain in the background, and we only become explicitly aware of them when our experience significantly departs from them. For instance, say I come home late from work on my birthday and, as I open the door to the dark house, a sudden frisson rises in me, but I don't know why. Some expectation structures my experience here, but I do not know what it is until I walk in and see my family watching TV: suddenly, I feel disappointed and realize that the dark house on my birthday had triggered the fleeting expectation of a surprise party, which was disappointed by the tableau of couch potatoes. This is how we typically become aware of our anticipatory expectations: we see how they structure our experience indirectly, when they get thwarted. To be clear, then, we do not enjoy luminous, transparent access to the expectations that structure our experience; we access them indirectly, hermeneutically, and fallibly.

Secondly, it's important to emphasize that, from the first-person perspective, probabilistic, normic, and normative expectations are irreducible to each other. We cannot reduce normic expectations to probabilities, because the highly improbable can be perfectly normal—again, winning the lottery is astronomically improbable, but it isn't abnormal. We also cannot reduce normative expectations to what's probable: even if we know it's highly likely that our aggressive colleague will insult us at the next meeting, we retain the normative expectation that he shouldn't, and our reactive attitudes respond to his insults accordingly. Finally, normic and normative expectations take different objects—normic expectations apply to things that are not themselves beholden to norms, while normative expectations apply to norm-responsive agents in second-personal space. We have normic expectations about cars, dogs, and sunrises; and we have normative expectations about teachers, spouses, and politicians. Departures from normic expectations signal abnormalities; departures from normative expectations signal perceived failures to live up to standards.

Finally, we should also note that, in keeping with the commitments of normativism, an agent's expectations of all three types tend to organize around their normative orientation. My probabilistic expectations tend to be tuned to the higher-order possibility I'm currently engaged in. For example, when I'm out for a run in the winter, I have expectations based on prior experiences about how the sole of my shoe will slide on icy patches in the park, and I adjust my stride accordingly. Were I not running, or were it not winter, these expectations would not be in play. Similarly, normic expectations tend to be keyed to my normative orientation towards higher-order possibilities: a racing heart is normal after a sprint in a football match and abnormal if I'm sitting at my desk. Finally, my normative expectations hinge entirely on my normative orientation. If I am lecturing to a group of students, I expect a range of learning-conducive behaviours; if I encounter the same students at the campus pub, my normative expectations shift dramatically. All our expectations revolve significantly – and sometimes entirely – around our current normative orientation.

2 The default setting

Before turning to the phenomenology of alienation in section three, this section establishes a point of contrast for that analysis by using the elements of normativism just described to explain the typical 'owned' character of experience. Most of the time, I feel like the thinker of my thoughts, believer of my beliefs, doer of my deeds, and so on; what's more, my thoughts, beliefs, actions, and so on seem to belong exclusively and, for the most part, unproblematically to me. In a word, my default experience involves feeling like (1) I am myself and (2) my experiences are mine. Why is this?

Before we answer that question, we need to avert two potential misunderstandings. First, the word feeling here – i.e., feeling like I'm myself and my experiences belong to me – does not imply the conscious experience of an emotion, as in, "I feel angry." Rather, in this context, "feeling" denotes a first-personal sense of things. For example, when I say, "I feel constrained by this arrangement", I'm not talking about an emotion, though I might also be angry or frustrated; what I'm talking about, rather, is a lived sense that I am not free to act as I please. That feeling need not be something that I am ongoingly consciously aware of; in fact, it might be something that remains largely tacit, which I can only characterize rather sketchily when prompted. To feel like I am the subject of experiences that belong to me, then, is just to have a first-personal sense that I am the subject of my experiences and my experiences are mine, such that, if prompted, I would affirm those propositions. That doesn't mean that an awareness of these feelings permeates phenomenal awareness; nor does it mean that they are feelings akin to anger or joy; it means that when I think about it, I have a sense that I am the subject of experiences that belong to me. That is part of the default phenomenology of the first-person perspective.

Secondly, the preceding paragraph does not commit me to any position in the debate about the extent to which phenomenal awareness involves self-awareness. Billon and Kriegel (2015) divide the authors in that debate into 'universalists', 'nihilists', and 'existentialists.' When asked how often self-awareness features in phenomenal experience, universalists answer, "Always", existentialists say, "Sometimes", and nihilists reply, "Never". I'm not signing up for any of these positions here. My point is that, *upon reflection*, most people, most of the time, will say they feel like the subject of their own experiences; and that does not commit me to any position in the debate just described. Although those familiar with the debate will see an affinity between my position and Schear's (2009) view, I set the issue aside here.

Let's look now at the target feelings, taking each in turn. Why do I tend to feel like myself? There are at least two major reasons I consider here: (1) I have an a priori entitlement to regard myself as the subject of my own experience, and (2) the interaction between my anticipatory expectations and my experience tends to reflect my agency back to me in a way that reinforces that entitlement.

Any agent who can respond sensitively to the normative requirements of a higher-order possibility – and that's most adult agents, most of the time – has an immediate a priori warrant to regard herself as the subject of her own experience. Why? Responding sensitively to normative claims involves, among other things, feeling, recognizing, weighing, and reacting to their normative force. Doing so presupposes a subject of experience who feels, recognizes, weighs, and reacts in terms of a particu-

lar normative orientation. In other words, I do not respond to the norms that govern a higher-order possibility in terms of some neutral view from nowhere; rather, I respond to them in terms of my relevant cares, my current interests, my circumstances, my sense of the normative requirements placed on me by relevant others, and my understanding of the relevant higher-order possibility. Thus, my normative responsiveness presupposes a subject who responds to normative demands from a particular standpoint. Experiences of internal normative tensions make this especially clear. Imagine Sarah has started therapy, and a tension emerges early in the process. She feels her therapist's questions probe too deeply, too quickly, but she also takes this as a sign of genuine interest; and so, she feels ambivalent about how to respond. Now, if there were two clients in the room, one might bristle at the intrusive questioning, while the other appreciates the intense interest, and the two need not be aware of any tension in their viewpoints. However, if Sarah feels both ways about his questions, then she faces a normative tension that she must negotiate; and that tension only makes sense in reference to her singular point of view. But this example only accentuates a more general point: responsiveness to normative claims presupposes a subject who responds to those claims. Thus, the typical agent's normative responsiveness furnishes her with an a priori warrant to regard herself as the subject of her experiences.

The preceding paragraph takes its cue from Tyler Burge's (2000) interpretation of the Kantian claim that we enjoy an immediate, non-inferential a priori entitlement to the first-person concept in virtue of our mastery of notions such as reasoning, judgment, change of mind, and point of view. It also reflects a core commitment of the post-Kantian tradition, namely, the idea that self and world form a co-constituted, internally related, interdependent duality. Whenever we make sense of the world, we make sense of ourselves in a related way; and whenever we make sense of ourselves, we make sense of the world in a related way. When I disclose the people in my classroom as students, my role as a teacher is reflected back to me; and if I consider the fact that I am teaching, I simultaneously disclose the people present as my students. All world-disclosure is self-disclosure and vice versa; and so, all world-disclosure reflects my self back to me and all self-awareness refers to the world.

Moving on to the second major reason I tend to feel like myself, the interaction between my anticipatory expectations and my experience ongoingly reinforces my entitlement to regard myself as the subject of my experience; and this is true, for the most part, both when my experience fulfils my anticipatory expectations *and* when it violates them.

Experiences that satisfy my anticipatory expectations confirm my sense that I am the subject of my experience, because such satisfaction only makes sense in terms of *my* normative orientation towards a higher-order possibility. For example, when I open the door to my doctor's office and, as expected, I encounter a physician in a medical setting, the experience confirms my sense of who I am and what I'm up to in the world. The scene tracks with what I expect to find – it satisfies my probabilistic, normic, and normative expectations – given what I'm up to. In this way, the satisfaction of my anticipatory expectations reinforces my sense that I am myself, i.e., a normatively competent agent oriented towards the world in terms of the higher-order possibility of being-a-patient.

What's more, experiences that thwart my anticipatory expectations also tend to reinforce my sense that I am the subject of my experiences. To see why, we need to be clear about what thwarted expectations amount to. Recall the flexibility of our expectations—we tend to anticipate a determinate yet open-ended range of outcomes as a situation unfolds. When I walk into a room full of friends, say, my probabilistic, normic, and normative expectations allow for a range of experiences to show up as more or less what's expected. For instance, there's a range of temperatures and ambient light distributions that would in no way violate my probabilistic expectations; there's an uncountable number of scenarios that would leave my normic expectations unviolated; and, finally, there's a wide range of responses from my friends – from handshakes to hugs – that would satisfy my normative expectations for greetings. So, for an experience to genuinely thwart my anticipatory expectations, it must fall outside that range. To stick with the example, it would thwart my expectations to walk into that room and have insults hurled at me. After an initial shock, however, if I can adjust my comportment to restore the sense that my experience is unfolding as expected, in light of the new information, the thwarting of my expectations will ultimately reinforce my sense that I am the subject of my experience. For example, say that the person hurling insults is not a friend but a disgruntled co-worker I didn't expect to be there, and I manage to defuse the situation. My efforts to smooth things over satisfy another set of normative expectations associated with the higher-order possibility of resolving conflicts, which in turn confirms my sense of self, by reflecting my normative responsiveness back to me. Thus, adjusting my response to make sense of and thereby assimilate surprising events into an ongoing pattern of fulfilled expectations also makes me feel like myself, because it reflects my agency back to me.

To sum up, then, I typically feel like I am myself, because (1) the tight correlation between self and world gives me an immediate a priori warrant to understand myself as the subject of my experiences, and (2) the interaction between my anticipatory expectations and my experience reinforces that entitlement, i.e., my experience either satisfies my anticipatory expectations and thereby reflects my agency back to me, or it thwarts my expectations, forcing me to resolve some tension or problem in a way that ultimately reflects my agency back to me.

So, what about the second feeling? Why do my experiences by default feel like they are mine? A quick reminder: in this context, to say that my experiences tend to 'feel' like they belong to me is not to say that an explicit feeling of experiential ownership permeates phenomenal awareness. It is to say, rather, that most of us, most of the time, have a first-personal sense that our experiences belong to us.

The tight internal relationship between self-disclosure and world-disclosure accounts for this feeling too. Every aspect of my normal experience is indexed to some dimension of my self. Events and processes in the world unfold in concert with *my* anticipatory expectations; and phenomena have their meaning and salience relative to *my* normative orientation to some higher-order possibility. All my experiences are thus intrinsically indexed to me. In a word, experiential ownership flows from my a priori warrant to understand myself as the subject of my experiences. We might formalize the point as follows:

1. If I am the subject of certain experiences, then those experiences must belong to me.
2. I have an immediate a priori warrant to regard myself as the subject of my experiences.
3. ∴ Those experiences must belong to me.

To illustrate the point with an example, consider Sarah's therapy session once more. For her, that entire context has its meaning in terms of *her* normative orientation towards the higher-order possibility of being-in-therapy. The time advancing on the clock correlates with her experience of the time in her session running out; everything her therapist says and does has its determinate meaning for her in relation to her sense of how things should go for her as a patient; and, finally, everything in the context matters (or fails to matter) to her in relation to her normative orientation. The entire situation makes sense and unfolds in the determinate way it does in relation to *her* agency; thus, all her experiences in that room are indelibly marked as *hers*. Being intimately indexed to – and making sense only in relation to – Sarah's self, it would be strange to think that her experiences could belong to anyone but her.

Indeed, that is what makes alienation so uncanny—experiences that by default belong to me feel, to some extent, like they are not mine. Let's turn our attention to these strange experiences now.

3 Experiences of alienation

What happens in experiences of alienation? Why do I sometimes feel like I am not fully myself, or that my experience does not entirely belong to me? How do we constitute these experiences with their distinctive alien quality?

The hypothesis I want to begin to defend here is that such experiences arise from a specific kind of mismatch between my anticipatory expectations and my experience. Given what I said in section two, this might sound unpromising. After all, I argued there that most expectation-thwarting experiences ultimately reinforce my sense that I am the subject of my experience, because by adjusting my comportment and making sense of them in terms of my normative orientation, I incorporate them into the wider meaning framework of my experience, re-establishing the more typical pattern of correlation between my anticipatory expectations and my experience, thereby reinforcing my sense that I am the subject of my experience. I do not wish to gainsay those claims.

Instead, I want to argue that a certain class of expectation-thwarting experiences resist such incorporation, and to the extent that they do, and for as long as they do, these experiences partially disrupt the tight correlation between self and world. In doing so, they challenge, to varying degrees, my a priori warrant to regard myself as the subject of my experience, so that I feel, to some extent, as if I am not the one having the experience. What's more, mirroring the fact that experiential ownership flows from my a priori warrant to understand myself as the subject of my experiences, alienation flows from radical challenges to that a priori warrant. We can formalize this alternate direction of flow as follows:

1. If I am not the subject of an experience, then the experience cannot belong to me.
2. Certain expectation-thwarting experiences make me feel, to some extent, like I am not the subject of my experience.
3. ∴ These experiences also make me feel, to some extent, like my experience (or some element of it) does not belong to me.

Once more, the two feelings travel together, due to the intimate correlation between self and world.

In recent work on dissociative experiences, Černis et al. (2020, 2021, 2024) coin the expression 'felt sense of anomaly' (FSA) to capture a common phenomenological feature of many dissociative experiences. My proposal here is that the anomaly in question is the expectation-experience mismatch that resists incorporation into the typical order of my experience. The varieties of this kind of mismatch, I want to suggest, can help us make sense of the varieties of alienation experiences wherein we feel, to some extent, like we are not ourselves and our experiences (or elements of them) do not fully belong to us. To the extent, and so long as, I cannot re-establish the typical correlation between my anticipatory expectations and my experience, I cannot make sense of my experience in the normal, default way. I become partially estranged from myself and my experience.

But which expectations do I have in mind here? Is it my inability to incorporate experiences that depart from my probabilistic, normic, or normative expectations that gives rise to experiences of alienation? The answer, I think, is all three. The right kind of mismatch between my experience and any of these anticipatory expectations, singly or in combination, can give rise to feelings of alienation. In what remains of this section, I try to illustrate how this works by way of examples.

3.1 Probabilistic expectations

Someone I know played the lottery every week for 25 years. She knew the odds were long, but she bought a weekly ticket anyway, mainly because she relished the fantasies of winning. Then one day, her number came up. Upon winning, a kind of befuddled haze marred her initial excitement. She couldn't shake the thought that a mistake had been made, and she compulsively rechecked the numbers to see if they really matched. But no amount of doublechecking seemed to settle her doubts—her new circumstances remained stubbornly difficult to absorb. Indeed, her win felt partly unreal, as if it had not really happened. Why? Because the new information resisted incorporation into the overarching meaning framework in terms of which she made sense of her life.

For decades, her mind had been harried by financial worries. Indeed, her entire adult life had been partly structured by a normative orientation towards the higher-order possibility of pinching pennies and all its associated probabilistic expectations about what she could do with money. Suddenly, something utterly unexpected made that long self-defining higher-order possibility irrelevant, shattering her probabilistic expectations in a way that she could not, for some time, incorporate into the wider meaning framework that organized her world.

To unpack this a bit, her new financial situation was radically at odds with a wide range of probabilistic expectations that had sedimented in her mind over the course of her life. Everything else in her world – e.g., the kitchen she had wanted (but could not afford) to renovate for 30 years, the reliable but cheap car she had wanted (but could not afford) to replace for 25 years, the modest wardrobe she had wanted (but could not afford) to update – continued to mirror back her probabilistic expectations as a person of modest means. But the memory of winning and her newfound purchasing power were radically discordant with those expectations. In a word, the win and the opportunities it created were so at odds with her sedimented probabilistic expectations that they resisted incorporation into the wider meaning framework that organized her world. Thus, the new life in which she enjoyed financial freedom felt, to some extent, like a fantasy that she might, at any moment, snap out of. Indeed, for some time, she had the sensation upon waking that it was all a dream. Of course, at the same time, she knew the win was real and experienced it as such. The experience was fundamentally ambiguous.

Does this contradict what I said earlier, namely, that most expectation-thwarting experiences ultimately reinforce my sense that I am the subject of my experience, because I can reestablish the typical expectation-experience correlation through my own comportment?

It does not. The case under consideration differs from most expectation-thwarting experiences by a significant degree. Our lottery winner was not simply compelled to adjust some element of her comportment, like the earlier example wherein I quickly switched from friend-mode to conflict-mode. She had to alter part of her lifelong self-conception and its associated expectations, and that takes time. Gradually, over the course of a year or so, she acquired a new normative orientation towards her financial affairs and reestablished the tight correlation between her probabilistic expectations and her experience. She felt increasingly like the subject of these new experiences and the fact of the win felt more real. The feeling that it was all a dream, however, still occasionally washes over her, especially upon waking, when, in memory, she relives the win shattering her probabilistic expectations.

3.2 Normic expectations

The war reporter Anthony Loyd offers a first-person account of an experience of alienation that arose from the violation of his normic expectations. On his way to Turkey from Aleppo, Loyd was kidnapped by a Syrian gang. After a failed escape attempt, he was recaptured, shot in the foot, and severely beaten. During that beating, he felt estranged from his own body. Loyd writes:

> He held my head by the hair and pummelled away, big farm-boy firsts smashing my face one way and another as he gasped with delight. The first two blows hurt in a dull, deep way, and caused black and white dots to pop around the periphery of my limited vision. After that, though, sensation faded and I observed the thudding impacts in a disembodied state…Through my one good eye I saw my blood splatter across the car seats and floor, joined by fistfuls of my hair (Loyd, 2014).

The key normic expectations violated by this experience were Loyd's expectations about pain. Given his normative orientation to the context – seeing his assailant beat him, hearing the blows, watching his blood splatter and hair scatter about the car, trying to get away and to position his body to protect himself, and so on – he expects to feel terrible pain; and those expectations are not just probabilistic. In a normal world, there's a tight psychophysical correlation between physical punishment and pain, such that bodily damage without pain borders on unintelligible. The pain-free character of the ordeal thus violates the first-personal satisfaction conditions of the experience as an episode of physical trauma. When subpersonal mechanisms kick in to numb Loyd's pain, then, the experience radically violates his normic expectations.

Of course, naturalistically speaking, it's normal for the body to react to trauma by releasing adrenaline that mutes the pain response. But the normic expectations we're interested in here are first-personal, and from the first-person perspective, bodily injury normally causes pain. In other words, trauma not causing pain demands some specific explanation.

Again, it's important to emphasize that the experience not only thwarts Loyd's normic expectations, but it does so in a way that resists incorporation into the wider order of his experience. Nothing Loyd can do will make his experience match his normic expectations about pain. He cannot restore the normic order of his experience by means of his own free comportment. The typical tight correlation between his normic expectations and his actual experience has slackened, and no effort of his own will restore it. All he can do is wait for the experience to end.

Once again, I want to highlight the ambiguous character of the experience. Loyd knows he's the one being brutalized – after all, many of the correlations between his anticipatory expectations and his experience remain intact – but it's partially 'as if' it's not his body being beaten, because the violence delivers no pain, and so the experience fails to reflect that bodily element of his being back to him. Thus, the experience is ambiguous—he feels like he is the one being beaten, but, at the same time, he feels, to some extent, as if it's not really him. Specifically, to the extent that the experience fails to reflect his sensory, bodily agency back to him, it feels as if he's observing it happening to someone else's body. By disturbing the correlation between his normic expectations and his bodily experience, the episode makes him feel, to some extent, like the battered body is not his and, correlatively, that he, to some extent, is not the subject of the experience. It is clearly him, but also somehow not him.

3.3 Normative expectations

The violation of our normative expectations can also lead to alienation experiences of varying intensity. For example, extreme transgressions of moral norms in public space, major betrayals of trust in intimate relationships, and the sudden irruption of anger from a friend can disorient us and make us feel uncannily estranged from our experience. In such cases, a mismatch between my experience and my normative expectations arises that, at least temporarily, I cannot incorporate into the wider normative framework of my perspective as an agent; indeed, they thwart expectations that are constitutive of the phenomena in question. Expectations of common moral decency are constitutive of feeling safe in public space; expectations of mutual trust

are constitutive of loving relationships; and expectations of kindness are constitutive of friendship. Probabilistically speaking, we know that such norms get violated; normically speaking, we know that such violations happen in a normal world; however, in normative terms, such violations subvert the very category of experience we take ourselves to occupy. The normative dimension of the tight correlation between self and world is, for some stretch of time, disrupted. To the extent that, and for as long as, I cannot incorporate the given experience into the wider normative framework of my life, the experience will have an uncanny, ambiguous character. Much of it will continue to meet my various expectations and so reflect my sense of self back to me; but part of the experience will resist incorporation into the normative order of my world, and so, to some extent, I will feel estranged from the experience.

Let's take a closer look at the case of betrayal in an intimate relationship. Films often depict betrayed lovers stumbling about the scene of an affair, dazed and confused. They find evidence strewn about the family room – an empty bottle of wine, stray garments, etc. – but comprehension stubbornly fails to dawn as they drift towards the bedroom. When they finally cotton on, they are typically portrayed as stunned and speechless, in a state of disbelieving shock, and this depiction seems apt, I think, because the betrayed partner experiences a radical mismatch between their normative expectations and their lived experience. The experience, to some extent, fails to reflect their sense of self back to them, and they cannot remedy that failure with any short-term adjustments. The promise of fidelity is constitutive of the normative meaning of the typical marriage. The cuckold who catches his spouse in flagrante delicto, then, will likely find the experience not only painful but also uncanny and strange, as it violates the very normative expectations that are constitutive of their experience of their spouse *as* their spouse. "How could she do this?", he might think; or, "The person I know would never do this!" And such shock and denial reflect the fact that the experience resists incorporation into the wider normative framework of their life. To incorporate the new experience, that framework must be partially restructured, e.g., they will need to see their spouse anew as someone who was in fact not committed – or was perhaps too frail to commit – to the normative demands of marriage. But such restructuring takes time, and until it occurs, the episode will, to some extent, feel strange and unreal, like something that happened in a bad dream. Of course, the experience will not feel utterly alien—it continues to meet many of his expectations about the world and so reflects his sense of self back to him. It's just that an element of the experience – i.e., his wife's infidelity taken against the backdrop of his normative expectations about marriage – that resists incorporation into the wider meaning framework that organizes his world. Once again, the experience is ambiguous—he feels simultaneously as if he is the subject of the experience, and yet, at the same time, he feels as if it's not really happening.

These examples have at least two limitations. First, as I said in the introduction, the experience of alienation is a continuum phenomenon that manifests in countless ways, so a few examples can only get us so far. Fortunately, the next section will offer more examples to consider. Secondly, the examples do not fall as neatly into the three categories – probabilistic, normic, and normative – as my headings suggest. The lottery winner assuredly has her probabilistic expectations thwarted, but she likely also has normative expectations about her lot in life that were also disrupted

by the win; Loyd definitely had his normic expectations violated, but his normative expectations about human decency and his probabilistic expectations about what might happen to him that day were also likely overturned; finally, our cuckold no doubt had some of his normative expectations crushed, but he very likely had his priors shattered too. This second limitation, I think, reflects the fact that although our different anticipatory expectations can come apart, they rarely do, because, as I said in section one, they tend to organize around our normative orientation towards some higher-order possibility. Despite these limitations, I think these examples illustrate my core hypothesis. The next section bolsters that hypothesis more by illustrating how my view can enhance other phenomenological work on alienation.

4 Providing a missing link

Many contemporary phenomenologists write about experiences of alienation in terms that broadly resonate with my view, arguing that alienation occurs when our default mode of experience gets disrupted. This section considers some prominent, relatively recent work in this vein in the phenomenology of illness, grief, and mental disorders. I argue that although these authors make an intuitive case that some disruption induces alienation, none of them successfully explains the putative link between that disruption and the experience of alienation. In each case, I try to show how my view could provide that link without otherwise undermining the views under discussion.

4.1 Illness

To begin with the phenomenology of illness, several authors working in this area highlight the fact that illness often involves experiences of bodily alienation. As Svenaeus (2011) puts it, the ill body shows up "as an alien being (being me, yet not me)" (p. 336). Toombs (1992) attributes such alienation to processes of objectification. Following Husserl (1990) and Merleau-Ponty (2002), she contends that in everyday experience, the lived body must, for the most part, remain transparent. That is, for ordinary experience to unfold as it does, our bodily skills, mastery of sensorimotor contingencies, saccadic eye movement, and so on must all remain, for the most part, in the background of experience, so that the action-relevant aspects of our current context can be foregrounded. In illness, however, this transparency often gets disrupted, as aspects of the lived body obtrude, jutting out from the background and showing up in their object-like dimension. As Aho (2017) expresses the point, "the pains, difficulties, and discomforts of physical illness shift the perception of our own embodiment from the seamless engagement of *Leib* to the alienating and disorienting object-ness of *Körper*" (p. 122). In illness, we become explicitly aware of our bodies as objects—an awareness that, according to Toombs (1992) and Carel (2016), gets reinforced by clinicians who relate to us through the objectifying attitude of the biomedical model. Leder's (1990) influential work mines a similar vein but places more emphasis on how the ill body resists the person's will; Carel (2016) highlights this aspect of illness too, describing how the ill body "thwarts plans, impedes choices, and renders actions impossible" (p. 42). This contributes to feelings of bodily alienation,

Leder and Carel maintain, because rather than smoothly operating in the background in service to our goals, the ill body confronts us as an obstacle that works *against* our goals. In sum, these authors argue that the breakdown of the ill body induces experiences of alienation because it brings the body to the fore as an object-like *Körper* that faces me as an obstacle.

I agree that disruptions in the lived body can induce the kind of alienation these authors describe. However, something seems to be missing from their accounts of *why* such disruptions induce alienation. Many experiences involve (a) explicit awareness of the body as an object-like *Körper* coupled with (b) a breakdown that thwarts our agency, and yet they induce no alienation. If that's true, then there must be some other alienation-inducing factor(s) left unexamined by these accounts. Is it true?

I think so. Consider intensive athletic training. The thwarting of the will and the experience of the body in its object-like dimension are common features of such training, and yet it rarely induces alienation.[7] When athletes push their endurance beyond its current limits, they sometimes exercise to the point where the mind remains willing, but the body gives out, as they 'hit a wall'. Similarly, in strength training, most athletes take every set to failure, namely, the point where one wills to do another rep, but the target muscle fails. To repurpose Aho's (2017) words, intensive training often involves experiences in which "pains, difficulties, and discomforts…shift the perception of our own embodiment from the seamless engagement of *Leib* to the… object-ness of *Körper*". Think of the runner's cramping muscles and racing heart, or the painful burning sensations in the weightlifter's muscles as they fail. The lived body breaks down in these experiences, making these athletes keenly aware of their bodies' object-like character; however, this tends to induce no alienation. On the other hand, if someone experienced identical sensations due to an illness, the experience might very well induce the sort of bodily alienation the above authors describe. How do we account for this?

Before answering that, we should also note that bodily breakdowns in illness do not necessarily induce alienation. Imagine a long-COVID sufferer doing housework on a Saturday afternoon when she's suddenly stricken by the recurring symptoms: breathless and fatigued, she must stop working and retreat to bed. Just as the phenomenologists of illness describe, her effortful breathing brings the ordinarily transparent activity of her lungs to the fore with an 'object-like' character, thwarting her plans and impeding her choices. Will this induce bodily alienation? It depends. She *might* feel estranged from aspects of her body, especially if the condition is relatively new. But let's say she contracted COVID in 2021 and has grown used to it. It's entirely possible that she has lived with the condition long enough to set a new norm for her experience, such that, while she continues to find it aversive, it no longer induces alienation. What seems abnormal and alienating initially can become a new normal.

In summary, phenomenologists of illness posit a link between the disruption of the lived body and experiences of alienation, but, as I see it, they do not satisfactorily explain that link. My account could help them fill that gap while leaving their views otherwise intact. Specifically, these authors could argue that the breakdown of the lived body in illness induces alienation to the extent that, and for as long as, it

[7] There are exceptions, e.g., the trance-like quasi-hallucinations experienced by some ultra-marathoners.

radically disrupts a person's bodily expectations in a way that they cannot incorporate into the wider meaning framework of their experience. So, to refer to the above examples, in the initial stages, our COVID sufferer's breathlessness and fatigue will likely induce experiences of alienation, because it radically thwarts her probabilistic and normic expectations about how her lived body will feel and function. Cleaning house has never made her feel this way, and the fact that it does now calls for some specific explanation. What's more, her expectations cannot be easily updated to accommodate these changes. Her self-conception is that of a healthy person who can rely on her body to do hard work, and these new experiences radically fail to reflect that sense of self back to her, leaving her feeling like she is not herself. However, after years of living with the condition, her probabilistic and normic expectations – i.e., her expectations about what's likely and what's normal for *her* body – will shift, such that her long-COVID symptoms continue to periodically render her lived body object-like in a way that thwarts her plans, but this no longer induces alienation because it no longer radically fails to reflect her sense of self back to her. Indeed, at some point, it will begin to reflect her expectations and sense of self back to her. This also explains why breakdowns in athletic training do not tend to induce alienation: the obtrusive, intention-thwarting aspects of these athletes' bodies *satisfy* their probabilistic, normic, and normative expectations and so reflect their agency back to them. No pain, no gain, etc.

Some readers might balk at the idea that bodily normic expectations can change as much as my long-COVID example implies, but I want to insist on this point. Such expectations are largely indexed to individual bodies: it's normal for Lebron to dunk; it's normal for others to need a wheelchair on the court; but dunking and wheelchair use would both be abnormal for me. The tendency to think that there is one univocal set of normic expectations for "the normal body" conflates the normative with the normic. In addition to sharpening their account of bodily alienation, then, phenomenologists of illness could also defuse the criticism that they work with an illegitimate, normatively-loaded notion of normalcy by indexing normic expectations to the individual body (Sholl, 2015; Burch, 2023).[8]

4.2 Grief

Another recent phenomenological account of alienation that resonates with my own is Køster's (2022) work on grief. The bereaved often express their grief in terms of alienation: e.g., "'I have become a stranger to myself'…'the world no longer makes sense without her'" (p 386). Why does such loss "cause a state of alienation from oneself and one's sense of belonging in the world" (p 387)? Køster's answer shares two key premises with my view: (1) the correlation between self and world makes it such that I always understand myself in relation to the world, and (2) bereavement induces alienation by disrupting that correlation. However, Køster highlights

[8] To present that criticism compactly: the phenomenology of illness (PI) defines pathology in relation to the normal body; but there is arguably no such thing as a 'normal body'; therefore, PI's arguments depend on a normatively-loaded, philosophically suspect notion of normalcy.

an aspect of the self-world correlation that I have not mentioned, namely, it often involves the intertwinement of the self with intimate others.

An intimate other, according to Køster (2022), is "a person with whom one shares most of the practices of everyday life" (p 387). In sharing our lives with such others, he maintains, "the invisible threads of intentionality that integrate us with our habituated world will tend to be inseparable from that person" (p 391). Following Fuchs (2018), Køster (2022) argues that intimate others share a dyadic identity, achieving "a sedimented way of being together through coordinating their daily habitual comportments", allowing them to refer to themselves as a 'we' (p 392). The death of an intimate other, Køster suggests, induces alienation by disrupting this "dyadic habitual structure through which I relate to myself" (p 394). In a word, the loss of an intimate other severs my "connection to the habitual world that sustains me", leaving me "feeling alienated" from myself and the world.

Once again, I agree with most of this. Such a disruption can induce feelings of alienation; however, something seems to be missing from Køster's account, because the disruption of a dyadic habitual structure does not *necessarily* induce alienation.

Imagine Saoirse meets Danny in her second year of university. She likes him right away, but is unsure he likes her, because he's aloof and seems to put her down in subtle ways. To her surprise, Danny asks her out. After a year of dating, however, she remains uncertain about his affections, often wondering whether he secretly wants someone else. Again, he surprises her by asking her to move in together. Danny moves into Saoirse's cosy one-bedroom, and they live together for two years, sharing the routines of life, coordinating their quotidian patterns, and becoming habituated to each other's bodily presence. Then one day Saoirse allows a suppressed worry to surface: she feels like she cannot be herself with Danny, nor can she feel at home in their living space, because his manner keeps her on edge. She starts seeing a therapist and gradually realizes that their relationship in many respects repeats a maladaptive pattern from her childhood, one of attaching herself to men who take no interest in her as a person. Realizing she'd be better off without him, Saoirse dumps Danny and he moves out.

As I see it, despite the disruption of their dyadic habitual structure, it's an easy possibility that Danny's absence will induce no alienation in Saoirse. Indeed, after years of feeling like she could not be herself, she might very well feel more like herself and more at home in her place than ever. What's more, this example illustrates a more general truth: when some dysfunctional dyads dissolve, they leave at least one of the former members feeling freer and more like themselves. This suggests that the rupture of a dyadic habitual structure does not suffice to induce alienation.

To summarize, Køster posits a link between the disruption of a dyadic habitual structure and experiences of alienation, but, as I see it, he does not satisfactorily explain that link. My account could fill this gap while leaving the rest of his view intact. Specifically, he could use my account to argue that the disruption of a dyadic habitual structure induces alienation to the extent that, and for as long as, it radically disrupts the person's expectations in a way that they cannot incorporate into the wider meaning framework of their experience.

In many cases, the death of an intimate other disrupts the bereaved person's expectations in all three categories discussed above. For example, in Paul Aster's (2023)

Baumgartner, the eponymous protagonist suddenly loses his partner of 30 years – the vibrant, 50-year-old Anna – in a freak accident. This shatters Baumgartner's probabilistic expectations. His adult life has been partly structured by a normative orientation towards the higher-order possibility of being Anna's husband and its associated probabilistic expectations about how he spends his time. In the blink of an eye, her death makes that long self-defining normative orientation irrelevant, thwarting his probabilistic expectations in a way that takes years to fully incorporate into the wider meaning framework that organizes his life. The persistence of the world he shared with Anna makes reckoning with her death all the more difficult, as their home, populated by her things, continues to reflect his sense of self as her husband back to him. The loss subverts Baumgartner's normic expectations too. In a normal world, one's healthy, vibrant partner doesn't up and die; such a death demands a specific explanation. Having such an explanation, however, doesn't simply resolve the tension between Baumgartner's normic expectations and reality, because his mind partly refuses to absorb it. Indeed, we can think about the denial that nearly always features in grief as the mind's insistence that in a normal world, something like this wouldn't happen. To blend Køster's view with mine, our intimate others comprise a significant component in our conception of a normal world, such that a world without them shows up as inherently abnormal. Finally, and for related reasons, Baumgartner also resists shifting his normative orientation from being-a-husband to being-a-widower; and so, the normative expectations of the latter – i.e., those associated with letting go, acceptance, and moving on – leave him cold. He doesn't want to 'process things'; he wants his wife back. The normative expectations associated with grieving fit poorly with his preferred sense of self.

For Baumgartner, then, there's a mismatch between his probabilistic expectations and his experience of Anna's death, as his lifeworld continues to reflect his sense of himself as her husband back to him; and there's a mismatch between his normic/normative expectations and his experience, because his mind resists adjusting to reality. In this way, the experience ongoingly resists incorporation into the meaning framework that organizes his life and so induces a complex cocktail of feelings of alienation.

Saoirse's circumstances differ profoundly from Baumgartner's. The change will no doubt fail to reflect her probabilistic expectations back to her. She's used to having Danny around and her apartment continues to reflect that relationship back to her. But she finds nothing abnormal in dumping a bad boyfriend; and so, her new situation reflects her normic expectations back to her. What's more, she freely chose to shift her normative orientation from being-a-partner to being-single, and she sees the latter as an authentic expression of herself. Thus, her new life also reflects her normative expectations for her own conduct back to her. On balance, then, Saoirse's situation sufficiently reflects her expectations back to her for us to reasonably expect it to induce no feelings of alienation.

4.3 Mental disorders

I want to pivot here to the phenomenology of mental disorder to discuss some experiences of alienation associated with schizophrenia. In several respects, the obvious

work for me to discuss here would be Gallagher's (2005, 2006, 2015, 2017). He offers a richly developed phenomenological account of thought insertion (TI) that resonates with my own view, as he attributes TI to its unanticipated character. However, I will focus on Ratcliffe's (2017) view, because it does more to enhance this article's dialectic. Ratcliffe (2017) challenges Gallagher's view by claiming that TI is "not attributable to a lack of anticipation but instead to how one anticipates" (p 79). In doing so, he challenges not just Gallagher but a 'widespread emphasis on prediction failure' (ibid.). Thus, by showing that my view is consistent with Ratcliffe's account, I will (1) further demonstrate the scope of its utility and (2) show that my reliance on the idea of an expectation-experience mismatch does not render me vulnerable to Ratcliffe's critique of Gallagher-like views that emphasize prediction failure.[9]

My reconstruction focuses on chapters three and four of Ratcliffe's *Real Hallucinations* (2017). In those chapters, Ratcliffe argues that TI – "the experience of one's own thoughts as somehow alien and emanating from elsewhere" – is in fact 'indistinguishable' from what are typically called 'internal auditory verbal hallucinations' (p 43)—a kind of inner dialogue that a person experiences *in their head* but also as somehow alien and emanating from elsewhere. Now, such hallucinations might seem to differ phenomenologically from TI insofar in that they are *auditory*. However, Ratcliffe considers this a misnomer, because although these experiences "involve a sense of receiving some kind of meaningful content from elsewhere", there's nothing audition-like about them (p. 60). Thus, Ratcliffe drops the term 'auditory' and calls them 'internal verbal hallucinations' (IVHs). What's more, he argues that once we recognize that IVHs lack auditory qualities, it becomes highly plausible that TI and IVH are two "descriptions of a common experience" (p. 60). I will reconstruct Ratcliffe's basic account of this common experience, which I refer to as TI/IVH.

According to Ratcliffe, TI/IVH is best understood as a "disruption of the modal structure of intentionality" (p 51). Specifically, TI/IVH involves a strange kind of intentionality that "lies somewhere between thinking and perceiving" (p. 44). It's not an in-between state on a spectrum; rather, it's an intentional mode wherein "aspects of one kind of experience are paired with the sense of having another kind of experience", so it resembles "two different kinds of intentional state, while remaining phenomenologically distinguishable from both of them" (p 62):

> The experience is perception-like, insofar as B [the person] experiences something as present (rather than as remembered, anticipated, or imagined) and as emanating from elsewhere. However, it remains thought-like, to the extent that the content of the experience continues to resemble that of an act of thinking. To be more specific, it resembles the content of a certain kind of thinking, usually referred to as "inner speech" or…"inner dialogue" (p 51).

What's more, in its quasi-perceptual character, TI/IVH resembles interoception or proprioception more than exteroception, in that TI/IVH-experiences fall within the boundaries of the body. However, such experiences deliver the kind of meaningful communications that normally come from an external source. Thus, TI/IVH

[9] In an ideal world I would discuss Gallagher's view too, but I lack the space to discuss both here.

"involves an unusual kind of experience, something that is not quite like thinking, externally directed perception, or perception of bodily states" (p 62).

This clarifies what makes TI/IVH so strange: it's a distinctive mode of intentionality that "does not fit into established categories" (p. 62). But what gives TI/IVH its quasi-perceptual character and why does it involve feelings of alienation? To both questions, Ratcliffe answers: anxiety.

His defense of this claim begins with the insight that affects contribute to our sense of being in one or another type of intentional state. Guilt, for example, contributes to the sense of being in a remembering state, as we tend to feel guilty about past failures. Anxiety, Ratcliffe claims, contributes to the sense of being in an intentional state that "anticipates the arrival of something that is somehow dangerous and threatening to oneself" (p 72). This can be a kind of general foreboding about nothing specific, or it can have a particular object, e.g., an exam, a dark alley, or a hard conversation. Thus, Ratcliffe argues, the anxious anticipation of TI/IVH thought contents gives them a quasi-perceptual character, because anxiety typically anticipates things in the world that endanger or threaten us. This anxious anticipation also contributes to the intrinsic strangeness of TI/IVH. After all, under normal circumstances, we do not anxiously anticipate our thoughts. Some thoughts make us anxious, but in such cases, we are not anxious about the thoughts but rather the states of affairs they represent.

Finally, Ratcliffe argues that anxiety also contributes to the experience of the thought content in TI/IVH as alien. How so? "There is a sense", he writes, "in which anxiety is intrinsically alienating or externalizing. It presents its object…as something unpleasant that one has to confront" (p 85). To unpack this claim, he compares it to some experiences of pain:

> Consider an intense, lingering pain in the hand that persists independently of any external stimulus. The pain is not experienced as external to the body but as located within one's bodily boundaries…All the same, there is a feeling of alienation from it, in the sense that one is faced with something unpleasant, something one seeks to avoid, to push away, but can do nothing about' (p 86).

Although I find Ratcliffe's account compelling overall, this last claim about the 'intrinsically alienating' character of anxiety is unconvincing for two primary reasons.

First, it seems to me that I can be anxious about phenomena within the boundaries of my body without them becoming alien to me. For example, one well-documented symptom experienced by sufferers of anxiety is anxiety about their anxiety disorder itself. They get anxious about experiencing anxiety-related sensations in the future—sometimes called 'anxiety sensitivity' (Reiss and McNally 1985; Reiss, 1991); and they also get anxious about their anxiety as they experience it in real-time—sometimes called 'meta-anxiety' (Cooper and Dryden 2015). But for many of these people, their anxiety is unquestionably theirs. Indeed, one common difficulty in treating patients with anxiety is that they over-identify or 'fuse' with their anxiety, understanding it as the core of their personality, the source of their success, their shield against disaster, and so on. They get anxious about their anxiety without ever externalizing it. To take a different example, one can also experience anxiety about pain without feeling like the pain is somehow alien. For example, I had a post-viral

reactive arthritis in my hip. The pain sometimes became acute when I moved, but I could not predict which movements would cause it. Thus, as I moved around the world, I anxiously anticipated acute pain; but when it arrived, I was never in any doubt the I was the subject of the experience and that the pain experience was mine. Though I agree that anticipatory anxiety tends to gear us towards dangerous and threating things in the world, I disagree that anxiety is 'intrinsically alienating.'

Ratcliffe might object here that these experiences *are* alienating because they involve someone "faced with something unpleasant, something one seeks to avoid, to push away, but can do nothing about". I agree that they involve these things, but I disagree that this endows them with an alien quality.

This brings me to my second complaint about Ratcliffe's discussion of alienation: I think it loses track of the phenomenon of interest. All the phenomenological accounts of alienation considered above, including mine, target an experience of something, to borrow Svenaeus's phrase, "being me, yet not me." Ratcliffe, however, uses the term to denote something aversive and unavoidable. I think this definition encompasses too many things – e.g., the itchiness of mosquito bites, the annoying duration of unavoidable journeys, the proverbial taxman, and so on – that induce no alienation in the sense that interests us here. These things are aversive and unavoidable, but they don't cause feelings that I am somehow not myself, or that my experience does not belong to me. In a word, my second complaint is that by thinking of TI/IVH thought contents as alien in that they are aversive and unavoidable, we miss what's genuinely interesting about the kind of alienation they involve, namely, that they are thought contents in *my head* that seem to emanate from *somewhere else*, i.e., me, yet not me.

As I see things, however, for his account to work, Ratcliffe need not argue that anxiety is intrinsically alienating, nor does he need to rely on such a wide definition of alienation. Instead, he could easily explain the alienation in TI/IVH by appealing to the idea of expectation-experience mismatch. Ratcliffe (2017) states more than once that TI/IVH thought contents are "intrinsically strange" (p 58; p 62): they violate the modal structure of consciousness; they resist incorporation into any normal intentional categories; they are simultaneously perception-like and thought-like; they happen in the body but seem to emanate from outside it; and they involve anxiously anticipating thoughts as if they pose a real threat. Another way to express this intrinsic strangeness, I want to suggest, is to say that they disrupt the typical tight correlation between the agent's expectations and their experience in a way that cannot be incorporated into the overarching meaning framework in terms of which they make sense of their life.

They clearly violate the agent's probabilistic expectations, especially initially, as it's extremely rare to experience thoughts as perceptual objects and to receive messages from someone else inside your own head. These probabilities will update somewhat with time, but the TI/IVH thought contents will continue to violate the agent's normic and normative expectations. All the features of TI/IVH thought contents Ratcliffe describes are abnormal—they demand some specific explanation. What's more, it's unlikely that the agent's normic expectations will update the way they're prone to do with bodily norms (see above). Why not? Because it's *normal* for bodies to change significantly over the course of a life. Puberty, pregnancy, midlife, injury, illness, old-age, and so on—we all get hit with multiple major changes that

require us to adjust our normic bodily expectations. But it's very unusual to end up with a mind that does things that people around us simply cannot make sense of. These relatively rigid normic expectations are also reinforced, I think, by strong normative expectations about the structure of the mind. For instance, relevant to TI/IVH, the entire normative structure of human conversation is built around the expectation that thoughts are private until shared through expressive acts (speech, writing, signs, gesture, etc.). Internally received messages violate that normative order. Finally, the normic/normative expectations relevant to TI/IVH will also be reinforced by the fact that most persons who experience it retain the ability to distinguish TI/IVH's 'inner dialogue' from conventional conversation. Referred to as double bookkeeping, they live in a standard normic/normative order, while they also have experiences that radically violate and cannot be squared with that order. To keep one foot in the standard order, then, part of them needs to see their TI/IVH-experiences as strange. Thus, their experience regularly resists incorporation into the normic/normative order that they share with everyone around them. If an extreme expectation-experience mismatch can induce alienation, then the intrinsic strangeness of TI/IVH thought contents suffices to account for their alien quality.

At the start of this section, I said that engaging Ratcliffe's work would (1) further demonstrate the scope of my view's utility and (2) show that I am not vulnerable to his critique of Gallagher-like views. I accomplished 1) by showing that my view can supplement Ratcliffe's account. Regarding 2), recall Ratcliffe's issue with Gallagher-like views: such views attribute TI to the fact that its thought contents arrive unanticipated; and Ratcliffe argues that TI is 'not attributable to a lack of anticipation but instead to how one anticipates' (p 79). Do I not commit the same error?

No. I do not attribute TI/IVH to the unanticipated arrival of its thought contents. My point is that the 'intrinsic strangeness' of those thought contents violates an agent's probabilistic, normic, and normative expectations in a way that induces alienation. And that point is compatible with Ratcliffe's claim that anxious anticipation induces TI/IVH. On the version of Ratcliffe's view that incorporates my hypothesis, then, anxiety induces TI/IVH, and the intrinsic strangeness of TI/IVH induces alienation.

5 Conclusion

This article argued that alienation is induced by a specific kind of expectation-experience mismatch. Section one described the basic elements of a normativist theory of the self, namely, it views the self as an achievement acquired via socialization into shared practices; it maintains that we always understand ourselves in terms of some normative orientation taken up in such practices; and it holds that these normative orientations associate with specific probabilistic, normic, and normative expectations about our unfolding experience. Section two then characterized what I call our default condition, namely, a condition in which I feel like (i) I am the subject of my experience and (ii) my experiences belong to me. What's more, I argued that our default experience is characterized by these feelings because of the tight correlation between self and world: we always make sense of ourselves in terms of the world and vice versa; and so, as we move through the world, it reflects our sense of self back to us. It

does this by meeting our various expectations about how our experience will/should unfold; but it also does it by thwarting those expectations, compelling us to adjust and reestablish a tight self-world correlation. Section three then argued that feelings of alienation – feelings that I am not fully myself and that my experiences partly do not belong to me – are induced by experiences that radically disrupt that self-world correlation by thwarting my expectations in a manner that, at least for some stretch of time, cannot be incorporated into the wider meaning framework in terms of which I make sense of things. Finally, section four showed how my account of alienation might contribute something of value to the existing conversation about the phenomenology of alienation. Specifically, I tried to show that accounts of alienation in the phenomenology of illness, grief, and mental disorder could benefit by supplementing their accounts with my theory of alienation.

There is, of course, more work to be done to develop this account systematically. For instance, my view, in its current form, is strictly phenomenological, but it also purports to have causal import, claiming that certain expectation-experience mismatches induce feelings of alienation. How should we understand this claim? Whether phenomenology – a discourse concerned with the space of meaning – can make claims about the space of causes is a long-contested and vexed question. What's more, I cannot side-step the issue by pointing out that the other phenomenological views discussed above also purport to have causal import. Sharing a problem doesn't make it go away.

Phenomenologists can take some consolation from a trend in contemporary cognitive psychology to move away from models of the mind that insist on one-way causal relationships from subpersonal mechanisms to epiphenomenal personal psychology. For instance, dissatisfaction with the 'latent disease model' of mental illness has led to approaches that conceptualize mental illness as a complex causal network in which elements of our personal psychology such as beliefs play a causal role in a larger feedback loop that maintains mental illnesses (Hayes, Hofmann, and Ciarrochi 2020). There is a growing openness, then, to the idea that features of first-person experience contribute to a larger causal system. Even so, most of that larger causal system remains beyond the reach of phenomenological reflection.

One obvious place to look for assistance with this problem is the theory of predictive processing, which has been used to characterize diverse experiences of alienation, including anarchic hand syndrome, the rubber hand illusion, phantom limbs, TI, depersonalisation, dissociation, Cotard delusion, and Capgras Syndrome (Tsakiris and Haggard 2003; Zeller, Friston, and Classen 2016; Weiss, Koehler, and Croy 2023; Sterzer et al., 2016; Gerrans, 2019; Seth, Suzuki, and Critchley 2012; Lin, 2014; Pezzulo, 2014). However, even if my account resonates with predictive processing theory in certain respects, it's unclear that normativism can be squared with it. Is it possible to construe normic and normative expectations in probabilistic terms, without eliding their mutual irreducibility? It seems unlikely. What's more, Gallagher et al. (2022) raise important questions about whether the predictive processing framework can adequately explain such phenomena, as that framework posits open communicative processes between hierarchical levels in the cognitive system that minimize prediction error, while the intrinsically strange experiences of the sort discussed above "seemingly allow prediction errors to rule" (p 1003). Perhaps the

sort of 4E approach taken by Gallagher and his co-authors would be more helpful in fleshing out a fuller picture of the larger causal system at play; or perhaps we can find a better solution in the wider literature on the relationship between phenomenological description and causal explanation (Casper and Haueis 2023; Fuchs, 2023; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008; Petitot et al., 1999; Pokropski, 2022; Reynolds, 2018, 2023; Sass, 2010; Spaulding, 2023; Stendera, 2023; Summa, 2023; Williams and Musholt 2023; Williams, 2023a, b). In any case, I must leave this task for another day.

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