Uncovering the Familiar – Philosophical Approaches to a Ubiquitous and Elusive Phenomenon

Conference venue: <u>Lecture Hall of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Karlstraße</u> 4, 69117 Heidelberg

Program

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Arrival of invited speakers

Optional pre-conference meeting, 8.00 pm

Thursday, June 27, 2024

09.00 am   *Welcome address*

Jaspers Section 1: (Self-)Familiarization and Self-Understanding

09.15 am   Matthew Ratcliffe: *On Being Emotionally Haunted by One's Past*

10.15 am   Philipp Schmidt: *Self-Feeling and the Varieties of Familiarity: On Losing and Finding Oneself*

11.15 am   *Coffee Break*

11.40 am   Daniel Vespermann: *Personalized and Permeable* Gehäuse*: Revisiting and Refining Jaspers' Idea of "Housing" as Intimate Familiarization*

12.40 pm   *Lunch Break (catered lunch)*

Section: Familiarity, Normality, and Normativity

01.40 pm   Judith Martens: *A Sense of Normalcy*

02.40 pm   Laura Candiotto: *Loving a Place That Is Dying*

03.40 pm   *Coffee Break*

04.10 pm   Michelle Maiese: *Naming the Familiar: The Power of Emancipatory Terms*

07.00 pm   *Conference Dinner at Zafferano*

Friday, June 28, 2024

Jaspers Section 2: Losing and Regaining Familiarity in Psychopathology and beyond

09.00 am   Thomas Fuchs: *The Foreign as Limit Situation: Jaspers and the Psychopathology of the Loss of Familiarity*

10.00 am   Allan Køster: *Loss, Identity, and the Sense of Self: Towards a Comprehensive Framework*

11.00 am   *Coffee Break*

Section Familiarity and Aesthetic Experience

11.30 am   Julian Kiverstein: *Recovering the Experience of the Familiar: Lessons from Deep Brain Stimulation and the Experience of Art*

12.30 pm   *Lunch Break (joint lunch) at Restaurant Choa*

02.00 pm   Jérôme Dokic: *Transfigurations of the Familiar*

Section: Familiarity, Authenticity, and Autonomy

03.00 pm   Hannes Gustav Melichar: *Transformative Trust. On the Phenomenology of Autonomy and Goal Orientation in Psychotherapeutical Relationships*

4.00 pm   *Coffee Break*

4.30 pm   Sanneke de Haan: *Enacting Authenticity: The Case of Self-Illness Ambiguity*

Afterwards: *Optional drinks*

Abstracts

On Being Emotionally Haunted by One's Past

Matthew Ratcliffe

Talk of being emotionally haunted is commonplace in everyday life and also in literature. However, the relevant experiences have been neglected by philosophers working on emotion. In this paper, I consider what it is to be haunted specifically *by one's past*. I suggest that it is a matter of feeling unsettled by the indeterminate significance of something in the past. One senses that whatever happened or may have happened retains the potential to take on a more determinate significance that would undermine and disrupt the current organization of one's life. I situate haunting within a larger conception of human emotional life, which emphasizes the themes of anticipation, indeterminacy, and self-familiarity.

Self-Feeling and the Varieties of Familiarity: On Losing and Finding Yourself

Philipp Schmidt

In this talk, I distinguish different forms of familiarity that are essential in shaping our psychic lives and discuss their relationship to self-feeling. I suggest that self-feeling, even in its most basic forms, is characterized by intertwined moments of self-related familiarity and trust. Having conceptualized how these two moments structure self-feeling in its most basic form, I argue that it is because self-feeling is so structured that our familiarity and trust towards others and the worlds we live in significantly shape our self-feelings. Focusing on familiarity, I shed light on the role of affective practices in making oneself familiar with things, people, situations, rules, scripts, temporalities, and the world more generally. In doing so, I identify the structures of 'making oneself familiar with…' as the general movement of ongoing *self*-familiarization. I further suggest that this process involves a non-transcendable dynamic of losing and finding oneself. As I want to argue, it is *within* this dynamic that we must find a "hold (*Halt*)", to use Jaspers' terms. Accordingly, I suggest that what has traditionally been called self-preservation (*Selbsterhaltung*) should not be understood as unchallenged self-familiarity and absence of

self-loss but rather as the right kind of agential attitude (*Haltung*) towards such fluctuations in the self. Therefore, my particular interest lies in the agential aspects within this dynamic, especially concerning the repair of lost self-familiarity. Given the proposed intrinsic relationship between self-feeling and self-familiarity, I argue that discussing such repair helps shed light on how we are, at least partially, responsible for how we feel about ourselves, and concomitantly, for who we are.

Personalized and Permeable *Gehäuse* – Revisiting and Refining Jaspers' Idea of "Housing" as Intimate Familiarization

Daniel Vespermann

Karl Jaspers introduced the idea of "housing" (*Gehäuse*) as the general frame of refence for a person's experience, the guiding attitude towards life, or set of beliefs solidified into an ideology. In other words, "housings" are ordered sets of beliefs that have become taken for granted. Whereas Jaspers emphasizes the transformation of housings in existential limit situations, I propose to take a closer look at how housings are established through continuous interactions in specific life contexts and how they can change rather gradually than drastically to better understand the more subtle reorientation of these guiding attitudes. To this end, I will explicate what I call *intimate familiarization* as the ongoing process of shaping one's affective and evaluative dispositions in social environments.

In order to increase resolution and focus on the the shaping of affective and evaluative dispositions, I distinguish 1) (intimate) familiarity from taken-for-grantedness by underlining the phenomenological and functional significance of the former. Subsequently, I will draw on empirical and philosophical work on the spatial dimensions of memory to analyze 2) familiarization within specific life contexts or social situations. In a last step 3), I will explore the dynamics of generalization and personalization of experiences within and between life contexts on the basis of processes of episodic and semantic memory formation.

A Sense of Normalcy

Judith Martens

Although many find it easy to accept that we often act habitually, the philosophical debate is still out on what this means. Habitual actions do not fit well with traditional views of action where intentions play an important causal role in the explanation. In this talk I will argue that habits create a sense of normalcy, or familiarity. This sense can function as a proxy reasons. I will explore similarities and dissimilarities between these two ways humans can act and explore the implications for our normative understanding of ourselves, both as individuals and as part of a collective.

Loving a Place That Is Dying

Laura Candiotto

After introducing the intertwining of love and grief in human experience, I present my existentially laden enactive account of loving a place that is dying. Feelings of belonging and familiarity constitute what does it mean to inhabit a place. Especially when a place becomes

one's home, the relevance of the affective experience in constituting the existential meaning of "home" is of paramount importance. Loving a place is more than a subjective feeling of pleasure in being in company with the beloved – in our case, to be in a valued place. It is an existential engagement in a dialectic of encounter with a place and its inhabitants. By digging deeper into the tensions in attending to a place that is dying I depict environmental grief as an experience of "existential groundlessness". I focus on it as a temporally extended affective experience of progressive abandonment. I argue that, although a feeling of displacement and identity crisis can emerge out of loving a place that is dying, affectively charged processes of sense-making are still ongoing. This is what I call "grieving sense-making". I contend that this is precisely what love can do in grief: pushing to find new meanings, not as moving on, but as a continuation of life despite the circumstances. This is because not only grief is a continuation of love, also love is a continuation of grief. And in this hope can unfold.

Naming the Familiar: The Power of Emancipatory Terms

Michelle Maiese

Some feminist theorists have highlighted the way in which new terms can function as interpretive resources that help people make sense of their experiences and shed light on some important aspect of social reality. When women introduced the term 'sexual harassment,' for example, they gave a name to a particular set of behaviors and thereby increased the intelligibility of this phenomenon. However, even before there was name for what they were trying to articulate, they were familiar with what we now would term 'sexual harassment' and could describe it in a rough-and-ready fashion. What, then, did they gain after the introduction of this term, and why did this have an emancipatory impact?

I propose that even before this social wrong had a name, some agents possessed some minimal degree of epistemic familiarity with it, one which was undergirded by affectivity. However, introduction of the term enhanced their capacity to recognize the phenomena, identify salient features, and gauge its similarity to other related phenomena. To make sense of the emancipatory potential of such terms, I draw from enactivist accounts of language and the theoretical notion of 'affordance.' New terminology should be understood as a tool that orients agents toward the world in a particular way and whose use involves skillful know-how. Employing this terminology deepens epistemic familiarity, reshapes agents' affordance fields, and uncovers new avenues for thought, feeling, action, and communication. Insofar as the availability of this concept allows agents to gain a better "grip" on available affordances, it can promote both epistemic and moral agency.

The Foreign as Limit Situation

Jaspers and the Psychopathology of the Loss of Familiarity

Thomas Fuchs

Karl Jaspers understands a limit situation to be a life situation in which the "housing" of familiar convictions and certainties breaks, the fundamental contradictions of human existence become visible and the previous life plan no longer holds. However, limit situations in this sense include not only the situations of guilt, struggle, chance and suffering highlighted by Jaspers himself, but also experiences of disturbing foreignness, such as those that can occur when

traveling or after migrating to a foreign cultural or linguistic environment. Here, too, the "housing" of familiarity, self-evidence and the common sense of shared convictions can collapse and lead to existential crises. Mental illnesses and even psychotic developments are often the result of such "overwhelming foreignness." The lecture explores these connections using literary and clinical examples.

Loss, Identity, and the Sense of Self: Towards a Comprehensive Framework

Allan Køster

In my talk I introduce a comprehensive framework for understanding loss as an existential experience that manifests as grief. While not all experiences of loss carry the existential weight of grief, those that do can be distinguished by the fact that they impact on our identity. To unpack this framework, I begin by drawing a basic distinction between grief as a ground attunement (Grundstimmung) and grief stemming from a specific loss – emphasizing that the latter always has the former as its condition of possibility. From this standpoint, I explore the line of thought that grief resulting from a specific loss has to do with losing something integral to my identity..

In advancing this framework, I go on to specify identity in existential terms as a matter of my *sense of self or self-familiarity*. Both empirical research and phenomenological evidence suggest that our sense of self is both variable and distributed. Further, it is rooted in a personalized context—a "personal niche." On my interpretation, grief arises when we lose something essential to this personal niche irreversibly and permanently. To illustrate this, I distinguish between four overarching levels of identity vulnerable to loss: 1) Habitual identity 2) Practical identity 3) Historical identity 4) Narrative identity. In conclusion, I contend that these levels together comprise a robust framework capable of elucidating how most, if not all, experiences of grief can be interpreted as existential loss.

Recovering the Experience of the Familiar: Lessons from Deep Brain Stimulation and the Experience of Art

Julian Kiverstein

My talk will start from the familiar phenomenological thesis that psychopathologies are characterized by a disturbance of orientation in a familiar, meaningful world that people ordinarily enact as they go about their everyday lives. I will ask how to think about recovery in psychiatry given this phenomenological perspective on illness. What does it mean to recover from a disturbance of orientation with a familiar world? I will address this question by reflecting on two lines of research from our research group: patients being treated for obsessive compulsive disorder with deep brain stimulation, and the engagement with art by people suffering from grief following the loss of a loved one. I will argue that what these two very different examples share in common is the recovery of openness to possibilities through a disruptive experience.

Transfigurations of the Familiar

Jérôme Dokic

The aim of this presentation is to clarify the role played by feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity in aesthetic experiences. Some aesthetic experiences, such as intense experiences of beauty, involve a sense of hyperfamiliarity: we are strongly touched "from within". Other aesthetic experiences, such as experiences of the sublime, involve a sense of hypofamiliarity: the sublime is initially perceived as excessively vast or powerful, and thus extremely unfamiliar, even alien to us. In both cases, the dynamics of aesthetic experience can be explained by the capacity of the aesthetic object to resist or delay familiarization.

Transformative Trust. On the Phenomenology of Autonomy and Goal Orientation in Psychotherapeutical Relationships

Hannes Gustav Melichar

Following Blankenburg, we can understand that psychotherapy aims to retrieve natural familiarity. This talk argues that trust is a constitutive element for the psychotherapeutic progress towards this goal. Psychotherapeutic research has shown over the last few years that the therapeutic relationship is the most crucial factor in the healing process of patients. For this relationship, trust is a constitutive factor that helps the patient to regain autonomy. However, how trust can be efficacious in psychotherapeutic contexts hasn't been investigated. In this paper, I will develop a concept of trust that explains how trust can be therapeutic by approaching the topic from a phenomenological and Aristotelian-informed perspective. Trust as a central theme in philosophy has received increased attention in the last three decades. Many conceptualizations understand trust as an expectation of reliability to which another factor is added. In contrast, the present presentation argues that trust consists of an attitude that balances the autonomous goals of other beings with one's purposes. This attitude is characterized as phenomenological because of its life-world foundation of goal orientation. Hans Jonas's biology philosophy and enactivism explain the idea that living beings are goal-oriented. The paper analyzes the ability to perceive this goal orientation with the help of Tomassello's developmental psychology theory and the phenomenological understanding of empathy. Finally, to demonstrate the fruitfulness of the concept of trust thus unfolded, it is shown how trust is effective as a central building block in the context of psychotherapies.

Enacting Authenticity: The Case of Self-Illness Ambiguity

Sanneke de Haan

There are situations in which you might say: 'I'm not myself at the moment', or: 'I wasn't myself at that time'. One example is the context of psychiatry: we may say things like 'that was the addiction that made me do that', or: 'that is the voice of the depression speaking'. The relation between oneself, one's identity, and one's disorder or problems is typically referred to as 'self-illness ambiguity'. I will sketch some important distinctions to be made with regard to the notion of self-illness ambiguity and some implications for the current debate on this notion. Traditional notions of authenticity fall short in various ways, mostly because they do not take our relational nature sufficiently into account. Instead, I will propose an enactive, relational understanding of authenticity: you enact yourself in relations with others. Finally, I will discuss some parameters that follow from understanding authenticity in this way.