

The Existential Structure of Substance Misuse

A Psychopathological Study
Guilherme Messas



Springer

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ISBN 978-3-030-62723-2 ISBN 978-3-030-62724-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62724-9>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

1. The Existential Structure of Substance Misuse – A Psychopathological Study by
Guilherme Messas

This book hits the spot! Guilherme Messas combines an in-depth knowledge of contemporary phenomenological psychopathology with extensive clinical and policy experience to provide a uniquely insightful account of the widely diverse experiences of substance misuse. The clear presentation of complex ideas richly illustrated with personal stories of those concerned make for a rare delight.

Professor Bill (KWM) Fulford, St Catherine's College, University of Oxford, UK

2. In this ground-breaking work, full of sophistication and nuance, Guilherme Messas considers the experiential dimensions of substance use and misuse. His book offers a compelling orientation to phenomenological and hermeneutic theory, followed by an original, eye-opening analysis of the ways in which consciousness-altering drugs can foster, but also destroy, a person's sense of meaning and purpose.

–Louis Sass, Distinguished Professor of Clinical Psychology, Rutgers University; author of *Madness and Modernism* and *The Paradoxes of Delusion*.

3. In this wide-ranging volume, the author presents a comprehensive phenomenological conception of mental illness on the basis of the existential conditions of the human being. The concept of anthropological disproportion, which Ludwig Binswanger had already developed to describe mental disorders, is applied here systematically to different forms of illness. For the first time, the author finally drafts an existential phenomenology of substance abuse as a Dionysian form of temporality, spatiality and corporeality. A groundbreaking work that is highly recommended to every psychiatric and psychotherapeutic reader.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Fuchs

Karl Jaspers Professor of Philosophy and Psychiatry
Heidelberg

4. If, in the early days in Europe, phenomenological psychopathology emerged as the phenomenology of psychoses, contemporary Brazilian phenomenology reinvented itself as a phenomenological psychopathology of neuroses and of experiences of pathological suffering in general. The work of Guilherme Messas masterfully addresses the innovative moment in phenomenological

psychopathology, whose framework is the idea that every experience of illness is a form of anthropological disproportion due to the lack of intersubjective anchorage. Through this lens, Messas understands the role of substance misuse as different forms of disproportion. Certainly, this was only possible based on solid clinical experience, daily contact with patients, and a deep knowledge in psychopathology. The intersection between theory and practice allows Guilherme Messas to develop a phenomenological psychopathology of substance misuse addressed in this book; he developed the theory based on his clinical practice, making this book a valuable contribution to clinical practice for treating substance misuse.

Virginia Moreira

Universidade de Fortaleza, Brasil

*This book would not come to light without
the dedication and competence of its author
assistant, my colleague Livia Fukuda, MD*

Foreword

When Karl Jaspers first identified phenomenology as a core method for psychopathological research, psychiatry was still gaining a foothold as a major branch of medicine. The systematic description and classification of abnormal experiences provided a necessary foundation for the field. At the time, it was well-understood that without these phenomenological descriptions, clinicians stood little chance of understanding their patients or appreciating their existential predicaments. Yet, the advances made by phenomenological psychopathologists were largely ignored after the 1980 publication of the DSM-III. The rise of operational diagnosis, with its oversimplified diagnostic criteria and inattention to the complexities of abnormal experience, left little if any space for the kind of insights that phenomenological psychopathologists offered.

Yet, today, we're witnessing a new wave of phenomenological psychopathology. On the one hand, this might be cause for concern: A renewed interest in phenomenological psychopathology, and in philosophical contributions to psychiatry generally, are signs of an ongoing crisis in psychiatry; after decades of failed promises to neurobiologically validate the current diagnostic categories, mental health professionals have become disillusioned with psychiatry's dominant approach to understanding mental disorders. On the other hand, the renewed interest in phenomenological psychopathology should also be cause for hope and optimism: Mental health professionals now actively seek viable alternatives to superficial symptomatology provided by the operational approach; as a result, we now find phenomenological psychopathology making its way into major venues for the dissemination of academic research, including books and articles published by the major academic presses and in the top journals.

However, this new wave of phenomenological psychopathology hasn't simply picked up where the classical figures left off. If one compares much of the recent work in the field with some of the major studies conducted by classical figures such as Ludwig Binswanger or Medard Boss, one is bound to find striking differences of style, presentation, and approach. In particular, the early approaches to phenomenological psychopathology seamlessly blended Freudian psychoanalysis with phenomenological and existential philosophy, producing what they called existential

analysis. There's a value to this approach that we may find lacking in many contemporary approaches to phenomenological psychopathology. Existential analysis provided immediate clinical value to the therapeutic encounter. The existential analysts sought to understand not only abstract diagnostic categories, but the concrete, historically situated, and constantly unfolding lives of their patients.

Why should we bother to reflect on those aspects of a tradition that we've left behind? Because there's much in these classical works that we should renew, develop, and apply—and this is precisely what we find in Guilherme Messas' book. Messas integrates the abstract, structural analyses of disorders with explorations of the lived, interpersonal dynamics that constitute his patients' personal histories and concrete situations. In this respect, he brings together the best elements of classical and contemporary phenomenological psychopathology, providing us with an approach that illuminates general categories of disorder as well the concrete, day to day lives of those who live with these disorders. To drive home the value of Messas' approach, I want to focus here on two key virtues of his book.

First, Messas does not merely apply phenomenology to the field of mental health or to the topic of substance misuse. Rather, he provides us with a theoretical framework that accommodates and illuminates these ways of being in the world—one that may also be taken up by other researchers and applied to a range of psychopathological conditions. Phenomenological psychopathologists often stress that they're concerned with the "form" or "structure" rather than the "content" of experience. However, while this is more or less true of phenomenology, it's also an oversimplification—not only because the relation between form and content is complex, but because experience takes "form" at many different levels. Messas is careful to distinguish at least two of these levels, highlighting a fundamental difference between what he calls "anthropopathologies," on the one hand, and "structural pathologies" on the other. This should not be understood as a distinction between pathologies that affect the content of experience versus pathologies that affect the form of experience. Rather, the difference is between two levels, or strata, at which the form or structure of experience can be altered.

At the anthropological level, we find disproportions in the relative weight of different poles of existence, such as the poles of self, other, and world. As Messas clarifies, these pathologies—which include personality disorders, phobias, obsessions, and compulsions, among other conditions—do not involve alterations in the most basic structural features of human existence. There's a sense in which these modes of existence, or ways of being, differ from healthy or non-disordered experience only in degree. For example, each of us will experience shifts in the relative weight that we place on how others perceive and understand us. At some points in our lives, our identities will rely heavily on the perception of others—maybe even a particular other. At other points, we may be relatively secure in our sense of identity, granting greater weight to our own self-perceptions. On Messas' account, however, these changes become pathological only when we suffer a reduction in our ability to dynamically shift these relative proportions in response to life circumstances. When we become stuck in a particular distribution of these anthropological proportions, we become existentially vulnerable.

In contrast with anthropopathologies, we can also undergo what Messas calls structural pathologies. Perhaps the best example of such a pathology is schizophrenia, but certain aspects of melancholic and manic experience occur at this level of existence as well. These are pathologies that involve alterations at the most basic or fundamental level of experience—what Messas refers to as the conditions of possibility of existence. These may involve fundamental disturbances in the structures of selfhood, temporality, or affectivity, among other structural features. But it's important to keep in mind that such structural alterations are bound to have ramifications on our anthropological proportions as well. To fully understand a patient with a structural pathology, the clinician must also explore their anthropological situation.

These discussions may at first seem a bit too philosophical for the more clinically minded reader. But Messas is remarkably skilled at tethering these complex and seemingly abstract analyses to the concrete lives of his patients. In fact, the style of Messas' presentation makes the clinical value of his work unmistakable. This brings me to the second virtue of Messas' book. Phenomenological psychopathologists often focus their research on a particular disorder. The diagnostic category establishes the starting point and the scope of the study. But Messas proceeds in a different direction. Rather than start from a particular diagnosis, he starts from a particular behavior: substance misuse. I can't stress enough just how much of a difference this starting point makes. Rather than analyze a broad category of disorder and eventually inquire into how one might behave as the result of having such a disorder, Messas begins from the behavior that leads his patients to the clinic in the first place—only from here does he inquire into the particular pathology, whether anthropological or structural, that may have led his patient to behave in such a way. By moving in this direction, he starts from a position of immediate clinical value. The behavior that his patients want to change is the anchor for his philosophical analyses. And, once he's provided each analysis, the behavior of substance misuse becomes eminently understandable. Substance misuse is among the most stigmatized of behaviors in nearly every culture. Yet, after Messas carefully unpacks the existential predicament of those who engage in such behavior, the reader will find it difficult if not impossible to stigmatize or judge. The behavior no longer seems chaotic or unpredictable; rather, it becomes an obvious way of coping. In this respect, Messas' approach has value not only for patients, but also for the patient's family and friends who want to understand a set of behaviors that, to them, may have seemed beyond comprehension.

The goal of phenomenological psychopathology is to comprehend precisely those experiences and behaviors that, at first, seem incomprehensible. Measured against this standard, Messas' book is an exemplar in the field. It sediments him not only as a leading figure in phenomenological psychopathology, but also as the foremost expert on the phenomenology of substance misuse.

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Preface

This book contributes to one of the most challenging areas of mental health: substance misuse. Its focus is on the psychopathological experiences associated with it: both the consequences of substance misuse and the existential vulnerabilities that lead to it, even if such a clear-cut distinction is rarely possible. The work brings an innovative perspective to the issue, as it draws on two scientific fields whose association has not yet been fully explored: phenomenological psychopathology and substance misuse studies. The association of these two perspectives could build a greater understanding of this important topic and be of practical help to a wide array of professionals in their clinical practice.

Substance misuse is a heterogeneous field of existential conditions which range from the free personal decision to modify the state of consciousness to profound changes in the capacity for freedom of existence, passing through various conditions of vulnerability and specific or nonspecific comorbidities. What this heterogeneous group of conditions share, above all, is the uncontrolled use of psychotropic substances, although the exact parameters of the disturbed status of such experiences are not easy to define. Consequently, despite its epidemiological importance, the field of substance misuse studies is still marred by controversies and scientific inaccuracies, which this book seeks to mitigate.

Phenomenological psychopathology is a human science that aims to depict the core characteristics of disturbed experiences, constituting the most comprehensive tool for addressing mental disorders. In recent years, in response to increasing interest in the approach across the world, phenomenological psychopathology has been applied to a variety of mental disorders, especially schizophrenia and depression. More recently, some clinical contributions based on the phenomenological method have been published, pushing the frontiers of the discipline into clinical practice. Although these findings are welcomed as promising for the future of mental health care, the application of the approach to substance misuse is still in its infancy. One goal of this book is to fill this gap, introducing a wider audience to the different ways phenomenological psychopathology can shed light on substance misuse and enable a more informed and targeted offer of clinical care strategies. As a core discipline of psychiatry and clinical psychology, it is the science that delimits the

object to which all clinical practice is directed. As such, any clinical training which purports to be comprehensive and coherent should begin with an in-depth introduction to this field. The broad objective of this book is therefore to introduce this understanding, offering a useful instrument for mental health clinicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, undergraduate students of these disciplines, and all substance abuse workers. The structure of the book is inspired by this overall perspective. Its division into three parts is designed to introduce the reader, in a step-wise manner, to the complexities of the theme, based on the latest advances in the specific literature.

The division of the work into three parts is designed to allow them to stand alone up to a point. As phenomenological psychopathology is based on the conception that all psychopathological understanding is ultimately a general hermeneutic of the human condition, it is impossible to completely divorce it from a philosophical interpretation of human existence. It is this that is presented in the first part of the book, which is recommended for readers who appreciate philosophical reflections and disputes over concepts. The second and third parts are specifically psychopathological. The second examines the topic of substance misuse as a part of general psychopathology, whose fundamental interest lies in the meaning of existential vulnerability and comorbidities with the use and misuse of psychoactive substances. It will be of most interest to those who are keen to acquire a broad and general view of the whole edifice of phenomenological psychopathology. The third part focuses specifically on the psychopathology of substance misuse, observing the ways in which the modifications of consciousness produced by psychotropic drugs gain meaning for existence, while also producing significant changes in the ability of existence to fulfil its dialectical destiny. In this third part, specific psychopathological changes are always seen as modifications that could happen to any of us, as they are fruits of the human condition itself. This part is the most novel and original. It draws the reader into the complex and ambiguous ways in which substance use infiltrates and distorts existence. Throughout the book, clinical examples are given to enrich the psychopathological explanations and show how real people experience the complex interplay of altered experience and substance use.

São Paulo, Brazil

Guilherme Messas

Acknowledgement

This book represents the culmination of an intellectual trajectory which began some 25 years ago almost by chance and now converges in this broad interrogation of the very bedrock of human existence. I am grateful to all the people who have accompanied me in this process, whether through shared readings or in the long years of study groups I have led, giving me the chance to peruse the vast body of classical phenomenological literature. This book would certainly not have been possible without these groups, the hermeneutic rigor of their readings and the temporal breadth of their references, from the earliest contributions to the most recent.

This is a book by a medical doctor who is fascinated by human existence and who in this sense feels like an epigone of the Hippocratic tradition and, in the twentieth century, of Jaspers. Because I am a doctor, the truth is that the greatest contributors to this book were actually the people I have treated over the last 28 years. No literature can surpass in value the deference these people, whom we call patients, paid me in sharing their existential pains. I am profoundly grateful to them all.

Although this short list of acknowledgements cannot include all the people I am grateful to for their intellectual contributions, I will attempt to do so according to the number of hours of intellectual discussion we have shared (in alphabetical order). Initially, my thanks go to Daniela Ceron-Litvoc, Susan Mondoni, Melissa Tamellini and Antonia Tonus, whose meticulous readings of texts in a study group for 17 unbroken years are the very core and lifeblood of this work. In a way, this work belongs to all of us, although it is written by my hand and structured in my thoughts. I also wish to thank all my colleagues from the Brazilian Society of Phenomeno-Structural Psychopathology (SBPFE), who, since 2006, have been divulging and revising phenomenological psychopathology through courses, seminars, lectures and congresses, and especially through the journal *Psicopatologia Fenomenológica Contemporânea*, which it was my honour to co-found and to edit for many years.

The ideas elaborated and developed in this book have been matured over the years at several scientific academic events held in different parts of the world. At all of them, the criticisms and suggestions made by colleagues were indispensable for refining the ideas brought together here. Just as they will continue to be in the future as they are further refined. For their dedication to the discussion of such complex

themes, not to mention the boundless passion with which they did and still do so, I extend specific thanks to my partners Mauro Aranha, Claudio Banzato, Georges Charbonneau, John Cutting, Maurício Daker, Thomas Fuchs, Gilberto Di Petta, Otto Dörr-Zoegers, Anthony Fernandez, Bill Fulford, Adriano Holanda, Virginia Moreira, Michael Musalek, Maria Lucrecia Rovaletti, John Sadler, Louis Sass, Giovanni Stanghellini, Pedro Varandas, and both the prefacers of my previous books, the philosophers Alex Moura and Cristiano Rezende

The first part of this book is a synthesis of the didactic material developed and honed over 7 years for the course given as part of the master's program in phenomenological psychopathology at the Santa Casa de São Paulo School of Medical Sciences, my institution, whose courage, intellectual independence and academic ambition were instrumental in bringing this topic to prominence in the country. I am most grateful not only to this institution, but also to all the students who shared their lives with me over these years and helped me mature these ideas. They have each left their own mark on the work.

Thanks also to the Collaborating Centre for Values-Based Practice in Health and Social Care, St. Catherine's College, Oxford, coordinated by Bill Fulford, from which I have received great support and of which I have the honour of being a member, and to the International Network of Philosophy and Psychiatry (INPP), which keeps alive the flame of philosophical thinking in psychiatry and psychology.

A small portion of the ideas presented here have been published elsewhere in peer-reviewed scientific publications. To their reviewers, whose attentive reading and careful suggestions influenced this work diffusely, I also express my gratitude.

I would also like to express my thanks:

To the two reviewers who approved the proposal of this book.

To my colleagues Melissa Tamelini and Livia Fukuda, for their detailed and painstaking reading of the drafts of this work – and for their sharp, relentless and generous criticism. Especially to Livia, the associate author of this work, for her detailed, competent and tireless support in discussing all the intellectual details that I expose here and presenting solutions to all the editorial and bibliographical difficulties. Literally, this work is ours.

To my editor, Erica Ferraz at Springer Nature, whose dedication, courteousness and competence (and patience) were instrumental in bringing this work to light.

To my proofreader Rebecca Atkinson, whose meticulous reading, discussion and post-editing of the manuscript gave it a new voice in English.

To Valentim Gentil, my friend and Master, who, despite never having devoted himself to phenomenological psychopathology, has in various ways enabled me to successfully pursue this life course.

To Tadeu Andrade, for kindly offering all his professional expertise in Ancient Greek, so fundamental for the linguistic precision of all the neologisms created here.

Finally, the people to whom this book is dedicated. To Cris, Pedro and Mari, the eternal loves of my life. And to my parents: I am nothing but proud of incarnating your spirits, which already inhabit the ether; a link in the chain between you and those who will come... it has been a great honour.

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Chapter 1

Introduction



*Wine, teach me the art of seeing my own past
As if it were already memory's ash
(Wine Sonnet, Jorge Luis Borges)*

Phenomenological psychopathology is a core discipline of psychiatry and clinical psychology, as it is the science that delimits the object to which all clinical practice is directed. As such, any clinical training that purports to be comprehensive and coherent should begin with an in-depth introduction to this field. The first person to postulate an association between phenomenology and psychopathology was Karl Jaspers (1968). However, this young German psychiatrist and future philosopher saw phenomenology as no more than a descriptive stage in an intellectual procedure geared primarily towards the epistemological organisation of methods that already existed in psychiatry. In his conception of a general psychopathology, Jaspers saw the role of phenomenology as being restricted to a first-person description of distorted experiences (Messas 2014a). Despite this limited conception, it was precisely this procedure that marked the birth of psychopathology as an autonomous science, validated by its own internal criteria and with its own categories for apprehending reality.

However, it was when the scientific scope expanded to more than just a description of psychopathological experiences that a truly phenomenological psychopathology came into existence (Fuchs et al. 2019). Its origins date back to 1922, when figures such as Minkowski and Binswanger, attending a symposium in Zurich, set the founding stone of what is today known as phenomenological psychopathology (Tatossian 2002). From then on, phenomenological psychopathology started to be understood not just as a description of the subjective experiences of persons suffering mental disorders but also a search for their conditions of possibility – the structures that underpin the experience of reality, which, when modified, determine psychopathological experiences. The results of a phenomenological comprehension of the conditions of possibility serve to reconstruct the whole structure of

existence¹ of some afflicted persons, whom I refer to here as patients. Although throughout the history of the discipline there has been considerable variation in the names and perspectives of the conditions of possibility, it is possible to argue that their identification and study is what unifies the science of phenomenological psychopathology. The wealth of scientific writings produced after 1922 is characterised by analyses of modifications in these conditions of possibility and their correlated distorted experiences. Similarly, in the wealth of contemporary contributions to phenomenological psychopathology, as demonstrated by a recent edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology*, the study of the conditions of possibility of existence is of primary interest (Stanghellini et al. 2019).

The fact that phenomenological psychopathology operates on the level of the conditions of possibility calls for two further explanations of how they interrelate to patients' subjective experiences. First, a condition of possibility is not an experience but a zone of determinations and restrictions within which experiences may emerge. It is therefore beyond the field of experience but is responsible for setting the limits and defining the features of experiences. It is like a mould that provides the contours of a sculpture but is not present in the final work. As it is beyond the layer of subjective experience, it is called transcendental. The best example of this property is perspective. When we look at an object, our perceptual experience identifies it as something that exists in the world, independent from us and at a certain distance from our body. Nonetheless, for there to be such a perception, there must be a prior world design that enables the object to be appropriated by our gaze. This prior field of vision is perspective, which delimits and determines the way the subjective apprehension of the object is endowed to us. As such, its transcendental action is fundamental in determining the way the world is transformed into visibility for us. Due to this interest, the scope of phenomenological psychopathology is different from that of descriptive psychopathology, the mainstream of psychiatric training. Descriptive psychopathology focuses on examining subjective and objectively measurable experiences (Oyebode 2018), whereas the ultimate field of knowledge of phenomenological psychopathology is the study of whatever preconditions and pre-configures these experiences. Its overarching interest encompasses the whole structure of existence.

Second, subjective experiences stem from the organic articulation of these conditions of possibility amongst themselves, which brings about the manifestation of a structured existence. So, any subjective experience must be understood from its

¹Although the whole of existence as an object of study in phenomenological psychopathology is also known as "lived world", I gave, in this book, preference for this more somewhat philosophical concept of structure of existence due to its more overarching meaning, since it comprehends not only the self, but also the other, and the world, as we will see throughout the book. On the other hand, "lived world" unjustifiably highlights only the worldly aspect of existing. In addition, I tend to agree with Charbonneau that it is not easy to determine what lived world means, because it has to do with the "indeterminate background" (Charbonneau 2010, tome 1, p. 69, note 12) in which the mysteries of human existence occur.

articulation with the whole of existence, constituting a dialectic relationship. It is dialectic because it is based on the idea that each specific experience (sadness, fear, hope, delusion, etc.) gains its own meaning from its relationship with the significant whole of existence. There is no such thing as a specific experience endowed with an inherent meaning without reference to its relative position in the circle of intersubjective and worldly relations in which existence is rooted.

In order to operationalise this enlarged conception of psychopathology, a specific two-step epistemological procedure is required. First, from the direct description of the subjective experiences of some patients, the psychopathologist is able to gain a first-person perspective on the psychopathological object. This procedure is not, however, enough to gain access to the conditions of possibility of existence, for which a second-person perspective must be added. This is gained through the exercise of phenomenological comprehension, in which the psychopathologist penetrates the material contained in the subjective description of the patient and, by an act of hermeneutical comprehension, comprehends the meaning of their experiences (Messas and Fukuda 2018). This search for meaning penetrates the very structure by which the unity of existence is organised and assured. The methodological strategy of this book adopts this mixture of first- and second-person perspectives. The many clinical examples it offers serve to two purposes. First, they give us access to some self-reported experiences of patients: the first-person perspective. Simultaneously, they are articulated in such a way as to bring forth their respective psychopathological structured experiences, constituting a second-person perspective. It follows from this procedure that the reconstruction of these structured existences – that is the epistemological result of phenomenological psychopathology – is a composite of subjective self-descriptions and phenomenological comprehension.²

Phenomenological psychopathology is based on the conception that all psychopathological understanding is ultimately a general hermeneutic of the human condition. It is therefore impossible to completely divorce it from a philosophical interpretation of human existence. Although the core interest of this volume is limited to psychopathology, it also inevitably evokes an anthropological bedrock. In other words, there is a theory of human existence underpinning each category of phenomenological psychopathology and each clinical act or therapeutic decision. Accordingly, the first part of this book sets forth the anthropological roots of my conception of phenomenological psychopathology. This defence of a fundamental anthropology makes this work auctorial in nature. Science and auctoriality are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, evidence acquired in scientific research is enriched by the incorporation of the values of the researcher who applies them to specific cases. Every psychopathology is the application of the humanities, which makes it a

²It is worth noting that although the psychopathological positions expressed here always employ this two-step approach, the first part is sometimes not included and the phenomenological comprehension is proposed without any accompanying subjective account. This is done simply because of space limitations.

values-based science (Fulford et al. 2012; Messas et al. 2017a). An auctorial work in the field of psychopathology is thus not so much an exercise in academic erudition – although at no point is its rigor abdicated – as an exploration of new frontiers that the empirical application of a body of personal values may lead to. Its language is therefore inevitably essay-esque, insofar as an essay, like music, permits improvisations on themes already examined, synthesised and acknowledged. Or insofar as an essay, in the classical sense given by Montaigne, is an indication of dialogue with a consolidated tradition. A values-based essay is a personal contribution to a heterogeneous but unified body of work.

The anthropology that underpins this undertaking is expressed in the conditions of possibility of experience. Every experience is based on and rooted in the world through these conditions. They are the *a priori* foundations of existence, which provide the conditions for any personal biography to be developed and expressed. For the purposes of this book, the fundamental conditions of possibility of existence will be given technical terms designed to distinguish them from the acceptance of the words in non-specialised language. For example, I use temporality rather than time, spatiality rather than space, embodiment rather than body. These terms serve to indicate transcendental and non-experiential categories that have to do with the conditions of possibility, rather than the time, space or body we experience subjectively. The reader may notice, in the dynamics of the book, the relevance of this decision.

But the notion of condition of possibility is not exhausted with this preliminary delineation. Presented one by one, linearly articulated as if they were isolated points to be checked off for a diagnosis, they reveal little about any one existence. Investigated in isolation as elements, they would serve no more than a first step towards psychopathological understanding. Elementarism as the endpoint of an investigation is an epistemological position refuted by phenomenological psychopathology (Tamellini and Messas 2017). A deeper understanding of existential reality calls for us to define conditions of possibility as participants in the dialectical relations that constitute existence, which converge towards a notion of whole, existential totality. Therefore, this first part is complemented by an overview of the structure of existence. The part-whole dialectic between the conditions of possibility of existence as an ontological-epistemological option is what distinguishes the approach offered in this work. I call this procedure dialectical-proportional phenomenological psychopathology. By *dialectic* I mean the examination of the reciprocal relationships of the components of human existence, which interact in oppositions, tensions, absorptions and ambiguities. It is precisely because it is essentially dialectic that human existence can be enriched and modified over its biographical trajectory. In line with Jaspers, I argue that these dialectical movements, always in often irreconcilable tension and opposition, are responsible for the emergence of the existential movement (1997, p. 341).

The empirical results of this branch of phenomenological psychopathology will be presented throughout the work. In this introduction, I would just like to mention the epistemological contributions the notion of proportional dialectic brings to the science of psychopathology and person-centred psychiatric and psychological

clinical practice. Due to its ability to articulate different existential tendencies in a simultaneous regime of proportionality, dialectical-proportional phenomenological psychopathology (i) enables the accurate apprehension of the complexities of psychopathological experiences; (ii) helps offer a more refined scientific observation of the movements and transformations existences undergo in their life course by introducing pre-reflexive conceptual elements for apprehending the kinetics of existence; (iii) equips the psychopathologist to identify the ambiguities contained in existence and in each psychopathological experience and (iv) provides conceptual instruments for the expansion of the science of phenomenological psychopathology to territories as yet little explored, such as substance misuse, the specific object of this work.

Although phenomenological psychopathology has been applied to a vast array of topics, the field of substance misuse is largely unexplored by this empirical science. One of the possible explanations for this is the degree of complexity required to address it. Substance misuse is a heterogeneous field of conditions which range from the free personal decision to modify the state of consciousness to profound changes in the capacity for freedom of existence, passing through various conditions of vulnerability and specific or nonspecific comorbidities. The complexity required for a comprehensive approach to such a topic stems, I would argue, from the fact that the psychopathology of substance misuse cannot be approached from a single investigative perspective. The psychopathological approaches must therefore be organised methodologically. Two perspectives will be placed side by side, although it would be erroneous to imagine they are completely independent of one another. In the first of these, substance misuse should be understood as part of existential vulnerabilities, the main result of which are the comorbidities of mental disorders and substance misuse. The second part of this book examines the topic of substance misuse as a by-product of general psychopathology, whose fundamental interest lies in the meaning of existential vulnerability and comorbidities with the use and abuse of psychoactive substances. This part should therefore be understood as a miniature general psychopathology tailored to the understanding of substance misuse. All the phenomenological analyses conducted in this part are based on empirical evidence of the conditions of vulnerability and comorbidities that are most epidemiologically relevant for the understanding of substance misuse. In this sense, substance misuse is a secondary product in this approach despite being the ultimate purpose of this whole section on general psychopathology. To my mind, no coherent approach to substance misuse is possible without first having a general comprehension of the alterations of existence. Given its more general nature, this second part is called psychopathology *and* substance misuse. The third part of the work focuses specifically on the psychopathology of substance misuse, observing the existential meanings by which the modifications of consciousness produced by psychotropic drugs gain meaning for existence while also producing significant changes in the ability of existence to fulfil its dialectical destiny. In this third part, specific psychopathological changes are always seen as modifications that could happen to any of us, as they are fruits of the human condition itself. This third part is entitled the psychopathology *of* substance misuse.

The fact that there are two simultaneous phenomenological psychopathological approaches to the same topic has its pros and cons. On the plus side, I intend to bridge the gap in the psychopathological literature on substance misuse without oversimplifying it. This dual apprehension of reality prevents any psychopathological understanding of substance misuse from calcifying into a rigid system of thought that would ultimately close itself off to intellectual renewal. The downside of this dual epistemological perspective is that it leads to a certain overlapping of themes. Some repetition will be inevitable to ensure coherence to the text. However, the overlapping does not imply an *ipsis litteris* reproduction of certain concepts; rather, it means observing similar subjective and intersubjective experiences from different perspectives, with the same experience gaining a different name according to the epistemological perspective to which it is linked.

The division of the work into three parts is designed to allow them to stand alone up to a point. The first part can be read separately as an anthropological proposal on the foundations of existence and also, to some extent, a glossary for the two subsequent parts. It is recommended for readers who appreciate philosophical reflections and disputes over concepts. The second part can be read as a dialectical-proportional contribution to phenomenological psychopathology. It will be of most interest to those who are keen to acquire a broad and general view of the whole edifice of phenomenological psychopathology. The third part is the most novel and original. It draws the reader into the complex and ambiguous ways in which substance use infiltrates and distorts existence. However, while each part is relatively independent, full understanding can only be achieved by delving into all three. I therefore provide cross-references wherever appropriate to help enrich the reading experience, and by so doing make the work more reader-friendly.

This book is the final volume in a trilogy devoted entirely to the examination of the main dialectics of existence. The first focused on the dialectic between permanence and stability in existence, using clinical cases as illustrations to examine the contradictions inherent to a being that is transformed over time and yet never ceases to be identical to itself (Messas 2010b). The second work in this trilogy contributed to reflections on the human antinomy that is particularity-generality. Through clinical cases, I indicated how the science of psychopathology can and should access human existences as simultaneously singular and representative of a general type (Messas 2014c). Finally, in this work, I return to the dialectical relations studied in the previous two works, synthesising them with the examination of the internal relationships and reality-constituting relationships implied in each psychopathological experience. From the perspective of psychopathological science, it is the most comprehensive work of the three. It consists of the dialectical and synthetic maturation of the previous two, building on and lending new meaning to their contents.

This effort of synthesis takes form in an immersion in the structured existences of substance misusers. The notion of substance misuse goes beyond the operational sense with which substance-use disorders are catalogued in the latest mainstream classifications of mental disorders, the World Health Organisation's International Classification of the Diseases (ICD-11) and the American Psychiatric Association's

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5). This distance between the conception developed here and the mainstream classifications does not imply a denial of their worth, as will be indicated – albeit briefly – in the third part of this book. Rather, what this volume offers the community of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists is an in-depth reflection on the integral existential meanings that underlie these operational criteria. The destiny of phenomenology is to go beyond the evident manifestations of reality without ever denying them. It is an attitude that is profoundly anchored in admiring respect for the infinite complexity contained in the ineffable fact that we exist.

Part I
The Anthropological Roots of
Phenomenological Psychopathology: Core
Concepts

Chapter 2

The Conditions of Possibility of Existence



I will start by presenting the conditions of possibility as elements, that is, apprehended from an isolated perspective. This separate investigation, covering the first five sections of this part, will allow a detailed assessment to be made of the essential properties of each of the conditions of possibility. While such a detailed analysis takes us into the depths of the bedrock of existence, it does have a somewhat idealised fictional overtone, insofar as it separates out what actually happens between the different conditions of possibility in relationships of articulation and simultaneity. Any psychopathological comprehension will only be complete once an examination supplementing this isolated view of the conditions of possibility has been done (Fukuda and Tamelini 2016). For the purposes of psychopathology, the importance of identifying each condition of possibility separately is matched by the importance of examining how they are articulated dialectically among their own intrinsic components and among themselves in a regime of anthropological proportions. After this, I will show how these conditions of possibility are unified in the existential whole, constituting a structure. This will be the theme of the sixth section of this part.

Once the conditions of possibility of existence and its structural unity are presented, I will conclude this first part of the book with reflections of an ontological and epistemological nature about the psychopathological object. These considerations serve as a final clarification so that the contents presented in Parts II and III can be understood by the reader to their full extent.

2.1 Temporality

Temporality is the condition of possibility that has received the most attention in classical phenomenological psychopathology. Several of the early authors sought to understand pathological mental experiences from the perspective of alterations in temporality (Minkowski 1995; von Gebattel 1966b; Straus 1935; Binswanger