**Loneliness and the Desire for Recognition**

**Holly Beth Havens**

**Abstract**

My thesis offers phenomenological reflections on the nature of loneliness. I argue that loneliness is a more complex phenomenon than we have heretofore realized. Through engagement with various phenomenologists, as well as looking at case studies of lonely persons, we can reach a better understanding of loneliness. Previous research has suggested what loneliness is, but not what is *missing* in the experience of loneliness. To further complicate matters, feelings of loneliness can occur in a variety of different contexts; it is not just when one is lacking friendships or love relationships that one may feel lonely, for instance, but one may also feel lonely whilst *with* friends and loved ones. My thesis seeks to rectify these gaps in the literature. I will argue that what is missing in loneliness is a felt recognition. Through looking at various case studies, I will develop a three-tiered model of recognition.

In chapter 1, I review theories of loneliness that have been proposed thus far. I demonstrate the ways in which I believe they fall short in understanding loneliness. I differentiate between loneliness and solitude and define loneliness as a *feeling* rather than an emotion or mood. Chapter 2 is the first case study. There, I explore feelings of loneliness in relation to solitary confinement. Through looking at first-person accounts of persons in solitary confinement, and the work of Sartre, Honneth, Margalit, and Guenther, I form the first level of recognition. In chapter 3, I examine feelings of loneliness persons experience within and outside friendships and love relationships. I draw off the work of Cocking & Kennett, Scheler and Von Hildebrand, as well as some empirical studies and first-person accounts to develop the second and third levels of recognition. In chapter 4, I look at the way loneliness can occur in some experiences of auditory verbal hallucinations. I argue that in a subset of voice hearers, auditory verbal hallucinations act as a substitute for so-called ‘real life’ relationships. In chapter 5, I differentiate between the experiences of loneliness and depression. I look at the work of Ratcliffe, Husserl, and some first-person accounts in order to do so. In chapter 6, I discuss the relationship between trust, loneliness and recognition. I do so by looking at Løgstrup and Baier's, amongst others, ideas on trust. I conclude by suggesting future possible directions loneliness research may take.

Loneliness and the Desire for Recognition

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By Holly Beth Havens

Department of Philosophy

Durham University

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**Declaration**

I declare that none of the material contained in this thesis has been submitted for any degree at this or at any other university. The material in this thesis is my work. All quotations and paraphrases have been indicated accordingly.

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Introduction

“Life is about connection. There is nothing else.”—Sally Brampton, *Shoot the Damn Dog* (p. 1).

“Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.”—Mother Teresa

Loneliness is a neglected topic in philosophy. It is surprising that an issue that seems so paramount to interpersonal understanding has not received due attention.[[1]](#footnote-1) I hope this thesis will begin to rectify this oversight. Studying loneliness can give insight into the way we experience connection and disconnection with other persons, amongst other interesting philosophical insights. Loneliness has been shown to have adverse effects on our mental, physical, and emotional well-being.[[2]](#footnote-2) Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) claim that being lonely is as detrimental to the body as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. Loneliness has been linked to depression and anxiety. Most of the research on loneliness has been done by psychologists (e.g., Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008; Weiss, 1973, Peplau & Perlman, 1982) who conduct experiments and create tests such as the UCLA loneliness scale[[3]](#footnote-3) that measure whether a person is lonely. Though these empirical studies are useful in *quantifying* loneliness, they have neglected to capture the *experience* of loneliness. This is why my thesis will primarily rely on case studies and insights from current and historical phenomenologists in order to develop a better understanding of loneliness. Phenomenologists hold that in order to understand a phenomenon, it is vital to examine the first-person experience. If we want to better understand loneliness, we must consider the first-person, lived experience. I have chosen to do this by looking at cases of persons experiencing loneliness. I will refer to these accounts of loneliness here as *case studies*. In this thesis, I will explore a range of different case studies to showcase all the different ways loneliness can be experienced. The case studies will highlight the importance of the first-person experience when understanding loneliness.

The common understanding of loneliness is that loneliness mainly occurs when your friends or loved ones are absent, or one is physically isolated from other persons. However, loneliness researchers have demonstrated that loneliness is a feeling of *subjective* rather than [just] *objective* isolation from other persons (e.g., Peplau & Perlman, 1973). That is, loneliness occurs independent of whether one is with or without other persons.

Since loneliness can occur in a variety of contexts to people from all countries, of all ages and of all ethnicities, is there one unifying link between all the accounts of loneliness? Here, I propose that what is missing in all experiences of loneliness is felt recognition from another person or persons. I create a tripartite model of recognition in order to capture the recognition that is missing at each level of interpersonal interaction during loneliness. This is developed from the idea that we need a certain level of felt recognition from other persons in order to feel connected. At the first, most basic level of recognition, we need to be recognized by others as *human beings*. We need to be *perceived* and *acknowledged* by them. At the second level of recognition, we need to be recognized through engaging in meaningful friendships. At the third level of recognition it is vital we engage in love relationships where we are recognized in all of our particularities. When one or more of the three levels of recognition are not adequately met, one experiences loneliness, I contend.[[4]](#footnote-4) Through looking at different case studies (particularly in chapters two and three), I will illuminate the three levels of recognition. For now, I will briefly outline what is to come in this thesis.

**Thesis Outline**

Before we are able to delve into the case studies on loneliness, it is important that we first get a better understanding of the research conducted thus far. Therefore, I have devoted the first chapter of this thesis to looking at the way researchers have conceived of loneliness in the past and how they do now. In this chapter, I cover a variety of issues concerning how to conceive of loneliness. I begin by discussing different perspectives on loneliness. Then, I consider whether we should define loneliness as a mood, a feeling or an emotion. In the following section, I compare loneliness and solitude, highlighting the important differences between the two. Finally, I conclude the chapter by arguing for the need for a phenomenological perspective on loneliness.

In order to lay the groundwork for the first level of recognition, I begin chapter two by discussing Kant and Hegel’s Theories of Recognition. I begin section 2.1 by looking at Kant’s (1785) ideas on recognition, focusing on his ideas on respecting the personhood of others. I then look at Hegel’s (1807/1977) ideas on recognition. Hegel believes that recognition must necessarily be mutual. I will argue that recognition need not be mutual to occur, especially in relation to abating feelings of loneliness. Looking at Kant and Hegel’s theories of recognition will serve as a framework through which my own views on recognition are situated. In section 2.2, I examine some infant studies on the importance of feeling recognized. These studies help illustrate the fact that the desire for recognition is something we are all born with. Even as an infant, not feeling recognized is detrimental to well-being.

Through examining Kant and Hegel’s theories of recognition and looking at some infant studies on the importance of feeling recognized, I develop the first level of recognition. I contend that in order to feel recognized at the most basic level, one must be seen by another, perform actions in front of another, and, as Honneth and Margalit (2001a) hold, one must engage in expressive bodily gestures (such as smiling or waving) with another. All of these things allow one to recognize oneself as a person. That is, they enable one to experience the feeling of being recognized.

Chapter two is the first of the case studies. After outlining the first level of recognition, I examine the experience of solitary confinement as a case study that may help in understanding the experience of loneliness. I do this by primarily drawing from Jean-Paul Sartre’s (1943/2003) work, with a section that looks at important research from Honneth and Margalit (2001a) as well, which is useful in further illuminating some of Sartre’s ideas. I focus on Sartre’s ideas on what the experience of being with others is like, his ideas on the Look, and shame from the third section of *Being and Nothingness* (1943/2003). I also look at his play *No Exit* (1946/1989), which portrays the experience of three fictional characters in hell. Though many scholars have interpreted the meaning of *No Exit* to literally be ‘Hell is other people’ (e.g., Bering, 2008), I interpret Sartre in a different way. I interpret him to be highlighting that, although interpersonal relationships are often fraught with challenges and difficulties, we cannot sustain ourselves without them. There is something devastating about not having the opportunity to appear before another person and be recognized by them.

In chapter three, I discuss the second and third of my case studies: friendship and love. I look at examples of persons who experience loneliness both within and outside friendships and love relationships. I begin the chapter by looking at Cocking & Kennett’s drawing view of friendship. Their drawing view of friendship is particularly useful as it is based on the idea of close, companionate friendships, which lonely persons often claim they are lacking.

I go on to look at some empirical studies and case studies of lonely persons lacking friendships and love relationships. I discuss the second level of recognition, which is having close friendships in which one can trust the other and be vulnerable to her. Then, I turn to the work of Von Hildebrand (2009) and Scheler (2008) to develop a theory of love relationships. Combining insights from the two phenomenologists aids me in developing the third level of recognition. Finally, I discuss the third level of recognition in my model. The third level of recognition consists of making a commitment to the other person, whilst creating an idealized paradigm of values for him. In this third level, one engages in a love relationship with another and is able to be seen by the other as a unique individual.

The next two chapters of my thesis, chapters four and five, look at two different so-called ‘pathological’ cases: voice-hearing and depression. In chapter four, I begin by looking at the experiences of persons who have experienced auditory verbal hallucinations (AVHs) whilst either isolated or lonely. Then, I turn to the work of Gadamer (2004). I look at his ideas on horizons, dialogue, and effective history. This situates the case studies in a phenomenological framework. I then turn to discussing Hoffman’s (2007; 2008) Social Deafferentation Model (SDA) as a useful means in understanding the role that loneliness plays in AVH. My primary claim in this chapter is that a subset of voice-hearing experiences can be linked to loneliness. I conclude the chapter by demonstrating that what is missing for the lonely voice hearer is the experience of being recognized by another person. Voice hearing, I contend, can occur in some cases of lonely persons who are not engaging in dialogue with other persons in real life. When they are not receiving recognition through being spoken to, their minds may find an alternative pathway to linguistic connection through voice hearing.

In chapter five, I look at depression in relation to loneliness. I contend that both loneliness and depression represent a rupture in the way that one ordinarily experiences the world. Though the two terms are often looked at as similar (or are even equated), I will stress that loneliness and depression are two distinct phenomena. Loneliness occurs when one’s interpersonal world feels corroded, and depression occurs when one’s *world* feels corroded. Thus, the experience of loneliness feels as if one is living in a different interpersonal world, whilst the experience of depression may feel as if one is living in a different world altogether. I will look at some case studies of persons suffering from depression and compare and contrast those with persons suffering from loneliness. I will then turn to Husserl (1976) and discuss how in both loneliness and depression, persons experience a loss of possibilities.

I devote chapter six to investigating the nature of trust and the vital role it plays in understanding loneliness and the desire for recognition. In section 6.1, I begin by looking at Husserl (1991) and his ideas on the anticipatory structure of experience. Husserl contends that we can ordinarily anticipate what will happen next. Our ability to do so gives us a sense of confidence and implicit trust in the world. I argue that during the experience of loneliness, the ordinary sense of confidence and implicit trust in the world is not present. Instead, a person experiencing loneliness may anticipate the future with fear and distrust. In section 6.2, I will examine the idea of *implicit trust[[5]](#footnote-5)*, drawing on the work of Baier (1986; 1991; 1992), amongst others. A better understanding of implicit trust will help us understand how, in loneliness, our ordinary trust may be altered into distrust. In section 6.3 I will examine Løgstrup’s (1997) ideas on trust. Various studies have suggested that lonely persons often lack trust in other persons (e.g., Rotenberg, 1994; Segrin and Kinney, 1995), thus an in-depth exploration of the importance of trust is vital for understanding the phenomenon of loneliness. I conclude Chapter 6 by offering some final thoughts on the chapter as a whole in section 6.3.

In my thesis, I draw from a diverse range of figures. It is important to consider this range of thinkers because each one helps highlight different aspects of the experience of loneliness and helps aid in better understanding it. I am utilizing the insights of each figure in very specific ways. For instance, I am using Sartre’s ideas in *Being and Nothingess* and *No Exit* to show the importance of being seen and regarded as a human being by other persons. Through the inclusion of such a diverse range of figures, I am able to garner both a deeper and broader understanding of the experience of loneliness which would not be afforded to me if I had simply focused on one figure.

In the conclusion, I will begin by looking at some of the philosophical implications this thesis may have. I will suggest some future directions of research that may be fruitful. I will then look at the clinical implications this thesis may have. I hold that a better understanding of loneliness will help us develop a better understanding of psychiatric illnesses such as depression. Drawing on work on the experience of loneliness may help improve the treatment practices for persons suffering from various psychological affects and traumas. I will then devote the final section to the increasing attention loneliness has received in politics and the media. For example, the U.K. has recently appointed an MP, Tracey Couch, whose mission is to help alleviate loneliness. This appointment demonstrates that loneliness is now being taken seriously in the U.K.

It is not only psychologists and social scientists that recognize that loneliness can be a serious problem. Increasingly, diverse groups of people (including biologists, physicians, and politicians[[6]](#footnote-6)), are recognizing that loneliness can cause a broad range of unwanted effects. The dialogue on being meaningfully connected to other persons is slowly shifting from a pleasant ideal to a requirement that human beings need in order to live healthy lives. Other disciplines are beginning to realize the importance of researching loneliness, so I hope that soon the discipline of philosophy will as well. My aspiration in writing this thesis is to make a philosophical contribution to research on loneliness. Loneliness is a topic that is so all-pervasive, yet intriguingly, philosophers have remained fairly silent on it. My thesis will hopefully help garner much needed attention to this neglected topic.

Chapter 1

*Loneliness Then and Now*

‘Who knows what true loneliness is—not the conventional word but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask.’

--Joseph Conrad

*Prima facie*, loneliness is a familiar concept, often a part of our everyday conversations. ‘She must be feeling lonely without her friends around during Easter time’, April says about her friend Tiffany. Yet upon closer examination, loneliness may be difficult to fully grasp. One very broad motivation in writing this thesis is to get a clearer idea on the nature of loneliness. More specifically, when we use the term, what does it refer to? Therefore, the focus of this first chapter will be to better understand what is meant by the term ‘loneliness’.

In order to understand this subject matter, a multi-disciplinary perspective is needed. I will begin in section 1.1 by discussing a range of different perspectives on loneliness. Some of this will be drawn from psychology, some from evolutionary biology, some from what authors have described as metaphysical approaches, in order to develop this multi-disciplinary view. In section 1.2, I will look at whether loneliness should be classified as a mood, an emotion, or a feeling. It seems natural to look at loneliness in terms of moods, emotions, and feelings, as this debate on the affective dimension is one that philosophers have been long entrenched in. I will employ a familiar distinction between these terms in order to discover which term best describes loneliness. Part of the way in which philosophers distinguish between whether a state is classified as a mood, emotion or feeling is looking at the duration of time it lasts. Therefore, I will also include a discussion here on the temporal aspect of loneliness. Looking at loneliness this way should help us make an important distinction: how to differentiate between *feeling lonely* and *being lonely*. Doing so should aid in achieving a better understanding of loneliness overall. In section 1.3, I will look at loneliness in relation to solitude and discuss the differences between the two. In section 1.4, I will conclude the chapter by suggesting that the most fruitful way to better understand the nature of loneliness is an engagement with it through a phenomenological perspective.

As I will make clear in this chapter, there are deficiencies in the way loneliness is addressed. I seek to rectify that in this chapter and in this thesis overall. I contend that we can illuminate loneliness through a phenomenological perspective. I will briefly outline what I mean by ‘phenomenological perspective’, and then suggest that the best way to grasp what the experience of loneliness is like is by looking at the experiences of persons who describe themselves as lonely. I will wrap up the chapter with a brief discussion of my argument that loneliness is the desire for recognition. It is the principal aim of my thesis to demonstrate that what ties all of the case studies together is that lonely persons experience a felt lack of recognition. I will return to this idea at the end of this chapter. Before proceeding to make this argument, we must first get a clearer idea of what loneliness is and how it has been defined and theorized over the years.

* 1. *What is Loneliness? Definitions, Explanations and Theories*

What does the term ‘loneliness’ mean? Though there have been various definitions and theories proposed over the years, there are three general points of agreement most scholars share. 1) Loneliness is the result of deficiencies in one’s social relationships, 2) The experience of loneliness is subjective; it is not the same as objective social isolation, 3) The experience of loneliness is unpleasant and distressing (Peplau & Perlman, 1982).

The first point highlights how the experience of loneliness is decidedly social. One can only experience loneliness in relation to the state of her social interactions and relationships with other human beings. Furthermore, it is important to draw out what is meant by the statement ‘deficiencies in one’s social relationships’. By using the word *deficiencies*, most loneliness theorists (e.g., Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Weiss, 1973; Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008) do not only mean *objective* deficiencies, but also *subjective* deficiencies in one’s social relationships. This is why a person who lacks friends and a person who has friends but finds his friendships unfulfilling may both experience loneliness. Having acquaintances, friends, co-workers, or a romantic partner does not mean that one is immune to loneliness. On the contrary, having social relationships that one finds unsatisfactory may exacerbate loneliness.

The second point addresses a common misconception about loneliness: it is not synonymous with being physically isolated from other persons. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, the experience of loneliness occurs in many different contexts. It is not just the person detained in solitary confinement who may be lonely; it could just as easily be someone who appears to have a loving family and lots of friends.

The third point illustrates the fact that loneliness is not valence neutral. That is, it is highly unlikely that you have ever heard anyone state that they were lonely and happy. Persons reporting loneliness describe it as ‘unpleasant’ and ‘distressing’. Fromm-Reichmann (1959) describes it as ‘painful’ and’ frightening’. Weiss (1973) characterizes it as a ‘gnawing distress without redeeming features’ (p. 15). Though some theorists note that the experience of loneliness may result in some positive effects (e.g., Moustakas, 1973 notes that loneliness is often linked with creativity), the potential positive upshots do not cancel out the fact that the experience of loneliness is all together unpleasant.

There are several different topic areas to draw from when studying loneliness. Here, I will focus on specific aspects of the following: 1) The inherent human needs for intimacy, 2) Cognitive processes of people’s perception and evaluation of their relationships, 3) Insufficient social reinforcement, 4) Evolutionary biology, 5) Metaphysical Perspectives, 6) Phenomenological perspectives, and 7) Perspectives from phenomenological psychiatry. Examining these diverse perspectives is useful in that it provides a multi-disciplinary approach to loneliness. I have selected these seven topics because in my view they do the most helpful job in covering the most prominent aspects of loneliness research so far.

1. Inherent Human Need for Intimacy

**The first approach** details our inborn needs for intimacy. Proponents of this view include Sullivan (1953), Fromm-Reichmann (1959), Weiss (1973) and Svendsen (2017). Sullivan defines loneliness as, ‘The exceedingly unpleasant and driving experience connected with inadequate discharge of the need for human intimacy, for interpersonal intimacy’, (p. 290). Robert Weiss, whose work on loneliness has been some of the most influential to date, states

Loneliness is caused not by being alone but by being without some definite needed relationship or set of relationships….Loneliness appears to be a response to the absence of some particular type of relationship or, more accurately, a response to the absence of some particular relational provision, (1973, p. 17).

Weiss holds that our needs for intimacy are met in two main ways: 1) Through an attachment to a primary care figure, or, in later years, a romantic partner, and 2) Through having a satisfying network of social relationships outside the home, which may include friends, colleagues, or other members of a club or society. Loneliness, according to Weiss, occurs when one or both of those relational provisions are insufficiently met.

Weiss developed his view that one must have an attachment figure based on the principles of attachment theory (e.g., Bowlby, 1988; Bowlby and Ainsworth, 1991). Attachment theory is the idea that children need an attachment figure in order to feel loved and supported and in order to understand how to love and support others. This attachment figure may be a mother, father, grandmother, or other guardian. Having a stable home environment provides the child with the necessary emotional tools to develop attachments to others, including friends and romantic partners. This primary attachment is the foundation of all our future relationships. If it is non-existent or unsatisfactory, forming future bonds may be difficult.

The theory goes on to say that once the child gets a certain age and leaves the home, he often seeks a different kind of primary emotional attachment, this time through a romantic partner. If he lacks a romantic partner, is in an unsatisfying relationship, or becomes widowed, he will likely experience loneliness. When one develops loneliness due to the lack or insufficiency of a primary attachment figure, it is what Weiss refers to as ‘Emotional Isolation’. ‘Emotional Isolation’, is characterized by a ‘sense of utter aloneness’, in which the individual may describe the surrounding world as ‘desolate’ or ‘barren’ (1973, p. 22). The only way that the loneliness of emotional isolation can be remedied, Weiss believes, is through the integration of a new emotional attachment, or the reintegration of the attachment lost.

The second relational provision that must be met is that of having a satisfying network of friends or colleagues to belong to. When one lacks the companionship of friends, for instance, one may feel ‘boredom, exclusion, or marginalization’, (p. 20). Weiss holds that membership in a group helps one achieve a clearer sense of oneself.

He uses adolescents as an example. Adolescents, he holds, achieve self-definition partially through identifying with others in their age group who they have something in common with. He holds that continued interaction with a group helps shape and sustain one’s self-identity. This may explain why when someone makes a radical life change (e.g., moving jobs or moving to a new community), they may grapple with loneliness. They may begin to experience what Weiss refers to as the ‘loneliness of social isolation’. One may attempt to rid oneself of it by joining a sports club at her new high school or reaching out to colleagues to form deeper friendships.

In order to keep loneliness at bay, one must feel both emotionally and socially connected, satisfying each of the relational provisions Weiss outlines. Even if, for example, a child comes from a loving and supportive family, she may not experience the same sense of connection and belonging when she attends primary school, her shyness making it difficult for her to make friends. Thus, a sense of loneliness may begin to grip her as the type of sociality she requires outside the home has not been met. Though Weiss admits there are likely more ways that loneliness manifests, he identifies the two above as the main causes.

Weiss’ work is considered to be the first systematic study on loneliness. There is no orthodox account preceding his. His ideas on loneliness and especially his ideas on the two main types of it are groundbreaking. Before Weiss, little research had been done on loneliness. Researchers such as Fromm-Reichmann (1959) attempted to shed some light on the matter, but their articles consist of more scattered remarks and conjectures. Weiss’ is the first structured analysis, complete with both empirical research and case studies of person’s identifying as lonely.

In many ways, Weiss’ theory is very enticing (so enticing, in fact, that a good percentage of psychologists today use it as their model when conducting their empirical research). He shows that loneliness can occur in many different contexts and provoke a variety of feelings and emotions. Yet, where I believe his theory falls short is that he does not go so far as to identify the root cause of it. It is certainly true that one often feels lonely if he lacks either of the necessary relational provisions outlined. Yet, what underlines them? If one is feeling lonely because one is lacking a romantic partner, for example, what exactly is missing? What is one not receiving? This is what my thesis hopes to address and rectify: that loneliness research has thus far neglected to uncover the root of why we are lonely.

Svendsen (2017) argues that loneliness is, ‘an emotional response to the fact that a person’s need for connection to others is not satisfied’ (p. 15). He believes that there is no need to describe loneliness, as persons know it first-hand. He also goes on to say that first-person experiences are unreliable when attempting to understand what causes loneliness. He holds that this is due to the possibility of persons making inferences from their own experiences about other people’s, and persons inability to adequately grasp their own experiences. Due to the fallible nature of first-person accounts, he holds that the inclusion of empirical studies is needed to validate the findings on loneliness.

I agree with Svendsen that loneliness involves ‘a person’s need for connection to others’ (as he phrases it) not being satisfied. However, I take issue with his assertion that loneliness is an ‘emotional response’. As I will discuss in section 1.2, I do not think that loneliness can be rightly classified as an emotion. Furthermore, as I will discuss in more detail in section 1.2, Svendson’s claims that loneliness is an emotion lack support. I also think that he is misguided in his assertion that we do not need to describe loneliness, as persons already know it.

Many persons claim to have never experienced loneliness, a claim Svendson is skeptical of. Rather than distrust this assertion as Svendsen does, I suggest that we instead entertain the possibility that there are persons who may never have experienced loneliness. For persons who have never experienced loneliness themselves, reading accounts of other persons who have would be useful in aiding their understanding of the phenomenon. Secondly, experiences of loneliness differ immensely. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, persons suffering from loneliness describe it in a myriad of ways. Some persons describe it in physical terms, as a ‘hunger’, a ‘gnawing appetite’, or a ‘scream’. Others describe it as ‘empty’, ‘dark’, ‘alone’. Not only do persons describe it in different ways, they experience it in vastly different circumstances. For some, loneliness is a pre-cursor to a psychological malady, such as depression. For others, loneliness is just experienced temporarily, e.g.., on an afternoon when their friend is unable to come round as planned.

I understand Svendsen’s concern regarding persons making inferences about others’ loneliness from their own experiences of loneliness. After all, in everyday conversation, persons often make inferences as to how other persons might be feeling in relation to their own experiences with the same phenomena. Furthermore, persons may fail to accurately disclose all aspects of their experience of loneliness in their accounts. That said, I take a charitable approach and propose that we take these first-person accounts seriously, acknowledging the value they provide in gaining a better understanding of loneliness. These first-person accounts have been an invaluable resource in developing my perspective that loneliness is a lack of recognition. I agree with Svendsen’s idea that empirical studies are useful in better understanding loneliness, however, thus I have included some empirical studies to support my claims in addition to the case studies. Though empirical studies cannot account for many of the nuances that make up the experience of loneliness, they are nevertheless useful in developing a broader understanding of how loneliness is experienced.

1. Cognitive Processes

**The second approach** researchers have used to understand loneliness involves an emphasis on the cognitive when conceptualizing loneliness. This approach examines persons perceptions and evaluations of their social relations. Proponents of this theory hold that loneliness results from perceived dissatisfaction with one’s social relations (e.g., Flanders, 1976; Sadler & Johnson, 1980). Lopata (1969) defines loneliness as ‘a wish for a form or level of interaction different from the one presently experienced’, (p. 250). Cognitive approaches (Peplau & Perlman, 1979; Sermat, 1978) suggest that loneliness occurs when an individual perceives a discrepancy between their desired and achieved patterns of social relations. Peplau & Perlman add that loneliness can be viewed as an endpoint on the continuum of evaluating social relations. They believe that each individual has an optimum level of social interaction. When an individual’s social relations are suboptimal, he experiences loneliness. On the opposite side of the continuum, an individual may experience ‘crowding’ or an ‘invasion of privacy’ if he has an excess of social contact (Altman, 1975). Evaluations of one’s social relationships are also made in part through comparisons with one’s past experiences and with the experiences of other people.

Parts of the cognitive approach appear correct. Surely, part of loneliness is a desire for a different level of interaction than one is currently experiencing; surely it involves feelings of dissatisfaction with one’s current social relations. It also appears plausible that loneliness may involve an evaluative aspect, which includes comparing one’s past experiences with one’s present experiences and comparing one’s social experiences against those of other persons. The evidence of this approach failing is that it doesn’t even ask, let alone answer the question of what the roots of loneliness are. I fear it also over-intellectualizes loneliness, putting too much emphasis on the evaluative aspect of it[[7]](#footnote-7), and not enough on the affective character. Though the cognitive theory mentions feelings of dissatisfaction with one’s current relationships, it emphasizes measuring that dissatisfaction on a continuum rather than investigating what has gone amiss in the experience. In order to better understand loneliness, I think a theory that includes more emphasis on qualitative rather than quantitative measures is needed. Loneliness is more than a cognitive appraisal of one’s social milieu, but a despair at that fact.[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. Insufficient Social Reinforcement

**The third approach** to understanding loneliness is the idea that loneliness is caused by insufficient social reinforcement (e.g., Sullivan, 1953; Young, 1979). In this view, our social relations are a specific class of reinforcement. Each person has what is known as his ‘reinforcement history’. The amount of and type of contact persons find satisfying is a result of their reinforcement history. For example, if one has found confiding in a close friend to be a rewarding experience, one will likely have a continued need for that kind of reinforcement. Relationships may serve as secondary reinforcers. Proponents of this approach select a direct link between rational deficits and subjective reactions to the deficits. A proponent of this theory, Sullivan (1953) writes, ‘There is no way that I know of by which one can, all by oneself, satisfy the need for intimacy’, (p. 271). In order to not be lonely, persons require fulfilling, rewarding relationships. Persons are not self-sufficient; they cannot capture the joys of companionship on their own. One interesting aspect of this theory is the idea that loneliness is an experience that people may have without explicitly recognizing or defining themselves as lonely. As Fromm-Reichmann (1959) notes, loneliness is an experience that people struggle to acknowledge to themselves and others.

Though this theory provides some valuable insights into the nature of loneliness, I believe it does not provide a comprehensive enough account. A better understanding of loneliness would include not only looking at one’s reinforcement history, but looking at other empirical studies, and looking at how one experiences loneliness as well (e.g., how one feels). Perhaps some aspects of loneliness can be explained by insufficient social reinforcement, but not all.

1. Evolutionary Biology

**The fourth approach**, that loneliness can be explained through evolutionary biology, has been most recently and popularly defended by Cacioppo and Patrick (2008). They believe that loneliness evolved in order to protect individuals from the dangers of isolation. Our ancestors depended upon social bonds for safety, as well as successful reproduction of their genes. Feelings of loneliness served to inform them when those bonds were damaged or broken and encouraged them to reach out and try to repair them. Therefore, they hold that, just like burning your finger on a frying pan,

Loneliness developed as a stimulus to get humans to pay more attention to their social connections, and to reach out toward others, to renew frayed or broken bonds’ (p. 7).

They describe loneliness as a ‘social pain’, analogous to a physical pain. By ‘social pain’ they mean that one finds it painful to be separated from others or not have meaningful relationships. Not having meaningful relationships drives us to seek companionship. It reminds us that we need these sorts of relationships in order to be healthy individuals. Physical pain also acts as a catalyst to repair ourselves. Indeed, the comparison between loneliness and physical pain is supported by the results of empirical studies. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) appears to illustrate that the emotional region of the brain that is activated when we experience rejection is the same region (the dorsal anterior cingulate) that registers emotional responses to physical pain, (N.I. Eisenberger *et. al.,* 2003). Therefore, it can be inferred that when we experience rejection and subsequently feel lonely, it feels similar to being hit. Their theory does not stop there, however, but they further delineate the ways in which loneliness can occur. They identify three complex factors that may play a role in the development of loneliness:

1) *Level of Vulnerability to Social Disconnection*—They hold that each individual inherits from her parents a particular degree of need for social inclusion. Depending on whether our individual needs for connection are being met, distress signals are turned on and off. One example they provide is of a young woman who moves away from her community for the first time, and experiences significant loneliness as she finds it difficult to make friends there. They contrast this with other examples of people who move to a new community and do not experience loneliness. They argue that this is because some people simply have a higher need for social connection, and thus suffer more when it is absent.

2) *Our ability to self-regulate emotions associated with isolation*—Self-regulation entails being able to regulate our emotions whilst retaining both outward and inward composure. As loneliness persists, however, a dysregulation of the emotions may occur and it may become more difficult to self-regulate them. This ‘dysregulation’ affects us at a biological level, making us unable to obtain sufficient sleep and making it more difficult for us to heal from illness or trauma.

3) *Our mental representations, expectations, and reasoning about others*—Our experiences are framed through our own unique perspectives. We make sense of others through our *social cognition*; that is, the way we interpret our social interactions with others. When a person is in the grips of loneliness, the way she views herself and others, as well as the types of responses she expects from others, is influenced by feelings of unhappiness and threat.

According to Cacioppo and Patrick, the study of loneliness is important not only to better understand the physical, mental, and emotional toll it can take on persons, but it serves as ‘a new window on who we are as a species’ (2008, p. 28). Human beings are designed by evolution to feel good and secure when they are connected, and lonely when they feel disconnected and lack the social ties they require.

Cacioppo and Patrick’s approach to loneliness has been one of the most important theories to date. It is important in the followings ways: 1) Their idea that loneliness is something that humans are evolutionarily vulnerable to. Being connected is not just an ideal, but a vital need for human beings. This idea has done a lot to further advance loneliness research overall, and 2) By emphasizing that loneliness is not just a mental issue, but a physical one as well, Cacioppo and Patrick have helped bring needed awareness to the physicality of loneliness. Yet, there are still some contentious issues with their theory. One of those is that their evolutionary theory may demonstrate the beginnings of why many people develop loneliness, but it does not account for the nuances of loneliness. They do not discuss many different contexts of loneliness and why it occurs in them. In emphasizing what they take to be evolutionary theory, they focus on the biological and physical processes and neglect the first-person perspective.

1. Metaphysical Perspectives

**The fifth approach** to understanding loneliness, Metaphysical Perspectives[[9]](#footnote-9), is defended by theorists such as Mijuskovic (1973). Mijuskovic argues that all people are lonely. Loneliness, he asserts, is the basic structure of human consciousness. The very way in which we view the spectrum of our lives is through a lens of loneliness. According to Mijuskovic, we are constantly trying to avoid and transcend our loneliness. We may attempt this through conversation, or various other means of communication. Nevertheless, the drive to rid oneself of the unpleasantness of loneliness is ever present.

I think that Mijuskovic is right to point out that loneliness is an unpleasant state that persons desperately try to avoid or escape. However, I disagree with his idea that we are all existentially lonely, that loneliness is an ever-present state. Surely, we experience feelings of loneliness sometimes, but claiming that we are lonely from birth until death appears implausible.[[10]](#footnote-10) Even so-called ‘chronically lonely’ persons will likely be able to recall a few moments of connection sprinkled throughout their lives. Furthermore, I agree with Mijuskovic that loneliness may serve as a motivation for our behavior, though I differ in my thinking that it does not motivate *all* of our behavior. Instead, it seems that human beings are motivated by all kinds of things: the desire for success, money, their interests, and so on.

1. Phenomenological Perspectives

**The sixth**, Phenomenological Perspectives, is perhaps most notably defended by Clark Moustakas (1989). Moustakas, a psychologist, shares many experiences of loneliness from both his clients and his own personal life to develop his theory. Like Mijuskovic, he views loneliness as an existential predicament. Therefore, he believes that loneliness is a necessary aspect of human life. He writes,

Man is ultimately and forever lonely whether his loneliness is the exquisite pain of the individual living in isolation or illness, the sense of absence caused by a loved one’s death, or the piercing joy experienced in triumphant creation. I believe it is necessary for every person to recognize his loneliness, to become intensely aware that, ultimately, in every fiber of his being, man is alone—terribly, utterly alone. Efforts to overcome or escape the existential experience of loneliness can result only in self-alienation (1989, p. xi.)

Though Moustakas and Mijuskovic both contend that loneliness is a necessary aspect of human life, their theories differ in most other ways. Whilst Mijuskovic develops a metaphysical perspective to explain our existential loneliness, Moustakas relies on first-person accounts. Mijuskovic emphasizes that loneliness is a negative experience, whilst Moustakas acknowledges that feeling lonely can be painful, yet contends that loneliness also yields creative insights and opens one up to realizing the uniqueness of being human, thus emphasizing positive aspects of the loneliness experience.

The primary strength I see in Moustaskas’ work is that he does an excellent job in giving voice to first-person experiences of loneliness. He has been one of the few loneliness researchers who has recognized the importance of listening to the stories and perspectives of persons who have experienced loneliness. However, I disagree with his theory that loneliness is an inescapable, existential predicament. As I discussed above, it is surely not the case that we are lonely *all* the time. I also take issue with his emphasis on loneliness often being a positive experience. Even if loneliness does lead to interesting existential realizations, or increased creative output, that does not change the fact that it is an all-together unpleasant experience. Plus, many experiences of loneliness do not result in those feelings or experiences at all; rather, one may simply breathe a sigh of relief that their loneliness has passed.

1. Phenomenological Psychopathology

**The seventh approach** I will discuss is studying loneliness from the vantage point of phenomenological psychopathology. This is a lesser known perspective, but one I think is important to include here, as it appears to be one of the most promising perspectives in getting to the roots of understanding loneliness and its effects. This is because phenomenology emphasizes the importance of first-person experiences in understanding. Psychopathology often looks at mental disorders from a scientific perspective. Thus, phenomenological psychopathology looks at first-person experiences of persons with mental disorders. Loneliness has been shown to be a pre-cursor for depression and other mental disorders (e.g., Young, 1982; Shaver *et al*., 1991; Rudolph *et al*., 2008; Rudolph, 2009).

The main proponent of this theory I would like to discuss is J.H. Van den Berg (1973). In his book *A Different Existence: Principles of Phenomenololgical Psychopathology*, he argues that all psychiatric patients are lonely; in fact, loneliness is central to each patient’s illness. ‘Loneliness is the nucleus of psychiatry’, (p. 105), van den Berg writes. That is, all psychiatric disorders stem from loneliness.[[11]](#footnote-11) His claim makes sense when looking at various first-person accounts of persons whose loneliness was a pre-cursor to depression, schizophrenia, or other mental disorders (e.g., Karp, 1996; Sechehaye, 1994).

I wish to highlight van den Berg’s argument here to emphasize one of my own: that is, I agree with van den Berg that loneliness is central to psychiatric illness. Developing a better understanding of loneliness will surely aid in developing a better understanding of various psychiatric illnesses. The large role that loneliness plays in psychiatric illness underscores yet another reason that the study of loneliness is important: to better help and understand those suffering from depression and other illnesses. In chapters 4 and 5, I will return to this idea when I look in depth at the experiences of voice hearing and depression. I will argue that once loneliness is understood in the ways I propose, we are then able to attain a better understanding of depression and voice hearing experiences.

1.2 *Is Loneliness an Emotion, Mood, or Feeling?*

One important question raised when discussing loneliness is how to understand it affectively. This is important because defining this will help us better understand the concept of loneliness overall. Taking the idea that loneliness is a felt experience, how can we rightly say whether it is a mood, emotion, or feeling? Also, philosophers of emotion often consider the temporal aspect important when defining an affective experience. Therefore, in this section, I will look at the differences between an emotion, mood, and feeling. I will also take into account the temporal aspect of each affective experience. I will then argue that loneliness is a feeling. Though there are certainly many accounts of emotions, moods, and feelings in philosophy, I will focus here on the account provided by Robert Roberts (2003).[[12]](#footnote-12)11 The way that Roberts clarifies the nature of emotions appears particularly illuminating in exploring how loneliness may be situated. Additionally, the distinctions he employs between emotions, moods and feelings are akin to the way persons often describe them in everyday life.

Feelings, on the other hand, are about the self in a given state. That is, they are primarily focused upon how one is faring in a situation. Though one may have feelings about things outside the self (more on this below), feelings still emphasize one’s personal response. Roberts believes that there can be both intentional feelings (feelings about or of oneself) and feelings about other things (e.g, envy of a colleague). You could argue that the latter type of feelings sound similar to emotions; however, they differ in that they involve how the self is faring. The difference between emotions and feelings may be illustrated through the following example:

Susan is envious toward a colleague. Though she and her colleague are at a similar level, and have achieved virtually identical accomplishments, her colleague has been promoted. Therefore, she is envious of her and of her promotion. This describes envy as an *emotion*. This is because Susan’s envy is directed outward, in this case to another person. I will take that same example and now describe envy as a *feeling.* Susan is feeling envious of a colleague. Seeing her colleague get promoted and outshine her makes her feel a low sense of self-worth, and subsequently lowers her confidence in her abilities to do well in the profession. This is a feeling because she experiences envy as inwardly directed. I have used the example of how envy can be either an emotion or a feeling to illustrate that loneliness, unlike envy, can only be classified as a feeling.[[13]](#footnote-13) A distinctive aspect of loneliness is that it seems less directed outwards in the way that everyday emotions might be, and more directed towards how the self is faring.

Roberts also includes a clear discussion on moods. Moods, he holds, are generalized affective states. Unlike emotions, moods do not have to have any focus. He gives the example of winning the lottery: someone wins the lottery and is glad. That is an example of an emotion, as it has the reason of having won the lottery. It is focused on a particular state of affairs. An example of a mood is when, for no particular reason, everything and everyone around one begins to take on ‘the colour of gladness’, as Roberts phrases it. People one encounters appear kinder, work seems more pleasant, jokes are funnier. Once in the mood, one just experiences things through the lens of that mood.

Being in a certain mood presupposes the elicitation of similar emotions. In the absence of a certain mood, one would not respond with the emotions that one does. For example, whilst experiencing the mood of joy, everything one encounters is coloured with gaiety and goodness. Returning to the example of winning the lottery, one now encounters people and has different emotions elicited, such as happiness. Furthermore, moods may also colour one’s feelings. Being in a joyful mood may help one to feel better about oneself. One may experience feelings of increased confidence and self-worth.

I think we can safely assert that loneliness is not identical to an emotion. Emotions, Roberts argues, are outward directed, intentional states. When we speak of loneliness, we don’t say, for example, ‘I am lonely at Caroline’, or, ‘I am lonely about what Caroline did’. Furthermore, Roberts notes that emotions are commonly not felt. As I discussed previously in this section, what he means by this is that one may be cognizantly aware of having an emotion without accompanying bodily feelings. Though there may be cases where someone realizes that they have been lonely for a while, for the most part, I think loneliness is usually a felt experience. One ordinarily recognizes feelings of loneliness.

However, others (e.g. Ben-Ze’ev, 2001; Svendsen, 2017) argue that loneliness should be classified as an emotion. In his book *The Subtlety of Emotions*, Ben-Ze’ev holds that loneliness is a particular type of sadness that ‘stems from the absence of desired social relationships’ (p. 470). Unfortunately, Ben-Ze’ev does not go on to develop a more detailed account of loneliness as an emotion, so I can only disclose his brief remarks here.

Svendsen, on the other hand, devotes an entire chapter of his book *A Philosophy of Loneliness* to exploring how loneliness should be classified. He notes the difficulty in distinguishing between affective states, particularly between feelings and emotions. He holds that feelings are usually associated with physical sensations, such as hunger or thirst, whereas emotions are usually associated with cognitive appraisals, such as is the case in experiences of jealousy and love. Rather than argue that loneliness falls more on the physical side or the cognitive side, Svendsen chooses to not distinguish between the two and simply classify loneliness as an emotion.

Svendsen accumulates a list of traits that are common in most theories of *x* being an emotion. Emotions are commonly considered: 1) Subjective phenomena, 2) Not valence neutral, 3) To have intentional objects (that is, to be directed at someone or about something), and 4) To last for a short duration of time. He holds that loneliness possesses all of the characteristics except the fourth, as loneliness can undoubtedly last for longer durations of time. He also holds that ‘unfelt emotions do not exist’ (2017, p. 39).

Whilst I agree that loneliness does possess the first three characteristics Svendsen outlined, I argue that categorizing loneliness as an emotion puts too much emphasis on the cognitive side, and not enough on the physical side. Additionally, I disagree that emotions always involve feelings. It is certainly plausible that one can experience an emotion without feeling anything. For instance, one can recognize that one is angry at someone because, e.g., they failed to follow through with doing what they said they would do, yet one does not experience any feelings about it.

Though Svendsen defines loneliness as an emotion at the beginning of the chapter, he seems to backpedal a bit when he goes on to say,

We might of course wish that the boundaries between emotions were clearer, and that we could perhaps develop a definition that gives the necessary and sufficient conditions, such that: x is lonely if, and only if...’... In reality, not all phenomena allow themselves to be defined in that way, and when we take up emotions in general, and loneliness in particular, we must accept a certain vagueness surrounding our object’ (p. 39).

I think Svendsen rightly points out the difficulty in distinguishing where affective phenomena should be placed. Yet, although it can be difficult to situate phenomena, I think it is important that we do so in order to better understand them. By situating a phenomenon in a particular area, we are not saying that that phenomenon is forever to be considered that way. We are simply stating that, with the information gathered thus far, we are placing the phenomena in what is the most appropriate location. Thus is the case with my classification of loneliness as a feeling. By classifying loneliness as a feeling, I am stating that I think it is the correct classification according to my understanding of loneliness thus far.

I think we can also assert that loneliness is not identical to a mood. Moods, as Roberts argues, are generalized affective states, colouring everything we do. Whilst loneliness can be a state that can engender other feelings, I do not think it is one that necessarily bleeds into everything we experience.[[14]](#footnote-14) Additionally, as Roberts asserts, moods do not have a particular focus or reasons, and loneliness may or may not have specific focal points or reasons. Thus, the strongest argument for loneliness not being classified as a mood is that loneliness does not colour all that we do and experience.

I believe that loneliness can rightly be classified as a feeling. Firstly, when people describe it, they commonly use the phrase, ‘I feel lonely.’ Secondly, feelings, as Roberts asserts, are about how the self is faring, and loneliness appears to first and foremost be about oneself. You could argue that this is not the case, as one of the main components of loneliness is how one is faring socially, that loneliness necessarily involves other persons. Yet, the fact that this is the case does not present a problem to my argument that loneliness is a feeling. Though loneliness may be about not having the relationships you need or desire, it is still about *your* *feelings* about that. Contrary to emotions, loneliness seems to ordinarily involve a felt-response. Therefore, loneliness cannot be considered an emotion, as emotions are directed and focused outward, and loneliness is focused on how the self is faring. Though one may be lonely because she does not have, say, the friendships she desires, the feeling of loneliness is still primarily about herself and her sadness rather than her lack of friends. As I just mentioned, loneliness seems to ordinarily involve a felt-response. There is an awareness of it, be it a bodily sensation such as a sudden sharp pang in the heart or stomach, or a feeling of sadness. As discussed above, emotions are often unfelt, that is, one may cognizantly recognize them and not feel any bodily twinge of them. Feelings, on the other hand, are always felt.

Loneliness cannot be an emotion as it is not directed towards someone or something. One cannot be lonely *at someone* or *about something* the way that one can be angry at or about them. Similarly, one can be’ in love’ with another person, but not ‘in lonely’ with them. Though it could be argued that one could have inward or self-directed emotions, I hold that an emotion necessarily involves an object beyond the self. Part of what makes loneliness the state that it is, is that it does not involve feelings *directed at* or towards another person or object.

Questions may remain, however, on whether loneliness is always a feeling. After all, you may have heard someone say at some point that someone *is a lonely person*. One way in which the distinction between whether one is *feeling* lonely or simply *is* lonely could be drawn is the amount of time one has experienced loneliness. Some loneliness researchers (e.g., Beck & Young, 1978) claim that loneliness can be split into three different types according to duration: transient, situational, and chronic. *Transient loneliness* is considered to be the most common form and refers to short periods of feeling lonely. *Situational loneliness* often follows major stressful life events, such as a divorce or the death of a loved one. After a period of distress, the situationally lonely person accepts the loss and is able to recover from their loneliness. *Chronic loneliness* occurs when a person is unable to develop satisfying relationships over a period of years. Using these distinctions of duration could be a useful way to distinguish between *feeling lonely* and *being lonely*. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to suggest that loneliness is a feeling in the majority of cases, including when one is struggling with transient or situational loneliness. If someone is dealing with chronic loneliness, loneliness then may, in some cases, be considered a character trait.

Now that I have argued that loneliness is a feeling, I will look at how to delineate between loneliness and solitude. Delineating between loneliness and solitude is important because it aids in combating a general misunderstanding about loneliness; that is, that loneliness and solitude are the same. In colloquial conversation, the terms loneliness and solitude are often used interchangeably, but as I will show in the following section, there are important differences between the two. Establishing these differences will make understanding loneliness and solitude easier.

* 1. *Loneliness Versus Solitude*

As I mentioned above, the words ‘loneliness’ and ‘solitude’ are often used synonymously. Persons may sometimes inaccurately assume that if someone is often by themselves, they are lonely. Here, I will tease out the differences between loneliness and solitude and show that solitude and loneliness are two distinct states.

Loneliness, I argued in sections 1.1 and 1.2, is a negative state. When one expresses that one is feeling lonely, the loneliness is often accompanied with sadness and low self-esteem. Solitude, on the other hand, is a valence neutral state.[[15]](#footnote-15) One may experience bliss or sorrow (or somewhere in between) in solitude. Though solitude may produce any range of feelings and emotions, it has most commonly been studied and written about as a positive experience with many beneficial aspects. Below, I will share just a few of those.

Firstly, studies have suggested that solitude is related to positive changes in persons’ cognitive states. In solitude, persons are much less self-conscious than when they are with others. Adults report easier concentration whilst alone, and adolescents report better concentration in certain activities, including working on hobbies, playing individual sports and studying (Larson, 1982). Another study suggests that adolescents who spend a greater deal of time alone demonstrate greater purposiveness and personal direction (Larson, 1997). Therefore, it appears that solitude allows one to be better focused, thus improving concentration and attention.

Secondly, the experience of solitude is often viewed as freeing. In solitude, persons may pursue things not offered or part of their everyday lives with others. When asked to identify positive effects from previous solitude experiences, different samples of backpackers (Hammit, 1982) and university students (Long, 2000) responded that freedom of choice with respect to thoughts and actions was one of the most important benefits of solitude.

Berlin (1969) makes a careful distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ freedom, which will be useful in illustrating the freedom that may be part of solitude. *Negative freedom* is freedom from constraints (say, social constraints or pressures to conform or behave a certain way). *Positive freedom* is freedom to engage in desired activities, due to necessary internal (e.g., education) or external (e.g., financial) resources being available.

Koch (1994) provides a good example of a type of negative freedom offered by solitude. He suggests that the mere presence of other persons obliges us to coordinate our experience with theirs, which in turn diminishes the scope of our own actions. Take the example of viewing a painting at a museum. Our experience of the painting can change when another person walks up and we are taken out of our own thoughts and revelations about the painting. Our subjective experience is influenced by even the tiniest interaction with another person. When another person approaches, we can no longer simply focus on our own responses and reflections, but must also accommodate the other. We are now not only conscious of viewing the painting before us, but conscious of the other viewing us viewing the painting. Solitude, Koch suggests, reduces the demands of experiencing ourselves as the object of another’s thoughts and actions, minimizing our feelings of self-consciousness. The example of viewing the painting on one’s own serves to highlight Koch’s idea.

Another possible benefit of solitude is creativity[[16]](#footnote-16). The freedom to pursue our own ideas and interests in solitude often leads to an increase in creative output. Indeed, freedom is often viewed as a prerequisite for creativity (Amabile, 1983). Two ways that solitude may facilitate creativity are 1) Stimulating imaginative involvement in multiple realities, and 2) Trying on alternative identities (Long & Averill, 2003). Through using the imagination to contemplate other worlds and dimensions, as well as considering different identities the self may take, one may experience self-transformation.

One surprising benefit of solitude is intimacy. Though it may seem paradoxical to say that solitude may involve feelings of intimacy *prima facie,* it is indeed the case that solitude may facilitate these types of feelings. For example, the poet Lord Byron (1812/1996) wrote that solitude is the place ‘where we are least alone’ (p. 445). In his poem ‘I wandered lonely as a cloud’, Wordsworth (1807) writes of the ‘bliss of solitude’. During his time at Walden, Thoreau (1854/1981) said, ‘I have a great deal of company in the house, especially in the morning when nobody calls’ (p. 206). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton (1667/2004) remarked that ‘solitude sometimes is best society’ (p. 529).

Additionally, through looking at examples from novels and popular songs, interviews, and analysis of dictionary definitions, Nisenbaum (1984) discovered that solitude often involves feelings of connection with other persons. Yet, it is important to note that the experience of solitude is not always pleasurable or beneficial. Take the case of David Hume (1738/2000) who in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* wrote that he was ‘affrighted and confounded’ with ‘forlorn solitude’ (2000, Part 4, section 7, p. 420). I will return to this theme later on in this section.

Perhaps one of the most widely recognized benefits of solitude is enhanced spirituality and transcendental experiences (e.g., Suedfeld, 1982; France, 1997). Many different groups have reported spiritual experiences in solitude, including solitary wanders who have described feelings of unity with God, the universe, or nature; tribal cultures who have incorporated a solitary quest for a higher level of consciousness into their adolescents rites of passage; major religious figures, including Jesus, Mohammed, the Buddha, and Moses reported divine communion; many other mystics and prophets following the aforementioned major religious figures also spoke of divine communion in solitude (Suedfeld, 1982). From the last several thousand years to present day, monks and nuns of various religions meet in collective devotional solitude, and solitary meditation plays an integral role in many religious and spiritual regimes (France, 1997; Merton, 1958). France’s (1997) essay on religious solitaries explores the connection between solitude and spirituality from the perspective of different cultures. One example he gives is that of the Daoists, who value solitude because it is a chance to get away from the pressures of society, which often distort oneself and reality, and experience the healing effects of nature.

Another benefit of solitude for mystics and other spiritual figures includes increased intimacy with oneself, the surrounding environment, or God. Whether achieved through meditation, confession, prayer, or quiet contemplation, one may experience new insight into their religion or spiritual quest.

However, for all the positive benefits solitude has been shown to have, the perception of the solitary person is still negative. As many have reported (e.g., Fromm-Reichmann, 1959; Stephens, 1975), when people discover that someone spends most of their time in solitude, that person becomes an object for pity, assistance, or therapy. Being alone for a protracted period of time may be characterized as a sign of the denigration of society; a symptom of individual maladjustment; a pre-curser and cause of pathology (Solomon & Patch, 1974). Adults show concern about children who prefer solitary rather than group activities (Solomon & Patch, 1974); clinicians attempt to develop techniques for managing socially isolated persons (Argyle, 1967; Gottman, Gonso, and Schuler, 1976; Oden & Asher, 1977); gerontological psychologists attempt to devise methods to treat elderly people who spend a significant amount of time alone (Schulz, 1976).

Not only is the perception of persons in solitude often negative, some studies have shown that being alone itself[[17]](#footnote-17) depresses a person’s mood. Larson *et. al* (1982) report that their studies suggest that people are significantly less happy, cheerful, and sociable, as well as less alert, strong, and excited when they are alone as opposed to when they are with people. In fact, the average person in the study reported feeling ‘very’, ‘quite’, or ‘somewhat’ lonely three times as often when alone. In the sample group of 182 people, only 29 reported feeling lonelier when with others than when they were alone. Thus, what may be concluded from these studies is that, although being physically isolated from other persons does not in itself *cause* loneliness, it can lead to loneliness in some cases. Therefore, we can reasonably assert that there are other conditions that must be present (e.g,, feeling sad) in order to make *being solitary* turn into *being lonely*. In order to achieve a proper grasp of what these are, we need to acquire a better understanding of the first-person experience. Thus, I will now turn to phenomenology in order to accomplish that.

* 1. *The Phenomenological Perspective*

In this thesis, I will primarily look at loneliness from a phenomenological perspective. Here, I will give a brief exegesis on the nature of phenomenology, and how looking at loneliness from a phenomenological perspective may be useful in better understanding loneliness. I will begin by discussing the ways we ordinarily refer to phenomenology, as well as provide a definition for the purposes of this thesis of the term ‘phenomenology’. I will discuss how Husserl is credited with founding phenomenology, and how other phenomenologists have departed from some of his crucial insights into phenomenology.

Phenomenology is ordinarily referred to in two ways: as a movement in the history of philosophy, or as a branch of philosophy. The word itself stems from the word *phenomena*, which literally means ‘appearing’. Phenomenology then, is the study of the way things appear to us. It is the way we experience and find meaning in things. Phenomenology studies conscious experiences from a subjective or first-person perspective.

Phenomenology developed in part as a reaction against the dominant philosophical ideas of the nineteenth century, including rationalism, positivism, Neo-Hegelianism, Neo-Kantianism, and empiricism. One of the main components leading to its development was the emphasis on scientific facts, and third-person knowledge that took hold over the nineteenth century. One of the tasks of phenomenology was to emphasize the importance of the first-person view. Another one was to escape the various dogmatisms that had taken hold in previous centuries (e.g., religion, abstract metaphysics).

Edmund Husserl is credited with founding phenomenology. He first formally introduced the term in the Introduction to the Second Volume of his *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901/2002). Despite the profound influence Husserl had, his predecessors have often deviated from many of his key phenomenological insights. In fact, Paul Ricoer commented that the story of phenomenology is one of deviations from Husserl; the history of phenomenology is the history of Husserlian heresies (1987). For instance, both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty were skeptical about the possibility of carrying out a complete phenomenological reduction.[[18]](#footnote-18) They held that we can only look back at our being-in-the-world, we cannot go behind the phenomena. Therefore, instead we can regard the reduction as a type of ‘leading back’ to our pre-reflective experience. In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2002), for instance, Merleau-Ponty commented that ‘the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction (xiv.; viii.)[[19]](#footnote-19)After the publication of Martin Heidegger’s important *Being and Time* (1929), phenomenology began to be known as a discipline to be examined through the combined contributions of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.

In his 1927 lecture course on the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger declared that there was ‘no such thing as the one phenomenology’. In order to be true to phenomenology, he reasoned, we must be true to the matters themselves and the way that they appear to us. Thus, the Heideggerian turn ushered in a whole new era of phenomenologists who chose various new emphases. Gadamer (1975/2004), for instance, employed Heidegger’s way of attending to the things themselves and located them within speech and living dialogue.

Throughout this thesis, I will look at the work of several different phenomenologists, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Knud Løgstrup, Hans George-Gadamer, and Edmund Husserl, as well as more recent phenomenologists such as Matthew Ratcliffe. I will also look at work from other research contexts that is in increasing dialogue with phenomenology, e.g., cognitive science, neuroscience and social psychology.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Each phenomenologist included has a different emphasis and way that they employ the phenomenological approach. By discussing these different phenomenologists, I am able to highlight the crucial aspects of loneliness I wish to bring to light. Phenomenology highlights these aspects in a way that no other approach can, as it emphasizes the first-person experience. I will investigate various methodologies these phenomenologists suggest and determine whether they aid in better understanding loneliness. In order to better understand loneliness and to develop a theory on loneliness, I will also examine a series of different case studies. Through looking at the work of different phenomenologists and through various case studies, I will show that there is one unifying way through which we can understand loneliness: that is, that loneliness is the desire for recognition and the despair at not feeling recognized.

One of the reasons I chose to study loneliness from a phenomenological perspective is because I do not think that the empirical sciences and the theories developed from them are sufficient in helping us understand loneliness.[[21]](#footnote-21) My thesis seeks to rectify this oversight in the literature and provide a way in which we can better understand loneliness. In employing phenomenology, I will get the chance to look at first-person perspectives of persons who have suffered from loneliness. There may be no better way of understanding loneliness than to look at the experiences of persons who have dealt with it, to listen to their words and stories. To draw an analogy, patients in a hospital may complain that the doctor they have says that he understands they are in pain during an operation, but she cannot *feel* their pain. Therefore, in contrast to empirical studies that understand loneliness from a detached, intellectual perspective, looking at loneliness through a phenomenological perspective shall help one develop better empathy, which will in turn help us to develop a better understanding of loneliness. [[22]](#footnote-22)

I will begin the next chapter with the first case study, solitary confinement. Through shedding light on this experience in relation to loneliness, I will pave the way for the other case studies I will explore in later chapters.

Chapter 2

*Lonely Spaces: A Sartrean Analysis of Loneliness and Solitary Confinement*

I have heard the key

Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

--T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

The case of prisoners in solitary confinement may be considered by some to be a primordial example of loneliness. After all, in solitary confinement prisoners are both physically and emotionally cut off from everyone and everything they once knew. Whilst in solitary confinement, prisoners’ only form of direct human interaction is often with the guards, who push their meal under their door three times a day. As Lisa Guenther (2013) argues, the lack of human interaction, and more importantly, the lack of meaningful connection to others that persons in solitary confinement usually feel, leads to them becoming ‘unhinged’: unhinged from others, themselves, and sometimes even from feelings of being a real human being. She, as well as many human rights activists, holds that the experience of solitary confinement is ‘dehumanizing’. Guenther goes even further and calls it ‘deanimalizing’, arguing that no living creature should be forced to live in conditions where even the possibility of engaging with another is absent.

Indeed, the experience of solitary confinement testifies that without the presence of other persons, people begin to experience a wide range of disturbances that threaten their personhood. Stuart Grassian (2006), an expert witness of observing inmates in the SHU (Security Housing Units) at Pelican Bay, found that eighty percent of inmates held for prolonged periods in solitary confinement had either significantly aggravated previous psychiatric illnesses or fallen prey to psychiatric symptoms as a direct result of the RES (Reduced Environmental Stimulation) conditions they were exposed to. Grassian notes that the typical effects of RES (which he later refers to as SHU syndrome), are (1) hyperresponsivity to external stimuli, (2) perceptual distortions, illusions, and hallucinations, (3) panic attacks, (4) difficulties with thinking, concentration, and memory, (5) intrusive obsessional thoughts, and (6) overt paranoia (pp. 335-6). The authors of the KUBARK manual (an interrogation manual for the U.S. Army and CIA)[[23]](#footnote-23) list the typical effects of solitary confinement as superstition, hallucination, delusion, and ‘an intense love of any other living thing’ (CIA 1963, p. 88; 1983, K-6). In fact, in Cold War thought reform researchers highlighted this point in KGB and Chinese incarceration techniques:

In nearly all cases the prisoner’s need for human companionship and his desire to talk to anyone about anything becomes a gnawing appetite, which may be as insistent as the hunger of a starving man (Hinkle and Wolff 1956, p. 129).

The insistent hunger of the person in solitary confinement can be compared to the lonely persons. As Weiss (1973) argues, loneliness is felt like a hunger. As I discussed in chapter 1, loneliness is a yearning for what one is missing socially. Whilst lonely, one is missing interpersonal connection. This can be compared to a person who is hungry and needs food. Whilst alone for a protracted period of time, one may become hungry, as it were, for connection. Von Hildebrand (2009) discusses the effects of being alone for a prolonged period of time. Though he does not mention whether one is lonely, he argues that being by oneself puts one into a sort of ‘starvation’ mode, which in turn serves to heighten the experience of sociality when it finally occurs and one encounters another. He writes,

It is true that if I have been alone for a long time and am “starved” for the company of other human beings, I see the value of even mere contact with others more clearly than ever when I finally encounter some other person. Of course, here we have primarily to do with a beneficial good that I have long been deprived of. Its importance and gift-character is thrown into relief by the fact that I have gone without it for a long time. But it would obviously be false to reduce this importance to the mere satisfaction of a desire for companionship. It can also happen that not only the importance of some beneficial good becomes clearer when it is already desired, but that such a desire can make me more sensitive to value. When I have not heard beautiful music for such a long time that I am “starved” for it, I acquire a disposition that lets the value of some piece of music stand forth in a particular way and that heightens my receptivity for it (p. 30).

In the above quote, von Hildebrand uses the example of not hearing the sound of beautiful music as a way to illustrate that when we have not experienced something for a long time, we are even more grateful for it when we experience it again. He ties this to how we feel when we have been alone for a long time and are starved for the company of others. Once we encounter another person again, we feel extremely grateful for their presence.

In this chapter, I will show how solitary confinement is an example of being alone in which one is, as von Hildebrand discusses, ‘starved’ for the companionship of other persons. I think that looking closer at both the experiences of solitary confinement and loneliness may highlight the intrinsic need we have for human connection. Both solitary confinement and loneliness are examples of experiences in which we lack other persons and connection. In both of these instances, our innate needs to connect to others are not being met. As von Hildebrand suggests, the value of something may not shine through until there is a lack or, in the case of solitary confinement, a complete absence of it. When everything is going as normal, we may not be able to see the value of what we have. That is, in our everyday lives, which are usually filled with various social relationships and obligations, the idea that others are important to us, indeed the assertion that their very presence matters for us is, I think, not ordinarily salient.

In order to better understand the significance of our interpersonal relationships and the effects they have on us, let us look at a quote from William James (1890/2000):

No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met ‘cut us dead’, and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruelest bodily tortures would be a relief; for these would make us feel that, however bad might be our plight, we had not sunk to such a depth as to be unworthy of attention at all (pp. 293-4).

In the above quotation, James emphasizes the importance of being recognized by other persons. Indeed, he suggests that there is no worse form of punishment than being ‘unnoticed’. He even goes so far as to suggest that persons would prefer ‘the cruelest bodily tortures’ to being unrecognized. Being recognized by other persons is something we ordinarily take for granted. The case study of solitary confinement showcases the way that persons outside the prison system may take recognition for granted. Persons in solitary confinement complain about not being recognized by the guards. It is not just recognition that they are looking for, but distinctively *human recognition*. Many inmates complain that they are being treated as a number or an animal. Recognizing someone as a human being means treating the other person with respect and dignity, and acknowledging that they are capable of reasoning, reflective thought and other distinctively human attributes.

The despair at the lack of recognition experienced by inmates in solitary confinement may help in understanding the lack of recognition lonely people feel. Though many lonely persons are not prohibited from engaging with others, they feel at a metaphorical distance from them. They may feel misunderstood, unacknowledged, or meaningless to the persons they encounter. James’ words highlight what I refer to as the *first level of recognition*. The first level of recognition is comprised of persons directly encountering and engaging with other persons. As I will illustrate in this chapter, engagement with other persons can occur through a variety of means, including being seen by others and exchanging gestures. The main point that underscores the first level of recognition is that one is recognized by other persons as a human being capable of rational thought and reflection.

Though it could be argued that the experience of solitary confinement is a rather extreme example to shed light on some experiences of loneliness, I think that looking at solitary confinement may be useful in getting a glimpse of what persons feeling lonely may be experiencing. Therefore, in this chapter I will examine the experience of solitary confinement as a case study that may help in understanding the experience of loneliness. I will primarily draw from the work of Sartre (1943/2003) to help illustrate this, though I will also draw from Honneth and Margalit (2001a) in section 2.5. to aid in developing and extending Sartre’s ideas in sections 2.3 and 2.4.

I will begin the chapter by providing an analysis of recognition. Specifically, in section 2.1, I will look at Kant (1785) and Hegel’s (1807/1977) ideas on recognition. Kant and Hegel are known as two of the most important figures in the philosophy of recognition. Looking at their theories of recognition will be used as a framework to guide us in understanding where my view of recognition is situated. Furthermore, it will aid in understanding why an alternative viewpoint is needed in order to best understand the lack of felt recognition present in experiences of loneliness. In section 2.2, I will look at Reddy’s (2009) studies from childhood development. Looking at the importance that being recognized has even at the level of infants will show that recognition is something we naturally seek and require to sustain a healthy self and not be lonely.

In section 2.3, I will look at Sartre’s ideas on our relationships with others. In section 2.4, I will specifically examine Sartre’s work on the Look in order to draw out the importance of being seen by others. Then, in section 2.5 I will draw on Honneth and Margalit’s work on invisibility. In section 2.6 I will look at Sartre’s ideas on shame. In section 2.7, I will demonstrate how his play *No Exit* has some interesting and insightful observations about the importance of sociality. I will also look at some case studies of persons in solitary confinement and lonely persons, in order to compare and contrast the two experiences. In section 2.8, I will elaborate on what I have referred to as the first level of recognition, which I hold is needed for persons to not feel lonely. Through looking at solitary confinement, I hope to achieve a better understanding of the experience of loneliness and what I hold to be the first level of recognition that must be met in order for persons to not feel lonely. The case study of solitary confinement should help illustrate the way the first level of recognition functions.I will now turn to examining Kant and Hegel’s theories of recognition.

*2.1 Kant and Hegel’s Theories of Recognition*

In order to grasp what recognition is for Kant, it may be most useful to look at his Humanity formulation of the Categorical Imperative. This imperative states that we should never act in such a way that we treat ourselves or others as merely a means to an end, but always as ends in themselves (1785/1993, p. 36). By doing so, we are respecting the humanity each person possesses. By *humanity*, Kant means the features we have that make us human. These include our capacity to reason and engage in rational behavior, and our freedom to choose and pursue our own ends. Kant holds that we are to respect all persons, regardless of their gender, socioeconomic class, nationality, or other identifying factors. Whether the person in question is a close family member, stranger, or vicious person, they are all due respect. For Kant, respecting persons is not an evaluative process through which we decide whether persons should be given our respect, but rather, respect is an attitude we should automatically take towards other human beings simply in virtue of them being persons. According to Kant, what accords each person dignity is

The innate power of reason, the capacity of each individual to think and choose, not only to shape his or her own life but also to protect and promote reciprocal respect by enacting laws that can form the legal structure of life for everyone (1785, p. 438, 440).

What the Humanity Formulation stipulates is that neither oneself nor others may be regarded or treated as only instrumentally valuable, as a means to satisfy our own needs or desires. Persons must be treated as persons, not merely things or objects that persons can dismiss or manipulate according to their own wishes. Kant holds that one must view other persons as ‘the supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends’ (p.431). Respecting persons not only prohibits acts like theft or physical violence, but acts such as lying or making promises one is not certain one can keep. Kant uses the example of lying promises in order to illustrate his point. He asserts that lying promises treat the other person in a way in which the other is unable to consent that they are a person worthy of self-respect. The person being deceived, therefore, cannot rationally agree to the lying promise, to being deceived.

For Kant, the positive notion of respect is recognizing and appreciating other’s interests. According to Kant, every human being has two main interests: striving to be virtuous and desiring happiness. Of course, no one can *make* another person virtuous or happy—that is something each person must do themselves—and we are not obligated to assume responsibility for another’s moral disposition. That said, we *do*, however, have an obligation to recognize and promote others’ happiness.

Our promotion of our own and other’s happiness is what Kant refers to as the *law of love*. Kant is very careful to point out, however, that his use of the term ‘love’ has a very specific connotation and should not be confused with other usages of the word. By ‘love’, Kant does not mean that we should have feelings of sympathy or emotions like solicitude, but rather, a practical attitude about how we ought to act towards others, regardless of our feelings of affection towards them (p.399). Therefore, we have an obligation to contribute to other’s happiness simply out of respect for them as persons, regardless of whether they are persons of special concern to us (p. 441). What his idea of love stipulates is that persons adopt an attitude of benevolence or well-wishing that requires them to be concerned about the needs and desires of others.

Adopting an attitude of benevolence or well-wishing towards others is a way in which persons show respect for other persons. More specifically, by approaching others with an attitude of benevolence, persons are recognizing that other persons are human beings who are capable of rational thought. In this way, they are *recognizing them*. For Kant, respect is paramount for recognition.

Recall the case studies I discussed earlier in this chapter, where I looked at the experiences of prisoners in solitary confinement. Many of them spoke of feeling ‘dehumanized’, stating that they felt like they were treated by the guards as if they were animals rather than human beings. They spoke of the pain of being just a number, of their very make-up being altered by the lack of dignity allotted them. Looking at the Kantian notion of respect may begin to shed more light on how the experience of solitary confinement takes away the ability of one to engage in relationships of respect with other persons. Persons in solitary confinement feel that they are no longer wholly embodied persons, but rather just objects, part of the guard’s jobs they must attend to. In other words, to use Kant’s terms, they feel as if they are merely *means to ends* rather than *ends in themselves*. They do not feel that the other persons in the prison have their well-being in mind, thus they do not feel respected. Feelings of disrespect in themselves may lead to feelings of loneliness, but I argue that there is more to feelings of loneliness than simply feeling disrespected. After all, we may hold a variety of feelings after being disrespected by another person: anger, contempt, disappointment, and sadness, just to name a few.

Using Kant’s idea helps to illuminate cases in which there is a lack of recognition in loneliness through looking at the importance of respecting others as human beings. Moreover, looking at Kant’s ideas on recognition is helpful in shedding light on cases in which his form of respect as recognition has failed. What is arguably attractive about Kant’s view of recognition is that he is trying to build a system that is applicable to all persons and situations. However, it’s this very aspect that some scholars (e.g., Noggle, 1999) have found problematic. Noggle holds that Kant’s view of moral respect

…makes it into something like a mass mailing directed to anonymous “occupants” of the kingdom of rational agents. It is not addressed to us as the particular persons that we are (p. 455).

Kant’s view of recognition provides general information on what it is to be a person. However, his view does not accommodate the particularities of persons. By *particularities of persons*, I mean the things that make them unique. Their likes, dislikes, aspirations, personalities, and so forth. Therefore, I think that Noggle is right to assert that Kant’s theory of recognition cannot account for the particularities of persons. His account would surely be inadequate for accounting for the recognition of persons in the second and third levels of recognition I have proposed. However, I think that it could be part of the first level of recognition.

Recall that I suggested in chapter 2 that the first level of recognition is being seen and engaging in gestures with the other. Prisoners in solitary confinement lamented not being seen by anyone for days and how that led to feeling not recognized. Simple acts such as seeing another person as a person and engaging in gestures (such as waving hello or goodbye), are ways that persons respect the dignity of others. Not only does one feel respected when someone looks them in the eye or waves hello to them, one feels *recognized*.

Another figure directly engaged with the Kantian tradition of recognition is Hegel (1977). In reaction against Kant’s theory of recognition, Hegel develops his own account of recognition. Looking at Hegel’s theory of recognition may be useful in that doing so will help us further illuminate aspects of loneliness. Below, I will discuss some aspects of Hegel’s account. I will argue that most aspects of his account of recognition are not useful in understanding the lack of recognition in lonely persons. Nevertheless, it is important to understand Hegel’s theory of recognition in order to better understand where my own view is situated.

Hegel (1977) critiques Kant’s notion of recognition, in the first instance, in a similar way to Noggle (1999). He notes that Kantian recognition does not allow for the particularities of a human being to be recognized. He also opposes Kant in his idea that recognition is not, in his view, something that can be given and not received, or vice versa. For Hegel, recognition is necessarily *mutual*. Hegel believes that Kant has the wrong starting point when it comes to thinking about recognition. For Kant, the emphasis is placed on adhering to certain laws of conduct. Hegel believes that our starting point should be love rather than laws. This is because in love, according to Hegel, the distinction between individuals is given up, and the two persons, whilst still retaining their unique identities, are bound together. Hegel holds that,

Love completely destroys objectivity and thereby annuls and transcends reflection, deprives man’s opposite of all foreign character, and discovers life itself without any further defect. In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer something separate; life [in the subject] senses life [in the object] (1977, p. 305).

For Hegel, Jesus is a primordial representation of a morality grounded in love. This is due to the fact that Jesus placed the quality of human life and our moments of human need higher than the law. Hegel writes,

Over against commands which require a basic service of the Lord, a direct slavery, an obedience without joy, without pleasure or love, i.e., the commands in connection with the service of God, Jesus set their precise opposite, a human urge and so a human need (1798/1970, p. 206).

You may recall that I discussed Kant’s law of love above. That said, I am not trying to assert that Hegel’s theory of recognition includes a discussion of love whilst Kant’s does not. Rather, my aim is to address the way that Kant and Hegel integrate love into their theories of recognition in different ways. Firstly, Hegel believes that love should be our starting point in recognition, whilst Kant looks at love as a law that is to be infused into his overall system. Secondly, Kant’s definition of love in his law of love is ‘well-wishing’ and ‘benevolence’; Hegel’s is centered around the ideas of romantic love and Jesus. Whereas love is a ‘command’ for Kant, my reading of Hegel’s view is that love is something that occurs more naturally and spontaneously. Moreover, in Hegel’s view, there is no need for a command to dictate the response to a given situation: rather, the response is found in the recognition of the person herself.

Now that I have briefly mentioned how Hegel begins the discussion of recognition and have highlighted some important differences between Kant and Hegel, I will outline Hegel’s ideas on the pure concept of recognition. The *pure concept of recognition* conceives that recognition has a symmetrical structure and occurs by way of direct reciprocation, i.e., ‘I recognize you, you recognize me’. The first part of this process involves the meeting of two individual self-consciousnesses. Once the two have met, one individual loses its immediacy for itself to the other, thus what it now experiences immediately is no longer itself but the other. Since one experiences self-consciousness in the immediacy of the other, it experiences itself as mediated by the other, thus, it finds itself in the other and experiences itself as alien.

The second part of this process occurs when the other’s otherness is supplanted. This is because the other is not actually other but rather self-consciousness in life. This means that self-consciousness finds itself as other. The third part entails self-consciousness finding itself as other displeasing, as it is divided from itself. In order to overcome this division, self-consciousness ‘must supersede this otherness of itself’ (1807/1977, p. 111). It does so by recognizing the other as other, rather than itself as other, and in doing so allows the other to be free again. This act of letting the other go free allows self-consciousness to return to itself. In allowing the other to go free, the otherness is retained. Self-consciousness both finds itself in the other and is able to recognize the other as another self-consciousness. Though he describes the process unlilaterally, he is careful to note that it must always be reciprocal. He writes,

The movement is simply the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses. Each sees the *other* do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both (1807/1977, pp. 111-112).

Finally, both self-consciousnesses must be let go and maintained in their otherness. In order for this to occur, each self-consciousness must be recognized as a self-consciousness by the self-consciousness that they are recognizing. In the process of mutual recognition, the other is not destroyed or annihilated, but instead, remains other. Both self-consciousnesses ‘*recognize* themselves as mutually recognizing one another’ (p. 112).

After outlining the pure concept of recognition, Hegel goes on to detail the struggle for recognition. The struggle for recognition occurs when two self-consciousnesses meet and regard the other as an object. Simultaneously, each self-consciousness takes itself to be an independent subject. Each is then motivated by the desire to prove its autonomy by being recognized as an independent self-consciousness. In order to prove its independent status, and be recognized as a self-consciousness, it must be prepared to sacrifice its existence as an object (pp. 113-14). To be recognized, however, self-consciousness must establish conditions in which the other can also be recognized. Therefore, self-consciousness must not only be prepared to sacrifice its existence, but also to sacrifice the other by making him into an object. The battle ends with the death of either one or both self-consciousnesses, thus the attempt to attain recognition from the other results in failure.

Though I think that Hegel is correct in asserting that recognition must consist in more of the particularities of a person being accounted for, I think that he is incorrect to assert that mutual recognition is necessary. The problem in lonely individuals is not that they cannot achieve mutual recognition with other persons, but rather that they do not feel recognized *themselves*. Nor is the problem that they are struggling for recognition against other persons, as Hegel contends. The only part of Hegel’s theory that fits into my own is his emphasis on love. At the beginning of this section, I discussed how Hegel’s theory of recognition uses love as its starting point. Hegel argues that it is only love that can recognize the particularities that a person possesses. As I discussed in Chapter 3, that is exactly what lonely persons are missing when they do not have satisfactory love relationships: that they are not just any person, but a person made of unique characteristics.

In the following sections, I will further unpack what I mean by *recognition*, and how recognition is missing in the experience of loneliness. In the section below, I will discuss how infants are affected by a lack of recognition.

*2.2 Infants and Recognition*

In her book *How Infants Know Minds* (2009), Reddy stresses that we are not isolated, self-sustainable individuals. Having others in our lives is not just a bonus, but a necessity in order to understand ourselves, other people, and our world. She attempts to highlight many ways in which self and other are connected. She holds that our proprioceptive experience of our own acts, reactions, and feelings ‘always involves the perception of what relevant others are doing, saying, or feeling’ (p. 30). Indeed, when we are actively emotionally engaging with someone, our perception of the other ‘always involves proprioceptive experience of self-feelings-for-other, and your proprioception of the self always involves perception of other-feelings-for-self’ (p. 30). She showcases how this plays out by looking at the way infants imitate, react to expression, and respond to gaze.

According to recent neurophysiological studies, neonatal imitation is the first indication of the psychological connection between self and other (e.g., Reddy, 2009; Gallagher, 2005; Meltzoff and Moore, 1977; 1983; 1994). Directly following birth, newborns are able to match the actions of the other with actions of the self, imitating the facial gestures they see before them. Even more notably, newborn infants do not just imitate other persons, but respond to them through interest or disinterest.

One study demonstrated the different effects maternal expressions had on infants. If the mother appeared gentle and friendly, this often increased the infant’s interest in the interaction, leading to smiles, whereas if the mother displayed an angry face or vocal tone, the infant often responded by appearing sad, fearful, and resorting to self-soothing (increased ‘tongueing’) behavior (Nagy and Molnar, 2004). At three months old, the response of infants to their mothers appears even more direct. Infants whose mothers report being angry during an interaction express more anger themselves, and infants whose mothers report sadness express distress (Meltzoff and Moore, 1994). Reddy views imitation as a powerful way in which we confirm and recognize the other person as they are.

She also discusses the effects of gaze on infants. She notes that by just four months of age, infants experience more cortical arousal by seeing someone look at them directly versus an averted gaze. Additionally, if an adult looks at a four-month-old and then looks away, infants are more likely to follow the adult’s gaze and look at objects in the same direction. The mother’s gaze helps to cue the infant about both her surrounding world and herself. Reddy writes,

To experience your looking at me…is to be aware that there is a me to be looked at; to experience that you like me is to be aware that I am; to experience your liking for what I do is to be aware of what I do. This “me” that the infant is aware of in these simple engagements exists and develops within this relation to other people (p. 126).

Indeed, our ‘self-conscious affectivity’ (as Reddy phrases it) refers to the ways in which feelings and reactions in engagement between persons occur through being seen or known by another; through ‘the visibility of one self to another’ (p. 126). Thus, in order to know or see ourselves, we require gazes, expressions, and general engagement with other persons. Even in our earliest days, we look to other persons to recognize us as persons. Reddy goes so far as to say that we need to be recognized as a person by others in order to become one. Recognizing another as a person occurs through many of the things I have outlined in this thesis: gaze, expression, dialogue, and entering into some sort of relationship with them (for example, recognizing them as your friend).

When we fail to be recognized by others, we may feel distressed and lonely. This is evinced by infants in many different versions of the still-face study. In this study, parents must abstain from acknowledging or reacting to the infant before them in any way. Despite the infant repeatedly attempting to regain his parent’s engagement, often very distressed that he does not have their attention, parents must maintain a ‘still-face’, showing no expression or acknowledgment of the infant’s presence. Understandably, many parents find this a difficult study to engage in. These studies demonstrate the importance of the other’s recognition of our presence even in the first few months of our lives. The feeling of being unseen and unheard is distressing to nearly everyone.

Every interaction we have after birth can be tied back to a basic, implicit trust. The infant is born into this world naive, unassuming. She naturally trusts that her parents or caregivers will look out for her until she is given reason to doubt that. Through this natural trust, she interacts with them, seeking the recognition she needs to have a concept of herself as a person. Her trust enables her to interact with them in ways in which receiving recognition is possible.

As I discussed earlier in the chapter, the lonely person may become so distrusting that she regards other people with suspicion rather than trust. When she interacts with people and is suspicious, that compounds the issue of her lack of feeling recognized, as she expects others not to recognize her. I think the first step to feeling recognized may be holding the belief that it is possible that others will recognize you.[[24]](#footnote-24) The steps after the first one include gaze, expression, dialogue, and so on. This is recognition at its most basic level.

As I will discuss at length in chapter 3, developing relationships with others helps us to feel recognized as well. A good friend may recognize our cheerful disposition and comment how it never fails to brighten his day. A parent may recognize that her child is gifted at biology and encourage her to pursue further studies. A partner may praise us for how giving or kind we are. In all of these instances, we are not only recognized, but bestowed a positive appraisal. We are recognized as human beings capable of contributing positive things to the world. The recognition and positive appraisal of those close to us helps imbue our lives with meaning. Below, I will turn to look at the way that Sartre conceives of our relationships with others.

2.3*. Sartre on our relationships with others*

In the third section of *Being and Nothingness* (2003), Sartre describes our relationships with others. He begins by discussing how one’s consciousness of oneself is interwoven with the Other’s consciousness of one. To be aware of oneself as a subject presupposes that one is aware that others are aware of her as a subject and an object. Therefore, one can only exist for oneself in a self-conscious way when one is aware that she exists for others. To be a human being, Sartre holds that one must be simultaneously a *being-for-itself* and a *being-for-others*; that is, one must be both conscious of oneself and accessible to others who are conscious of one in ways one cannot access. This occurs through the Other making one an object, whilst he is subject, and in turn, one making the Other object and retaining the status of subject (Sartre, 2003, pp. 222, 228).

Sartre describes the entrance of the Other into one’s sphere as a disruption, a rupture in one’s experience (2003, p. 255). Before one sees another human being, or before being seen by him, she remains in possession of numerous possibilities; many of the facts of her existence are not fixed but may be transcended. That is, she remains in possession of her subjectivity, of her freedom to transcend her subjectivity. She, as Sartre seems to imply, is in control of herself and who she is, and may choose to become something other than who she is. Though she may now deliver the mail, the dream she has of one day becoming an astronaut may be realized. She is able to view herself not only as who she currently is and what she has achieved, but all that she could become as well.

Once the Other appears in front of her, however, he fixes her with his gaze, and in doing so, evaluates her objectively, attributing characteristics to her that she may or may not recognize in herself. He sees the facts about her: she works for the post office, is roughly twenty-five years old, has blonde hair, blue eyes, and comes from a middle-class family background. He sees her as bubbly and personable. She, on the other hand, sees herself as only appearing bubbly and personable because it’s part of her job to do so; in fact, she does not feel very comfortable interacting with people. This example shows how one’s outward appearance and inner feelings are often contradictory. Because we do not always behave the way we feel, the impressions other persons have of us may be different from the kind of persons we take ourselves to be. According to Sartre, the way in which we experience emotions and their intelligibility is dramatically different when we are alone. When we are alone, our inner feelings and outward appearance are aligned: there is no other there to shed light on us. Once another person appears before us, however, our world and the way we experience it shifts.

In order to illustrate this idea, Sartre gives the example of a man in a park. At first, the man is alone and therefore, still the center of his universe, as Sartre puts it (2003, p. 254). He sees no other human beings in the park, and the objects before him do not disrupt his perception. He remains in total control, the various impressions of the grass and the trees solely his own, unpolluted by the ideas and perceptions of others. Suddenly, he notices another man in the park sitting on a nearby bench. At the sight of another person, the world which was completely his just moments ago, has now slipped from his grasp. Indeed, Sartre writes, ‘The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe’ (p. 255). This is because before one was the subject, casting his gaze onto things and making them objects, but now that the other person is on the scene, he is an object whilst the Other is a subject. The freedom that he possessed to transcend what he currently was has been stolen away by the Other. He had been in complete possession of himself before the appearance of the Other, but once the Other appeared, he was forced to be an object to her subject, to be fixed by her perception of him.

Sartre speaks of the way the appearance of another human stands out amongst other objects. Whilst other objects remain in the background of one’s perception, the Other jumps to the foreground and commands one’s attention. One’s perception shifts from organizing the surrounding objects according to his will (i.e., that is a bench I could sit on) to a universe centered around the Other’s will. Sartre writes,

Thus suddenly an object has appeared that has stolen the world from me. Everything is in place; everything still exists for me, but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of a new object (p. 255).

One interesting aspect of things now being centered and organized by the Other is that one notices that the Other organizes things in ways that are structurally similar to the way that he organizes things. For example, one realizes that he and the Other both view the park bench as something they could sit on (p. 255). Now that the Other has disrupted his world, he may understand the concept of the world better. That is, by having his centrality disturbed by the presence of the Other, he comes to the realization that his place in the world is fragile, as it may be perpetually challenged and undermined by the Other. He is no longer the center of the universe; he lives in a shared world with other persons. The same process occurs when the Other sees one: the world he possessed has suddenly shifted; he is now the object whilst the one is subject. He must now adapt to the de-centering of his world.

Thus, a drama then occurs as both subjects struggle to retain their ownership of the world and reduce the Other to object. This is a hopeless task as what they each seek to objectivize (another consciousness) can never be done. This recognition of another consciousness and its recognition of one, is the basis for Sartre’s famous maxim ‘Hell is other people’ (1946/1989, p. 39), as well as the basis for all of our relations with others: one shall always seek to objectivize the Other, and the Other shall always seek to objectivize one, and they both will fail.

Our relationships with other people are marred by a variety of different issues, Sartre says. One is the necessary enslavement that occurs due to the dependency one has on the Other. Contrary to one’s original belief, once the Other appears before one, one realizes that he is not completely self-sustainable. He must share his world with others and is therefore subject to their influence. Thus, there is an unresolved tension that exists in one. He wants to possess and be in control of his world, have complete freedom to transcend his current situation whilst realizing that the Other’s appearance necessitates that he cannot be in complete possession of the world; he is partially determined by the Other’s perceptions of him.

In order to illustrate this, imagine you are going to a job interview. Because you need this job in order to provide for yourself and your family, you are dependent upon the boss’s approval to get the job. If you are hired, the boss is dependent upon you to do satisfactory work to help keep the company afloat. This example shows the interdependency persons have on one another. According to Sartre, because persons are dependent upon one another, they cannot have complete freedom. Persons are almost always subject to the influences of an Other. They can be influenced by the Other in various ways. One way they can be influenced is their dependency on him, which I have discussed above. Another way they can be influenced by the Other is by the way he qualifies them as a human being.

The Other qualifies one by bestowing certain values upon him. He characterizes him as, e.g., ‘evil’, ‘jealous’, or ‘sympathetic’. These characteristics one receives from the Other may not originally be recognizable to one. In these instances, one may have a mediated form of recognition of oneself. Through the Other, one may be able to achieve a form of self-understanding one is unable to achieve on one’s own. As Catalano and McBride (1996) assert,

We need other persons for discovering how we appear in the world; indeed, we need the other for becoming a person, for acquiring our very selfhood (p. 20).

The Other provides one with knowledge about oneself that would otherwise be inaccessible to one. An example below will help illustrate this.

Say that a person does not consider himself to be a jealous person. However, through comments and evaluations made by his friend, he is provided a different perspective of himself: the perspective that he *is*, in fact, a jealous person. After considering and reflecting upon his friends’ appraisal, he may concede that he often is very jealous. That said, though we often may question or resent other’s appraisals (due to our desire to solely govern ourselves), we are often dependent upon other’s appraisals in order to prosper in our lives. Perhaps your friend’s appraisal of you as a jealous person leads you to reflect on how that trait may be affecting other areas of your life. You may realize that your jealousy has infected the relationship you have with your partner, and vow to be more trusting. In this instance, the Other’s appraisal may have functioned to incidentally help one build a stronger relationship with his partner. It may also be the case that your friend’s assessment of you as a jealous person is inaccurate; it could be the case that she is projecting her own insecurities onto you, for instance. However, whether the way she views you is accurate or not, at the very least, her view of you may lead you to reflect and consider for yourself whether or not you often act jealous. This is important, as without the Other to try and shed light on our character, we may not be led to contemplating ourselves and our character. The Other provides one with an immeasurable opportunity for self-understanding.

Sartre holds that the Other also confers possibilities on one. The future he imagines for himself is no longer in his complete possession. The Other might, for instance, assert that he ought to become a doctor or a lawyer. Though he does not hold these dreams himself, he may consider them, if only for a moment. Perhaps the Other sees some natural ability he possesses in those fields that he himself has not recognized. Through evaluating the Other and conferring these assessments, one seeks to reduce the object to his perceptions, his will. A tension exists in that one recognizes he cannot fully recognize himself without the mediation of the Other, despite his desire to be in complete control of himself and his world at all times. He reluctantly acknowledges that it is through the Other that he comes to know himself and his place in the world. The Other is the one who gives one an ‘outside’, a ‘nature’. Sartre writes,

As I appear to the Other, so I am. Moreover since the Other is such as he appears to me and since my being depends upon the Other, the way in which I appear—that is, the moment of the development of my self-consciousness-depends on the way in which the Other appears to me (2003, p. 237).

Indeed, the Other is the one who reveals one to oneself. Through interaction with another person, we may come to better know ourselves. He is the one who can ‘release to me the secret of my being’ (p. 291). Therefore, it is the Other who possesses the ability to confer recognition upon one: one cannot confer recognition upon oneself. One needs the Other to be recognized. Recall how I stated in the introduction of this chapter that in order to not feel lonely, one needs to be recognized by another person. One needs the Other in order to fully recognize attributes and skills she possesses, for instance. The Other can shine a light onto her and illuminate the things that had formerly been hidden from herself. Sartre notes that this is recognition in the sense not only of each conferring recognition upon the Other, but also regarding the amount of weight that is placed on the recognition conferred. Two persons can recognize each other independent of circumstances, however ‘the *value* of the Other’s recognition of me depends on the value of my recognition of the Other’, (2003, p. 237, my emphasis).

Here, I take Sartre to be referring to the amount of meaning an interaction with recognition engenders. So, for instance, if I encounter a stranger and we have a short dialogue, and she and I recognize each other in some way (i.e., mutual gaze, a brief discussion), that interaction is likely going to be less meaning-laden than an encounter with say, my mother. The value of the recognition between two persons who are close may often be higher. I hold that recognition between two persons who are close is likely higher because persons who are closer have a shared history and background. Though an interaction with a stranger can certainly be interesting and meaningful, I believe that because there is no shared history between the two persons, the value of the meeting between two strangers is likely less meaningful.

I want to emphasize that when I am discussing recognition, I am discussing it in the present moment: it is the recognition received from an interaction happening with another person right now. Though it may be the case that a stranger you met on a train several years ago winds up playing a major role in your life, you do not know that at the moment the first interaction occurs. Thus, it is important, particularly for the case of lonely persons, to focus on how one is faring during an interaction in the present moment. Recall the first level of recognition I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The first level of recognition occurs through the experience of a direct encounter with the other; what it is like, through being seen or heard, to be recognized by another person. Though the value of the recognition we experience varies from case to case, Sartre emphasizes the importance of the recognition conferred when appearing before another, period. He writes,

If the Other is to be a probable object and not a dream of an object, then his object-ness must of necessity refer not to an original solitude beyond my reach, but to a fundamental connection in which the Other is manifested in some way other than through the knowledge which I have of him (p. 253).

This is one of the primary issues that occurs both in situations where a person is in solitary confinement and when a person is experiencing a more self-imposed solitude in certain instances of loneliness (albeit in different ways). One of the most devastating facts of solitary confinement is that one does not have the opportunity to appear before an Other and to receive recognition from him. It is no wonder then, that after a while, inmates not only feel as if they have lost touch with the outside world, but they have lost *themselves* as well. A woman placed in pretrial solitary confinement in Denmark attests to this. She says, ‘The person subjected to solitary confinement risks losing herself and disappearing into a non-existence,’ (quoted and translated in Smith, 2006, p. 497). In some instances of loneliness where the person is stuck in an unpleasant solitude, there is also the sense of loss at not appearing before an Other who can confer recognition upon her. Perhaps one is ill and cannot go out to meet her friend as afore intended. She may experience feelings of loneliness as the opportunity to appear before an Other is now gone. She may sit and wonder what the evening might have been like, what new revelations may have unfolded. Through meeting with her friend, she may have, for instance, learned new insights about herself. According to Sartre, we need others to help interpret us. Without the perspective of the Other, he holds that much of one is unknown to oneself.

One could argue that there are ways besides others to obtain self-understanding. For instance, one could do so by way of self-mediation or imaginative mediation. Yet, if we take Sartre to be correct, one’s perspective on the world is centered on the self. That is, one is only able to perceive oneself from one angle—his own point of view. Thus, he needs direct mediation with others to attain a deeper understanding of himself. Interacting with others allows one to obtain multiple perspectives on oneself.

Sartre even goes so far as to say that without the ability to appear before an Other, to reveal oneself to her, one is dead. Sartre writes,

Only the dead can be perpetually objects without ever becoming subjects, for to die is not to lose one’s objectivity in the midst of the world; all the dead are there in the world around us. But to die is to lose all possibility of revealing oneself as subject to an Other (2003, p. 297).

Recall the quote from James (1890/2000)) and the discussion on the first level of recognition at the beginning of the chapter. James said that ‘No more fiendish punishment could be devised…[than] to remain absolutely unnoticed’ (p. 293). Above, Sartre goes so far as to liken the experience of being unnoticed as akin to being dead. Sartre feels that it is so vital to appear before another and reveal oneself, that if one cannot, he thinks that one might as well be dead.

Persons in solitary confinement also often describe their experience as akin to being dead. Here are two case studies that testify to that:

‘Capture, imprisonment is the closest thing to being dead one is likely to experience in this life.’—George Jackson, *Soledad Brother*, 1994, p. 20.

‘When they talk of ghosts of the dead who wander in the night with things still undone in life, they approximate my subjective experience of this life.’—Jack Henry Abbot, *In the Belly of the Beast*, 1991, p. 4.

Guenther (2013) discusses how persons in solitary confinement suffer a double death, both civilly and socially. They suffer a *civil death* in the sense that they are deprived of the legal status of a person who has the right to vote, to own property, to bring a case to court, and so forth. But merely noting that persons in solitary confinement suffer a civil death does not sufficiently capture the experience prisoners have, Guenther argues. She adds that they also suffer a *social death*, which she defines as,

The effect of a (social) practice in which a person or group of people is excluded, dominated, or humiliated to the point of becoming dead to the rest of society. Although such people are physically alive, their lives no longer bear a social meaning; they no longer count as lives that *matter* (2013, p. xx, italics in original).

These two distinctions aid in further supporting Guenther’s thesis that we are not atomistic individuals, completely self-determining and self-sustaining, but require the existence and presence of others in order to sustain our well-being. Guenther’s point here is one that I am trying to make and elaborate upon in this chapter and in this thesis as a whole: in order to feel well and not be lonely, one must depend on others. My own thesis extends this idea as I argue that one must depend upon others to provide recognition for one. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, one needs the Other to help show her who she is. The Other may help her realize things about herself she was unaware of or lead her to contemplate the type of person she is or wants to become. Without the presence and recognition of other persons, one begins to feel as if her life, as Guenther asserts, no longer *matters*. As both George Jackson and Jack Henry Abbott attested to above, being imprisoned and not able to experience the reassuring presence of the Other and her recognition, feels like being dead.

Not only do accounts of persons in solitary confinement mention feelings of being dead, but curiously, accounts of loneliness also speak to feeling dead. For instance, Lisa\*[[25]](#footnote-25), an interviewee in Seepersad’s (2011) book, says

I know it sounds crazy, but loneliness is a very powerful thing. It makes you feel dead inside. And sometimes it makes you feel as if you would rather be dead than to deal with it (pp. 33-34).

Perhaps even more interestingly, accounts of loneliness often mention reoccurring themes that appear in accounts of solitary confinement, such as feeling as if one is in a black hole and being unable to reach others due to the barriers in place. A patient of Moustakas’ (1973/1989) mentions both of these themes. He begins by describing his loneliness: ‘Empty, that’s how it feels to be lonely. A sense of being in a deep dark pit, with nothing in sight, no way out,’ (p. 40). He then goes on to provide an even more nuanced and detailed account of loneliness:

When loneliness strikes I feel thoroughly abandoned. (…) It seems almost as though a transparent barrier has separated my world from that of my friend. A barrier too high to scale and too solid to get through. Therefore I’m a captive of loneliness until it chooses to release me (p. 41).

An interesting parallel can be drawn here between the experiences of loneliness and solitary confinement. Persons feeling lonely often use metaphorical language to describe their loneliness that sounds akin to the experience of solitary confinement. Though the two experiences are clearly distinct and should not be equated, it is fascinating that persons feeling lonely view their state in a way that sounds like someone who is actually in solitary confinement and unable to engage with other persons. From this, it appears that there is something about the presence of others that we find inherently rewarding, and something about their absence that feels like punishment. The fact that persons find being away from others to be the worst punishment showcases how the presence of other persons is a fundamental need for our existential condition.

This idea of ‘punishment’ occurs in different ways, depending on the situation. For persons feeling lonely, the punishment of not interacting with others may sometimes be self-imposed; in other instances, perhaps persons are feeling too shy to go out and make friends. In other cases, persons feeling lonely may have been ostracized. A child may have tried to make friends at recess, but for reasons unbeknownst to her, the other children have shunned her and will not allow her into their friendship group. For persons in solitary confinement, they are actually being punished by the state for a crime they have been convicted of, therefore, their state is completely involuntary.

Compare this to lonely persons, whose isolation from others is often voluntary. As I mentioned in the paragraph above, lonely persons may isolate themselves from others due to shyness or fear of future ostracization from others. In some instances of loneliness, the lonely person may actually be ostracized from other persons; in other instances, lonely persons may be unable to interact with others due to circumstances such as ill health. This is one of the main points of distinction between lonely persons and persons in solitary confinement: lonely persons often have the option of being in the presence of other persons, whilst persons in solitary confinement do not.

What can be inferred from both the experiences of persons in solitary confinement and loneliness is that persons find being separated from other persons to be the worst punishment there is.[[26]](#footnote-26) This is because, without the presence of the Other, the possibility of receiving recognition from them has vanished. I will return to this idea in section 2.3. In the following section, I will continue to examine Sartre’s ideas in *Being and Nothingnesss.* I will further extend my argument on the important role that others play in one’s life. Most importantly, I will continue to highlight the importance of satisfying the first level of recognition in order to abate loneliness. I will look at Sartre’s notion of the Look in order to help illustrate this.

2.4 *Sartre on The Look*

According to Sartre, The Look occurs most often through two eyes fixed upon one, but it can also occur in other ways, such as ‘a rustling of branches’, ‘the slight opening of a shutter’, or the ‘light movement of a curtain’ (1943/2003, p. 257). These actions do not refer to the actual eyes of the person behind them, but instead serve as representations of the eyes. The function of the Look is a reference from one to oneself. Though one recognizes that the Look is from the Other, Sartre asserts that what is apprehended from the Other’s Look is how it might affect one. Sartre writes,

What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that there is someone there, it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and that I can not in any case escape from the space in which I am without defense—in short, that I am seen (2003, p. 259).

For Sartre, being seen by the Other renders one ‘defenseless’, ‘exposed’, as one suddenly must ‘apprehend oneself as the unknown object of unknowable appraisals—in particular, of value judgments’ (p 267).[[27]](#footnote-27) In order to better draw out the Look and how being seen by the Other lends itself to one being vulnerable, I will now turn to Sartre’s famous example of spying on someone through a keyhole.

Sartre asks us to imagine that, due to feeling jealous, curious, or just generally mischievous, you press your ear against a door to listen and fix your eyes through a keyhole to watch what unfolds behind the door. You are alone, therefore your acts are not performed with the concern of the appraisal of others in mind, but purely for yourself. Since your actions are unknown to other persons, whatever meaning they have cannot be mediated through them. This is because the meaning of the actions for oneself is constituted in a different way than it is when mediated by the Other. Having only to account for yourself, things offer themselves up as being potentially used for whatever ends you desire. The world itself appears to you as a place where your possibilities may be explored. Therefore, the scene behind the door is one for only you to see, the conversation for only you to hear. Acting alone, you are simply doing what you feel necessary in order to establish your desired goals. There is no Other to view your acts and confer value judgments on them (meaning, there is no other person to judge whether your actions are right or wrong). Without the presence of the Other to mediate your actions, your attitude has no ‘outside’: it is simply a ‘process of relating the instrument (the keyhole) to the end to be attained (the spectacle to be seen), a pure mode of losing [yourself] in the world’ (p. 259), as Sartre puts it. That is, in this instance, you are acting unreflectively, without consideration for how your actions may affect yourself or others. Overall, everything exists in relation to your freedom, your possibilities.

Then, you suddenly hear footsteps in the hall and realize that someone is looking at you. Other than the issue that you are now caught in a shameful situation (more on that in section 2.4.), Sartre asserts that you now exist as yourself for your unreflective consciousness. In other words, you are now able to see yourself because another person sees you. You are now conscious of the fact that you are no longer in complete control and possession of yourself; rather, the other has gained control of you. By her seeing you, you are no longer in complete possession of yourself, Sartre argues. Instead, one becomes under the other’s control. Sartre writes, ‘I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other’ (2003, p. 260). By this he means that one is only able to view herself now as the other sees her. She is now fixed by the Other’s gaze, no longer able to be in control of who and what she is. Though this may sound troubling, Sartre asserts that it is through the Other’s look that one is able to be who she is and establish her place in the world. Sartre says,

But in order for me to be what I am, it is sufficient merely that the Other look at me. It is not for myself, to be sure; I myself shall never succeed at realizing this being-seated which I grasp in the Other’s look, I shall remain forever a consciousness. But it is for the Other,” (p. 262).

The Other’s look simultaneously solidifies and alienates your possibilities. It fixes them in their current state, disallowing the freedom for one to have more alternative possibilities for oneself. Now the possibilities you have are also available to the Other—he may decide to transcend them himself. For instance, whilst alone you may act in a way motivated by jealousy, but you are not ‘fixed in’ that jealousy, which would otherwise be established by the presence of the Other. Your performing an act motivated by jealousy is not a fact, as it is not a fact for others; that is, your jealousy is not perceivable by them. According to Sartre, your jealous act does not determine your character. Though you have the potential to be a jealous person, others have not witnessed it, so you are not perceived as such. However, when an Other comes upon the scene and views your actions, he confers a value judgment upon you: suddenly, your jealous feelings are solidified as you, as part of your character. The assessment of an Other fixing one’s possibilities into actualities, into value judgments helps you to become someone, according to Sartre. He states,

Thus I, who in so far as I am my possibilities, am what I am not and am not what I am—behold, now I am somebody! (p. 265)

Though the relationship between oneself and the Other appears, in some senses, wholly negative[[28]](#footnote-28), Sartre emphasizes that having relations with others, being seen by them is crucial in establishing oneself in two ways: a) as a person, and b) as a person capable of reflective thoughts. The Look of the Other not only causes there to be a world for one, but enables one to have thoughts concerning oneself. Indeed, Sartre goes so far as to say that the Look gives proof that one is a living person. He states, ‘Each look makes us prove concretely…that we exist for all living men; that is, that there are (some) consciousnesses for whom I exist’ (2003, p. 281). Without experiencing the look of an Other, one does not have a location in the world, so it is a bit like, as Danto (1985) asserts, one is outside the world looking in.

Persons in solitary confinement mention the strange experience of being in the world, but not really present in it, as they are not able to interact with other persons. Or rather, they feel as if the world as they have known it is utterly transformed. Jeremy Pinson, a prisoner at the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum Facility (ADX) in Florence, Colorado says, ‘You feel as if the world has ended but you somehow survived,’ (quoted in Greene 2012). Many case studies of lonely persons also discuss feeling as if, whilst lonely, they are no longer part of the ordinary world. A patient of Moustakas’ describes a time when he was feeling lonely. He was walking up and down in one of the rooms of his empty house. He suddenly longed for the presence of another. Time stood still, and silence permeated the air. He felt completely shut off from the world. However, his feelings of loneliness washed away when another came onto the scene and the possibility of being seen and recognized by another person had the chance of taking place. He said,

Then out of nowhere came the sound of a motor and light broke through the colorless scene. A car slowly turned up the driveway, allowing time to go on and the sun to set,” (1973/1989, pp. 42-43).

I have attempted to illustrate the importance of the Look here in our experiences. However, it is not only the Look that is important in receiving recognition. The Look is only the beginning; there are other elements in the first level of recognition I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. In the following sections, I will attempt to extend this idea. Now, I will turn to the work of Axel Honneth and Avishai Margalit (2001a) in order to further develop the idea that the presence of other persons is integral to the first level of recognition.

2.5 *Honneth and Margalit on Invisibility*

Honneth and Margalit begin their work by exploring Ralph Ellison’s novel *The Invisible Man* (1952/2001). In the prologue to the novel, the protagonist details his invisibility. Though he is a real ‘flesh and blood’ man, others wish not to see him; they look right through him, thus he is ‘invisible’ [to them]. The protagonist thinks that his invisibility is due not to any visual deficiency, but rather the others’ inner dispositions which disallow them to see his true person. It is not until a few pages later that one discovers that the protagonist is black, as he reports that those passing by who look right through him are white. The protagonist goes on to relay aggressive and angry statements, depicting a subtle form of racist humiliation. The prologue serves as an overture to the remainder of the novel: the black protagonist continues to note his struggles of being made to feel invisible, to disappear, of not existing or mattering in the social sense.

From there, Honneth and Margalit distinguish between two forms of invisibility: intentional and non-intentional. *Intentional invisibility* is expressed through the colloquial ‘looking through’ someone. Looking through someone is a way in which we show our disregard to persons present by acting as if they were not, Honneth and Margalit hold. Doing so is therefore performative in that gestures or certain ways of behaving are enacted in order to make clear to the other person that he is intentionally not seen; in other words, that he is being actively ignored. This intentional invisibility affects the (non) perceived by causing them to actually feel themselves as not perceived. From this Honneth and Margalit conclude that perception means more than just seeing, more than just ‘identifying and cognizing something or someone,’ but in fact, ‘physical visibility implies an elementary form of individual identifiability and, accordingly, represents a first, primitive form of what we call ‘cognizing’,’ (2001a, p. 113). This idea of Honneth and Margalit’s shows some similarities to Sartre’s idea of the Look, which I outlined in section 2.2. Being physically present and seen by another person is the most elementary form of being identified as an individual, of being recognized. But, in Honneth and Margalit’s formulation, this is just cognizing; something more is needed for a person to be recognized.

For Honneth and Margalit, recognition is conferred between persons through expressive bodily gestures. Performing these gestures is the only way, in his estimation, to clearly differentiate between cognizing (being seen by another) and recognizing. Moreover, these bodily gestures are the only means of publicly recognizingsomeone. They give the examples of smiling at or extending a welcoming gesture toward someone as different ways in which we symbolically give a preview to the sort of actions the other might expect from us in the future. A welcoming gesture (i.e., a handshake or hug), is a way in which the actor expresses to the recipient that she may expect further benevolent actions. He is saying to her through his actions that he feels obligated to behave toward her in a certain type of benevolent way. Furthermore, when a person recognizes another, Honneth and Margalit hold that a decentering takes place in the recognizing subject because she concedes to another subject a ‘worth’ that is the source of legitimate claims infringing upon her own self-love (p. 122). Thus, the recipient is

…equipped with as much moral authority over one’s person as one knows oneself to have in being obligated to carry out or abstain from certain classes of actions (Honneth and Margalit, 2001a, p. 122).

Contrarily, Honneth holds that it can be concluded that those who look through us or fail to give a smile or welcoming gesture, may not have respectful or benevolent intentions toward us. These are cases where persons may be signaling aggression or lack of respect through their lack of benevolent gestures.

From the above, Honneth and Margalit intend to delineate recognition from cognition by showing that recognition is ‘the expression of an evaluative perception in which the worth of persons is ‘directly’ given’ (p. 125). They note that, whilst in social interaction, we are usually made aware of the ‘worthy’ characteristics of those we interact with. So, mere cognitive identification of someone represents a more unusual case in which the primary act of recognition is ‘neutralized’. This is in contrast to Sartre’s idea of the Look as affirmative. In this instance, I do not think Honneth and Margalit are quite right. I think that Sartre’s idea that the Look serves as a preliminary basis of recognition is correct. Then, stemming from that, Honneth and Margalit’s idea that in addition to mutual gaze, expressive bodily gestures are needed to build on that, would be my preliminary take on what is required for this first level of recognition.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Looking back at some of the examples of persons in solitary confinement, it may be evinced why, whilst in solitary confinement, this first level of recognition cannot be achieved. When the guards push their meals under the door every few hours, no eye contact is made, let alone are they able to witness any welcoming bodily gestures. Rather, persons in solitary confinement may feel as if they are just a ‘number’ in the prison, their lives being reduced to mere facts and figures. This lack of the first level of recognition demonstrates to them their worthlessness, the fact that they have suffered, as Guenther formulates it, a ‘social death’: they feel as if they no longer matter, are no longer embedded in the social world. Though it could be argued that the guards *do* acknowledge their existence, as prisoners will attest, this acknowledgment does not ameliorate their feelings of frustration at not being recognized as a human being.

Lonely persons may experience the absence of recognition through lack of gaze or feeling as if someone, as Honneth suggests, is looking right through them. Some lonely persons describe feelings of invisibility: they may feel as if others do not notice them, and if they do, do not care. Lonely persons may feel invisible both in solitude and whilst surrounded by other persons. This fact represents a curious idea: how can one feel invisible when one is clearly seen by the other? Moreover, how can one still feel invisible when engaged in gestures with another? It appears then that there must be more to our relationships with others, more to the experience of recognition if these conditions remain unsatisfactory. Though being seen by another and engaging in gestures is an important part of recognition, these aspects do not represent *all* that there is to be recognized. In the next section, I will turn to Sartre’s ideas on shame in order to further elucidate the first level of recognition. Above, I discussed Honneth and Avaishai’s idea that gesture is important in providing recognition. In the following section, I will relate this idea of gestures providing recognition via Sartre’s discussion of shame. Shame (as I will discuss below) is a special emotion that provides feelings of recognition to one. Through looking at Sartre’s ideas on shame, I will show that shame is necessary in providing self-awareness and self-understanding. Most importantly, I will show how the experience of shame enables one to recognize that one is not alone but that there are others one is accountable to.

2.6 *Sartre on Shame*

For Sartre, shame is a special emotion that aids in self-understanding. Shame is revelatory; it serves to reveal what one is at the end of the Other’s Look. Sartre emphasizes that shame is an emotion that occurs before others. Though he notes that it is possible that one can feel ashamed whilst in solitude (say in some extraordinary experience where one is ashamed before some kind of religious authority, e.g., God), the primary form of shame is before someone. He gives the example of making an awkward or vulgar gesture. In solitude, he contends, one simply makes the vulgar gesture, neither judging nor blaming it. Once one realizes that one has been seen by another, the vulgarity of the gesture may come to light and one may be ashamed.

This example illustrates how other persons may help bring self-awareness to one. In feeling shame before the other, one may come to better know oneself. Though one may experience shame in solitude, it would arguably not be as affecting as the sense of shame one feels before the Other. By oneself, one is not, as Sartre phrases it, ‘touched to the quick,’ (1943/2003, p. 221). What Sartre means by this is that our perceptions and appraisals of ourselves do not emotionally resonate with us in the same way that the way others view us does. Furthermore, the presence of others helps one to better understand oneself. Sartre holds that vulgarity and awkwardness cannot be lodged in one’s body as potential actions, but instead are meanings that surpass the body and reference a witness (The Other) who is able to understand them. Sartre writes, ‘shame is shame of oneself before the Other; these two structures are inseparable. …The For-It-Self refers to the For-Others,’ (p. 222). Moreover, ‘Shame is by nature recognition. I recognize that I am as the Other sees me’, (p. 221).

Danto (1985) offers an interpretation of Sartre on shame that I think is helpful for my purposes. He writes,

To feel shame is to be committed to the belief that one is not alone, the existence of others as a structure of one’s consciousness being built into the very concept.…Discounting the special case of shame before oneself…the structure of shame is such that one who had no concept of other persons could not sensibly be supposed to feel shame; the feeling simply cannot arise except with reference to other persons (p. 93).

Despite the negative feelings that shame entails, the inherent risk that interpersonal relations carry is arguably preferable to constant solitude. As the case of solitary confinement demonstrates, being alone, thus not having the opportunity to appear before an Other, is a fate far worse than risking the chance that others may find one’s actions shameful. Shame allows one to realize that one is accountable to other persons, and moreover, is embedded in the social world. To extend the example: in an emotion like joy, the Other may not recognize one, nor pass value judgments on one. Though my joy may be displayed to him through my gestures or expressions, he may remain unaffected. Joy, I argue, does not often lead to value judgments in the same way that shame does. It is not an emotion that ordinarily leads the Other to recognize one in a particular way, and it does not normally lead to self-reflection. Joy does not need to be witnessed by another to come to full fruition; it can be recognized just as easily on one’s own.

Now that I have examined some of Sartre’s ideas in *Being and Nothingness*, I will turn to his famous play *No Exit*, (1946/1989) which arguably conveys and elaborates upon many of the ideas I have presented above. The play is best known for the maxim ‘Hell is other people’ (1989, p. 39). Some scholars read the play as an extension of Sartre’s ideas on others in *Being and Nothingness,* where the appearance of the Other is wholly negative (e.g., Danto, 1985). Others argue that there is no true interpretation of the play. Howells (1988/2009) holds that we must look to Sartre’s views on art and theatre in order to understand how his plays should be interpreted. In *Situations II* (1943/2012), Sartre asserts that the work of art is created by the consumer as much as the producer. What he means by this is that his work only has as much meaning as the consumer gives it; in other words, each person who sees one of his plays gives it their own interpretation (1943/2012, p. 96).

In Sartre’s formulation in *Being and Nothingness*, one is constantly involved in a battle to, so to speak ‘kill the other off’; that is, to retain control and ownership of his world, and not let it slip into the Other’s grasp. However, my reading of Sartre’s ideas on our relationships with other persons is much more positive: I see Sartre as recognizing that our relationships can often be problematic, yet at the same time acknowledging that we would rather endure all of the difficulties they often entail than give up on them entirely.[[30]](#footnote-30) Though interactions with others are sometimes felt as alienating (and thus can engender feelings of loneliness), they are still preferable to eternal solitude. In eternal solitude (such as the case of solitary confinement), one never gets the opportunity to encounter another, to be recognized, and this appears far worse than even the most challenging relationships. This fact is made salient in his play *No Exit*, which I will now discuss in greater detail below.

2.7 *An analysis of Sartre’s play No Exit*

In his play *No Exit*, Sartre (1946/1989) has three characters who suddenly find themselves in hell. First there is Garcin, an assassinated left-wing journalist who thinks he is in hell because he mistreated his wife; then there is Inez, a postal worker who enjoys seducing other women; and finally, there is Estelle, a beautiful young debutante who killed her baby and drove the father to commit suicide. The play opens with the valet showing Garcin to his room in hell. First, Garcin is confused by the atmosphere: there is no fire, he can find no ‘instruments of torture’ such as ‘racks and red-hot pincers’ (1989, p. 2). Instead, he finds himself standing in a Second Empire style drawing room with three couches. Secondly, he is confused by the fact that there are no beds or mirrors. He is alarmed when he realizes that he has no eyelids, therefore sleep is impossible. He is further frustrated by the discovery that there is no light switch—one must simply live in eternal light, never sleeping, never allowed any respite from the state of wakefulness.

Another soon-to-be-resident of hell enters, Inez. She and Garcin have a conversation on politeness. Inez is disgusted by the constant mouth-twitching Garcin displays. She reproaches him for it saying, ‘Remember you’re not alone; you’ve no right to inflict the sight of your fear on me,’ (1989, p. 9). In other words, his being present with her in the room necessarily means that he is held accountable for his actions and gestures and they must try to get on peacefully. Her look confers a sense of recognition upon Garcin; being held in her gaze, he is ‘somebody’, as Sartre says of the Look.

Soon, a third inmate enters, Estelle. The three discuss why they have been placed in hell together and why there is no ‘torturer’ present. Inez thinks that this is because each of them is to act as torturer to the other two. This is related to the idea that the mere presence of other persons is disruptive to one’s world, let alone having to deal with them constantly. Being around others is torturous as one is no longer in complete possession or control of her world, is made vulnerable by their presence.

Since the three are not getting along so famously, Garcin suggests that they just try to each sit in a corner and ignore the others. Of course, they are incapable of doing this for too long. Shortly after the silence is broken, Inez and Estelle get into an interesting discussion about there being no mirrors to view oneself. Estelle is upset that she cannot see herself, so Inez volunteers to act as mirror for her as she applies her lipstick and regards her visage. At first, Estelle is hesitant to allow Inez to act as her mirror. She says,

Oh, I don’t know. You scare me rather. My reflection in the glass never did that; of course, I knew it so well. Like something I had tamed. …I’m going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become,” (pp. 20-21).

Estelle’s statement refers to Sartre’s idea that the Other and her impressions of one are unknowable. One is knowable to oneself, and thus, whilst in solitude, she can control the image of herself that she portrays to the world. Yet the perspective of the Other, let alone the perspective the Other takes on one, can never be fully grasped. Estelle recognizes that she is vulnerable through Inez’s gaze, that she is no longer looking at a reflection of herself but a *mediated form* instead. Inez begins singing to herself, and the three enter back into dialogue, seemingly coming to the realization that what Garcin suggested was unfeasible: to ignore others when they are right before you is not sustainable for very long. Their very presence distracts you, decenters you from having complete possession and control of the world, according to Sartre. With Inez as her mirror, Estelle appears not as she views herself, but as Inez views her. Thus, in Sartre’s estimation, Inez has ‘stolen the world’ from her.

Garcin again suggests that the three just sit quietly, that it would be best if they could just ‘forget’ about each other. Inez tells him that doing so is impossible. She exclaims,

To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I *feel* you there, in every pore. Your silence clamors in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out—but you can’t prevent your *being there*. Can you stop your thoughts? I hear them ticking away like a clock, tick-tock, tick-tock, and I’m certain you hear mine. It’s all very well skulking on your sofa, butyou’re everywhere, and every sound comes to me soiled, because you’ve intercepted it on its way. Why, you’ve even stolen my face; you know it and I don’t! (p. 22).

Here, Inez speaks to the importance of the presence of others. One cannot simply ‘forget’ them, for they are a vital part of one’s world, a crucial aspect of what it means to be a being-for-itself. To rehearse Sartre’s point from earlier, to be a being-for-itself one must be a being-for-others. The Other necessarily affects me: through my expressions and gestures, through my bodily orientation, through my language and thoughts; the other affects me, and I must respond in some way. Others are needed in order for one to receive recognition at the most basic level. For example, Inez notes that she is a cruel person who cannot survive without making others suffer. Thus, she notes that she needs their presence in order to do so, for ‘When I’m alone, I flicker out’ (p. 26).

Garcin notes how the three seem to be inextricably bound together, for better or worse.

They’ve laid their snare damned cunningly—like a cobweb. If you make any movement, if you raise your hand to fan yourself, Estelle and I feel a little tug. Alone, none of us can save himself or herself; we’re linked together inextricably (p. 29).

Though being with the others is difficult, they realize that being together is still better than being apart. It is only through being together that they are able to receive the recognition they need. Our relationships with others, in all their complexities, may be the only thing that can provide peace and well-being.

An important point is that, throughout the play, all three characters remain fixated on the world they left behind. Specifically, each character focuses on the people they left behind, the relationships. They despair at being able to still see situations happening yet not being able to intervene. One example of this is Estelle’s watching a man she was romantically involved with dancing with another woman. She despairs at the fact that she can no longer influence the situation, can no longer make him see the error of his ways. She wishes that the other woman could see her looking at her, that she could make her presence known somehow and turn things around.

Garcin also despairs at no longer being a part of the social world. He watches angrily as people spread lies about him, and there is nothing he can do to set the story straight, to show both himself and others that he is not the horrible person they are portraying. Not being able to engage with them, especially not having the opportunity to salvage his reputation and be seen as a decent person feels like death, Garcin notes. Thus, he then calls upon Inez and Estelle to recognize him as a decent person. He implores,

If there’s someone, just one person, to say quite positively I did not run away, that I’m not the sort that runs away, that I’m brave and decent and the rest of it—well, that one person’s faith would save me (p. 39).

This leads us to the play’s ironic conclusion: despite all of the difficulties the three characters have with one another, despite all of the complaints and desires to escape each other’s presence, when the door swings open, giving Garcin an opportunity to finally escape the others and be in solitude, he doesn’t take it. Rather, he chooses to stay in hell and deal with the others for the rest of eternity.

My reading of this play is as follows: Hell may be other people but being without them is a fate far worse. This play is a dramatic exploration of the risks of interpersonal relations. Arguably, Sartre is a master at painting the intrinsic risk of interpersonal relations. The intrinsic risks of interpersonal relationships are not usually something persons focus on. The experience of loneliness illuminates this risk. Whilst lonely, persons may realize the complexity and difficulty interpersonal relationships may have. They may also realize the importance of being meaningfully connected to other persons.

I read Sartre’s *No Exit* to be a good example of literature that discusses a variety of ways one can experience and abate loneliness. Recall the importance of being seen by each other in the play. As I mentioned, for Garcin, being seen by another makes him feel like he is ‘somebody’. Estelle discusses being upset at the sight of the man she was formerly involved with dancing with another woman. This example showcases Estelle experiencing a lack of recognition from another person through a love relationship. Being recognized by a loved one is what I refer to as the third level of recognition.[[31]](#footnote-31)

As I mentioned above, when given the chance to escape hell, Garcin refused it. My reading of his decision whether to leave hell and be on his own or stay with the others and contend with all of the difficulties their relationships entailed, is that he made a choice between no possibility for meaningful connection and possibilities for meaningful connection. Though being with the others could also be lonely at times, he decided that at least through them he would have the possibility of being recognized. The others would certainly satisfy the first level of recognition I have outlined, and in the future, they may even satisfy the second and third levels of recognition (friendship and love relationships).

Through reading the play *No Exit* one not only receives a rich interpretation of the complexity of human relationships, but an analysis of three lonely characters and the ways that they experience their loneliness. I have argued in this section that this play has immense value for understanding the experience of loneliness and how important meaningfully connecting with other persons is.[[32]](#footnote-32) Now, I will turn to the final section of this chapter, where I will discuss the first level of recognition.

2.8 *The First Level of Recognition*

In this chapter, I have examined the case study of solitary confinement and drawn some parallels and distinctions between that and feeling lonely. I have looked at Sartre’s ideas[[33]](#footnote-33) on Being-for-others, as well as Honneth and Margalit’s ideas on invisibility. Sartre’s work in section three of *Being and Nothingness* helps draw out the importance of being seen by other persons. Honneth and Margalit’s work shows that gesture and expression are important as well. Sartre’s play *No Exit* demonstrates the importance of the presence of other persons in achieving recognition. Though our relationships with others may be problematic at times, their presence at least ensures that we have the opportunity to be recognized.

Being seen by others, as well as having them witness our various gestures and expressions, makes up what I have outlined here as the first or most basic level of recognition. In this first level of recognition, one first of all appears before an Other. The fact that she is in front of him means that she is the object of his gaze. At the basic level, her body is vulnerable--his presence threatens it. He may decide to physically harm her or be kind to her, but what he decides to do is out of her control. In this first level, one is now an object, whilst the Other is subject. The Other may form various thoughts and opinions of who and what she is. He may make friendly or benevolent gestures to show he comes to her with no intentions of harm. Through his Look and his gestures, he gives her something she may respond to.

Though she must deal with no longer being in complete control of her world, she is not ‘invisible’ to the Other. His Look, gestures, and appraisals of her demonstrate to her that she indeed is *someone*, a human being, with various attributes. He confirms her body; she does in fact have blond hair and blue eyes. He confirms her personality: she is bubbly and enthusiastic. Though his appraisals of who she is may not be entirely accurate, she has the chance to appear before him as a human being and be recognized.

In both solitary confinement and some instances of loneliness, I believe that this very first level of recognition is missing. The person in solitary confinement has no contact with other human beings. After being locked up for months or years, it is no wonder he loses his sense of self; he has had no one recognize him for years. He must rely solely on his own ideas and impressions of the kind of person he is.

The lonely person who, whether due to physical illness, ostracization, or shyness, is in solitude, also lacks the ability to be recognized by another. Her self-imposed solitude means that she has no way of confirming herself as a human being with various qualities, as a person who matters. She feels invisible to other persons as she has no opportunity to be seen by them.

Failure to establish this first level of recognition is a barrier for a person in achieving what I will call the second and third levels of recognition. I will discuss these in the following chapter. As I will argue, in order to abate loneliness, a person needs to be recognized not only at this first, most basic level, but through friendship and love relationships as well. In the following chapter, I will look at case studies of lonely persons who lack satisfying friendships and love relationships and discuss the second and third levels of recognition.

Chapter 3

*Loneliness, Friendship and Love*

“My peers lately have found companionship through means of intoxication—it makes them sociable. I, however, cannot force myself to cheat on my loneliness—it is all that I have—and when the drugs and alcohol dissipate, will be all that my peers have as well.”

—Franz Kafka

Lack of satisfactory close friendships is one of the most commonly mentioned reasons persons say they are lonely (e.g., Bell, 1993; Fessman and Lester, 2000; Hamid and Lok, 2000). As many have noted, it is not the quantity of friendships, but rather the *quality* of friendships that combats feelings of loneliness (e.g., Ernst and Cacioppo, 1999). Lonely persons often desire to form friendships, or to strengthen existing friendships; however, as I will demonstrate, they may find forming and maintaining friendships difficult. In addition to friendships, lonely persons often lament a lack of love relationships[[34]](#footnote-34) or unsatisfactory ones. In this chapter, I will examine the experiences of lonely persons both within and outside friendships and love relationships. I will do this by examining both first-person accounts and empirical studies.

In section 3.1, I will begin by looking at Cocking & Kennett’s (1998) drawing view of friendship in order to garner a better understanding of close friendships. In section 3.2, I will look at some different empirical studies on social skills deficits in relation to lonely persons. Looking at the findings in these empirical studies will help illuminate some aspects of the behavior lonely persons display whilst trying to form or maintain friendships. In section 3.3, I will look at the case study of Emily White (2010). White describes herself as ‘chronically lonely’ and wanting good friends, yet she cannot manage to form the friendships she desires. Based on the ideas of Løgstrup, Cocking & Kennett, the empirical studies, and the case study of Emily White, I will then elaborate upon what I hold is the second level of recognition. Following that, in section 3.4 I will turn to consider some first-person accounts of lonely persons lacking the love relationships they desire. This will help set the stage for what I will accomplish in 3.5. In section 3.5, I will draw off Von Hildebrand (2009) and Scheler (2008) in order to develop a better understanding of love relationships. By doing so, I will demonstrate what I consider to be the third level of recognition, love relationships.

The relationship between loneliness, friendships and love relationships is complex. Some loneliness theorists have postulated that once a person who is lonely obtains the type of relationship they desire, feelings of loneliness will vanish. Weiss (1973), for instance, states:

…the responsiveness of loneliness to just the right sort of relationship with others is absolutely remarkable. Given the establishment of these relationships, loneliness will vanish abruptly and without trace, as though it never had existed. There is no gradual recovery, no getting over it bit by bit. When it ends, it ends suddenly; one was lonely, one is not anymore (pp. 13-14).

However, many first-person accounts of lonely persons do not corroborate Weiss’ view. For instance, a freelance journalist named Frank that Emily White (2010) interviewed states, ‘Even with close friends, even with people I’ve known for decades who I still know, it’s just sometimes…something’s not there’ (p. 196). Elizabeth\*[[35]](#footnote-35), an interviewee of Seepersad’s (2011), also testifies that her loneliness does not disappear just because she has close friendships and love relationships. She says,

I have been trying for what seems like forever to find ways to escape these very overwhelming periods of loneliness. In close friendships I feel deserted, at work I feel an outsider, in motherhood I feel overbearing, etc. (p. 49).

From these statements we begin to get a clearer picture of the complexity of lonely persons. It is not just that they lack relationships, but that they often struggle *within* relationships. This may be attributed to some of the character traits empirical studies have demonstrated that lonely persons possess. Overall, lonely individuals tend to score high on traits such as pessimism (Davis, Hanson, Edson, & Ziegler, 1992) and social anxiety (Segrin & Kinney, 1995), low in self-esteem (Kamath & Kanekar, 1993; Riggio *et al*., 1993), and tend to be shy (Booth *et al.*, 1992; Kamath & Kanekar, 1993; Mehrabian & Stefl, 1995; Schmidt & Fox, 1995). Lonely individuals are low in both sociability (Schmidt & Fox, 1995) and faith in people (Crandall & Cohen, 1994). They tend to score high in social avoidance and low in social approach (Nurmi *et al*., 1996, Studies 1 & 2). The lonely person feels alienated (Crandall & Cohen, 1994) and does not trust others (Rotenberg, 1994).

Though there are many different issues lonely persons struggle with in forming and maintaining relationships, I would like to highlight their difficulty with trust as a central feature. Trust is a topic that has received increasing attention in philosophical discourse in recent years, particularly since Baier’s influential paper ‘Trust and Antitrust’ in 1986. Prior to Baier’s publication, most of the work on trust had been done in fields outside of philosophy, such as political science (e.g., Axelrod, 1980; Held, 1968), experimental psychology (e.g., Tedeshi, Hiester, and Gahagan, 1969), and sociology (e.g., Luhmann, 1979; Barber, 1983). In philosophy, trust has been conceived of in a variety of ways. Some philosophers hold that trust is partly or wholly a belief (e.g., Adler, 1994; Baier, 1986; Hieronymi, 2008; Keren, 2014; McMyler, 2011). Others hold that it is a non-doxastic mental state such as an emotional state (e.g., Baker, 1987; Jones, 1996; McLeod, 2002; Faulkner, 2011). Some think it is a non-doxastic disposition to rely on a trusted party (Kappel, 2014), and some think that it is a type of stance (Holton, 1994). In general, most philosophers agree that trust involves conditions of risk as well as vulnerability and dependency.

Philosophers have mainly focused on *explicit trust*, or *trust as a conscious response*. This response may occur through reflecting on reasons one should trust or through deciding to trust based on probabilities. In order to trust we ordinarily develop beliefs that trusting would be in our best interest. Explicit trust is the form of trust we are most familiar with. For example, we may say ‘x trusts y’, or ‘x trusts y to do z’. Baier (1986) and Jones (2004) note that we often develop reasons to trust others based on our perception of their good will toward us. That is, we expect others to be moved by the fact that they are trusted and respond favorably.

In contradistinction to explicit trust is a lesser known type of trust called *implicit trust.* Implicit trust is a *non-conscious, pre-rational trust*, meaning that we do not explicitly reflect upon reasons to trust or distrust other persons. According to this view, trusting others is not something we ordinarily reflect upon; rather it is, as Frankfurt (1992) puts it, part of our ‘second nature’ (p. 7). The fact that we trust every day in a variety of situations, normally goes unnoticed. As Baier (1986) notes,

We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted, (p. 234).

Trust ordinarily stays in the background of our lives; it is not until it is threatened or breached that we consciously reflect upon it. The experience of depression is a good example of an instance where the everyday implicit trust we have in the world may be disrupted.[[36]](#footnote-36)

As I discussed above, lack of trust is a central issue for many lonely persons. Studies by Rotenberg (1994) and Duck, Pond and Leatham (1994) may help demonstrate this. These studies examine the interaction between lonely individuals and strangers. As I will discuss below, Rotenberg discovered that lonely persons act in a less trusting manner with strangers over time. Duck, Pond and Leatham discovered that lonely persons have a negative bias in their interactions with others. This negative bias may not be present after the first interaction with other persons, but becomes increasingly apparent in their appraisals of subsequent interactions.

In order to investigate how trusting lonely persons are, Rotenberg (1994) conducted a prisoner’s dilemma (PD) game, in which participants played against a confederate for money. In Study 1, he tested one hundred twenty females, all currently enrolled in the Introductory Psychology course at Lakehead University. In order to determine their eligibility to participate in his study, he administered the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale[[37]](#footnote-37) during the first week of class. He selected sixty females who had scored in the top quartile, and sixty females who had scored in the bottom quartile on the UCLA loneliness Scale. He then tested these one hundred twenty females on Rotter’s Interpersonal Trust Scale (Rotter, 1971, 1980). All subjects received credit towards their course, and all subjects in the second phase received five dollars for participating[[38]](#footnote-38).

The two players in the PD game sat at a table facing each other through a clear pane. Through this setup, they were able to identify the gender of the person playing against them, but were not able to identify any specific physical features. Each player was provided with red and green lights along with corresponding switches. By using these, each player was able to see both his or her choices and the choice of the other player during each trial. Choosing the green light meant that one wished to play cooperatively, and choosing the red light meant that one wished to play competitively. If both players chose green lights, they each received fifteen cents. If one player chose red and the other chose green, then the player that chose red received thirty cents, and the player who chose green received five cents. If both players chose red lights, they each received five cents. Before each trial, participants indicated to their opponent whether they would play cooperatively or competitively.

The confederate who played against each student simulated a realistic experience during the first five trials, demonstrating all of the possible alternatives he could choose.[[39]](#footnote-39) In the fifteen subsequent trials, the confederate used a tit for tat strategy and matched the subjects’ intention and choice.

Rotenberg used the subject’s responses to the confederates during the first five trials to serve as a measure of the subject’s basal rates of promised-cooperation.[[40]](#footnote-40) He used the subject’s promised-cooperation in the later fifteen trials as a measure of the subject’s trusting behavior. His study was guided by Schlenker *et. al.’s* (1973) idea that persons who cooperate as promised in response to an opposing player’s promise to cooperate (and that player doing so), demonstrates that he is willing to rely on another in a risky situation; therefore, Schlenker (as well as Rotenberg) hold that this demonstrates trusting behavior.

Rotenberg’s hypothesis was that lonely persons would act in a less trusting manner over time. The results of the study support his hypothesis: lonely persons acted less trusting over time, whilst non-lonely individuals retained the same level of trust that they began with. Low-trust beliefs were associated with a tendency to show a decrease in trusting behavior across the reciprocal trial blocks in the PD game. Rotenberg found that the partial correlational figures were suggestive, indicating that the relation between loneliness and trusting behavior may have been mediated by trust beliefs. Rotenberg suggests that the results of the study indicate that feelings of trust in lonely persons can be undermined more easily than in their non-lonely counterparts. Rotenberg’s study not only demonstrates that lonely persons may have difficulty trusting other persons, but that their levels of trust decrease over time. However, his study does not explain *why* lonely persons may find trusting others difficult. The study below will help explain why this is the case.

A study by Duck, Pond and Leatham (1994) suggests that lonely persons hold a negative view of their relations with others. They look at both lonely and non-lonely individuals’ assessments of their interactions with a friend at two points in time. Subjects watch the first session videotape of the interaction, and then rate the quality of the relationship and the interaction. In the second session, participants again rate the quality of the relationship, as well as the communication (after being reminded of their interaction during session one, and then re-watching the videotape). At all four of the measurement points, lonely persons rated their relationship quality more negatively than non-lonely individuals. The reaction of lonely persons was most negative after viewing the videotape during session two. In session two, lonely individuals also rated the communication quality more negatively than did non-lonely individuals.

Duck *et. al* believe that these findings suggest that the lonely person operates from a global negativity[[41]](#footnote-41) toward interpersonal interactions. They hold that when lonely persons rate elements of the interaction directly following it, the global negativity has not had time to bias their perception of the individual communication element. That is, they are still able to view the interaction from a less negative, less lonely viewpoint. As time passes, the negativity bias affects the memory and perception of the individual element. This accounts for the result of communication rated more negatively at session two than at session one. Duck *et. al* suggest that this negative impression may be partially caused by lonely persons filtering their social world through a negative lens.

Recently, Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) have also suggested that lonely persons tend to filter their social world through a negative lens. They argue that feelings of loneliness can lead to profound alterations in the way persons view both themselves and others, as well as the responses expected from others. These are influenced by feelings of unhappiness, threat, and an impaired ability for self-regulation. They hold that a person may begin with painful feelings of isolation, and, as loneliness takes hold, the person may begin to see social danger everywhere. One’s ordinary perception becomes filtered through the lens of ‘lonely social cognition’[[42]](#footnote-42), and other persons may seem more critical or unwelcoming. These negative interpretations of social interactions then become expectations of rejection, leading the lonely person to develop a defensive stance toward others.

To make matters even more complex, Cacioppo and Patrick propose that the defensive stance the lonely person takes toward others can diminish his ability to self-regulate[[43]](#footnote-43). When loneliness persists, a person’s impaired cognition and regulation serves to cause one to be less likely to acknowledge other’s perspectives.[[44]](#footnote-44) One is less able to correctly evaluate the intentions of others, which can lead one to be socially awkward or taken advantage of by person’s concealing ulterior motives. The defensive stance through which the lonely person navigates his social world may lead him to poorly regulated behaviors, such as blaming others, playing the victim, being overly desperate to please, or caustic. In turn, these inappropriate behaviors may then elicit the rejection the lonely person was dreading and anticipating.

Even more distressing is their suggestion that, over time, loneliness not only may serve as a buffer against forming new social bonds, but it may make us likelier to be dissatisfied and distrustful of the social bonds we already have. When persons are lonely, they react stronger to negative experiences, and they feel less uplift from positive experiences. For example, if a lonely person accrues the support from a friend or family member they were hoping for, the experience is often disappointing for them, as they find the interaction less fulfilling than they had imagined. Garnering support from loved ones (often regarded as a positive experience by non-lonely persons), may be met by the lonely person with suspicion or distrust.

Loneliness not only disturbs our ability to self-regulate, but also our ability to co-regulate[[45]](#footnote-45), Cacioppo and Patrick suggest. A person who is well-regulated sends social signals that are aligned with the rest of her environment. By ‘well-aligned with her environment’, I mean that she is acting in a way that is appropriate to the situation. For example, Susan listens attentively whilst another person is telling a story. This shows respect for the other person and interest in what she has to say. In addition to her sending signals that align with her environment, she must also receive harmonious signals from the other in return. Loneliness, Cacioppo and Patrick contend, uproots the way social signals are normally processed, which diminishes the accuracy of their interpretation.

For example, say Erin meets a man called Tyler. Tyler strikes up a friendly conversation with Erin about the weather. Tyler’s intention in striking up a conversation with Erin is quite simple: it is a pleasant way to pass the time whilst they are both waiting for the bus to arrive. If Erin is experiencing loneliness, however, she may misread Tyler’s intentions and actions. She may find it suspicious that he has spoken with her and fear that he has ulterior motives. She may think that his striking up a conversation with her is a sign that he is romantically interested in her. Or, she may worry that he has malicious intentions towards her. Whatever the case, in her lonely state, Erin is susceptible to misinterpreting Tyler’s intentions and actions. This may be more likely to occur if one is experiencing persistent loneliness. *Persistent loneliness* is characterized by higher sensitivity to social signals, but less accuracy. Persistent loneliness can cause persons to misconstrue social signals that are undetected by others or interpret them very differently. This is just one example of ways a person who is experiencing loneliness may misread the motives or intentions of other persons in a social situation. Presumably, there are numerous other ways lonely persons may misinterpret social cues.

Furthermore, persons experiencing persistent feelings of loneliness may create a negative feedback loop: anticipating social rejection, they may act in ways to elicit rejection. Through the unfriendly, caustic, self-protective, and distant behavior that lonely persons may exhibit, others may begin to treat them poorly. This may further the cycle of defensive behavior and poor social results. I will return to these ideas in Chapter 5 when I discuss empathy.

Through looking briefly at some empirical studies and social cognition research, I have attempted to illustrate the difficulties lonely persons face in navigating their social environments, as well as forming and maintaining friendships and love relationships. Now that I have attempted to provide a clearer picture of the complexity of the lonely person’s social world, I will move on to the next section. In the following section, I will examine Cocking and Kennett’s (1998) ideas on friendship. Using their idea of the Drawing View of Friendship, I will discuss close companionate friendships and why they make up the second level of recognition of my model.

3.1 *Cocking & Kennett: The Drawing View of Friendship*

In their article ‘Friendship and the Self’, Cocking & Kennett (1998) provide an account of close companionate friendship. [[46]](#footnote-46) Their aim is to supply an alternative version to both the popular Aristotelian mirror view[[47]](#footnote-47) and what they phrase the ‘secrets view’ of friendship[[48]](#footnote-48). Their theory attempts to portray a more accurate version of the way close companionate friendships function.

They propose what they call the ‘drawing view of friendship’: roughly, this means that in order to be close companionate friends, persons must be receptive to being directed and interpreted by one another. For example, in close friendships, friends are receptive to developing interests or activities that they are not already involved in, because they are the interests of the other person.[[49]](#footnote-49) One example that they provide is that of deciding to go along with your friend Iris to see the ballet. Though you yourself never formerly had any interest in ballet, Iris’ passion and enthusiasm for it strike you, and you decide to go along with her one evening. Upon going, you may discover a newfound love for ballet, (or, alternatively, may be unimpressed and decide that seeing ballets is not for you). Regardless, your willingness to go with Iris demonstrates your receptivity to her interests. On a larger scale, your willingness to go with Iris demonstrates your receptivity to her as a person; it is not just anyone who has asked you to go to the ballet, but Iris, whom you value as a close friend. Another example[[50]](#footnote-50) is when a close friend points out things that you do or characteristics that you possess that you were not aware of. For example, Jakob points out to Judy that she always needs to be right; Elizabeth points out to Adam that he is chronically late; Sheri points out to Ann that she is a very funny and cheerful person. In all of these instances, each person is able to receive interpretations about his character from the other.

Recall my discussion of Sartre’s ideas on our relationships with others in chapter 2. Sartre holds that it is only through other persons that one can come to know and understand oneself. According to Sartre, one depends upon the Other to interpret one. Not only does one depend upon the Other to interpret one, one depends upon the Other to provide recognition. However, Sartre notes that the recognition afforded by others to one and from one to others is dependent upon the value each place on the other person. He states that, ‘the *value* of the Other’s recognition of me depends on the value of my recognition of the Other’, (2012, p. 237, my emphasis). As Sartre contends, though it could be objected that a perfect stranger or acquaintance could make the inferences discussed in the above paragraph, one may not give them due consideration as they may a friend or loved one. That is, they may not allow an acquaintance or stranger to influence andinformthe way they think about themselves, their future actions and the way they treat others. They will likely place more value on the interpretations of others who are close to them.

Their willingness to place more value on the interpretations of those who are close to them may be due to their understanding that those who are close to them are more likely to understand who they are. Those whom they are close to are less likely to draw a false image of them. Recall Løgstrup ‘s (1997) ideas on drawing a false image in the previous section. Løgstrup holds that persons who do not trust or know one are likely to construct false images of one’s character. On the other hand, I read Løgstrup to say that close companionate friends are able to draw a fairly accurate image of one another. This is an important aspect of recognition, because feeling as if others have correctly interpreted the person that one takes oneself to be is an important part of feeling recognized. Furthermore, feeling as if others have correctly interpreted and thus understand one is an important way of abating loneliness.

Returning to the examples above, each demonstrates a type of recognition one can receive from another person. In recognizing Judy’s propensity to be right, Jakob is showing that he has noticed the way she handles different conversations and disagreements and is making an informed assessment. Elizabeth has recognized that Adam has difficulties turning up on time to various events, perhaps attributed to his laid-back disposition. Sheri has seen how on several occasions, Ann manages to get the whole room laughing uproariously, and tends to brighten the mood of everyone she meets with her cheerful attitude. Such detailed character assessments cannot be made by strangers[[51]](#footnote-51); they are made by close friends who often have one’s best interest at heart.

Upon hearing these interpretations of their character, the persons in the above example may take note of what has been said. Adam, for instance, may reflect and realize that his chronic lateness is upsetting to people and disrespectful of their time. Realizing his lateness has upset people may encourage him to improve and do his best to be on time. In all cases, however, persons provide a sense of recognition for their friend through their acknowledgment of their friend’s habits and dispositions.

The drawing view holds that the self is relational, partially developed through the friendship. Cocking & Kennett write,

A good artist draws her subject in a new light; she influences and enriches our sense of the person portrayed. So, too, do our close friends draw us and so enrich our sense of self through their engaged interpretations of us. I do not see myself in you as the mirror view suggests*, I see myself through you*. We are thus, to some extent, each other’s creators (p. 509, my emphasis).

In the above quote, Cocking & Kennett extend Løgstrup’s ideas on the way that persons draw one another. As I mentioned, Løgstrup places importance on persons accurately drawing one another. Cocking & Kennett extend his idea by suggesting that close companionate friends are able to draw one another ‘in a new light’ (p. 509). Close friends, they argue, are able to provide engaged interpretations of one another. Being able to do so means that, in some instances (such as the examples provided above), they are able to perceive more about one than one can oneself.

Cocking and Kennett go on to suggest that close friendships are not one-size fits-all; that is, each close friendship between persons is utterly unique. They state, ‘the self in friendship is, in part, a thing that is constituted by and particular to the friendship,’ (1998, p. 510). I take this to mean that in our close friendships we form a particular union that is unrepeatable in any other close friendship. Perhaps it is the inside jokes friends share, the topics they tend to discuss *ad nauseum*, or the way some always end up discussing politics. In any case, each of these examples showcase things that are characteristic to a particular friendship. Cocking & Kennett emphasize the importance of the particularity of each friendship to highlight the unique bond that persons have with one another. I read their account to highlight the importance of having friendships where persons are able to genuinely engage with one another.

Recall the first level of recognition I discussed in Chapter 2. In the first level of recognition, one needs to be seen by the other as a person in order to feel recognized. In the experience of close companionate friendships, which I refer to as the second level of my three-tiered model of recognition, one needs to trust others and be willing to be drawn and interpreted by them. Most importantly, in close companionate friendships, friends recognize each other as particular persons, and their friendships as particular friendships. That is, though both persons could have other friends, they recognize the unique value of the person they are friends with and the friendship that they share with them.

Cocking and Kennett’s account is unique in that it focuses on close companionate friendships rather than friendship in general or different kinds of friendship. Their focus on this type of friendship is vital to understanding the type of friendship many lonely persons are lacking and desire to be a part of. One may wonder why it may be the case that some lonely persons lack the friendships they desire. One answer to this may be Cocking and Kennett’s example of what they call the *excessively rigid person*. They turn to David Shapiro’s (1981) account of the rigid personality in his *Autonomy and Rigid Character* to attempt to shed light on this type of personality. Shapiro observes,

The fixed purposiveness of the rigid person narrows his interest in the world and restricts and prejudices his experience of it. He looks only for data—or, in the paranoid case, for clues—relevant to his purposes or concerns. The compulsive man who examines each woman with a checklist in mind of certain qualifications for marriage does not see that woman objectively; he sees a selection of traits and features whose sum is not a person but a high or a low score. This is a kind of…awareness that is not open and attentive to the world but is restricted and prejudiced by the necessity to satisfy pre-established requirements and fixed purposes (p. 75).

Cocking and Kennett note that Shapiro’s observation of rigidity reveals ‘a narrow self unable to engage with the world and with others,’ (1998, p. 519). From that, they take it as given that such a person cannot have close friends. I would like to suggest that the lonely person may, in some cases, be viewed as similar to the rigid person. Particularly in cases of chronic loneliness, the lonely person’s sense of trust and self-esteem may be so low, that the very thought of engaging with others may be terrifying. Due to the fear that the lonely person may have about engaging with others, he may develop a rigid personality in order to compensate for his fears. As I will demonstrate in the case study of Emily White (2010) in section 3.4, the relationships lonely persons seek may be sabotaged by their own fears and behaviors. Thus, it may become less and less likely over time that chronically lonely persons are able to form close friendships, as their ability to receive recognition from other persons is diminished.

In the next section, I will turn to some empirical studies about the set of social skills lonely persons may possess. Looking at these studies will aid in demonstrating the tension between the lonely person’s desire for friendships and his ability to attain or maintain them. Looking at these empirical studies will also provide further insight into how loneliness may affect interpersonal interactions.

3.2 *Social Skills Deficits from an Empirical Perspective*

Some studies indicate that loneliness is associated with social skills deficits (e.g., Inderbitzen-Pisaruk *et al*., 1992; Jones *et al*., 1981; Russell *et al*., 1980; Solano & Koester, 1989). An example is that loneliness has been linked to inappropriate self-disclosure (Bell & Daly, 1985; Davis & Franzoi, 1986; Franzoi & Davis, 1985; Sippola & Bukowski, 1999; Solano, Batten, & Parish, 1982). Solano, Batten, & Parish (1982), for instance, have suggested that when interacting in pairs, lonely college students disclosed too little information to partners of the opposite sex, and too much information to partners of the same sex. Regardless of gender, partners of lonely individuals felt that they did not get to know their partner as well as they did partners of non-lonely individuals. Jones *et. al* (1981) propose that this is due to lonely persons being self-focused and therefore less responsive to other persons. Their study shows that within the opposite gendered pairs, lonely persons make more statements focused on themselves, have slower response times to their partner, ask fewer questions, and change the topic more times than non-lonely persons. Similarly, Bell (1985) showed that after ten-minute ‘get acquainted’ conversations, partners of lonely participants rated them as less likeable and involved, and were much less enthusiastic about future involvement with them compared to non-lonely persons.

In contrast to these studies, Gardner *et. al* (2005), amongst others, suggest that lonely persons do not suffer from social skills deficits at all; they hold that lonely persons’ responsiveness in social situations is actually *enhanced*. They propose that this is due to lonely persons exhibiting increased social monitoring in their interactions. By stating that lonely persons exhibit ‘increased social monitoring’, they mean that the lonely person spends more time scanning their environment for social threats. It can be inferred from their argument that an increase in social monitoring may lead to an increase in accurate perception. Perhaps, by being so attuned to social situations, lonely persons are able to gather important information that the non-lonely would miss. Lonely persons spend more time scanning their social environment for threats because they often feel as if they do not belong. They hold that this perceived belonging deficit the lonely person exhibits may also be due to the lack of implicit trust he has.[[52]](#footnote-52) Without an attitude of implicit trust in place, one may view the world as very dangerous and hostile.

They also demonstrated in an earlier study (Gardner *et al*., 2000) that socially rejected participants versus non-rejected participants showed greater memory recall. Gardner claims that the reason lonely people do so well on social cues and memory tasks is because of an outward focus. By ‘outward’, however, she does not mean that they are able to focus on the other person *as* other, though. Rather, she contends that lonely persons display a heightened awareness of how they are being perceived *through* others. For example, instead of focusing on what the other person is saying in a conversation, lonely persons are likely to be more focused on what they are saying and what they will say next.

Whether one takes the perspective that lonely persons lack the social skills necessary to achieve close friendships, or the perspective that lonely persons indeed have an enhanced perception which allows them to better interpret and recall social encounters, feelings of loneliness often make it difficult to navigate the social world and have friendships and other types of relationships. Looking at the research presented above, it does indeed appear to be the case that ‘The social world…[is] a less rewarding place for lonely individuals,’ (Cacioppo *et al*., 2000). Due to their difficulties in forming or maintaining relationships, lonely persons may find that the social world does not have the benefits that it does for other persons. For instance, as I mentioned earlier, Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) note that lonely persons feel far less uplifted from experiencing positive social interactions than do their non-lonely counterparts.

Though informative in helping us form a clearer picture of the difficulties lonely persons may face in forming and maintaining friendships, these empirical studies are insufficient in capturing all of the complexities lonely persons confront. In order to better understand loneliness, it will be useful to again consider first person accounts. Examining first person accounts of loneliness will give insight into the nature of experience that empirical studies cannot. Why is it the case that, as Charles Baxter (2000) notes in his book through the character of Bradley, one feels as if he has ‘a window to heaven and no way to get in,’ (p. 215)? Why is it that lonely persons desire close friendships, yet often fail to attain them? In the section below, I will look at the case study of Emily White, whose chronic loneliness made it difficult for her to form the close friendships she desired.

3.3 *Emily White on being lonely and lacking close friendships*

Here, I will focus on Emily White’s story in her book *Lonely: A Memoir* (2010), in which she gives an account of her long-term struggle with loneliness. In this book, she gives detailed descriptions of how her loneliness feels. In the quote below, she details how her loneliness led to the increased social monitoring Gardner *et al.* (2005) suggests occurs in lonely persons. White writes,

My loneliness…didn’t let me tune out. Depression is like a blindfold: you can walk down the street and notice nothing and no one except your own despair. Loneliness is like a set of binoculars that’s trained on the social world (p. 139).[[53]](#footnote-53)

This set of binoculars White speaks of is evident throughout much of her book, in which she gives several examples that showcase how loneliness made her oblivious to cues of social bonds and rejections. Here, she describes her feelings upon locating a website for a cycling trip:

The pictures of sociability reminded me of what I thought of as my best self, my social self. When I saw two women checking the air in each other’s tires, I could imagine myself doing the same thing, and this imaginary act of friendship cued memories of real friendship. (…) The trip seemed to promise a shortcut back to the person I used to be. As I sat alone at the computer, this other version of myself—trusting, confident, open—seemed almost within arm’s reach, (White, 2010, p. 135).

Here, White articulates a significant element in her narrative: that there is a clear distinction between her ‘self’ whilst lonely and her ‘self’ whilst healthily socially embedded. White showcases here how important sociality is to self-understanding. Her loneliness has disturbed the very self she used to recognize. Through the images of the women on the cycling trip, she sees her social self, which approaches the world through trust, confidence and openness, compared to her lonely self which consists of the opposite of those attributes. She feels hopeful that going on the cycling trip with a group of women can help restore her social self and relieve her loneliness.

Unfortunately, her experience on the cycling trip is not at all what she had envisioned. Rather than socialize with and cycle alongside the other women, Emily instead becomes ‘hypnotically withdrawn,’ ‘standoffish,’ unwilling to engage with the other women, and finds herself uneasy rather than comforted by their presence. She struggles to make sense of why, when the opportunity for social engagement, and more importantly, an opportunity to make friends arose, she was not able to do so. She writes,

Out of everyone on the trip, I was probably the one who needed sociability the most. I’d craved it and daydreamed about it; I’d hatched plans and spent money to try to achieve it. Yet when confronted with strangers who wanted to get close to me, I retreated into a stiff and stammering version of myself, and became oddly resentful of the people who were trying to befriend me. And this protracted self-sabotage—which I could see developing but could do nothing to stop—left me feeling shipwrecked, as though I’d been thrown alone on a deserted island and would never again reach a friendlier shore (p. 161).

The cycling trip is one of many instances White recounts in which she had ample opportunity to socialize and make friends yet found herself retreating from the very possibility of close connection. In the book, she also discusses how the less she socialized and saw friends, the more challenging interactions became. What had started out as what seemed like some mild form of social anxiety snowballed into several years of chronic loneliness, a state she grew less and less capable of understanding the tools needed to rid herself of. Thus, her memoir is not only a great phenomenological study of loneliness, but also an attempt by White to better understand herself what she was going through.

As I have mentioned, close friendship is what I refer to as the second level in my model of recognition. Through forming close friendships, one is able to trust and be vulnerable to another. I also hold that Cocking and Kennett’s ideas on allowing oneself to be receptive to being drawn by the other, are vital to my second level of recognition, close friendship. As I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, it is not only lack of satisfactory close friendships that lonely persons complain of; they also often complain that what they require to not be lonely are close love relationships. Whether it be between a mother and daughter, a wife and husband, or another type of relationship, there is a need for persons to enter into love relationships where they are able to receive love.

In the next section, I will begin by looking at some first-person accounts of persons lacking satisfactory love relationships. Then, in section 3.5, I will briefly outline the accounts of love provided by Scheler (2008) and von Hildebrand (2009). Though love relationships share some of the elements of close companionate friendships (such as trust and vulnerability), I believe they require some different elements. What we receive, the way we do so, and most importantly, the way recognition is achieved in these relationships is, I think, notably different in some respects. It will become more salient below why and how this is the case.

As I have noted above, love relationships are notably different from close friendships, but that is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive. The elements I have discussed as requisites for close friendships are also requisites for love relationships. The difference is that love relationships simply have more requirements. Above, I discussed how persons must be vulnerable towards one another, must approach each other with the attitude of implicit trust, and must feel confident in bringing expectations to the other to be fulfilled. I also stated that close friendships consist in letting both persons emerge, in not creating a false image of the other. Cocking and Kennett hold that close friends necessarily exert influence over one another. Cocking and Kennett, in their drawing view, suggest that close friends must be open to being directed and interpreted. I closed the discussion by stating that each set of close friends creates a distinctive union, that the ways they behave and the things they say are unique to their particular friendship. Our love relationships require all of the elements I have discussed in this chapter thus far: trust, vulnerability and close companionate friendship. I hold that there are just a few more elements love relationships require: the ability to receive love, a ‘value response’ to the other, recognizing the other as a unique individual and making a commitment to the other, amongst others. In order to draw these out, I will begin by looking at some first-person accounts of lonely persons lacking satisfactory love relationships below. Then, in 3.5 I will turn to the work of Scheler (2008) and von Hildebrand (2009) in order to develop my account of the recognition necessary in love relationships for persons to not be lonely.

3.4 *First-person accounts of lonely persons lacking satisfactory love relationships*

As I will show, lonely persons often attribute their loneliness to either a lack of love relationships or a lack of satisfying ones. As I will discuss later in this section, love relationships are what I refer to as the third level of recognition in my tripartite model. Love relationships are important to our sense of well-being. Satisfactory love relationships may help ameliorate loneliness. For example, Bowlby and Ainsworth (1991), hold the theory that each person, from infancy to old age, requires an attachment figure[[54]](#footnote-54). In childhood, an adult guardian such as a mother or father may serve as such a figure. In adulthood, this role will be filled by another adult or adults whom one engages in a romantic relationship with. They hold that without the presence of an attachment figure, one suffers from feeling a lack of belonging. Their theory is known as Attachment Theory. This theory has helped shape the ideas of many loneliness researchers, including Weiss (1973). Weiss holds that a lack of love relationships is one of the things that causes one to be lonely. Bowlby and Ainsworth’s theory is important in aiding understanding of the third level of recognition I have proposed.

What does it feel like to not have the love relationships needed to not be lonely? The first-person accounts below will hopefully provide some insight into this question.

I just want to find that person who will love me and take some of the pain away. I need someone to understand me but nobody wants to try. I am alone, away from home, (Seepersad, 2011, p. 6, Sarah\*[[55]](#footnote-55)).

My loneliness remains. I have not had a girlfriend for years. I have more fingers than I have had hugs in the past several years, (p. 16, Jack\*).

I had an apartment alone, and would often dream about someone touching me, touching my face, loving me, somehow. I was focused on touch. I knew I would not be lonely if someone would just love me and if I could finally have a relationship like some of the other girls I knew and envied so much, (p. 24, Megan\*).

I feel so empty without someone to touch and kiss and love, (p. 97, Emily\*).

If I could have put what I was feeling into words, the words would have been an infant’s wail: *I don’t want to be alone. I want someone to want me. I’m lonely. I’m scared. I need to be loved, to be touched, to be held.* It was the sensation of need that frightened me the most, as if I’d lifted the lid on an unappeasable abyss, (Laing, 2016, p. 14, italics in original).

Jack’s account is perhaps the most noteworthy for the purposes of my emphasis on the importance of recognition in love relationships in this chapter. In addition to stating that he has not had a girlfriend, nor has he had many hugs in the past several years, he goes on to say,

I have come to realize that having people love you or care for you do not really matter. If you cannot let that love in, it might as well not be there, (Seepersad, 2011, p. 15).

This is an important detail as Jack is acknowledging the importance of being able to receive love in love relationships. He seems to recognize that he has not had the relationships he would like not only because other people have not cared for him, but also because he has been unwilling to accept the love that they have tried to give him. This points to my ideas on recognition. In order to achieve recognition in love relationships, one must be able to receive love. This is just one of the elements of recognition in love relationships, however. Below, I will look at von Hildebrand and Scheler’s accounts of love in order to further outline love as the third level of recognition, and also to illuminate a particular aspect of the way that love is reported.

3.5 *Von Hildebrand and Scheler on love*

How does one come to recognize the other as loved? Von Hildebrand and Scheler have contrasting views on how this occurs. According to von Hildebrand (2009), love is a ‘value-response’ to the other. That is, in order for feelings of love to awaken, he holds that ‘some apprehension of value is presupposed’ (p. 24). A second criterion for the awakening of love is that ‘the individuality of the whole personality stands before us as precious and beautiful’, (p. 23). Von Hildebrand, it can be ascertained, places value on possessing a great amount of knowledge about the potential love object. Once this knowledge of his personality has been gathered, the other responds to it positively, and then suddenly realizes his love for her. As von Hildebrand puts it,

The value which flashes up in another person pierces my heart and engenders my love for him. In being pierced, I experience the value that I have grasped as radiating throughout the other person as a whole. He stands before me not only adorned with certain values but he has become through and through beautiful and precious as a whole—as this individual (2009, p. 28).

For von Hildebrand, one cannot love another person before first recognizing who he is as a unique individual. Though he speaks of the importance of knowing the other prior to the value-response, he also acknowledges that, in love, persons do engage in the act of ‘drawing out the line’ of the other’s beauty and preciousness. He notes, however, that doing so need not entail succumbing to illusions or creating false images of who the other is.

Von Hildebrand goes on to suggest three more qualifications for love: 1) that it is characterized by a commitment to the other person, 2) that it requires ‘affirmation of the other in his existence’, and 3) that it is a special type of solidarity with the other. By ‘commitment’, I take him to mean that one enters into a contract of sorts with the other person, under which various maxims must be upheld. Marriage would be an example of an explicit contract, but the contract need not be explicit. Such as the case between a mother and a daughter: a daughter shows commitment to her mother by behaving in certain ways, such as not disrespecting her and showing care towards her. When he speaks of affirming the other, I read him as stating that one needs to show care and concern to the other as he is as a unique individual. For von Hildebrand, love is the kind of solidarity that engenders these behaviors: if you love someone, you likely adhere to various commitments, affirm and sympathize with them, and are able to perceive their unique personality.

Though there are some ways in which Von Hildebrand’s theory of love sounds like Scheler’s, there are some important differences. Perhaps the biggest difference between the two philosophers is that, for Scheler, love is not a value-response. Though he acknowledges that one recognizes positive traits in the other (i.e., that he is caring, that she is a good pianist), he holds that one’s love for another exists independently of those traits. Furthermore, he holds that love is a ‘primitive’, ‘immediate’ emotional response. Unlike Von Hildebrand, for Scheler, love occurs without the mediation of reflective thought.

Scheler’s theory of love is far more imaginative than Von Hildebrand’s. For Scheler, the value of the other need not be already perceivable. Love is a ‘movement towards positive value’ (p. 141). Love seeks to establish higher values, to maintain them, and also strives to eradicate the possibility of lower values. Love is not a static, but rather, an *active* state through which one’s love for the other either remains the same or increases as the lover becomes more and more engrossed in the beloved, as well as increasingly ‘perceptive of values not at first disclosed’ (p. 141). This is because love enables us to both perceive and imagine higher values in the beloved. Scheler writes,

Love is a movement of intention whereby, from a given value A in an object, its higher value is visualized. Moreover, it is just this *vision* of a higher value that is of the essence of love (p. 153).

In order to flesh this out, here is an example: let’s say that Person A (the love object) is very kind. Person B (the lover) perceives not only the thoughtful way she listens and responds to others, as well as the helpful advice she is always happy to provide when asked, but he is able to see the potential for even more kindness in her as well. She is surely kind now, but there is an even greater kindness that she possesses. Scheler refers to this process of the lover simultaneously perceiving and imagining positive values in the beloved as an *idealized paradigm of value*. His seeing both the kindness she presently exhibits as well as imagining that she is capable of even more kindness shows how this unique stance occurs.

In setting up this idealized paradigm of value, not to mention in loving the beloved, the lover is not ‘blind’, as Scheler notes some may suggest, but rather, is able to see clearly. Love opens our eyes, enables us to become wide-awake. Through one’s increased attention and interest in the beloved, one is able to see more. One is able to see not only the ‘social personality’, as Scheler phrases it, but the individual personality as well.

According to Scheler, the *social personality* consists of various facts that anyone can see: e.g., he is a lawyer and a father of three. However, when one views the other with love, ‘the essence of [their] individuality’ (2008, p. 160) emerges. In fact, Scheler says that it is only through loving another, or through the insight that loving another provides, that the other may be fully revealed. He emphasizes that it is the lover who is able to see what is objective and real about the beloved, not others who come from the unaffected, unloving stance. He holds that persons only become acquainted with the individual personality ‘*in* and *through* the act of loving’, and the value of the individual is only disclosed through this act. ‘Being an object of love represents…the only objective status wherein personality has existence and can therefore be manifested,” (p. 167). On the flipside of this is the way we relate to people without loving them. In looking at a person without loving him, we continue to objectify him, thus ‘his personality eludes our grasp, and only its trappings remain,’ (p. 168).

I think that both Von Hildebrand and Scheler’s views on love have merits and demerits. Therefore, instead of endorsing one or the other, I instead draw from particular insights from both. Both of their views on love aid in providing a depiction of love relationships that aligns with my views on what the love relationship in the third level of recognition I have formulated consists of. Both Scheler and von Hildebrand’s ideas on love emphasize the importance of the unique value that persons possess, which is an essential aspect of my third level of recognition. Von Hildebrand’s assertion that love is a ‘value-response’ to the beloved coalesces with my emphasis on feeling valued in the love relationship. Scheler’s idea that the lover creates an idealized paradigm of value of the beloved adequately captures how lovers understand each other in love relationships. In summation, my third level of recognition, love relationships, consists of loving another by responding to his unique value, and also includes an imaginative process of envisioning more values in the beloved than the lover presently perceives.

Von Hildebrand mentions commitment as being essential to love relationships. I think it is correct to assert that, whether implicitly or explicitly, persons who love each other have certain commitments they must uphold. He also mentions ‘affirming the other in his existence’ and having a special kind of solidarity with him. Though Scheler does not explicitly use these same phrases, I think it can be gleaned from what I have sketched of his theory above, that Scheler’s theory also includes a sense of affirming the other and being in solidarity with him. I would argue that these ideas are even more drawn out in Scheler. In his discussion of love being the means through which persons gain access to viewing the other’s personality in its entirety, Scheler points to the way that affirmation and solidarity take place. In being in a love relationship with the other person, in knowing that she beholds me as possessing certain positive values (and even sees more than presently exist), one feels affirmed in that knowledge. Likewise, one’s loving her provides a sense of affirmation and solidarity to her.

Through looking at von Hildebrand and Scheler’s views on love and combining their insights, I have formulated my third level of recognition on love relationships. In doing so, I have provided an account of how the recognition of persons who love each other occurs. To rehearse what I have said previously: The first level of recognition I outlined in chapter 2 included engaging in mutual gaze with the other, sharing gesture and expression, and being in the presence of the other. The second level of recognition I outlined earlier in this chapter was that of having a close companionate friendship with another person which includes trust, vulnerability, and being receptive to being directed and interpreted by one another. Here, I have suggested that the third level of recognition consists of forming a commitment through which one both responds positively to the values the beloved possesses, as well as creates an idealized paradigm of value for the beloved. In this third level, love relationships, the social personality is replaced with the individual personality, and one is able to be seen in a clearer fashion.

Though all three levels of recognition are important and provide well-being in various ways, it is the love relationship which may provide the most. This is because one is not just seen (as in the case of the first level of recognition I discussed in chapter 2), nor is one seen within the scope of close friendship for what one is (as I outlined previously in this chapter). In the love relationship, one is seen as a unique individual. Therefore, the model of recognition I have created can be viewed as one of increasing recognition. As these relationships progress, one goes from being seen by the other as simply a person, to being seen as a friend with distinctive characteristics, to the love relationship where one is seen as a complete individual.

Now that I have provided an explanation of the three-tiered model of recognition I believe is essential to understanding the experience of loneliness, I will turn to two more case studies that showcase one’s need for recognition: voice hearing and depression. Now that I have examined some ordinary cases of loneliness, I will turn to some so-called ‘pathological’ cases. Doing so will continue to showcase how loneliness can occur in a variety of contexts. In the next chapter, I will look at voice hearing in relation to loneliness and continue to make the case for the importance of recognition.

Chapter 4

*The Role of Loneliness in Auditory Verbal Hallucinations*

“We walk through empty corridors, and we talk in useless metaphors, only ‘cause we’re lonely.”

—Ben Howard

“Listen carefully to the sound of your loneliness, like a heartbeat drives you mad, in the stillness of remembering what you had and what you lost.”

—Fleetwood Mac

As I have demonstrated in the previous two chapters, loneliness can occur in a variety of different contexts. In chapter 2, I looked at the experience of loneliness in solitary confinement. I used the case study of prisoners in solitary confinement to show how recognition occurs at the first level (that is, through being seen and engaging in gestures with others, one is recognized). In chapter 3, I looked at the experience of loneliness within and outside friendships and love relationships. I argued that close companionate friendships make up the second level of recognition, and love relationships make up the third level.

Now that I have established the three levels of recognition that make up my model, I will look at some case studies that further exemplify what can happen when persons do not achieve the recognition they require. In this chapter and the next, I will show how loneliness can affect persons not only at the interpersonal level, but how it can also lead to persons developing psychiatric disorders. Looking at these case studies will further showcase the importance of recognition, and why it is vital in ameliorating feelings of loneliness.

In this chapter, I will look at how loneliness may manifest through so-called ‘auditory verbal hallucinations’. Looking at loneliness in respect to auditory verbal hallucinations will give us insight into the important role of language in fostering feelings of connection and belonging between persons. In particular, it is the nature of interpersonal dialogue persons engage in that provides a sense of connection between persons. More importantly, engaging in interpersonal dialogue provides persons with recognition.[[56]](#footnote-56)

*Auditory verbal hallucinations* (henceforth AVH’s), are notoriously difficult to define (Aleman & Laroi, 2008). Therefore, AVH is used as more of a blanket term to cover a wide range of experiences, including hearing a voice from the external world when one is not there, as well as inaudible, soundless voices within one’s head which can be described as more ‘thought-like’ than ‘voice-like’ (McCarthy-Jones, 2012; Bleuler, 1950; Moritz & Laroi, 2008). I will not focus on finding an appropriate definition for AVHs in this chapter. I will just employ a broad definition here; that is, that voice hearing may include hearing a voice from the external world that is not there, as well as inaudible, soundless voices within one’s head. My focus here will be on AVHs in the interpersonal context. Though an increasing amount of research is being conducted on various other aspects of AVHs, I argue that due attention needs to be given to the interpersonal dimension.[[57]](#footnote-57) How AVHs function interpersonally is difficult to grasp. As Bell (2013) notes, the experience of AVHs presents a curious paradox:

The experiences are generated from within a single individual but are typically experienced as a social phenomenon—that is, a form of communication from another speaker.

He goes on to suggest that the typical experience of voice hearing is not that of simply hearing voices spoken aloud, but is much more nuanced than that, with hallucinated voices typically having a social identity as well as interpersonal relevance. Indeed, studies have suggested that the voices persons hear are ordinarily not random and unrecognizable, but rather have specific recognizable identities. In fact, the majority of voice-hearers know the identity of their voices (Garret & Silva, 2003; Nayani & David, 1996). McCarthy-Jones (2012) have discovered that 70% of voice hearers report voices that, regardless of their identity, are ‘like’ or similar to people from their past.

Several studies have also indicated that the way voice hearers understand their voices is in terms of relationships. The way they interact with their voices is comparable to the way they interact with other persons in the social world. Perhaps most strikingly, many studies have shown that over 80% of persons are able to engage in dialogue with their voices (e.g., Garrett & Silva, 2003).[[58]](#footnote-58)

Considering the evidence I have presented above (that is, that verbal hallucinations often have a clear interpersonal context within which they are situated), it would seem to follow that verbal hallucinations could, in a sense at least, be viewed as surrogates for interpersonal interaction. This may especially be the case because, as previously mentioned, many of the AVHs reported by voice hearers are not just random, but are specific persons from one’s past or easily identifiable characters in society (e.g., the Queen). Thus, it would seem to follow that the experience of AVHs would, at least to some degree, serve in diminishing feelings of loneliness. This is due to the fact that having a voice one can engage in dialogue with (perhaps especially a voice known to the voice hearer) could serve as a substitute for real life dialogue and interaction with other persons.

In this chapter, I will explore how AVHs may function in relation to loneliness. I will look at whether a lonely person having auditory verbal hallucinations feels more or less lonely. I will also examine how loneliness may lead to the development of AVHs. I will argue that loneliness may produce AVHs in a subset of voice hearers. Through a closer examination of the role loneliness plays in AVHs, I will also shed more light on the importance of recognition. Looking at AVHs highlights the importance of interpersonal dialogue, which I contend is necessary for the second and third levels of recognition.

The relationship between loneliness and AVHs is quite complex. For instance, the affective quality of AVHs varies greatly, thus the emotions experienced by persons may range from pleasant and comforting to angry and jarring. For instance, an angel one hears may give counsel as to how to get through their day, stay calm, and achieve their goals. This example illustrates how voice hearing may not be indicative of any type of pathology. In fact, many voice hearers report having lived comfortably with their voices for years, unaware before it had been pointed out to them that voice hearing can, in some instances, signify that someone is unwell. As many theorists argue (e.g. Romme & Escher, 2009; McCarthy-Jones, 2012), it is not the hallucinations in themselves that are unhealthy, but rather the way the person experiencing them reacts to and copes with them.

In their book *Living with Voices*, Romme, Escher *et. al* (2009) interview fifty persons who identify themselves as voice hearers. The book details each of their stories. From examining these case studies, they argue that ‘voices are the stories of threatening emotions; emotions of the person twisted by terrible experience’ (p. 9). Furthermore, they postulate that through recognizing the origins of their voices, voice hearers are able to make sense of their experiences. Their voices are not indicative of madness, but rather,

A reaction to problems in their lives that they couldn’t cope with, and they have found that there is a relationship between the voices and their life story, that the voices talk about problems that they haven’t dealt with—and that they therefore make sense (p. 2).

For example, one voice hearer interviewed, Karina Carlyn, discusses hearing the voices of people she used to go to school with. Many of the voices she heard were those of people at school who bullied her. She notes that it was as if she was ‘carrying past voices around with [her] in the present. These voices were full of hate and disgust, teasing, mocking, and belittling’ (p. 230). She further links the voices with her past by stating, ‘they are like a tape recording of what people have said to me in the past’ (p. 232).

Another voice hearer interviewed, Lisette de Klerk, hears a male voice called Stefan. Through discussing the voice with her therapist, as well as thinking about the traumatic experiences she had growing up, Lisette was able to link the voice to her stepfather, who sexually abused her for many years. She noticed that the voice she heard resembled his and asked her to do the same things. For example, her stepfather constantly told her not to eat too much so she would not get fat. The voice also tells her this and forbids her to eat. Making sense of how her history has played into the development of her voice has helped her to understand how the experience of incest shaped the voice.

However, not all voices are negative in nature like those of Karina and Lisette’s; as I mentioned earlier, many AVHs are not negative and do not provoke negative emotional reactions in the voice hearer. Many AVHs are positive, both in character and in the feelings they produce. It may be interesting to note that many visionaries and leaders have reported hearing voices. These voices often served to counsel them in certain decisions they needed to make. Such diverse figures as Socrates, Mahatmi Gandhi, Jesus Christ, George W. Bush, and Sigmund Freud have all reported hearing voices. Freud wrote:

During the days when I was living alone in a foreign city—I was a young man at the time—I quite often heard my name suddenly being called by an un-mistakable and beloved voice (2012, p. 261).

Francis Galton (1907/2011) observed that voice hearing occurred not only in the general population, but also in a number of ‘great men’. He attributed the cause of voice hearing in great men to the ‘loneliness of greatness’. He writes,

The hallucinations of great men may be accounted for in part by their sharing a tendency which we have seen to be not uncommon in the human race, and which, if it happens to be natural to them, is liable to be developed in their overwrought brains by the isolation of their lives…a great philosopher who explores ways of thought far ahead of his contemporaries must have an inner world in which he passes long and solitary hours (pp. 67-8).

Whether one is considered ‘great’ or ‘acclaimed’ by society is beside the point, however. I have simply discussed persons who are considered ‘renowned voice hearers’ to demonstrate that voice hearing is an experience that can occur in anyone. No matter what your status, career, age, ethnicity, culture, and location, voice hearing can occur.

Now that I have provided a brief introduction to what the experience of AVHs are like for some persons, I will extend my focus to include loneliness. That is, my focus in this chapter will be on exploring the role that loneliness plays in some auditory verbal hallucinations. I will suggest that a subset of AVHs can be linked to the experience of loneliness. In order to draw out what this experience may be like, I will first turn to some first-person experiences of persons who experience AVHs. I will also report that those hallucinations have occurred either following or during a period of being socially isolated and feeling lonely. Then, I will turn to the work of Gadamer. Specifically, I will look at his ideas on horizons, dialogue, and effective history. Doing so will help situate the case studies in a phenomenological framework. In the next section, I will discuss Hoffman’s (2007; 2008) Social Deafferentation Model and suggest that it may be useful in understanding the role loneliness plays in AVHs. I will conclude the chapter by arguing that through looking at case studies, the aspects of Gadamer’s hermeneutics outlined above, and Hoffman’s SDA model, what is missing in the experience of lonely voice hearers is recognition. I will briefly explain how recognition may fail to take place in some voice hearers.

4.1 *First-Person Accounts of Loneliness and Auditory Verbal Hallucinations*

A theme that occurs time and again in first-person accounts of voice hearing is that of feeling disconnected from other persons. In some instances, this even leads to feeling disconnected from the world itself. Take the case of Ami Rohnitz, a voice hearer interviewed by Romme & Escher (2009). Ami describes two separate instances of voice hearing. The first occurred after she was admitted to hospital after trying to commit suicide. During this time, she was unable to talk. She describes herself as ‘in a mental state of isolation. Shut off from the world around me, shut up in myself,’ (p. 105).

The other instance she recalls is when she moved into a new flat where she did not know any of her neighbors. She describes not knowing how to make friends with the people around her, so she instead isolated herself with the concept of a future spent all alone in her flat. She felt paranoid, hiding herself when people passed by so as not to be seen. This was when the voices would come.

In addition to Ami, many other voice hearers link their experiences of voice hearing with loneliness. Rufus May, for instance, recalls that he began hearing voices at the age of eighteen. His first girlfriend had just left him, his mom had had a brain hemorrhage accompanied by personality changes, and he had a boring job as an office junior. In addition to those issues, his best friend was in Germany, and he was trying to avoid his old dope-smoking friends. He felt ‘socially isolated’, ‘left out in the cold’ during that time period (p. 292). Another voice hearer, Dorothy, that Gail Hornstein (2009/2012) met at a group meeting, links the appearance of her voices with loneliness. She says,

I think it’s that I feel lonely. When I go home by myself, I have no one to talk to. That’s when the voices appear (p. 25).

The above first-person accounts suggest that there may be a link between voice hearing and loneliness in a subset of voice hearers. Ami, Rufus, and Dorothy all experienced voice hearing when they were isolated from other persons and feeling lonely. Therefore, I want to suggest that loneliness may be a precursor for voice hearing experiences. In order to build my case for this idea, I will now discuss what having a relationship with one’s voice is like. I will note ways in which relationships with people in the physical world and relationships with voices are similar and different.

Findings from many studies suggest that the experience of voice hearing is not nearly as removed from our everyday reality as one might imagine. For instance, Garret & Silva (2003) found that the majority of voices persons reported hearing were quite similar to hearing other persons speak. The majority of voices people hear speak at a normal conversational volume (Moritz & Laroi, 2008; Nayani & David, 1996). The majority of voice hearers say they know the identities of their voices (Garrett & Silva, 2003; Nayani & David, 1996). In some instances, the voice may tell the voice hearer its name, just like a regular person would do when introducing herself to another (Garrett & Silva, 2003). Below, I will examine some first-person accounts of the relationships voice hearers have with their voices.

Mieke Simons, a voice hearer interviewed by Marius and Romme (2009) emphasizes the need to engage in dialogue with his voices. He learned that talking with them helps ‘keep them in a positive mood’ (p. 246) so they do not say negative things to him. Mieke is one of many voice hearers who highlights the importance of being able to speak with their voices. Just like communication is vital to the sustenance of a healthy relationship between persons, many voice hearers have discovered that it is also pertinent to having a good relationship with their voices.

Voice hearer Jacqui Dillon takes the perspective that her voices are not other to her, but are actually *part* of her. She refers to them as ‘other selves’. She writes,

I began to understand that my voices were dissociated selves that were internalized representations of the world that I grew up in. These various selves had been born from my experience. Each self was a part of the whole of me (p. 192).

She then goes on to compare the relationship between her and her voices to that of a parent and child. She realizes that they need her ‘unconditional love and support’, to be listened to and understood with compassion. She recognizes that their function was to help her survive during some difficult times, so instead of resenting their presence, she began to honor and embrace them. Doing so led the voices to be supportive and understanding to her. Then, rather than feel as if the voices were just fragmented selves, ‘a sense of connectedness and wholeness grew’.

Eleanor Longden, a voice hearer interviewed by Romme & Escher (2009), discusses her relationship with her most dominant voice. Like Jacqui Dillon, she notes that there is a reciprocal nature to the relationship between her and her voices. She notices that once she realizes that she can trust the voice, in turn, the voice treats her more compassionately. Instead of being abusive to the voice as he was to her, she became more gentle, loving and respectful towards him. Her doing this led to the diminishment of the vicious, antagonistic cycle she and the voice had gotten into.

Debra Lampshire, another voice hearer interviewed by Romme & Escher (2009), talks about how she began to approach her voices ‘as [she] would approach any relationship’ (p. 132). She began to ‘put parameters around how and when they could contact’ her. She also began to take a closer look at other areas of her life, in order to discover what kind of role the voices played for her. She found that they fulfilled a particular need in her. She writes,

…they fulfilled a need in me—a need to feel connected to someone, a need for a friend, a need to belong. (…) The voices kept me so busy I had no time for any other relationships and they also spared me the pain and hurt I had experienced by numerous rejections from people in the past. At least they did not desert me (p. 132).

Debra realized that the voices served as a type of protective barrier for her. Because she had suffered some traumatic events, she felt ‘worthless, defective, unlovable’ (p. 130). She discovered that this led to her closing herself off from having real face-to-face interpersonal interactions with people. The risk of exposing herself and being vulnerable to other persons, as well as the possibility of them deserting her appeared too terrifying. Yet, what she finally identified as the key factor to her recovery was, as she puts it, ‘inviting real people into my world’. She says,

I decided I needed to take the risk of inviting real people into my world, and cautiously and clumsily this became my new quest. It proved to be pivotal to my recovery. Developing relationships and being exposed to people who showed they could be kind, caring, and flawed, just like me, freed me from the need for voices. As I put more time and energy into these relationships, the negative voices receded further and further back (p. 132).

In addition to some voice hearers recognizing that their voices act as substitutes for connection with other persons, others identify that their voices act as friends. Elisabeth Svanholmer, a Danish voice hearer, has five voices that she acknowledges have influenced her life the most. Amongst those is Soren, whom she calls an ‘invisible friend’. He has been with her for as far back as she can remember. He

represents everything that true friendship means to me: support, respect, honesty, trust, a deep unspoken understanding and the ability to love without wanting to possess (p. 147).

Another voice hearer, Jolanda van Hoeiji, talks about her voice called Hannah. Hannah is a voice she can remember having since she was very young. She describes herself as ‘a bit of a loner’ so ‘Hannah was my mate’. Like Elisabeth, she views her voice as an imaginary friend. She recalls a time when she worked in childcare and was speaking with a little boy who told her that he had an imaginary friend. ‘That is about how Hannah is. She was just there, and maybe that also had its advantages. I was a lonely child’ (p. 225).

A third voice hearer, Jeannette Woolthuis, talks about the role that her voices played when she was feeling anxious and on her own. She says, ‘they were the only ones who understood me and gave me support and therefore they became more influential and I became dependent on them’ (p. 204). Though she does not explicitly call her voices ‘friends’ like the other voice hearers above, the way she describes them is akin to the way one would describe a good friend.

It may be interesting to note that the voices that voice hearers call ‘friends’, ‘imaginary friends’, or describe as having the qualities of a friend, are not just any type of friends, but you could say that they almost function as *perfect friends*. What I mean by perfect friends, is that they are always around, always supportive and understanding, and never disappoint. They are there to emphatically listen to their concerns without judgments. Especially important for the lonely person is the quality of trustworthiness and the comfort that the voice will not abandon them.

Real relationships are imperfect to say the least. The various degrees of openness between persons lends itself to one’s being vulnerable before the other. Recall my discussion of Løgstrup in 3.1. There, I discussed Løgstrup’s idea that every relationship between persons involves ‘self-surrender’ (1997, p. 9) to the other. Løgstrup holds that there is an inherent risk involved in all relationships; one may honor the trust given by the other, or one may betray it. Or, looking at it in a different light, our friendships with people are often unequal in various regards. Perhaps one friend does the bulk of the listening and offering advice whilst the other voices her grievances; or in another friendship, one friend is more considerate of the other’s time. In some voice hearing relationships (such as the ones mentioned above), it is almost as if the voice is tailored to stand in for the gaps in their real lives.

For instance, Elisabeth’s voice called Soren she refers to as her ‘invisible friend’. She goes on to say that Soren represents everything that true friendship means to her. It can be inferred that Elisabeth was lacking a true friend in her life. She may have had friends, but none that she felt she could count on, none that she felt truly understood and supported her. Jolanda’s voice, Hannah, she described as her ‘mate’. Hannah has been a part of Jolanda’s life since she was a wee child. Jolanda thinks this is due to the fact that she was quite a loner. Since Jolanda did not have any friends, Hannah filled in the role of a friend for her. It can also be inferred that Jeannette was lacking good friends in her life. The voices, she said, were the only ones she could count on to support her, thus she became dependent upon them. Jeannette became dependent on their support and understanding just like you would with a close friend in the physical world. It may be easier to understand now why these voices can fill such vital friendship roles in voice hearers’ lives.

As I have attempted to show above, in many ways, the relationships that people have with their voices are similar to real-life relationships. The importance of engaging in dialogue, negotiating boundaries, and acting in ways to accommodate the other and better the relationship are ways that we value one another in our real-life friendships. However, in other ways, these two types of relationships are remarkably different. For instance, recall how voice hearer Jacqui Dillon refers to her voices as ‘dissociated selves’; she recognizes that her voices are not others, but are pieces of herself. Other voice hearers echo this idea, claiming that they come to recognize that their voices are not others, but are their own thoughts or ideas heard through the mouthpiece of other voices.

Perhaps the biggest way these relationships differ from real-life relationships between persons is that there is a very different feedback loop taking place. During real life conversations, for instance, one person often makes a point and waits for the other’s response. The other may agree or disagree, highlight a new idea one may wish to take into account, choose to exit the conversation, etc. There is, moreover, often an element of surprise in our real-life encounters.

Many voice hearers claim that their voices are like ‘a broken record’ telling them the same things over and over again. Though the voices are often disturbing and denigrating to the voice hearer, the vulnerability they create is different from that experienced in real life relationships. The vulnerability the voices create is, using the example of a denigrating voice, a fear that they will displease the voice. They also feel vulnerable because they do not know how long it will be until they hear the voice again. Thus, with malevolent voices, voice hearers are always on their guard, trying to prepare for the next attack. Voice hearers are vulnerable to benevolent voices as well, but in a very different way. Voice hearers are vulnerable to benevolent voices for their support and guidance. They trust and depend on them. Yet, sometimes voice hearers may become *too* dependent on the comfort voices may provide.

Part of real-life relationships is living through a constant vulnerability to other persons as well as an implicit trust.[[59]](#footnote-59) As some voice hearers have noted, their voices provide them with an escape from having to be open and vulnerable with real people. In other instances, their voices provide a sense of connection they are unable to achieve otherwise. What underlines both cases, however, is that they often feel that their voices are much less unpredictable than persons they encounter in real life. After a while, they know exactly what the voice will say to them.

These ideas still require some further fleshing out. Turning to the work of Gadamer in the next two sections may help in shedding some light on the connection between voice hearing and loneliness I have thus far suggested exists in a subset of voice hearers. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, a subset of voice hearers may develop voice hearing as an effect of loneliness. As I discussed in chapter 3, loneliness is often caused by a lack of friendships and love relationships, or feelings of dissatisfaction with the relationships one has. In this chapter, I have proposed that the voices of some lonely voice hearers may appear due to lacking satisfactory friendships and love relationships in real-life. Some lonely persons may attempt to substitute real-life relationships with voices. Through doing so, they are achieving a sense of recognition (albeit in a different sense than they would achieve through real-life relationships).

Gadamer’s work highlights several aspects that are important in understanding the experience of voice hearers: language, dialogue, effective history and horizon. His emphasis on language and dialogue helps illustrate the vital role they play in connecting persons. His ideas on effective history and horizon are used to demonstrate the vantage point the lonely voice hearer is situated in to better understand her experience. Thus, through looking at the work of Gadamer, I believe we can better understand the importance of language in fostering feelings of connection. We will also be able to better understand why persons who do not engage in dialogue with others may experience feelings of loneliness. In the following section, I will look at Gadamer’s ideas on hermeneutics, effective history, horizon, language and dialogue. I will begin by looking at the origins of hermeneutics in order to illustrate how Gadamer’s hermeneutics departed from them. This will provide insight into Gadamer’s hermeneutic approach.

4.2 *A Gadamerian Approach*

In this section, I will look at the work of Hans George Gadamer (1975/2004). I will suggest that his approach to hermeneutics, as well as his ideas on horizon, dialogue, the role of language, and effective history may be fruitful in understanding how our real-life relationships differ from relationships voice hearers have with their voices. Then, I will use the insights from Gadamer to aid in understanding the connection between voice hearing and loneliness.

4.2a *The Origins of Hermeneutics, Gadamer’s Hermeneutics and Truth*

Before delving into Gadamer’s conception of hermeneutics, I will first include a few brief remarks regarding the origins of hermeneutics itself. Hermeneutics began as a way of interpreting sacred and classical texts. It emerged after the Enlightenment period and is often viewed as a response to it. During the Enlightenment Period, emphasis was placed on holding an objective, scientific viewpoint. Moreover, the way of thinking during this period was that there was a certain pathway to achieving knowledge. Hermeneutics argues that human understanding cannot be ascertained simply by scientific methods but is instead a matter of interpretation. Each person holds a unique perspective on the world, based on the time period through which she lives, her upbringing and other factors.[[60]](#footnote-60) Therefore, obtaining a completely objective viewpoint is, for Gadamer, an impossible ideal. Our understanding of the way things are is always provisional, subject to revision. After all, we are constantly accruing new knowledge about the way things work, as well as having new experiences, which both contribute to the expansion and re-setting of our perspective.

Having new experiences, or more specifically, having seemingly unrepeatable or unique experiences, is what Gadamer refers to as *genuine hermeneutic experience*. In encounters he deems ‘genuine’, one is surprised, caught off guard in a novel way. Former expectations dissolve as things that were once taken for granted are seen in a new light. Truth for Gadamer lies in the hermeneutic experience, the ways in which these encounters have the capacity to re-shape our former understanding and expectations, rather than just confirm them. As Lawn (2012) puts it, for Gadamer, ‘Truth is revelation, what is opened up in the encounter between the familiar and unfamiliar’ (p. 62). Truth is authentic, and for Gadamer that represents that the encounter is genuine. Thus, according to Gadamer, it follows that the most genuine or truthful encounters we can have are those in which we engage in spoken dialogue with another person, which I will discuss in more depth in section 4.2c.

As I mentioned above, historically hermeneutics was just a method used to explore and better understand texts through interpretation.[[61]](#footnote-61) However, one of the ways in which Gadamer is distinctive is his idea that, in addition to hermeneutics being a useful methodology in understanding texts, it can be applied in a much broader context; that is, hermeneutics can be applied at a *universal level* (Risser, 1997; 2012). It is not just texts that can be understood through interpretation, but everything we do can undergo interpretation. Whether it be tasks such as reading and writing, or looking and thinking, interpretation can be applied to achieve a better understanding. Through the act of interpretation, we can get a glimpse of the truth that we are striving towards. In order to better understand what this process of interpretation looks like (as well as Gadamer’s hermeneutics overall), I will now turn to Gadamer’s ideas on what he calls *horizon*.

The term ‘horizon’ is certainly not a novel one in Gadamer’s work. Prior to Gadamer, other philosophers such as Nietzsche and Husserl also used it to refer to a viewpoint or perspective. In *Truth and Method* (2004), Gadamer describes it thus:

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth (p. 301).

For Gadamer, each person has his own horizon. That is, he views the situations he is in from his own particular vantage point. The situations he finds himself in limit his ‘possibility of vision’ (p. 301). By stating that the situations limit his possibility of vision, I take Gadamer to mean that persons involvement in a situation gives them a personal, subjective view of the situation. Because they are involved in it, a different or more objective viewpoint is difficult to achieve. That said, a person who has a horizon is still able to envision some possibilities beyond what they are experiencing in the present. Additionally, factors such as a person’s effective history influence their viewpoint.[[62]](#footnote-62) A person’s horizon can be narrow or open up to include new horizons. On the other hand, a person may also not have a horizon at all. Gadamer contends that this is because a person ‘does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him’ (p. 301).

Applying Gadamer’s idea of ‘horizon’ to the experience of AVHs, I suggest that the isolated person experiencing AVHs may have an altered horizon. I propose that a person who has AVHs may experience either a narrowing of her horizon or an opening up of new horizons. If she is lonely and having AVHs, her loneliness may close her off to connecting with other persons, thus making her horizon too limited to allow others in. Allowing others in one’s horizon is important because other persons have the ability to alter or change one’s viewpoint. Other persons may help one expand one’s horizon by imagining other possibilities. Also, other persons are important for engaging in dialogue with. Dialogue, as I will argue in section 4.2c, helps foster connection between persons. Alternatively, a lonely person experiencing AVHs may be opening up new horizons. In some cases, the horizon the lonely person had for interpersonal possibilities is gone, so new horizons through which one lacks interpersonal connections and attempts to receive it through dialoguing with voices have opened up.

Whether it is the case that the lonely voice hearer’s horizon is narrowed, or new horizons have opened up for her, her horizon has been altered. Arguably, she will not be able to achieve the same level of connection through dialoguing with voices that she can with other human beings. One possible reason for this may be that voices function as ‘other selves’ (Romme & Escher, 2009, p. 192), as Jacqui Dillon asserted. That is, one may recognize that the voices she hears are not different persons, but rather just different parts of herself. That said, interacting with one’s voices may be less like interacting with another person and more like interacting with another version or part of yourself. Being with others, engaging in dialogue, I hold, serves to open up one’s horizon to include more possibilities than one would be able to conceive of on one’s own.

There are several elements that make up one’s horizon, including what Gadamer calls *effective history* and *language*. Before expanding upon my ideas on the role Gadamer’s hermeneutics play in a subset of lonely voice hearers, it is important to first get a clearer idea of some of the different elements that make up Gadamer’s notion of *horizon*. Developing a better understanding of these terms will lead to a better understanding of Gadamer’s vision of horizons. Below, I outline what Gadamer means by the employment of the terms *effective history* and *language*.

4.2b *Gadamer on Effective History and Language*

For Gadamer, our present is always infused with the past. That is not to say that we are always immersed in our past, but rather that our past always filters through our present. The way that we understand things in the present moment is always through our *effective history*, which means the history of the effects that have made us the kinds of persons we are today (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301). The one who is attempting to interpret, who seeks to understand, is always the effect of prior interpretation. For Gadamer, the act of interpretation itself is the effect that the past has upon the present. Gadamer holds that there is in fact an *effective historical consciousness* through which understanding takes place. He uses this term to further bring out the idea that consciousness always operates through the effects the past has on the present (2004*,* p. 301, 306, 336-7, 355).

Furthermore, the way we understand is always captured through tradition. Tradition is composed of past, present, and future. The way we attempt to understand ourselves is through the unknown future, but the way we understand in the present is always through the past. Our effective history is composed of a variety of elements. These include the country one was raised in, the role our parents played in our lives growing up, the kind of education we received, and so on. One’s past forms not only one’s effective history, but also gives one what Gadamer calls *prejudices*.

It is important to note here that Gadamer does not mean ‘prejudice’ in the ordinary way it is used in vernacular dialogue. Rather, he uses the term ‘prejudice’ to stand for the pre-judgments we have in interpreting and understanding things (2004*,* p. 277). Often, horizons are opened up with exposure to new things. Imagine someone’s horizon is enveloped in their family’s horizon. This person comes from a family of doctors, so the family horizon is structured through the idea of being a doctor. Whilst attending university to become a doctor, the person may or may not realize that he wishes to pursue another profession. Prior to being exposed to other disciplines, all the student had known is that of being a doctor. Now that he has been exposed to other disciplines, he realizes that he formerly had a prejudice towards becoming a doctor due to his upbringing. With more knowledge of other professions, he now feels as if he can make a more informed decision on his future profession. He may decide to carry on the tradition in his family of being a doctor, or he may forge a new path.[[63]](#footnote-63)

In addition to our effective history contributing to the scope of our horizon, Gadamer emphasizes the crucial role that language plays. Through language, ‘the historical nature of man to himself and the world is mediated’ (2004, p. 454). Indeed, his conception of horizon is similar to Humboldt’s idea that language is not just a means of communication for speakers, but it also gives the speaker a vantage point from which to view the world (2004*,* p. 404). Thus, language is critical in having a world view. Indeed, Gadamer asserts that ‘language is not just one of man’s possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a world at all’ (p. 440). Gadamer goes on to insist, ‘whoever has language “has” the world’ (p. 449), as it is ‘in language the world presents itself’ (p. 446). Language functions by way of provid[ing] the horizon as both disclosure and limit’ (Lawn, 2012, p. 66).

Through language ‘the reality beyond every individual consciousness becomes visible’, (Gadamer, 2004, p. 446). Not only does one make his thoughts and ideas clear through language, but language for Gadamer also operates in other important ways. Firstly, Gadamer holds that language operates on the assumption that one both desires to understand and be understood. This means that one desires to understand other people and their thoughts, prejudices, traditions, etc.; in turn, one also desires that other people will understand one’s position. Therefore, language is the medium through which understanding and agreement between persons can occur. Gadamer holds that we use language in a way that seeks to bring us into agreement with the other person. It is one of the goals of language to find common ground with others. This leads me to the second point.

Secondly, Gadamer holds that ‘language always presupposes a common world—even if it is only a play world,’ (2004*,* p. 407). This idea is crucial to what I want to emphasize in this chapter; that is, that language, and more specifically dialogue, is an important means through which we experience connection and recognize each other. I want to suggest that in a subset of voice hearers, AVHs may serve as a means of substituting our ordinary ways of dialogue and supplementing it with voices in our heads. What I mean by this is that lonely voice hearers may be lacking opportunities or do not feel comfortable engaging in conversation with others. Due to lack of conversation, they may be feeling as if the common world that we come to share through language, as Gadamer contends, has evaporated. Thus, the voices may serve as a means of retaining a sense of a shared world with others through language when others are absent. In order to elaborate upon these ideas, I will now turn to Gadamer’s ideas on dialogue.

*4.2c Gadamer on Dialogue*

For Gadamer, we are always striving towards understanding. Language makes up the background through which understanding may emerge. He is careful to note, however, that it is only through dialogue with other persons that understanding can emerge. You could say that dialogue is representative of, if not the greatest example of the hermeneutic experience. This may be evinced through some of Gadamer’s remarks on conversation. He says,

We say that we” conduct” a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partners. Thus a genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct (2004, p. 383).

Though we may try to conduct conversations according to a specific agenda, it is often the case that even in these situations, conversations do not go according to plan. Conversations that we do not allow to flow freely and take on the form they will are, according to Gadamer, not genuine conversations. True engagement with the other is often imbued with moves in unpredictable directions. Conversations often take unexpected turns; one moment, the tone is light-hearted and playful—the next, one simple statement or question can lead to the conversation suddenly being very serious. As Lawn (2012) insightfully adds:

Authentic dialogue reveals something about its participants. Dialogue is the very opposite of self-reflexive, monoadic, introspective thought. It is intrinsically spoken (as opposed to written or merely thought) and it takes place in a public forum. (…) In the genuine dialogue the participants change as initial assumptions are challenged, modified, held up to scrutiny in the public court of appeal, in the dialogue itself. (…) A productive dialogue often has the effect of forcing one to see things differently and in a new light (pp. 71-2).

Recall some of the examples from section 4.1, where I looked at first-person accounts of voice hearers. This quote from Lawn shows that, though AVHs can be revelatory, they normally function in ways that reveal things about only the hearer himself or his past relationships. Namely, there is no new input data that is occurring. Through the experience of AVHs, one may discover new insights about himself, his past and the people in his past, but the present and future will remain a mystery. If one is able to dialogue with his voice, he may then be able to view the relationship he has with the voice, as well as relationships with himself and persons from his past differently (e.g., Romme & Escher, 2009). However, he would not be able to glean any new insights into other persons in the present.

For Gadamer, communication occurs through a sense of trust; that is, one trusts in the willingness of the other person to reach out to her, and to be reaching towards understanding. Lawn notes, ‘Without the assumption of that trust language would constantly break down lacking the necessary flexibility within which trust operates’ (2012, p. 129). Gadamer himself states that our,

…social life depends on our acceptance of everyday speech as trustworthy. We cannot order a taxi without this trust. Thus understanding is the case not misunderstanding (quoted in Gadamer, Misgeld and Nicholson, 1992, p. 71).

Recall the discussion on the importance of trust in Chapter 3. There, I argued that trust is not only a vital aspect of having sustainable relationships, but also helps keep loneliness at bay. In the instance of lonely voice hearers, it may be the case that the voices occur in part because of the lack of trust they feel towards persons they encounter in everyday life. When someone is lonely, they often have a difficult time reaching out to others and accepting people reaching out to them. Thus, it may be the case that lonely voice hearers no longer accept everyday speech as trustworthy, so the voices may represent a sort of safety. This is because, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, many voice hearers report that their voices are like broken records, repeating the same things over and over again. This is different from exchanging in dialogue with real life persons, whose topics of conversation are often varied and unpredictable. The predictability of the voices saying the same things over and over again may give the voice hearer feelings of safety. As Gadamer asserts, our social life is dependent upon accepting everyday speech as trustworthy. In the world of the lonely voice hearer, relationships may be fraught with distrust or they may not be encountering many other persons at all. Thus, the voices may come as a means of supplementing the missing dialogue.

Gadamer holds that one of the goals we have in mind whilst engaging in dialogue is to better understand ourselves and the other. If we take this to be the case, then it illustrates yet another difference between real life dialogue and AVHs. Though one may reach an agreement with the voice (e.g., the voice agrees to only talk with one at certain times of the day), or one may come to better understand a voice (such as Lisette in our example earlier, who recognized the voice of Stefan as her abusive stepfather), it is not the same as reaching an agreement or coming to an understanding with another person.

Recall the first subsection in this section on Gadamer’s ideas on horizons. There, I discussed how each person operates from within her specific horizon or viewpoint of the world. Taken in one sense, only real human beings can have horizons. In another sense, one could argue that the voice one hears is a horizon. After all, voices *do* often have many of the components needed to make up a horizon I have discussed. They do have a historically effected conscious and prejudices, and you can engage in dialogue with them. However, one could argue that voices are not dynamic enough to have horizons; that is, they are not able to envision possibilities about the future. As I discussed in section 4.2a, Gadamer holds that one must be able to envision alternative possibilities to the present if one is to have a horizon (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301). Voices can only access feelings about the past and present. The phenomenon of voice hearing presents a huge amount of complexity when considering horizons. It is debatable whether voices can have horizons, so it may be even more questionable whether voices can form what Gadamer calls a *fusion of horizons* with voice hearers.

The term *fusion of horizons* is a term Gadamer uses to describe the process of understanding (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 306-7). He holds that each person occupies his own horizon and through the attempt to understand another person, extends his horizon in order to fuse with that of the other. The extent to which one fuses with the other can be measured by the extent to which agreement is reached, as well as partial understanding. Though Gadamer emphasizes that we should always be striving towards agreement and understanding, working towards the fusion of our horizon with others, he also holds that a complete fusion of horizons is impossible. It will never be the case that complete agreement and perfect harmony is achieved between persons. Total transparency in understanding one another is an impossible ideal. This is because ‘the horizons of interpretation change constantly’ (2004, p. 61). Yet, though we will never be able to fully reach agreement and understanding with the other, he holds that that fact does not cancel out the need for constant interpretation and striving towards truth and understanding of the other. Though each person is often undergoing change and revising his perspective on the world, that does not mean that two persons cannot come together and try to reach an agreement as best as they can.

As I remarked earlier, the experience of AVHs may entail some sort of agreement or understanding reached between the voice hearer and her voices. Just like a real-life relationship, various components of the relationship between voice hearers and their voices must be re-negotiated: terms of the relationship, how often the voice may speak to them, and how the voice speaks and behaves towards them. You could say that some form of fusion of horizons can occur between a voice hearer and her voices. Yet, as I discussed above, it is debatable whether a fusion of horizons between a voice hearer and her voices can occur. Looking at the example below will provide further insight into why a fusion of horizons between a voice hearer and her voices may be difficult to achieve.

Recall the account from voice hearer Jacqui Dillon in section 4.1. Jacqui believes that her voices are not other, but are actually *part* of her, thus she refers to them as ‘other selves’. She spoke of her voices as ‘dissociated selves’ that were ‘internalized representations’ of the world she grew up in. She views each self as coming from one of her experiences, thus contends that each self makes up part of the whole that is her. Jacqui learned that if she spoke with the voices in ways that showed her ‘unconditional love and support’ for them, and listened to and understood them with compassion, they in turn treated her in a kinder manner. Doing so made her feel connected to herself, ‘whole’ again.

However, the sense of connection Jacqui experienced with her voices is still different from the sense of connection one would experience with another person. It is certainly the case that treating the other with more kindness, understanding and compassion can lead to better connection with other persons; however, the type of connection that Jacqui had with her voices was more with herself. She felt that once she was able to engage in dialogue with her voices, she was able to put the pieces of herself back together and feel whole. Yet, this does not solve the problem of loneliness she may experience through not engaging in dialogue with other persons. Though she may have reached a better understanding of the voices and their purpose for her, I argue that it is still not comparable to engaging in dialogue with a real-life person and reaching a better understanding with them. One may feel connected to one’s voices, but they may not offer the same level of comfort, and more importantly, recognition that one needs in order to not be lonely.

Above, I have just drawn a brief sketch of ways that we can use some of Gadamer’s ideas to better understand the subset of lonely voice hearers I have suggested may experience AVHs as a means to cope with their loneliness. In the next section, I will discuss another approach: Hoffman’s Social Deafferentation Hypothesis (2007; 2008). I will briefly look at Hoffman’s ideas and suggest how they may be useful in understanding voice hearing, particularly from the viewpoint of lonely voice hearers. Looking at Hoffman’s Social Deafferentation Hypotheis will provide more rationale as to why I contend that some lonely persons experience AVHs.

4.3 *Hoffman’s SDA Hypothesis*

In Hoffman’s (2007) work ‘A Social Deafferentation Hypothesis for Induction of Active Schizophrenia’, he proposes that high levels of social isolation or withdrawal in vulnerable persons prompts their social cognition programs to produce social meaning by way of complex, emotionally vivid hallucinations and delusions representing other persons and agents. He bases his hypothesis from the following observations:

1. Many studies suggest that social isolation is often both a precursor and a risk factor for active schizophrenia
2. Sensory deafferentation often produces brain reorganization and complex hallucinations
3. The hallucinations and delusions schizophrenic persons experience are generally emotionally compelling and produce a typical/unusual social meaning (Hoffman, 2007, pp. 1066-7)

Several studies have indicated that social isolation may play a causal role in increasing the risk of schizophrenia. One early study conducted by Faris and Dunham (1939) found that living conditions that fostered social isolation in Chicago were tied to an increased incidence of schizophrenia, thus they postulated that ‘extreme seclusiveness’ could be a causal factor. A recent study has suggested that immigration produces a notable increased risk of schizophrenia (Cantor-Grae, Selten, 2005). Another study shows that the risk of immigrants developing schizophrenia is especially high when the migrant group comprises a small minority in comparison to the general population (Smith *et. al*, 2006).[[64]](#footnote-64)

In addition to the studies above, Hoffman and his colleagues have found corroborating evidence. They conducted surveys in which they asked schizophrenic persons if they were aware of when their voices began, and if so, what (if any) circumstances they recalled occurring prior to the onset of their voices. Of the cases surveyed who were able to recall the onset of their verbal hallucinations, increased social isolation prior to hallucination onset was 73% (Hoffman *et. al*, 2008). The most typical responses of verbal hallucinations following increased seclusion or isolation were: moving to a new neighborhood where one has no friends, being alone in an apartment whilst writing a dissertation, driving by oneself cross-country, and traveling alone to a non-English speaking country (Hoffman, 2007, p. 1066).

Like Romme and Escher (2009), Hoffman notes that although some verbal hallucinations are of persons or things the person is not acquainted with (e.g., angels), many of the voices are reflective of persons the voice hearer knows or has known. Indeed, Hoffman found that in 40% of cases, the acoustic characteristics of the speaking voices heard by the voice hearer are those of persons either previously known to the patients, or if unknown, become experienced by the voice hearer as familiar over time (Nayani & David, 1996). In addition to the voices often being recognizable, their verbal content is often not spurious either, but instead expressive of recurrent themes or ideas (Hoffman *et. al*, 2008) that tend to be emotionally resonant to the voice hearer. This often prompts the voice hearer to engage in dialogue with the voice(s) (Nayani & David, 1996). Voice hearers often say that they have an intimate ‘relationship’ with their voices, independent of whether the verbal content heard is positive or negative.

Due to the lack of interpersonal interactions some schizophrenic persons have, they may read into the few social situations, environmental stimuli, etc. that they encounter signs that are not there. Ambiguous signals are processed as having intentional meaning towards the schizophrenic person. Hoffman adds,

More elaborated delusions involving a range of misinterpreted signs and cues lead persons with schizophrenia to “discover” plots and schemes involving real or imagined persons or agents that can be viewed as repopulating a barren interpersonal world (2007, p. 1067).

Furthermore, Hoffman notes that although many hallucinations and delusions are experienced negatively,

they correspond to emotionally charged meaning seeming to derive from other persons that could provide a functional replacement for impoverished social experience (2007, p. 1068).

Though Hoffman’s focus is on how social isolation may be a precursor and risk factor for schizophrenia, I do not think it is necessary to confine the insights gained during his study to cases of schizophrenic persons. As he discusses in the quotes above, hallucinations and delusions ‘correspond to emotionally charged meaning’ possibly providing a ‘replacement for impoverished social experience, attempting to repopulate ‘a barren interpersonal world’. As I have suggested in this chapter, AVHs may be viewed as a way for some persons dealing with loneliness to retain a sense of being part of the social world. As voice hearer Debra Lampshire mentioned earlier, the voices she heard fulfilled a need in her; specifically, they fulfilled the ‘need to feel connected to someone, a need for a friend, a need to belong’. If Hoffman’s model is correct, then a lack of social stimuli can create AVHs. According to his model, the mind works tirelessly to locate social input and creates some where there is none. The need for connection, the need to keep loneliness at bay, may in some cases drive the mind to create connections via AVHs.

Returning to Gadamer may help in further illustrating these ideas. If Gadamer is right in stating that true understanding can only occur through dialogue and the fusion of horizons, then the vital role that the other plays in understanding and connection becomes clearer. The act of language by itself is not enough for connection to occur. One’s speaking to oneself may serve in sorting out some temporary issue, or remind one to do some task, but it may not help one connect with anyone in the same way that engaging in dialogue with them would. Though one has the capacity to think and speak on one’s own, without another person to bounce ideas off on, to challenge one, one may not be able to reach any new understandings or make a connection with another person. Without the other to engage in dialogue with, to reach out towards and attempt to fuse horizons with, one may not be able to grow and reach new interpretations of oneself, others and the world. It seems to follow that some lonely voice hearers may attempt to mirror this real-world interaction through AVHs.

My main argument in this thesis is that feelings of loneliness result from a lack of recognition between persons. In order to draw out what I mean by recognition, I will use the case of a person who is socially isolated from other persons. Say a young man is living abroad in a country where he does not speak the mother tongue. He finds himself spending most of his days with no or very little social interaction with persons. Without the presence of other persons, he may find himself feeling lonely. This is in part because there is no one there to engage with and receive feedback from. There is no one there to converse with, thus, as Gadamer contends, understanding cannot be reached.

As I contend, this lack of being able to engage in dialogue with others may lead to feelings of loneliness. These feelings of loneliness, in turn, may lead to persons developing AVHs as a means of coping with the lack of social input. The presence of AVHs may serve to both diminish and exacerbate feelings of loneliness. AVHs may diminish feelings of loneliness in that the voice hearer at least feels the presence of something there and may be able to engage in dialogue with the voice(s). However, the voice hearer may also experience loneliness whilst hearing voices. This is due to two factors: a) she hears voices no one else hears, therefore she cannot share or find ways to relate to other persons, and b) the voices are not a part of the physical world, thus she may feel isolated by this fact. Though the connections she may forge with her voices are important, these relationships are not the same as real life relationships.

In this chapter, I have examined the role that loneliness plays in the development and experience of a subset of auditory verbal hallucinations. Through looking at the work of Gadamer and Hoffman, I have suggested that some AVHs may occur due to persons being socially isolated and feeling lonely (and vice versa). I have emphasized the importance of language, particularly dialogue, in forming connections with other persons. I have illustrated the crucial role that being able to engage with other persons and have dialogue with them plays in experiencing connection, and also what the cost may be when those things are absent. In the next chapter, I will examine experiences of loneliness in relation to depression. Looking at experiences of persons who are lonely and/or depressed will shed further light on what the experience of loneliness is like, how it differs from the experience of depression, and how feelings of loneliness are caused by a lack of recognition.

Chapter 5

*Unreachable: Exploring the Relationship between Loneliness and Depression*

The ordinary way we live our lives is through a nexus of possibilities for connection with other persons.[[65]](#footnote-65) The usual way we experience the world is shared and structured through our relationships. Through these relationships, we experience connection and learn how to better understand and relate to one another. But what happens when our ordinary shared world is disrupted? The experiences of loneliness and depression[[66]](#footnote-66) both exemplify states in which one’s world (particularly the interpersonal world in loneliness) is significantly altered from what it was before.[[67]](#footnote-67) Depressed persons even go so far as to state that they feel as if they inhabit a different world from the one they lived in prior to their depression. A patient of Hornstein’s (2009) describes it by stating

You know that you have lost life itself. You’ve lost a habitable earth. You’ve lost the invitation to live that the universe normally extends to us at every moment. You’ve lost something that people don’t even know is. That’s why it’s so hard to explain (p. 216).

Here, Hornstein’s patient points to the ineffability of the depression experience. As earlier chapters have shown, persons feeling lonely also often have difficulty describing their experience. Loneliness, like depression, is often not something people who are in the grips of can just ‘snap’ out of, as it entails alterations in the way that a person relates to others and experiences interpersonal relationships. As I will show in section 5.2, the experience of loneliness entails not only a difference in *actual* interpersonal relationships, but it alters one’s interpersonal *possibilities* as well.

In this chapter, I will look at how the experiences of loneliness and depression disrupt the ordinary interpersonal world. I will begin in section 5.1 by defining the terminology to be explored in this chapter and briefly discussing the difficulties in teasing apart loneliness and depression. In section 5.2, I will begin by taking a closer look at how depression is described by suffers as living in a different ‘world’, and how loneliness may be described as living in a different interpersonal world. I will go on to discuss the way in which possibilities are altered in lonely and depressive experiences: depression often involves a loss of possibilities altogether, and loneliness involves a loss of interpersonal possibilities.I will also include a discussion on Binswanger’s (1975) ideas on rootedness versus falling, and how those affect what we perceive to be our possibilities.

Section 5.3 will explore the way that the sense of hope is altered in loneliness and depression. The depressed person, I will argue, may lose the capacity to hope altogether, as both his existential and intentional ways of hoping are altered, and the lonely person may lose the capacity to hope for interpersonal desires to be actualized. Section 5.4 looks at loneliness and depression in relation to empathy, showcasing how both experiences alter the ways in which we are able to empathically relate to people. Empathy no doubt enhances the ways in which we develop and sustain relationships, and with a diminished capacity to empathize, our interpersonal world suffers many setbacks.

Section 5.5 highlights the centrality of feelings of loneliness in the experience of depression, arguing that loneliness should be taken more seriously in depression diagnoses, as well as in the diagnosis of psychiatric illnesses overall. This again demonstrates the profound impact our interpersonal lives have: when the normal way we experience connection is altered, it suggests that changes at that level will bring about changes at other levels, down to how we view ourselves and our activities. In section 5.6, I will draw conclusions about the role of loneliness in depression overall and have a short discussion on how this further exemplifies the need for recognition.

5.1 *Descriptions and definitions of loneliness and depression*

Disentangling the terms *loneliness* and *depression* from one another is a difficult task. This difficulty often leads persons to wonder which malady they are suffering from: loneliness or depression? Or, as some have suggested, are they just depressed, loneliness being one of many symptoms? Alternatively, are the two states so similar that they needn’t be separated? Psychologists, as well as testimonies in case studies, argue that loneliness and depression are, in fact, two different, distinctive states (e.g., Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Distinguishing loneliness and depression is important for several reasons, including: a) clarity for persons experiencing loneliness and/or depression in understanding what they are experiencing, b) clarity for psychologists in correct counseling practices for persons experiencing each state, and c) clarity for psychiatrists in accurately diagnosing and treating persons experiencing loneliness and/or depression. I will elaborate upon point a throughout this chapter, and points b and c in section 5.5, respectively. In order to showcase how persons often equate loneliness and depression, I will now turn to a case study from Emily White.

Emily White (2010) discusses her frustration in people’s lack of understanding regarding the differences between loneliness and depression. ‘Maybe you were just *depressed*,’ editors and marketing reps would suggest to her as she tried to pitch her loneliness memoir. White’s response is a resounding ‘no’. She demarcates between the two states by viewing depression as a sort of presence, which she notes is often rightly depicted in memoirs as a ‘black dog.’ ‘Depression really does feel like something hounding and snapping at you. It’s as though you’ve been set upon by something vicious you can’t see.’ (p. 28) Loneliness, on the other hand, she views as absence. In addition to her own views on loneliness and depression, White also conducted interviews of lonely people who stressed that their loneliness was a problem in its own right. Whether the interviewees struggled with depression or not, they ‘described themselves as having two problems, not one,’ (White, 2010, p. 27). Cacioppo (in correspondence with White, 2010), agrees that they ought to be examined as two distinct states. He says,

Loneliness is related to depression, but it’s *not* the same thing. If you see loneliness as just an aspect of depression—and that’s really how it’s been conceived—then it doesn’t require any special attention (quoted in White, 2010).

Part of the problem in distinguishing the differences between loneliness and depression is simply that there has been far more research conducted on depression. There are also far more depression memoirs on the shelves. In her 1959 article ‘On Loneliness’, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann notes some reasons why this may be the case.

The writer who wishes to elaborate on loneliness is faced with a serious terminological handicap: Loneliness seems to be such a painful, frightening experience that people do practically everything to avoid it. This avoidance seems to include a strange reluctance on the part of psychiatrists to seek scientific clarification on the subject,” (p. 1).

Fifty-five years later, loneliness, for the most part, remains a subject to be discussed behind closed doors. In a 2014 article in the *Irish Times*, Jennifer O’Connell writes,

We all know how it feels. It is as much a part of the human condition as love or pain. According to a new study, it is twice as likely to kill you as obesity. And yet no one wants to talk about it. Loneliness really is our last taboo.

Depression, on the other hand, has experienced an increase in visibility, particularly in the last twenty-five years, with more and more depression memoirs being published, as well as more empirical psychological studies being conducted. However, as Ratcliffe (2015) notes, there has been little research conducted on the phenomenology of depression, especially in comparison with the phenomenology of schizophrenia. He postulates that this may be due to the assumption that depression is simply an ‘intensification or proliferation of commonplace feelings, emotions and moods’ (2015, p. 1), therefore the only requisite to understanding the phenomenology of depression is to imagine having intensive experiences of familiar kinds. Ratcliffe departs from this oft-held assumption, arguing that experiences of depression ‘differ radically from many people’s mundane, everyday experience’, (2015, p. 1). Indeed, case studies corroborate his views, as accounts of depression consistently assert that the experience falls outside the range of normalcy and is difficult or nigh impossible to describe. For example, one person whom experienced depression stated, ‘I have no words to describe this thing that was totally alien to my life experience’, (quoted in Whybrow, 1997, p. 23). Arguably, these quotes from depressed persons could also be from lonely persons, which demonstrates how difficult the experiences of loneliness and depression are to disentangle.

As I have elaborated upon above, distinguishing between loneliness and depression is often a challenging task. This is because the experiences are often described in similar terms. At first glance, the experiences may appear quite similar. However, through looking at case studies, as well as various other ways I will discuss in this chapter, I will show how the apparent similarities between loneliness and depression are superficial; on closer inspection, there are important differences between the two.

One way these differences can be ascertained is by pointing to the terminological differences between loneliness and depression. As I have noted throughout this thesis, by *loneliness*, I am referring to the painful sense of subjective disconnection one feels. When I use the term *depression* in this chapter, I am referring to *major depression*. According to the latest version of the DSM, major depression is characterized by fatigue, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, impaired concentration, insomnia or hypersomnia, loss of pleasure in activities, recurrent thoughts of death or suicide, significant weight loss or gain, and restlessness or feeling slowed down (DSM V, 2013).

These definitions of loneliness and depression are useful; however, they only provide a limited amount of information on the experiences. As I have emphasized, in order to better understand what loneliness is, we need to turn to case studies to listen to what people feeling lonely are saying. The same with depression: statements of symptoms from the DSM can only provide a limited amount of information. Therefore, in order to delineate between the two, I will look at a few descriptions in order to compare and contrast. I will begin by looking at some case studies from lonely persons.

Mrs. Graham, a widower that Weiss (1973) interviewed, attempted to explain her loneliness. She said,

I feel like I’m searching and I don’t really know what I’m searching for. It’s hard to put in words. It’s a strange feeling, the feeling that you’re completely alone, that there’s no one else in the world in your spot. If you look at it from another way, you’re not in such a bad spot, but you’re completely alone in it, and you don’t want this. So you look. You look in the wrong places and the wrong things, but you look anyhow. It doesn’t stop you from looking (p. 139).

A woman interviewed by Seepersad (2011) describes her loneliness, ‘It feels like everyone is living their lives with me floating on the outside,’ (Louise\*[[68]](#footnote-68), p. 41). Another woman Seepersad interviewed described her loneliness by way of directly looking at the difficulties she has in relating to people.

I have been trying for what seems like forever to escape these very overwhelming periods of loneliness. In close friendships I feel deserted, at work I feel like an outsider, in motherhood I feel overbearing, etc. (Elizabeth\*, p. 49).

The above passages indicate that feelings of loneliness may involve a sense of searching for someone to fill in the gaps, feelings of isolation, and lack of belonging in one’s social world. Notably, all of the quotes on loneliness emphasize that loneliness is an interpersonal issue. How does the experience of depression compare? I will now look at some case studies of depressed persons.

In his book *Speaking of Sadness*, David Karp interviews persons suffering from depression. Here is one excerpt from the book showcasing how depression might feel to the sufferer.

Depression is an insidious vacuum that crawls into your brain and pushes your mind out of the way. It is the complete absence of rational thought. It is freezing cold with a dangerous, horrifying, terrifying fog wafting throughout whatever is left of your mind (…) Depression steals away whoever you were, prevents you from seeing who you might someday be, and replaces your life with a black hole. Like a sweater eaten by moths, nothing is left of the original, only fragments that hinted at greater capacities, greater abilities, greater potentials now gone. Nothing human beings value matters anymore…because nothing and no one can reach the person trapped inside the void (1996, pp. 23-25).

In her memoir *The Devil Within*, Stephanie Merritt writes,

Depression is a bleakness that has gone beyond your control: you can no longer climb out of it through any act of will or be jollied out of it by others or by a change of circumstance. In this state of mind, you believe that neither the best, nor the worst news imaginable would make any measurable difference to the way you feel. You cannot take your mind off it, because it is your mind: bitter, relentless, despairing (2008, pp. 8-9).

In both accounts of depressive experience I have shared above, a sense of finality prevails. Depression is viewed as inescapable by the sufferer. As Merritt notes, ‘it *is* your mind’ (2008, p. 9, my emphasis). The depressed person feels completely unreachable, that ‘nothing and no one’ (Karp, 1996, p. 25) can reach her. The accounts of loneliness tell a different story, however. Mrs. Graham highlights the sense of searching that goes on whilst lonely. What the lonely person needs to be cured of is deeply unsatisfying relationships, so she searches for them, albeit often in the wrong places. In Louise’s account as well she states that she has long been ‘trying to escape’ her loneliness. The person feeling lonely, therefore, is still reachable; she still hungers for connection, despite often not knowing how to achieve it. The depressed person, on the other hand, has often given up on the very *possibility* of connection itself.

In the following section, I will look closer at the alterations in possibilities both lonely and depressed persons experience. I will also further elaborate upon some earlier claims I made regarding depression being a loss of one’s ordinary world, and loneliness representing a loss in one’s ordinary social world.

5.2 *Loss of possibilities and loss of world in loneliness and depression*

Ordinarily, one’s world is structured by a variety of possibilities: practically, socially and emotionally. One’s possibilities may range anywhere from mundane, everyday tasks such as, ‘I could fix the fence today’, to decisions on whether to pursue a profession like, ‘I could study to become a lawyer’, or decisions on whether to have a child ‘I could try to get pregnant or adopt in the next several years’. Various possibilities, enticing or otherwise, ordinarily present themselves to one. However, in both experiences of loneliness and depression, the way one experiences possibilities is altered. In experiences of loneliness, one’s interpersonal possibilities are altered, and in experiences of depression, one’s interpersonal as well as most or all other possibilities are altered. That is, depression is characterized not only by the possibilities for meaningful relationships with other persons being altered, but by possibilities outside relationships as well, such as career possibilities and possibilities in everyday functioning.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Loneliness is often characterized by a curious tension between having a strong desire for social connection, yet feeling worried that the kind of meaningful relationships one seeks will not come to fruition. Thus, one facet that features in experiences of loneliness is the use of the imagination to fill in the gaps in one’s present social milieu. White (2010) mentions several times how, whilst lonely, she would use her imagination to create a more ideal social world for herself.

I’d imagine a move to Ottawa, a move that might see me settling in with a small and closely knit group of crunchy environmentalists. I’d start to wonder about graduate work, about falling in with a cohort of like-minded students at a leafy campus out east. Or I’d fantasize about calling up the fisherman I used to date, and embarking, somewhat improbably, on a new life as a cook on a long-liner off the Alaskan coast. And as the daydreams gained steam, I’d start to feel better, lighter. An imaginary embeddedness would see me feeling more optimistic, more gregarious, more confident and secure. Unlike depression, which tended to latch itself into me with hooks, my loneliness was, as a psychiatrist would say, “labile.” If I thought closely enough about togetherness—if I really let go of the reins and pictured myself laughing in the grad lounge, or serving up stew to a group of hungry fishermen—I could alter my mood. The sense of unfocused anxiety and restlessness I was struggling with would fade, and in its place would be an odd sense of social engagement and ease,” (pp. 141-142).

Not only in loneliness, but in our ordinary, non-lonely lives there is a sense of imagination present: one is able to conceive of things being different than they are at the present moment. A new acquaintance, for instance, could later turn into a good friend, a colleague, or a romantic interest. The possibility of our social world being transformed ordinarily forms the background of our experience. Our relationships with other persons often just evolve naturally without any kind of mediation or concerted effort necessary. However, in the experience of loneliness, interpersonal relationships come to the forefront of one’s mind, and lonely persons despair at being unable to take part in the relationships they crave. Two of the things loneliness may be attributed to are: a) interpersonal possibilities being available, but one is not able to capitalize on them (due to various factors: shyness, low self-esteem, difficulties in social cognition, or b) One is not physically and/or mentally able to interact meaningfully with other persons (as is the case in some chronic illnesses, or in old age, which may render the individual incapable of going out and meeting people).

Depression is characterized by a loss of possibilities at a much deeper level. What is distinctive about the experience of depression is that not only are possibilities of interpersonal connection altered, but other possibilities as well. In fact, the very possibility of interpersonal connection and other possibilities in general is nearly inconceivable. Depression involves a radical shift in one’s world. Ratcliffe (2015) writes,

Depression…involves a change in one’s sense of belonging to the world. So it is not a localized shift in the experienced possibilities associated with however many entities or situations, (p. 50).

Perhaps the most informative way to understand the shift in experiential possibilities that occurs in experiences of depression and, as I will suggest, loneliness, is to look briefly at Binswanger’s (1975) ideas on rootedness versus falling. Normally, he contends, our bodies are oriented toward the world in a confident manner: we are confident that the next step in a flight of stairs will be there to step on, for example. Binswanger suggests that losing a confident bodily orientation toward the world is comparable to losing balance and falling. He writes,

When we are in a state of deeply felt hope or expectation and what we hoped for proves illusory, then the world—in one stroke—becomes radically ‘different’. We are completely uprooted, and we lose our footing in the world. […] our whole existence moves within the matrix of stumbling, sinking, and falling (p. 222-3).

Ratcliffe (2015) compares losing one’s balance or falling to an existential predicament. As we start to fall, specific kinds of possibility appear in the foreground. Falling involves ‘a sense of passively facing some threat, which may take on the guise of certainty’ (p. 60). Simultaneously, things that one usually experiences in a confident, habitual manner, such as a chair, do not offer what was anticipated. Thus, a sense of disappointed expectation or surprise prevails. When we fall, there is a ‘felt lack of control’, an ‘I can’t’ in relation to the danger of hitting the ground. Binswanger holds that this arrangement of possibility can be encapsulated in the overall structure of experience. Ratcliffe writes,

Rather than ‘*x* no longer offers support’ and ‘y appears in the guise of a threat that is imminent and certain’, we have ‘the world as a whole no longer accommodates the possibility of anything offering support’ and ‘things can only appear in the guise of threat’ (2015, p. 60).

Ratcliffe goes on to compare this sense of ‘I can’t’ captured in losing one’s balance or falling to first-person accounts in depression memoirs. Indeed, many depression memoirs claim that the experience is characterized by a sense of falling. For example,

Someone once asked me how it felt. I lost my balance, I said. It felt as if I lost my balance. I fell flat on my face and I couldn’t get up again (Brampton, 2008, p. 42).

If depression can be conceived of as losing one’s balance or falling, how can one conceive of loneliness? I think the experience of loneliness in relation to depression is best conceived of in this way: One is not falling but is standing on the ledge, aware that one could fall, and fearful of it. That is, whilst lonely, one still has the desire and motivation to pursue interpersonal relationships. In depression, one is falling or on the floor. Whilst lonely, one is still trying to connect with people; whilst depressed, one has often lost motivation to do much of anything.

Another way one might distinguish between loneliness and depression is that, in experiences of loneliness, possibilities may appear dim, but still, at least for the most part, accessible. In experiences of depression, on the other hand, possibilities appear non-existent. In fact, many depressed persons report feeling so removed from the world prior to depression, they cannot recollect a time when possibilities were accessible to them (e.g., Solomon, 2001).

This brings me back to the idea that depressed persons feel they inhabit a different world than non-depressed persons. Ratcliffe holds that most experiences of depression involve existential changes in the overall structure of experience (2015). By *existential changes*, he means a shift in one’s overall sense of belonging to a shared world, something that one ordinarily takes for granted. What is missing in depression, he argues, is a feeling of being comfortably situated in the world. This is not to say that one’s sense of belonging is completely lost in depression, but that it is significantly altered. The structure through which one ordinarily lives has been changed.

Though various sub-themes emerge in first-person accounts of depression (i.e., guilt, altered sense of time, vulnerability, low self-esteem, tiredness), I wish to highlight here the sense of loneliness present in almost every depression memoir. This will illustrate the central role that loneliness plays in the experience of depression.[[70]](#footnote-70) For instance, in her memoir *Prozac Nation*, Elizabeth Wurtzel (1994), mentions loneliness several times. Depression is ‘being so lonesome you could die,’ (p. 44), ‘the loneliest fucking thing on earth,’ (p. 61). Whilst depressed she notes that she was ‘lost in a loneliness that felt like forever, like a solitude that would never go away,’ (p. 75). She felt estranged from the rest of the world, as if she moved through a plastic bubble that separated her from everyone and everything around her. She asserts that the worst part of her depression was

isolation and a sense that all human connection was elusive, was the province of others, of the happy people on the other side of the glass wall (pp. 214-215).

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, David Karp (1996) conducts several interviews with depressed persons. Throughout the interviews, the theme of loneliness comes up frequently. Every interview, Karp says, raises the theme of human connection. He believes that much of the pain of depression is caused by the knowledge that the feeling of human connection that could make one feel better seems impossible during depression. ‘It is rather like dying from thirst while looking at a glass of water just beyond one’s reach, (pp. 15-16). One of his interviewees, a male salesman, aged 30, shares his account of depression:

*I played basketball. I was a member of a team. I had a roommate, but I was so alone. I had a lot of friends but I was completely isolated. And that’s what, like, I believe depression is—a disease of isolation that tells you to withdraw, stay away, don’t be a social person (*italics included in original, p. 37*).*

Sally Brampton’s (2008) depression memoir, *Shoot the Damn Dog*, arguably offers one of the most persuasive accounts of the central role that loneliness plays in depressive experiences. She refers to depression as ‘the most isolated place on earth,’ a ‘disease of loneliness,’ (p. 1). For Brampton, ‘Life is about connection. There is nothing else. Depression is the opposite; it is an illness defined by alienation,’ (p. 1*).* Depression is like a ‘waking nightmare’ for Brampton, primarily because of the fact that she feels disconnected from the world. Speaking for herself and other depressed persons, she writes, ‘What we want most is somebody to take our hand, to try to connect us back to the world,’ (pp. 100-101).

These accounts demonstrate the vital role that connection plays in our lives. Without meaningfully connecting to other human beings, we begin to feel like we have lost life itself, that we are marooned on an island forevermore. Depression is therefore often conceived of as a ‘prison’, where no one understands what one is going through. Whether other persons *actually* understand is beside the point, as one *feels* they are misunderstood.

Many depressed persons report feeling incapable of relating to others in a personal way (Ratcliffe, 2015, p. 206). Embedded into interpersonal experiences are different kinds of relational possibilities. In depression, Ratcliffe holds, access to certain kinds of interpersonal possibilities is diminished or lost. Though others may still be experienced as persons, one may feel incapable of interacting with them as persons. In cases like this, possibilities of connection are present but blocked. This may be due to a variety of factors, one being a diminished capacity to attribute mental states (empathize) to others. In order to perform even basic simulations,[[71]](#footnote-71) Ratcliffe contends that a felt-sense of connectedness to others needs to be present. I will return to these ideas in section 5.4 in my discussion of loneliness and depression in regards to empathy. In the next section, I will attempt to draw out the ideas of non-existent possibilities in depression and diminished possibilities in loneliness through the concept of losing hope(s).

5.3 *Loss of hope(s) in interpersonal relationships or one’s world altogether*

In his article ‘What is it to lose Hope?’ (2013) and in his book *Experiences of Depression* (2015), Ratcliffe argues that the experience of losing hope is finer-grained than has been acknowledged. Losing hope is not just a singular phenomenon, but can occur in many ways. The main two types of hope that he distinguishes are ‘intentional hope’ and ‘existential hope’. *Intentional hopes* take the form ‘I hope that *p*’; for example, ‘I hope that I get that new car for my birthday’, ‘I hope that I become prime minister one day’, or ‘I hope that my presentation goes well’. *Existential hope*, on the other hand, is a deeper kind of hope that Ratcliffe calls ‘pre-intentional’. Existential hope, therefore, is the ground on which intentional hopes are built. Ratcliffe writes,

It is not an attitude with a specific content however vague or general that content might be. (…) It can--in principle--survive the loss of all intentional hopes: one can lose ‘all hopes’ without losing ‘all hope’. And when this ‘pre-intentional’ or ‘existential’ hope is itself lost, what is gone from experience is not however many hopes but the possibility of adopting an attitude of the kind ‘I hope that *p*’, something that can be experienced *as* a loss,” (p. 103).

Unlike intentional hopes, which can be lost, existential hope instead refers to a shift in one’s entire orientation toward the world; a shift, more specifically, in the ability to hope itself, let alone hope for particular things to come to fruition. Ratcliffe holds that one of the things that makes the experience of major depression so profound is the experience of existential hopelessness it entails. In major depression, one has not simply lost all hopes; one has lost the capacity to hope as well. As Sally Brampton writes, ‘Depression is the paralysis of hope,’ (2008, p. 3). Many depressive experiences, Ratcliffe argues, highlight the loss of the sense of possibility the world incorporates. So, for depressed persons, it is not simply that all hope has vanished, but that they cannot even fathom the *possibility* of hope. It seems so far removed from the world of depression they currently inhabit.

The ways in which existential hope can be lost are varied. Sometimes, the emphasis rests solely upon oneself; ‘I’ lack access to the possibilities hopes rest upon, thus any sense that my life might improve is gone. As one respondent in the Durham Depression Questionnaire (2011) writes: ‘When depressed I feel I have no future and lose any hope in things improving in my life. I feel generally hopeless’[[72]](#footnote-72) (#158). What makes one’s predicament even more distressing is the fact that one can’t help but notice that others have managed to retain a sense of hoping; they still appear to reside in a world filled with salient possibilities, with things to hope for. For the depressed person, on the other hand, her state appears never-ending. As Solomon (2001) writes,

My father would assure me, sunnily, that I would be able to do it all again, soon. He could as well have told me that I would soon be able to build myself a helicopter out of cookie dough and fly on it to Neptune, so clear did it seem to me that my real life, the one I had lived before, was now definitely over, (p. 54).

Along similar lines, Styron (1990) writes,

In depression, this faith in deliverance, in ultimate restoration, is absent. The pain is unrelenting, and what makes the condition intolerable is the foreknowledge that no remedy will come—not in a day, an hour, a month, or a minute. If there is mild relief, one knows that it is only temporary; more pain will follow. It is hopelessness even more than pain that crushes the soul, (p. 62).

And Stephanie Merritt (2008) states,

If I had to summarize how depression feels from inside, I would call it the absence of hope. It is the sense that you will always be like this, that nothing can change, that there is nothing to look forward to and no reason to go on. To exist without hope is not only to be alienated from life, it is actively life-threatening; without hope, the logical conclusion is that there is no point, and after that comes nihilism, (p. 12).

It can, I think, be safely argued that most of the time we live our lives with both pre-intentional and intentional hopes intact. Our lives are lived through the anticipatory structure that, however bleak things look now, there is always the chance that they could improve for the better. However, in depression, the usual anticipatory structure with which the world ordinarily beckons filled with various enticing possibilities, is absent. In depression, everything loses its significance; there is no possibility for meaningful change. This loss is not limited to just the perceptual, however; it is inaccessible to thought as well, therefore, certain kinds of possibility can no longer even be imagined.

Now that I have demonstrated how experiences of depression are characterized by a change in the structure of existential hope, I will look at intentional hopes and suggest that the experience of loneliness is characterized by a shift in intentional hopes—more specifically, intentional hopes regarding the interpersonal world. Whilst experiences of depression involve a collapse in existential and therefore, intentional hopes, experiences of loneliness are more localized. Depressive experience involves a loss of hope on many different grounds: e.g., work, practical matters, relationships, hobbies. Experiences of loneliness, on the other hand, are represented in part by a loss of intentional hopes for relationships.

Recall that intentional hopes take the form ‘I hope that p’. So, if I am arguing here that a feature of loneliness is that intentional hopes are altered, that would take the form, e.g., ‘I hope that Paul and I will become friends’. That, under ordinary circumstances, would seem like a hope that has the potential to be realized. But recall the problems of self-attribution failure, distrust and suspicion, shyness, and many other factors that I pointed to earlier that persons struggling with loneliness often face. The intentional hope is not completely lost in the case of loneliness, but rather, its way of functioning is sometimes altered.

I will now return to the example above of hoping to be friends with Paul. Under ordinary circumstances, one might hope that a friendship will develop, and many persons will feel confident approaching Paul and attempting to develop a friendship. Persons experiencing loneliness, on the other hand, are likely to either a) never approach Paul and attempt to be friends to begin with, or b) Attempt to be friends with Paul, but find it incredibly difficult to manage. Some lonely persons will not approach him for friendship period, for all kinds of reasons, e.g., ‘he’s really into tennis, and I know nothing about that’; ‘he probably wouldn’t like someone like me’; or ‘I have no idea if I could trust him’. In the case of those who do develop a friendship with Paul, they may or may not still feel lonely within the friendship, especially individuals who suffer from chronic loneliness.

In this section, I examined the important role that hope plays in experiences of loneliness and depression. I argued that loneliness is characterized by a loss of intentional hopes and depression is characterized by a loss of both intentional and pre-intentional (existential) hope. I accomplished this by looking at Ratcliffe’s work on hope (2013; 2015) and using the distinctions he makes between pre-intentional hopes and intentional hope to illustrate what I hold to be a key difference between loneliness and depression. I also included some case studies of persons suffering from depression in order to illustrate how depression is often characterized by both a loss of intentional and pre-intentional hope(s). In the following section, I will examine the relationship between loneliness, depression and empathy. Including a discussion on empathy should aid in further distinguishing the experiences of loneliness and depression. I will begin by giving a brief explanation of what I mean by ‘empathy’, and then I will draw on some classical accounts (e.g., Stein, 1917/1989) as well as some present accounts of empathy (e.g., Zahavi, 2010; 2014 and Ratcliffe (2012b; 2015). I will conclude the section by looking at some problems lonely and depressed persons may have with empathizing.

5.4 *Loneliness, depression and empathy*

5.4a Empathy: A brief explanation

Before delving into the issues both lonely and depressed persons have with empathizing with other persons, it will be beneficial for my argument to lay out exactly what I mean by the term ‘empathy’. By ‘empathy’, I do not mean to imply emotional contagion[[73]](#footnote-73), simulation of the other’s thoughts or feelings[[74]](#footnote-74), nor do I intend to propose a theory that we can know other minds by positing ideas about why others may be acting or thinking the way they are[[75]](#footnote-75). Instead, I will propose a phenomenological account of empathy[[76]](#footnote-76), based on honoring the differences between individuals rather than trying to simulate another’s experience as one’s own. I will draw on present accounts of empathy (e.g., Zahavi 2010; 2014 and Ratcliffe (2012b; 2015), as well as classical phenomenologists such as Stein (1917/1989) in order to support my claims.

Zahavi, drawing on the phenomenological tradition of thinkers, including Scheler, Husserl, and Stein, holds that empathy is ‘a basic, irreducible, form of intentionality that is directed towards the experiences of others,’ (2010, p. 291). Empathy is not obtained by first-person access but rather is a type of second-person experience. It is akin to believing, perceiving, or remembering. Therefore, when we perceive a person’s behavior, we experience something of their experience in the behavior they exhibit. We do not confuse their behavior as our own, but instead view it as theirs.

Stein (1917/1989) holds a similar position. For her, empathy refers to all ‘acts in which foreign experience is comprehended’ (1989, p. 6). Empathy is not a matter of having the same feelings as another and then attributing the feelings to her (as simulation theories propose). Rather, in empathy one recognizes that the feeling is *his*. For Stein, empathy is double-sided: one has an experience of one’s own that then reveals another’s experience as theirs. She holds that empathy is never a matter of simulating another’s mental states and then projecting our own interpretations onto the other, but rather is double-sided from the beginning. Simulation, she argues, is a tactic we only employ once empathy has failed. In addition to empathy not being a matter of simulation, she also stresses that empathy is not a ‘feeling of oneness’ nor is it ‘emotional contagion’. Empathy involves encountering another’s experience as distinctively theirs and maintaining a clear distinction between self and other (pp. 14-23).

Ratcliffe (2012b; 2015), arguing along the same lines as Stein, states that empathy

…involves being open to varying degrees and kinds of interpersonal difference, rather than attempting to eliminate those differences by experiencing what the other person experiences in the same way that she does, (2015, p. 230).

For Ratcliffe, the principal constituent of empathy involves a special kind of ‘attentiveness’ towards another person, towards a ‘you’ (p. 234). Empathy involves ‘a feeling of *being with* another person, of relating to her *as* a person,’ (p. 236). When one is with others, ‘a feeling of interpersonal connection often manifests’ (p. 236) through which shared situations are experienced. This feeling of interpersonal connection does not necessarily involve one’s attending to the experience. Ratcliffe contends that being understood by another person is a necessary condition for interpersonal connection to take place. In severe depressive experiences, an all-enveloping loss of connection often occurs which causes persons to feel as if they are not understood by anyone. This lack of understanding from others may be interpreted in various fashions. Some interpret their feelings of alienation as a lack of others caring for them. In this respect, a vicious cycle presents itself. Since depressed persons cannot be a part of interpersonal relationships that would give them a feeling of being cared for, this leads them to the conclusion that no one in fact, *does* care.

The loss of interpersonal connection inherent in depressive experiences also serves to impair the depressed person’s ability to empathize. This theme is often acknowledged after recovery has taken place. Formerly depressed persons are able to reflect upon their time whilst depressed and recognize how self-absorbed they were. One example of this occurs in Sally Brampton’s memoir. In her memoir, Brampton details the strange tension between the need to connect with others, yet being unable to do so whilst depressed, the result of which is a crippling loneliness. She describes how she felt when she saw the planes crash into the twin towers on 9.11, and how the complete absence of feeling over such a horrific event helped her to realize how far removed she had become from other persons and her ability to empathize with them. She writes,

It was that lack of moral outrage and absence of any feeling that, more than anything else, convinced me that I had to do something to ease the terrible grip depression had on me. I was so lost in my own world that I had ceased to have compassion or feeling for any other. If the sight of bodies dropping from a burning building did not horrify me, that absence of feeling did. (2008, p. 176)

Brampton’s recollection of total self-absorption and ‘absence of feeling’ echoes the sentiments of many depressed persons. They feel that they are no longer able to reach others, to understand and engage with them, and in turn feel others cannot reach them for connection. How can depressed persons possibly be reached, then? Ratcliffe suggests that empathy may be the way towards understanding. But we must be careful to note that he does not wish to suggest that empathy be enacted by way of having gone through the exact same types of experiences as another. Instead, Ratcliffe suggests that empathy may be attained through cultivating an understanding and appreciation for the fact that there are some experiences completely alien to one. The experience of depression is such a transformative, world-shifting experience (as I described in section 5.2), that persons who have not themselves been through it cannot fathom what the experience is like.

However, differences in experience need not be a problem for empathizing. The key, Ratcliffe contends, is that an openness to experiential difference is present. This can be achieved through acknowledging the differences between the speaker and listener, asking the right questions, and demonstrating a curiosity to learn more about the speaker’s experiences. Doing so cultivates a ‘second-person relationship’, through which feelings of understanding and connection prevail.

Ratcliffe goes on to develop this further into the idea of ‘radical empathy’, which entails engaging with someone else’s experiences, yet simultaneously suspending the ordinary assumptions that both persons share the same possibility space (2012b). Furthermore, radical empathy emphasizes a person-centered approach in which one empathizes with the person rather than the experience, therefore attending to the particularities and interpretations that are inextricably bound to a person’s experience. By enacting radical empathy, Ratcliffe argues, persons may be better able to develop an understanding of each other, and thus achieve interpersonal connection. Whether this type of empathy is achievable may be dependent upon how blocked the potential for interpersonal connection actually is, versus just experienced by the depressed person as blocked.

In this section, I have examined some classical and current perspectives on empathy. I have examined how persons experiencing depression may have difficulty empathizing with other persons. I have suggested that Ratcliffe’s work on the nature of empathy (2012b) may be useful in shedding some light on how the process of empathy works and how it may break down in depressed persons.

In the next section, I will discuss how lonely persons often have difficulty empathizing. I will rehearse Cacioppo and Patrick’s (2008) ideas on self-regulation and co-regulation and look at some case studies of lonely persons who have difficulties empathizing with other persons.

5.4b *The problem of empathy in lonely persons*

Much like depressed persons, persons feeling lonely are often so focused on themselves in social interactions that they are unable to be fully present whilst engaging with others. They are unable to *self-regulate,* as Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) suggest. As I discussed in Chapter 3, *self-regulation* refers to an individual’s total mental and physiological efforts to achieve balance. Self-regulation is not only felt by the self, but also extends outward toward other people. A person who is well-regulated, therefore, sends signals to others that she is socially contented and aligned with her environment. In exchange, the signals that she receives back from others are reflective of harmony as well, as Cacioppo and Patrick suggest. This interchange between persons is what is referred to as *co-regulation*. In order for persons to be well-connected, they need to have both themselves and their interactions with others well regulated.

Without sufficient self and co-regulation, persons often have difficulty empathizing with other persons as they are unable to be truly present and engaged with their surrounding environment. Lonely persons are often so self-critical, that even when a friend or acquaintance is opening up and trying to connect with them, they are often too worried about how they are presenting themselves to be able to truly feel the other person’s joy or pain. Their often hyper-reflexive behavior may lead to their conversation partners feeling bereft of connection upon exiting a conversation with them.

Lonely persons often report feeling misunderstood by others. For example, one of the respondents in Seepersad’s (2011) study says, ‘I need someone to understand me but nobody wants to try. I am alone, away from home,’ (Sarah\*[[77]](#footnote-77), p. 6). There is also a very strong in-group/out-group dynamic present, in the sense that they underestimate how many other persons have been lonely and have undergone similar experiences of feeling painfully disconnected from other persons (e.g., Williams, 2002). To persons feeling lonely, their experience often appears to them as utterly original; other socially adjusted persons cannot possibly understand what it is like to be them, they think. In this way, loneliness is similar to depression; as I discussed above, depressed persons often feel utterly alone, and cannot conceive of anyone else in their position. I think that loneliness plays a vital role in depression, as well as in other psychiatric disorders, that ought to be examined more critically. In the section below, I will briefly outline why I think this is the case.

5.5 *The central role of loneliness in depression and psychiatry overall*

As I have shown in the previous sections, feelings of connection are crucial in a variety of contexts: in order to feel a sense of belonging with other persons and to the world, in order to experience possibilities and a sense of hope, and in order to empathize, amongst other things. When feelings of disconnection arise, the ways persons experience these ordinary ways of being in the world are altered, and they may feel lonely or depressed. Despite loneliness being mentioned countless times in depression memoirs, being a known antecedent to depressive episodes, as well as being mentioned in other psychiatric illnesses as a key symptom, loneliness has received little attention in psychiatric diagnoses. Note that in the nine criteria listed in the DSM-V I discussed in section 5.1, feelings of loneliness are nowhere to be found.

As I mentioned previously, in his book *A Different Existence: Principles of Phenomenological Psychopathology*, J.H. van den Berg (1973) argues that ‘loneliness is the nucleus of psychiatry’ (p. 105). By this, he means that loneliness is central to the development of all psychiatric illnesses. In the book, he presents a fictional patient whom he believes could, in theory, exemplify all of his patients, independent of their psychiatric diagnosis. The patient’s complaints fall into four categories: 1) Changes in the observable world, 2) Changes in the body, 3) Changes in the way he relates to other people, and 4) Changes that occurred in his past and his view of the future (p. 8). Whilst speaking of the change in the way the patient relates to people, van den Berg writes,

He cannot reach anyone, and no one can reach him. Even when people are touching him they remain at a distance in the most literal sense of the word (p. 14)

Van den Berg goes on to describe the patient as ‘a lonely individual’ (p. 47), whose surrounding world, as well as the people he encounters and his body, are estranged from him. My reading of van den Berg is that he believes that if we could better understand the nature of loneliness, this would lead us to a better understanding of depression and other psychiatric disorders as well. Ratcliffe (2015) also highlights the significant role loneliness plays, looking at it in relation to experiences of depression, noting that, though other themes such as shame, guilt and worthlessness must also be taken into account, ‘in all cases…there is a sense of disconnection from the interpersonal world,’ (p. 202).

Considering the large role loneliness plays in the experience of depression, I suggest that it be taken more seriously by psychologists and psychiatrists alike when talking with patients and making diagnoses of depression (as well as other psychiatric illnesses). Though I do not wish to underscore the other themes arising in experiences of depression, I do wish to suggest that more attention be focused upon the way persons are relating to other persons.

As I have shown in this chapter, losing a sense of meaningful connection with other persons often results in many issues. These issues may include problems with empathizing and losing a sense of enticing possibilities and hopefulness. In the case of depression, one may experience such a profound sense of loss that one feels as if she inhabits a different world. Through looking at case studies as well as empirical studies of lonely persons, I believe we will be able to garner deeper insight into experiences of depression. Additionally, looking at experiences of depression may be useful in better understanding feelings of loneliness, as both experiences highlight the need for meaningful connection, and furthermore, the need for recognition. Below, I will briefly articulate why this chapter on loneliness and depression serves to provide another example of the way the experience of loneliness can be viewed as a need for recognition.

As I have shown in previous chapters, the experience of recognition occurs in several ways. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the way recognition works at the first, most basic level, in serving as an implicit confirmation of one’s existence and as a relational being. Through looking at the case study of solitary confinement, I showed the importance of being physically present before other persons. In Chapter 3, I looked at how recognition occurs in our friendships and love relationships. Close friendship, I hold, is the second level of recognition, where persons engage in relationships in which trust is a central aspect. I then looked at how recognition occurs in love relationships, which make up the third level of recognition. In love relationships, one is recognized as a unique person, special to the loved one. The other person recognizes not only the current attributes the loved one possesses, but the potential attributes they could possess in the future (Scheler, 2008). In love relationships, one may participate in a contract with the other, such as marriage, or simply adhere to certain rules in order to govern the relationship (Von Hildebrand, 2009).

In Chapter 4, I suggested that a subset of lonely voice hearers may experience loneliness. I argued that engaging in genuine dialogue with other persons is another way recognition can be achieved. Some lonely persons may not be engaging in much conversation with others. I argued that this lack of participation in conversations may lead some lonely persons to develop voice hearing in order to supplement the lack of real-life voices. I discussed how voice hearing may affect persons and make recognition difficult to achieve at one or potentially all levels.

In this chapter I hope to have shown, through using case studies of persons experiencing loneliness and depression, as well as philosophical ideas from various thinkers, how recognition is missing from these experiences. The experience of depression, I argue, may affect persons at all three levels of the tripartite model of recognition I have outlined. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, persons suffering from depression often describe it as akin to living in a different world. That said, for many persons experiencing depression, it may be difficult to achieve even the first level of recognition. This is because many persons experiencing depression may not feel comfortable being physically present before others. Alternatively, they may appear before others, but not be able to feel the reassurance of their gaze and gestures. They may instead interpret these gestures differently, such as assuming they have malevolent intentions towards one. It would also be difficult for depressed persons to achieve recognition in the second and third levels. For instance, one potential issue I have discussed in this chapter is the problems persons with depression might encounter when empathizing. Because they can be so immersed in their own suffering, depressed persons often find it difficult to empathize with other persons (e.g., Brampton, 2008). Depressed persons may also suffer from a loss of possibilities and experience an alteration in the ways that they hope (Ratcliffe, 2012b; 2015).

Another issue in distinguishing between loneliness and depression is presented when we consider that the ways I have outlined above on the difficulties depressed persons have in achieving recognition, may also apply to lonely persons. However, looking back at the important distinctions between loneliness and depression that I have suggested throughout the chapter will aid in understanding the important differences between the two.

In section 5.2, I made an important distinction between loneliness and depression by discussing general possibilities versus interpersonal possibilities (Ratcliffe, 2015). I argued that the experience of loneliness is characterized by an alteration in interpersonal possibilities, whereas the experience of depression is characterized by an alteration in both interpersonal and general possibilities. I also discussed Binswanger’s (1975) distinction between rootedness and falling. I argued that lonely persons may be on the verge of falling, and depressed persons are already falling or have hit the ground. Ratcliffe (2015) argues that the distinction between falling versus rootedness is an ‘I can’ versus an ‘I can’t’. I apply this distinction to loneliness and depression to suggest that loneliness is characterized by the phrase ‘I can’, and depression is characterized by the phrase ‘I can’t. In the experience of loneliness, one is still hopeful about achieving meaningful connections with other persons and still believes it is possible. In the experience of depression, one has lost hope in achieving meaningful connections with others and in general. This distinction is useful in understanding another difference in lonely persons and depressed persons.

In section 5.3, I outlined Ratcliffe’s (2012b) distinctions on hope. I focused on his distinction between pre-intentional hope and intentional hopes. I argued that loneliness is characterized by an alteration in intentional hopes, and that depression is characterized by an alteration in both intentional hopes and pre-intentional hope. In section 5.4, I looked at the difficulties lonely and depressed persons may have with empathizing with other persons. I argued that lonely persons may have difficulties with self-regulation and co-regulation, thus making it difficult to meaningfully connect and empathize. Depressed persons, on the other hand, may find it difficult to connect due to their self-absorption in their own issues.

As I have discussed in this chapter, loneliness and depression do share some similarities, especially in the way persons describe them. However, I have shown that there are important distinctions to be made between the two. These distinctions may be useful for a variety of reasons. The reason I focused on in section 5.5 is that of clinical implications and diagnoses. For instance, when a psychiatrist is seeing a patient, it is important that she is able to diagnose the patient as accurately as she can. If she concludes that the patient is suffering from depression, she may decide to prescribe medication. However, if she concludes that the patient is suffering from loneliness, her decision would likely be that the person would be better suited to counseling. It is very important that psychiatrists are able to distinguish between loneliness and depression correctly. If they are not, then they not only risk misdiagnosis, but prescribing medicine where it may not be needed.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Now that I have finished presenting various case studies and established my argument that what is missing in the experience of loneliness is recognition, I will devote chapter 6 to a closer examination of what I mean by recognition and why understanding it is vital to understanding loneliness. I will first look at classical theories (e.g., Kant, 1785; Hegel, 1807/1977), and then go on to further develop my own theory of recognition. I will argue that experiences of loneliness exemplify our need for recognition and can be characterized by a lack of it.

Chapter 6

*Loneliness, Trust, and Recognition*

Trust plays an important role in our interpersonal relationships. Not only is trust vital for understanding our interpersonal relationships, it is vital for understanding loneliness as well. Many lonely persons suffer from a lack of trust (e.g., Rotenberg, 1994; Segrin and Kinney, 1995). I have also discussed the importance of recognition throughout this thesis. I have argued that persons need to be recognized by others in order to not be lonely. This is because, as I have demonstrated with the different case studies, the experience of loneliness is characterized by persons feeling and/or being unrecognized by other persons. The structures of interpersonal recognition have become altered in loneliness. The recognition persons require in order to abate loneliness may come in various forms. Here are the three levels I propose:

**Level 1:** At the first level of recognition, I hold that what lonely persons are missing is a felt sense of being recognized as a person. Being recognized as a person can occur through being seen by the other or engaging in gestures with her. I discuss this at length in Chapter 2.

**Level 2**: During the second level of recognition, I contend that one is recognized through having close companionate friendships, through which one is comfortable trusting and being interpreted by the other. See Chapter 3 for more on this.

**Level 3**: During the third level of recognition, I hold that one is recognized through engaging in love relationships with other persons. Through these love relationships, one is recognized and honoured as a unique individual. Again, see chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of this.

In this chapter, I will investigate the nature of trust and recognition in order to draw out their importance in understanding loneliness. Trust plays a vital role in the sustenance of our interpersonal relationships and is often lacking in lonely persons. I hold trust to be a cardinal aspect of what I take loneliness to be, thus a better understanding of trust will lead us to a better understanding of loneliness.

Through looking at the case studies in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, I have demonstrated that what is missing in each of these experiences is a felt sense of recognition. In this chapter, I will look at Husserl’s ideas on the anticipatory structure of experience, as well as provide a general overview of the relationship between loneliness and trust. I will also examine Logstrup’s ideas on trust and demonstrate their importance for understanding loneliness.

In section 6.1, I will explore how our everyday experience is ordinarily articulated in a way that incorporates forms of anticipation. For example, we ordinarily anticipate that a chair will be there when we sit down. This anticipation is *implicit*, meaning that we do not consciously reflect upon it. This anticipation of what will come next gives us a sense of confidence[[79]](#footnote-79) in the world. With this ordinary sense of anticipation, persons normally go about their days assuming that all of the activities they engage in will generally go as planned. For instance, they assume that the bus they need to get to work will be relatively on time; they anticipate that they will conduct their research as normal and return home to have a nice dinner with their partner. It is not until unexpected circumstances occur that their ordinary sense of anticipation is altered.

The experience of loneliness is characterized in part by alterations of the ordinary anticipatory structure of experience. In some experiences of loneliness, the ordinary anticipatory structure of experience is altered from the beginning, before anything unusual happens to disrupt it. The lonely person operates through a sense of distrust and fear, anxiously awaiting what will happen next. I will draw on the work of Husserl (1991) in order to explain this process. Husserl’s work on this topic has been incredibly influential, particularly in the phenomenological tradition. Looking at his work on the nature of the anticipatory structure of experience should help us glean insight into the way the ordinary anticipatory structure of experience is altered in loneliness. Though Husserl’s discussion of the anticipatory structure of experience is centered around objects, I think the scope of the discussion can be extended to include interpersonal relations. In this section, I will draw out the differences between the way we anticipate objects and the way we anticipate things occurring in our interpersonal relationships.

In section 6.2, I will discuss the relationship between loneliness and trust. Specifically, I will discuss the concept of *implicit trust*,drawing on the perspective of Baier (1986; 1991; 1992), amongst others. A thorough examination of implicit trust should aid in demonstrating what I take to be the nature of trust; that is, that trust is often given without hesitation. Looking at the ordinary way trust is experienced demonstrates how differently lonely persons experience trust. As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, lonely persons often operate from a sense of distrust. One aspect of loneliness is that whilst lonely, the ordinary implicit trust one has is often replaced with distrust.

In section 6.3, I will discuss Løgstrup’s (1997) ideas on trust. Løgstrup’s theory on trust emphasizes the vulnerability that occurs when trusting other persons. Vulnerability can be quite paraodoxical in lonely persons. On the one hand, if one is lonely without other persons present, she seeks others to be vulnerable to. On the other hand, when she does encounter others with whom she could be vulnerable to, (e.g., in close companionate friendships), she may be unable to do so.[[80]](#footnote-80)

In section 6.4, I will conclude the chapter by discussing my view that one of the main components of loneliness is a lack of recognition. I will summarize the aims I have intended to meet in this chapter and how they affect our understanding of loneliness.

*6.1 Husserl on the anticipatory structure of experience*

Drawing on the work of Edmund Husserl (1991), I suggest that ordinary human experience is shaped by and lived through a structure of anticipation. Husserl contends that all of our activities are imbued with a sense of anticipation. His work on anticipation can be better understood by first looking at his conception of time.

Contrary to popular A theories of time[[81]](#footnote-81), where time is conceived of in three distinct phases of past, present and future, Husserl thinks of time as continuously flowing. Thus, he proposes a tripartite model of temporal consciousness that allows us to experience the continuous flow of time (1991). Husserl describes our consciousness in the present moment as the ‘primal impression’. Within this phase, we not only have awareness of the present moment, but of the moment that has just past, and the moment that will directly follow the present one. The moment that has just past he refers to as ‘retention’, and the moment that will directly follow as ‘protention’. According to Husserl, in the present moment, we are able to experience that which has just past and that which will immediately follow. He terms this ‘the living horizon of the now’ (1991, p. 45). Through this, we experience a continuous flow of time; a sense of continuity from retention to protention.

Now that I have given some schematic background to one aspect of Husserl’s complicated theory of temporal consciousness, I will explain Husserl’s ides on anticipation. This may be best understood through looking at the popular example of a melody. Let us say that we have a melody composed of triads, featuring the notes C-E-G. When we hear the E note, we also have an experience of hearing the note that was playing right before it, C, experiencing the C note as past. Husserl states, ‘it is actually present itself (but not an actually present tone), it is a retention *of* the tone that has been (1991, p. 31). We also have an experience of the note that will come next: G. Our protention may not grasp that it is specifically G that will follow E, but rather may just recognize that *something* will follow E. This is why it catches us off guard when a melody suddenly stops short: it disrupts our intuitive understanding of the temporal tripartite process. Thus, when we hear a melody, it is not just a series of separate notes we hear, but rather a unified whole.

This example illustrates how our protention and retention are united with the present moment. It also shows how what we are experiencing in the present moment leads to anticipation of what will happen next. In the example of the melody, since we knew that the melody’s structure was the triad C, E, G, when we heard one note, our ears anticipated the sound of the next note in the succession.

However, it is not only through hearing musical compositions that persons can experience a unification of protention and retention in the present moment and anticipate what will happen next. This idea can be extended beyond musical compositions to include objects as well as everyday occurrences, such as waking up after a night’s sleep. Below, I will discuss this idea by tying it to Husserl’s idea of ‘open uncertainty,’ and applying it to examining a coffee mug and walking on solid ground.

In addition to the temporal structure outlined above, Husserl holds that the way we ordinarily anticipate things is through a sense of what he calls ‘open uncertainty’ (1973). By ‘open uncertainty’ he is referring to the degree of certainty with which we perceive unknown things, such as another side of an object, for instance. We know that one side of a coffee mug is black. Since we are unable to see the other side from our vantage point, it is uncertain what color it is. It may be black, just like the front side, or a different color entirely.

This is contrasted with what he refers to as ‘problematic uncertainty’, which is when ‘x may not occur’, or ‘what appears to be y may not be y’, regardless of how established y may be. Problematic uncertainty is characterized by a felt lack of confidence about the actualization of a possibility. Additionally, there is ‘doubt’, which occurs when there is a friction between an earlier anticipation of x and a later rivaling anticipation of ‘y and not x’. Experiences of problematic uncertainty and doubt occur contra to the ordinary experience of certainty.

According to Husserl, our ordinary orientation or mode in which we anticipate is certainty. Possibilities present themselves in a cohesive manner that eclipse other possibilities. In order to illustrate how we ordinarily anticipate with a sense of certainty, Husserl gives the example of watching a drinking glass fall. We anticipate the glass’ breakage with certainty: it is not something that *may* happen, but rather something that *will* happen. We know this to be true based on past experiences and our knowledge that glasses are very fragile. Though you may question or doubt that something is what it appears to be (say, a figure in the distance which may be a human or animal), according to Husserl, that experience is normally restricted to particular instances, and thus is in no way ordinary. It occurs against the background of other things we can still take for granted (i.e., that our feet will touch the ground whilst walking, that we will wake after a night’s rest). Our feet touching the ground as we walk and waking after a night’s rest are activities that are so integral to our everyday lives, they are not ordinarily explicitly reflected upon. We simply take it for granted that the ground beneath our feet is solid and will support us as we walk to our next destination; we take it for granted that we will wake up after a night’s rest to a new day.

It is against the background of certainty that experiences of problematic uncertainty and doubt occur, and we make explicit judgments regarding whether things will occur. The ordinary sense of confidence and certainty that we live with gives us a sense of feeling at home in the world. But what would it be like to feel that the world is no longer one that sustains us, that we feel at home in? What if instead, one felt a sense of alienation from the world?

In the preceding chapter, I discussed how the experience of depression was described by many persons as feeling as if they were alienated or ‘cut off’ from other persons, and sometimes even the world itself. I compared and contrasted this with the experience of loneliness, which, although also often involving feelings of alienation, is focused more on interpersonal issues. Here, I propose that feelings of loneliness can be regarded as a sort of homelessness. Not in the profoundly world-shifting way that may occur in depression, but in a way that persons suffering from feelings of loneliness may feel as if they have lost their footing in the world, that the usual anticipatory structure they live through is no longer in place.

Recall the example I gave in Chapter 2, where I drew upon Sartre’s discussion of waiting for your friend Pierre to arrive and then having him not show up. Extending from that example, imagine that you have a friend whom you always meet up with on a Tuesday night for drinks and pizza. You come to expect and look forward to meeting her each Tuesday. One week when she fails to turn up, something feels amiss as the usual routine has been altered; thus, the structure of ordinary confident anticipation has been disrupted.

Above, I have discussed Husserl’s ideas on the anticipatory structure of experience through his examples of listening to a musical composition and looking at one side of a coffee mug. I have also discussed how his examples may be applied to the everyday experiences of walking with confidence that the ground beneath is solid, as well as going to sleep with the anticipation of waking up the next morning. Here, I suggest that his ideas on the anticipatory structure of experience could be extended to include interpersonal relationships. Persons often perceive various aspects of their interpersonal lives with a sense of certainty. For instance, they expect their partner to come home from work at the usual time or their mother to call to check in if she has not heard from them in a few days. These forms of interpersonal interaction are so interwoven into our everyday lives, we confidently anticipate them each day. We do not consciously reflect upon them happening, but simply look towards the future with confident anticipation of them occurring.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, having meaningful interactions and relationships with other persons is not just an ancillary bonus in our lives, but it is essential to our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Being socially embedded in a family, group and/or community, is the bedrock of our world. We do not exist independently from others, but rather, other people are integrated into everything we do--even our solitary activities often have others in mind. This is why when a relationship is disrupted or ends, it can feel devastating. Widows often find the experience of their loved one’s passing to be a very lonely experience (Weiss, 1973). Not only do they miss their spouse, but they also miss how their lives were structured in a way that included him or her in every way.

Considering Husserl’s ideas on the ordinary structure of anticipation, it appears that there is an alteration in the way persons experiencing loneliness anticipate. This alteration in the way lonely persons ordinarily anticipate may in part be caused by the alterations in the way lonely persons trust other persons. In order to uncover what lonely persons may be experiencing, I will first look at research on trauma in order to shed some light on the way distrust can shape the ordinary structure of anticipation.

In their article, ‘What is a sense of a foreshortened future?’ A phenomenological study of trauma, trust, and time’, Ratcliffe *et al.* (2014) argue that in traumatic experiences, a loss, or rather an *alteration*, of what they refer to as ‘one-place trust’ occurs. They hold that one-place trust is the kind of ‘basal security’ (Jones, 2004) we have in place before other forms of explicit trust can be established. I will say more about this idea of one-place trust or, in some cases instead referred to as implicit trust below. For now, I will return to looking at Husserl’s ideas on anticipation.

Recall the example I gave earlier in this section on the musical melody. I used that example to show how Husserl conceives of time as continuous, composed of the present Now, as well as the recent past (‘retention’) and the imminent future (‘protention’). I discussed how, when listening to a piece of music or a succession of notes, we anticipate which note will come next in the sequence. He uses this example to illustrate his idea that the way we experience the present is molded by what we anticipate. This idea can be taken and applied to the affective facets of anticipation. As Ratcliffe *et al.* (2014) suggest, when we anticipate that some unstipulated threat will come to fruition, things may appear portentous. If our overall sense of anticipation takes on this form, our ordinary sense of being confidently immersed in the world is lost, and we instead feel uprooted.

For example, imagine that someone has arachnophobia. Though they have no reason to fear spiders, they simply do and are terrified that they will be bitten by hundreds of them. This phobia of spiders may begin to reshape the way one perceives the world. Instead of seeing children playing in the courtyard, one anticipates seeing spiders instead. One fears that if one falls asleep, the spiders will find one, and one develops insomnia. Thus, one’s phobia has altered the way one ordinarily anticipates. One can no longer confidently anticipate that they can go to sleep without spiders finding and biting them. To use Husserl’s terms, the ‘open uncertainty’ with which one once confidently perceived and anticipated with has now been transformed into ‘problematic uncertainty’.

It is not only phobias and experiences of trauma that can result in alterations of confident anticipation. As I will argue in section 6.3, feelings of loneliness often involve a sense that other people appear as threatening. This is one of the ways in which the experience of loneliness deviates from the ordinary way we navigate our interpersonal world.

Ordinarily, we likely see our various interactions and relationships with people as holding various enticing possibilities: whether it be the chance to get further acquainted with someone, or maybe just the fact that you have a lot of fun together, our interpersonal interactions are not ordinarily looked upon with a sense of foreboding. However, a person who is feeling lonely may perceive her interactions and relationships with people in a negative light. Rather than look at the positive ways other people may enrich and impact her life, she may primarily see the negative ways other persons could affect her, thus she may operate from a defensive stance (e.g., see Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008). As I remarked earlier, the experience of loneliness involves an alteration in the way we anticipate. The confident anticipation we normally have (for example, that our friend will turn up), is replaced with ‘problematic uncertainty’. Because our interpersonal expectations have been eroded in some way, we can no longer confidently anticipate the way our interpersonal interactions will go in the future.

Loneliness, I suggest, involves feelings of the ordinary sense of vulnerability we have before other persons feeling exposed (e.g., see Løgstrup, 1997). That is, though we are vulnerable, we do not ordinarily realize, are not normally cognizantly aware of that fact. Loneliness is unique in that it is an experience in which we are suddenly aware of how very vulnerable we are, how much we depend upon other persons to shape and enhance our world. Through looking more closely at the experience of implicit trust, I hope to elucidate how the basic trust we ordinarily have covers up our inherent vulnerabilities.

In the sections below, I will discuss Knud Løgstrup’s (1997) and Annette Baier’s (1986; 1991; 1992), amongst others, ideas on implicit trust. Additionally, I will highlight some case studies and empirical research which suggests that lonely persons operate from a stance of vulnerability and an altered view of trusting other persons.

*6.2 Loneliness and Trust*

In contradistinction to the usual way that we think about trust (for example, as an explicit, evaluative judgment of a person or situation), Løgstrup (1997) contends that there is a natural way in which we ordinarily trust other persons. Unless there have been some extenuating circumstances which warrant distrust, we ordinarily encounter both friends and strangers alike with a natural attitude of trust. Løgstrup gives the example of conversing with a stranger on a train. Not knowing anything about him, we simply take it as read that what he is saying is true, and do not become suspicious of him unless he says something that seems suspect.

Løgstrup holds that there is a distinctive vulnerability inherent in trusting other persons. When we encounter other persons, we automatically give them power over us. They could take our trust and honor it or choose to take advantage of it and abuse it. Ordinarily, however, persons assume that their trust will be met by the other in a way that honors it. Lonely persons, I have argued, have a different way they approach the world.

For persons who are feeling lonely (especially those who are chronically lonely), the natural attitude of trust has been altered in such a way that the default attitude they approach other persons with is one of suspicion. For the lonely person, engagement with other persons may not be perceived as uplifting or joyful, but with treachery, as they may see potential betrayal or hurt around every corner. The lonely person, as Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) argue, operates from a ‘lonely social cognition’, meaning that people who are feeling lonely approach the world with a fearful, defensive stance. They expect others to dislike and reject them, which sometimes causes the very rejection they have anticipated. Returning to Husserl, lonely persons approach others with what he refers to as ‘problematic uncertainty’, believing that persons are likely not to be trusted.

Baier notes that trusting another involves necessarily being vulnerable to them. In depending on the other’s good will, we are vulnerable to the limits of the other’s good will. In trusting others, we leave ourselves open to being harmed, yet our trust demonstrates that we are confident that we will not be. This trust in the other’s good will need not be acknowledged nor invited by the other; it is often simply unconscious. In fact, the inherent vulnerability in trust often remains unacknowledged. ‘When we trust we accept vulnerability to others’, (1991, p. 112) Baier adds.

In addition to the vulnerability inherent in implicit trust that I discussed above, there is another kind of vulnerability, *existential vulnerability*, which Bernstein (2011) refers to as a pre-rational ‘existential confidence’ that is oblivious to the ways we ordinary depend upon others. Normally, we go about our days with a sense of existential safety, ‘a sense that we have a standing in the world’. Since our dependency on others is not usually brought to the forefront, we are able to interact with others and our environment with the confidence and trust that everything will go as planned. It is often not until our existential safety is threatened that our inherent existential vulnerability comes to be an explicit object of our attention.

Trust underscores our everyday interpersonal engagement with the world. It represents our original vulnerability to others. Bernstein writes,

The need for trust begins with the inevitability of having others come physically close enough to cause physical harm and spreads out to each place where I have a care or fundamental interest…. Because we are physically vulnerable before every other…because we cannot contract with every other the terms of mutual safety, and because, further, we cannot fully anticipate how far-reaching our dependencies will go, in order to provide space for everyday habitation of the world we need separate and resilient networks of trust,” (2011, pp. 401-402).

Our trust relations are so embedded into our everyday lives, we are often oblivious to how dependent we are upon them. Bernstein holds that if we were fully aware of how dependent we are on trusting relationships, our trust would surely turn into distrust. Trust, Bernstein contends, is an orientation one takes toward the world that ‘acts as an interpretive filter’ through which we make sense of others. Additionally, he suggests that through the attitude of trust, there is a recognition of persons that occurs. In trusting, I take another as a person, who in turn takes me as a person. This is why what Bernstein refers to as ‘primary trust’ (counting as a person for oneself in respect to others) is integral to the self, and its demolition crushing to the person that one is. Part of being treated as a person is having our intrinsic vulnerability honored; expecting others to recognize it and be sensitive to it. Thus, Bernstein suggests that our vulnerability is constitutive to our intrinsic value as persons. He writes, ‘I cannot recognize you as a person if I do not recognize your vulnerability and perpetual exposure to harm,’ (p. 415).

Baier holds that we ordinary live through an ‘invisible web of trust’. Taking this to be the case, trust ordinarily only becomes visible through its breakdown. Once this occurs, an attitude of distrust may settle in. *Distrust* may be described as a ‘form of vigilance, anxiety, an exacting awareness of threatened vulnerability’ (Bernstein, 2011, p. 403), or as ‘wary suspicion’ (Jones, 1996, p. 7) of the other. In distrusting someone, we doubt her goodwill towards us. Whether our distrust is local or global, our attitude shifts from the oblivious, carefree attitude of trusting to one of persistent vigilance. Just as trust acts as an interpretive filter that relaxes one, allowing one to unconsciously go about her days without scrutiny or evaluation, distrust filters everything in a negative way: one begins to operate under the presumption that either a particular person or group of persons (or, worse yet, people in general), cannot be trusted and will likely do one harm.

Many have written on how the experiences of rape and torture destroy a person’s sense of bodily, as well as overall safety and trust in the world (e.g., Amery, 1999; Ratcliffe *et. al*, 2014). The body, which was once taken for granted, is now an explicit object of reflection; worries of its being harmed often become pervasive. In such instances of bodily violation, an attitude of distrust is often adopted toward other persons. Other persons are now perceived as potential rapists and torturers. The trust that has been destroyed disallows the persons who have undergone such traumatic experiences to experience recognition. They do not feel recognized as their inherent vulnerability has not been honored, but rather violated. In turn, they are unable to recognize others as persons due to their fear that others hold the very real possibility of harming them. Thus, their attitude of distrust prevents them from being healthily embedded into the social world.

Though loneliness is not necessarily brought about by instances of bodily harm[[82]](#footnote-82), I argue that feeling lonely may often lead to the development of an attitude of distrust toward other persons. As I argue in this chapter and in my thesis overall, feeling recognized by other persons is crucial to recognizing oneself as a person. Having healthy trusting relations with others is also part of what it means to be socially integrated. Once a person is lonely, his attitude of distrust may lead him to constant vigilance and scanning of other persons for signs of betrayal, as Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) argue.

In a study examining how people monitor social cues, Gardner *et. al* (2005) gave participants facts related to interpersonal social ties, presented in diary format. They found that participants who were lonely recalled a greater proportion of the information than those who were not lonely. Feeling lonely, it can be argued, increases a person’s attentiveness to social cues in the same way that being hungry or thirsty increases a person’s attentiveness to food or drink cues.

Gardner *et. al* (2005) then went on to test lonely person’s abilities to detect and infer meaning from nonverbal expressions. They presented pictures of twenty-four male and female faces representing four emotions: anger, fear, happiness, and sadness. These were presented in two modes—high and low intensity. Each face would appear for one second, during which participants were asked to judge the emotional quality. The results of the study were that the higher the level of loneliness the participant reported, the less accurate their interpretation of the facial expressions presented. Thus, the study suggests that although lonely people may be more attentive to social cues, this does not mean that their perceptions are more accurate. On the contrary, it appears in this study that the increased attention of the lonely participants led to them misreading the social signals. In the following section, I will expand upon Løgstrup’s notion of trust I discussed briefly earlier in this section.

*6.3 Løgstrup on trust*

In this section, I will focus on Løgstrup’s ideas on trust. I have chosen to do so because I believe his ideas on trust best highlight the natural trust one has, and how that natural trust can be altered in the experience of loneliness, complicating friendships. Løgstrup (1997) holds that the natural[[83]](#footnote-83) way persons encounter one another is through trust. Trust is so fundamental to human life, it is ‘part of what it means to be human’ (p. 9). He writes,

Initially we believe one another’s word; initially we trust one another. (…) Human life could hardly exist if it were otherwise. We would simply not be able to live; our life would be impaired and wither away if we were in advance to distrust one another’ (p. 8).

I think Løgstrup intends to convey that the quality of life of someone whose ordinary comportment is one of distrust is deeply impoverished as opposed to someone who, as he puts it, adopts this natural attitude of trusting. I think what he wishes to highlight is rather that the *quality* of life of one who initially distrusts others would likely be lower. Rather than just go about one’s daily life as normal, if one adopted an attitude of distrust, every aspect of one’s daily life as well as one’s reflective moments would present an affective challenge.

For example, if Jakob approaches the world with an initial attitude of distrust, he worries daily that the postman will lose his mail. He worries constantly that his emails will get lost and the recipients will never receive them. He worries every day that a car or bus will hit his children during their walk home from school. He worries that the food he purchases from the supermarket will be contaminated and poison him. Jakob is still very much alive, but his entire existence and way that he relates to other persons is based on distrusting them.

Contrast the way that Jakob relates to persons to the way that persons ordinarily relate to others: one normally trusts that the mail will come in the postbox as promised. One normally trusts that the emails one writes will be delivered to the intended recipients. One normally trusts that one’s children are fairly safe walking home from school, so long as they adhere to the traffic laws. One normally trusts that the food one buys from the supermarket is safe to eat and digest. In ordinary circumstances through which one approaches the world with an attitude of trust, it is not until someone does something to break our trust (e.g., lie to us or steal from us) that our trust is transformed into distrust and we regard others with suspicion. For example, if Jakob were to discover that the postman was keeping some of his letters and parcels and never delivering them, his trust in the postman would likely turn to distrust. This is because the postman has broken the trust that Jakob had previously given him without question.

Recall Baier (1986) stating that trust is like air—only noticeable when it has been polluted (p. 234). In Baier’s view, one would ordinarily simply trust that the mail and emails would be delivered accordingly; that one’s child would be safe walking home from school. She holds that one would ordinarily not approach the world with an attitude of distrust unless someone had done something to breach that trust. For example, if one discovered that a friend of their child’s had been murdered whilst walking to school, one would then likely approach their child walking to school with an attitude of distrust. The neighborhood, which formerly was viewed as safe, has been ‘polluted’, and now approached by its inhabitants with distrust. Upon the murder of her friend’s child, one realizes the climate of trust that previously existed. One realizes the vulnerability one ordinarily navigates the world with.

According to Løgstrup, when one person or persons trusts another, it is ordinarily characterized by what he calls ‘self-surrender’ (1997, p. 9). By ‘self-surrender’ he means that one can trust another to fulfill the expectations one has of them. Notably, trust is not unilateral for Løgstrup; rather, trust happens between two or more persons. As Stern (2017) holds, trust is important for Løgstrup because it reveals the natural interdependence persons have on one another. As I previously indicated, this means the taken for granted stance in intersubjective relations.

When one trusts another person, one is vulnerable to them. ‘To trust,’ Løgstrup writes, ‘is to lay oneself open,’ (1997, p. 9). According to Løgstrup, one lays oneself open to others through one’s words, deeds, and actions. We come to one another asking for acceptance, with expectations we desire the other to fulfill. In other words, we appear before the other and ask for her to recognize us by accepting us and fulfilling our wants and needs. These expectations we bring to the other may be spoken or silent, occur through our general attitude or conduct, or through specific words or actions. As Løgstrup writes, ‘there is self-surrender in all forms of communication’ (p. 11).

Independent of the form that the mutual expectations between the self and other takes, the expectation itself retains the same essence: that one assumes that the other person will fulfill the expectation she has brought forth. In this assumption, she surrenders herself over to the other person, is vulnerable to the other in that he may or may not decide to fulfill the expectation she has laid before him. One must be vulnerable to the other in order to have her expectations fulfilled. So, for Løgstrup there is a basic vulnerability that underlies all our relationships: from the stranger that sits next to you on a train journey, to a child who asks for help. In order to be a part of the social world, one must encounter and engage with other persons through being vulnerable to them, through trusting that they will do what is in one’s best interest.

What happens when the expectations of trust we have brought to the other are not fulfilled? Løgstrup says that when the other person does not fulfill our expectation, we feel distraught, embarrassed and rejected. These feelings of rejection and embarrassment may quickly turn into various moral accusations toward the other. Our former trust in interpersonal relations has now turned into what feels like a personal attack from the other against us (pp.10-11). That is, the implicit trust we once held toward the other and the world as a whole, has now been replaced with distrust. We then draw the conclusion that the other person does not value our life much. For if he did, our trust in him would not, as Løgstrup puts it, ‘leave him cold’ (p. 9). I read Løgstrup to be saying that part of what it is to value another’s life is to honour the vulnerability they show in trusting us. According to Løgstrup, if the other valued our life, she would not abuse our trust and turn it against us. It is bad enough that we feel embarrassed and endangered when our trust is abused. But what is worse yet is that our trust is spurned by the other. Løgstrup asserts,

For the other person to have been able to abuse it, our trust must simply have left him or her cold. However much he or she may seem to have accepted it outwardly, he or she did not actually accept it but merely exploited it. (p. 9)

Another way that trust may reveal itself is through our being able to take the person at face value. That is, to take him as he is without constructing a false image of him. In taking him at face value, we make no conscious effort to delve any deeper into who he is, what his character is like, as he has not done anything to arouse our suspicion, Løgstrup holds. If we approach the other through trust, we do not form any theories or create any false pictures about who he is (Stern, 2017, 290).

In contrast, if we are not in some way sympathetic to the other person, or there exists a tension between us due to there being something about the other that we are uncertain of or against, we react with ‘antipathy’ and ‘dissatisfaction’ (Løgstrup, 1997, p. 13). Rather than simply take the other at face value, we begin to form a picture of the other’s character, our guardedness transforming our view of him and making us see various dispositions in him that may or may not exist.

However, any images we have formed of the other person tend to fade away when the other is physically present with us (p. 13). It is not necessarily that he says particular things or performs specific actions (or, if he does, that allow us to correct our image of him), but that his actual presence does not leave room for a picture. That is, through the other’s physical presence, our imagination is constrained. We do not create theories about the other in an attempt to understand him, but simply take him as he appears to us. Unless it is a rare instance where the other’s unreliability has created in us what Løgstrup calls ‘an ingrown distrust’[[84]](#footnote-84), or we are completely antipathetic toward the other, our image of him will begin to break down.[[85]](#footnote-85) In being physically present with the other and taking him as he is, one is approaching him with an attitude of trust. It is through distrust that one develops false images of who a person is. Therefore, I read Løgstrup to be saying that it is important that one approaches others with an attitude of trust. If one approaches them with an attitude of trust, one is not only able to form a clearer picture of them, but they are able to see one more clearly as well. This way, one and the persons he encounters are able to engage more personally.

Løgstrup believes that in order to associate with or encounter another person personally, we must always be ‘in the power of’ (p. 14) his words and behavior. By ‘in the power of’, he means that we must be under the control or influence of another we associate with. For Løgstrup, the other always asserts a degree of control, of influence over our lives. This control may be over a small matter, such as a passing mood, or a matter of much larger scope, such as whether the life of the other flourishes. The idea that we encounter each other and rarely affect one another’s lives is, in Løgstrup’s estimation, incorrect. Rather, he contends that we constitute each other’s world and destiny. Though we are not ordinarily aware of it, what we say and do in our relationships with others determines their ‘joy or pain’, their ‘sincerity or duplicity’ (p. 16). Our very attitudes toward each other help shape each other’s worlds. Løgstrup writes,

By our very attitude to the other person we help to determine the scope and hue of his or her world; we make it large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure (p. 18).

I read Løgstrup to be saying that one must be careful in the way that she approaches others. One has more influence and control over another’s life than she may realize, thus she should exercise her power carefully. One should do one’s best to carefully consider the way her attitude affects other persons. I read Løgstrup to be urging us to contemplate the way we treat others and make sure we are treating them in a way that honors the gift of life[[86]](#footnote-86) they have been given and the particular persons that they are.

There are many ways one could understand Løgstrup’s ideas on trust, but I think that Stern’s (2017) account provides an accurate and broad understanding that will be most useful for my purposes here. Stern contends that there are four main ways of understanding Løgstrup’s ideas on trust: 1) *Psychological*: We start out trusting others (developmental priority), 2) *Transcendental*: Provided the necessary conditions are in place, trust is a reasonable default attitude (rational priority), 3) *Value*: Trust is a prima facie good, therefore distrust is a privation or deficient form of trust (axiological priority) 4) *Ontological*: Trust is essential to human life, whereas distrust is not (priority in being), (Stern, 2017, p. 276). Below, I will provide a more thorough explanation of the third and fourth alternatives, as Stern believes that these two options best encapsulate the principal elements of Løgstrup’s account.

Let us first look at the idea of value, that trust is a *prima facie* good. Løgstrup claims that ‘trust is basic’ (Løgstrup, 1997, p. 18, note 5). What Stern interprets him to mean by this is that ‘a world in which trust is possible is better than a world in which it is absent’ (Stern, 2017, p. 290). This is not only because a lack of trust may make some human relations difficult or impossible, but because ‘the world will be deprived of goods intrinsic to trust itself’ (p. 290). According to this axiological viewpoint, trust is not parallel or equal to distrust, but simply what is basic. Because trust is of prior value, distrust can only be regarded as a deficient form, according to Løgstrup.[[87]](#footnote-87)

Now I shall look at Stern’s fourth viewpoint, the ontological viewpoint. This viewpoint is summarized by the phrase, ‘Trust is not of our own making; it is given’ (Løgstrup, 1997, p. 18). What Stern interprets Løgstrup to be saying is that human beings do not themselves bring trust into existence through the creation of norms or practices. Rather, these norms and practices are brought into existence in contractual or semi-contractual manners, thus they are goods we introduce into the world and exert control over. Trust, on the other hand, is a structure which is ‘fundamental to life itself’ (Stern, 2017, p. 291). Due to our vulnerability and interdependence, Stern reads Løgstrup to say that without trust we could not function as human beings. Thus, ‘trust is not of our own making’ (Løgstrup, 1997, p. 18). Rather, trust is given with the original nature of human life and is a good we are not responsible for and can lay no claim on (Stern, 2017, p. 291). In contrast, distrust is not fundamental to human life and is something we could function perfectly well without, as Løgstrup contends.

However, unlike Stern, there are some philosophers that disagree with Løgstrup’s ideas on trust. For example, Hardin (2004) does not place the same value on trust as Løgstrup does. Rather, Hardin believes that we should value *distrust*. He writes,

It is a peculiar implication of the commonplace thesis that trust is inherently moral and…that distrust must evidently therefore be bad. (…) Indeed, distrust is sometimes not merely a rational assessment; it also is benign in that it protects against harms rather than causing them (Hardin, 2004, p. 5).

I agree with Hardin that distrust is not inherently *bad* or amoral. However, I disagree with his idea that distrust may protect us against harms rather than causing harms. It seems reasonable that one should take caution and employ one’s knowledge, logic and reasoning skills when in various situations. Yet, I do not see how approaching the situation with an attitude of distrust would be helpful. On the contrary, doing so may just make one paranoid. According to Løgstrup, approaching persons with the attitude of distrust is unnatural. Stern (2017) agrees and goes so far as to suggest that it ‘distort[s] life through our own selfishness’ (p. 291).

Another philosopher who disagrees with Løgstrup is Stangerup (1960). Stangerup believes that Løgstrup has the wrong starting point. Rather than a natural attitude of trust, Stangerup holds that human beings begin with an attitude of distrust. According to Stangerup, trust only follows after as a ‘result of the fulfillment of love or friendship’ (Løgstrup 2007, p. 2; 1961, p. 229). In other words, for Stangerup, one is distrusted until he is involved with one in a personal relationship and proves trustworthy.

It is important to note, however, that Hardin (2004) and Stangerup’s (1960) ideas on trust are aligned with the notion I discussed earlier in this chapter: *explicit trust*. An example of explicit trust is that *X* trusts *Y* to do *Z*. Recall that explicit trust is a conscious response. Løgstrup’s ideas on trust, on the other hand, fall into the category of *implicit trust* (the idea that trust is a pre-rational, non-reflective attitude). That said, comparing and contrasting the two is a difficult task, as they have completely different starting points. As I mentioned, I have chosen to focus on understanding Løgstrup’s ideas on trust in this section because I think they highlight the natural trust one ordinarily has, and how the experience of loneliness can alter that natural trust and complicate the process of forming and maintaining relationships.

*6.4 Closing Thoughts*

I began this chapter by looking at Husserl’s conceptions of time and anticipation. Through looking at the unique way that Husserl holds time flows, I demonstrated how we come to ordinarily anticipate things that will occur in the future. I argued that in the experience of loneliness, the ordinary structure of anticipation is disrupted. One no longer looks towards the future with what Husserl terms ‘open uncertainty’, but instead looks towards the future with ‘problematic uncertainty’. I gave some examples to illustrate how alterations in our interpersonal relations lead to alterations in the way we anticipate.

I discussed how implicit trust underscores our ability to engage with other persons and our world. I also discussed how we are born with an inherent vulnerability that ordinarily remains unacknowledged. The fact that others could harm or betray us is usually far from our consciousness until they do. Through looking at the work of Løgstrup (1997), Baier (1986; 1991;1992), and others, I looked at how implicit trust ordinarily functions. I then went on to discuss that lonely persons may no longer live through implicit trust, but instead, may navigate their lives through a sense of distrust. Through looking at the work of Bernstein (2011), I have suggested that loneliness is a distinctive feeling in which our existential and non-existential vulnerabilities are exposed.

Perhaps nowhere is our implicit trust and inherent vulnerability more apparent than when we look at infant studies. The infant naturally trusts the parent for his well-being and looks to him for recognition of himself as a person. The parents’ recognition of the infant helps the infant to recognize himself. Through looking at infant studies by Reddy (2009), Gallagher (2005), and others, I discussed how the desire for recognition is an innate need.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the importance of trust in shaping our interactions, providing recognition, and helping keep loneliness at bay. I have demonstrated the importance of recognition in shaping our interpersonal lives. I have articulated and clarified the levels of my three-tiered model of recognition. Now, in my conclusion, I will suggest some implications of my thesis and some possible further avenues of research to explore.

*Conclusion*

The primary aim in writing this thesis was to develop a better understanding of the experience of loneliness. Loneliness is a topic that is widely under-researched in philosophy, so this thesis serves as a contribution to a philosophical understanding of loneliness. In this thesis, I focused on case studies of persons who had experienced loneliness. I looked at persons experiencing loneliness from a variety of different contexts, including: solitary confinement, feeling lonely within and outside friendships and love relationships, voice hearing and depression. Through examining each of the case studies, I showed that there was a common theme that emerged: persons were lonely because they were not receiving the recognition they desired. I created a tripartite model of recognition in order to demonstrate the ways persons require recognition in order to not feel lonely.

At the first level, I argued that one needs to be recognized by others as a person. This may occur through being seen by the other or participating in gestures with him. I used the case study of persons in solitary confinement to demonstrate this. I discussed Sartre’s (2003) ideas on intersubjectivity in order to illustrate the importance of being seen by the other. Honneth and Margalit’s (2001a) emphasis on the importance of gesture in addition to being seen by others helped further explain how recognition can occur at this most basic level. I included a discussion of Sartre’s ideas on shame to further elaborate upon the importance of being seen by the other. I concluded the chapter by discussing Sartre’s play *No Exit*. I contend that this play is a great example of the difficulties persons often face in interpersonal interactions. More importantly, however, I contend that this play exemplifies our intrinsic need and interdependence on others. Garcin’s decision to stay in hell with the others when he was given the opportunity to leave demonstrates how much we value interpersonal relationships and how much we desire recognition. Whilst this play is a rather extreme example of interpersonal relations, its power lies in its ability to convey the importance of our everyday real-life interactions. The importance the characters place on how they are perceived by other persons, along with their despair at not being recognized, demonstrates the desire persons have for recognition in real life.

At the second level of recognition, I hold that one achieves recognition via close, companionate friendships. These friendships are characterized by a willingness to be interpreted by the other, and an emphasis on trust. I suggested that Cocking & Kennett’s (1998) drawing view of friendship is a good model for how close companionate friendships work. As I discussed, in their model, close companionate friends are willing to be drawn and interpreted by each other. I also discussed Løgstrup’s (1997) ideas on trust. Løgstrup’s work on trust provides a good understanding of the vulnerability inherent in trusting other persons. This is important as it underscores the vulnerability many lonely persons feel and highlights the difficulty they may have with trusting. In addition, I discussed the methodology and results of some empirical studies that have been conducted on the relationship between loneliness and trust. These studies demonstrated that lonely persons often find it more difficult to trust than non-lonely persons. This supports the first-person accounts I shared of the experiences of lonely persons who struggle to form or maintain friendships.

At the third level of recognition, I contend that persons are recognized through engaging in love relationships with others. Through these love relationships, one is recognized as a unique individual. In order to demonstrate ways in which love relationships function and provide recognition for persons, I discussed von Hildebrand (2009) and Scheler’s (2008) ideas on love. Von Hildebrand holds that one cannot love another person until they recognize who they are as a unique individual. Additionally, he suggests that love is comprised of commitment and a special type of solidarity with another. Scheler argues that love is a ‘movement of intention’ (2008, p. 153) whereby the lover perceives not only the qualities his beloved possesses but is also able to visualize higher values. According to Scheler, one is ordinarily only able to view others’ social personalities; that is, facts about them such as their age, profession or socio-economic status. It is only through loving another that the individual personality can be fully revealed. Von Hildebrand and Scheler’s accounts of love relationships help aid in understanding the first-person accounts I have provided. They help clarify why persons feel lonely when they do not have the love relationships they desire.

My inclusion of the levels in my tripartite model is to signify the increasing importance of recognition at each level, and to show that one cannot reach a higher level without obtaining recognition at a lower level first. For example, I hold that one cannot rightly be recognized in a love relationship at the third level if they have not received recognition first at levels 1 and 2. One must first be recognized as a person in level one, then recognized through close companionate friendship at level 2 in order to reach level 3. Trusting and allowing the other to draw and interpret one are characteristics that I hold are also integral to level 3. I hold that one cannot engage in a satisfying love relationship with another without trust and an openness to interpretation present.

After developing an understanding of my tripartite model of recognition, I examined the experience of lonely voice hearers. I drew from a series of case studies of lonely voice hearers, as well as the work of Gadamer (2004) and Hoffman (2007; 2008) in order to develop my idea that a subset of voice hearing experiences are caused by the experience of loneliness. Through looking at first-person accounts of lonely voice hearers, I showed that lonely voice hearers often felt that they lacked relationships with other persons. Thus, I suggested that due to this lack of interpersonal relationships, the voices served as a substitute for real persons. Through looking at Gadamer’s work, I discussed how persons all approach the world through their own horizons, and how their effective history affects that. I discussed Gadamer’s emphasis on the importance of language and dialogue with other persons. Gadamer contends that language gives us a world and that it is through dialogue that persons can achieve understanding with one another. I argued that Hoffman’s (2007; 2008) Social Deafferentation Hypothesis can be used to understand and bolster my idea that a subset of lonely persons may develop auditory verbal hallucinations.

In my final case study, I discussed the experience of depression in relation to the experience of loneliness. I looked at first-person accounts of depressed persons and lonely persons. Though many of these accounts shared similarities, I drew some important distinctions between the two experiences. One way I distinguished between experiences of loneliness and experiences of depression was through looking at the way that lonely and depressed persons experience possibilities. I used Ratcliffe’s (2015) work on depression in order to showcase the differences in the way lonely and depressed persons experience possibilities. I argued that lonely persons experience an alteration in possibilities at a more localized level; that is, their interpersonal possibilities change. Depressed persons, on the other hand, experience an alteration of possibilities at both a localized and a global level. As Ratcliffe holds, ‘Depression…involves a change in one’s sense of belonging to the world’ (2015, p. 50).

I then looked at Binswanger’s (1975) ideas on rootedness and falling in order to draw another useful distinction between the experiences of loneliness and depression. Loneliness, I argued, is characterized by falling or fearing that one may fall, whereas depression is characterized by one having already fallen and hit the ground. From the distinctions I drew from Binswanger’s work, I then made a further distinction based on Ratcliffe’s reading of Binswanger. Ratcliffe (2015) characterizes the difference between rootedeness and falling Binswanger speaks of as a difference between ‘I can’ and ‘I can’t’. I use his distinction to support my ideas on the differences between the experiences of loneliness and depression. Loneliness is characterized by the phrase ‘I can’. Whilst lonely, one still thinks it is possible to achieve the meaningful connections she years for. Depression is characterized by the phrase ‘I can’t’. Whilst depressed, one thinks it is no longer possible to achieve meaningful connections with others, nor is it possible to achieve any other goals.

I discuss Ratcliffe’s (2013; 2015) work on the experience of hopelessness. Ratcliffe holds that there are different kinds of hope one can have; namely intentional hopes and existential hope. He holds that intentional hopes are characterized by phrases like ‘I hope that p’, whereas existential hope is pre-intentional, meaning that it characterizes one’s entire orientation towards the world and the capacity to hope. I argue that the experience of loneliness is characterized by an alteration in intentional hopes, whereas the experience of depression is characterized by an alteration in existential hope. This distinction in the alteration of hope of lonely and depressed persons showcases another important way to distinguish between these two experiences. As I discussed in 5.5, distinguishing between loneliness and depression is important, as being able to do so has many significant clinical implications, including both psychologists and psychiatrists being able to administer better, more informed treatment.[[88]](#footnote-88)

I then included a brief discussion of classical and contemporary theories of empathy (Stein (1917/1989), Zahavi (2010; 2014) and Ratcliffe (2012b; 2015). I proposed that both lonely persons and depressed persons often have difficulty empathizing with other persons. Both lonely and depressed persons have difficulties focusing on other persons during interpersonal interactions. However, using the work of Cacioppo & Patrick (2008), I distinguished a difference in lonely persons and depressed persons. Lonely persons have difficulties with both self-regulation and co-regulation, Cacioppo & Patrick argue. This may be why they may be prone to misinterpreting interpersonal interactions.

In the final chapter of my thesis, I included a more extended discussion of the relationship between loneliness, trust and recognition. I began by looking at two of the most well-known recognition theorists, Kant (1785) and Hegel (1807/1977) and outlining their theories of recognition. I then showed where their theories of recognition are situated in relation to my own ideas on recognition. I suggested that Kant’s ideas on the importance of recognizing the personhood of others could describe the way I discuss recognition at the first level, but could not describe the way recognition occurs at levels 2 and 3. I discussed how I think that Hegel’s emphasis on love is important and fits into my models’ idea that love is the highest form of recognition. However, I disagreed with Hegel’s idea that recognition between persons must necessarily be mutual. I argued that it is most important for lonely persons to feel that they are being recognized by other persons in order to relieve their feelings of loneliness. I also included a more in-depth discussion on trust and argued through using the work of Reddy (2009) that the desire for recognition from others is innate. Her work on infant and childhood development studies helps illustrate that persons require recognition for well-being from birth.

Now that I have provided a summary of my work in the thesis, I will discuss some potential philosophical implications this thesis may have. Philosophical research on loneliness is indeed in its infancy, thus I will just highlight a few possible interesting avenues for further research below.

*Philosophical Implications*

Considering the variety of topic areas my thesis covered, there are many different philosophical implications that can be drawn. I will just highlight a few here, and then go on to suggest potential areas of philosophical research to pursue. Firstly, I have emphasized that my understanding of loneliness is informed by the phenomenological tradition of philosophy. Thus, my thesis is a contribution to the phenomenology of loneliness. As I have discussed, this tradition emphasizes first-person experience. One implication of my thesis is that looking at loneliness from the perspective of persons who have experienced it offers deep and unparalleled insight into the experience of loneliness. Though empirical studies on loneliness can provide useful information in understanding loneliness, they fail to capture how loneliness feels. Thus far, most of the research conducted on loneliness has been based on empirical research. In my thesis I have sought to demonstrate the importance of first-person accounts in understanding loneliness. It was primarily through these accounts that I was able to develop my idea that the one thing all lonely persons are missing is recognition. This led to my development of the three-tiered model of recognition. This leads me to the second philosophical implication.

Secondly, I argue that lonely persons across all of the case studies I have included suffer from a lack of recognition. In my thesis, I have begun to explore the relationship between loneliness and recognition, but more work could be done on this topic. Now that I have identified that lonely persons across many case studies lack recognition, more research could be conducted to decipher, e.g., how to rectify that. Possible questions to consider are: What are the implications of lonely persons lacking recognition? Are there methods or programs that could be devised to help lonely persons feeling unrecognized? Is there something persons in a society could do in order to help others feel less lonely (e.g., certain social behaviors persons could adhere to or display)?

I contend that garnering a deeper understanding of loneliness offers valuable insight not only in the phenomenological tradition I have emphasized in this thesis, but in several other branches of philosophy as well. Namely, the following five areas:

1. Moral Philosophy
2. Social/Political Philosophy
3. Philosophy of Religion
4. Philosophy of Emotion
5. Philosophy of Psychology/Psychiatry

I will now discuss the possible implications of each area below.

*Implications for Moral Philosophy*

My thesis has raised and answered questions that are important to many philosophers that focus on moral philosophy. The topics of loneliness, trust and recognition I discuss in this thesis would be of interest to moral philosophers. Firstly, I offer a novel understanding of the experience of loneliness. This topic itself could be interesting for moral philosophers to pursue. As I have argued in this thesis, looking at the experience of loneliness and gaining an understanding of it shows how important meaningful connection is to human beings. Recall Sally Brampton’s statement at the beginning of this thesis: ‘Life is about connection. There is nothing else’ (2008, p. 1). Indeed, what I have shown in this thesis is that feeling meaningfully connected to other persons is integral to our emotional, physical and psychological health. That said, one can argue that feeling meaningfully connected to other persons is one of the richest experiences one can have in life. Studies have suggested that feeling meaningfully connected is more important for well-being than any other factor, including increased income, success and fame (see, e.g., Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008).

Studying loneliness from a moral perspective could raise several interesting questions for moral philosophers. For example: What do studies on loneliness show about what it means to be a human being? Or, in relation to the emphasis on trust in this thesis: What insights about trust can be garnered from its importance in understanding loneliness? Those are just two examples amongst many, as studying loneliness could have many fascinating avenues of research for moral philosophers to explore. In addition to the implications loneliness has for moral philosophy, there are countless social and political implications it has as well. In the following section, I will detail how present loneliness research has impacted the public and political discourse on loneliness and suggest some ideas that could be implemented for the future.

*Implications for Social/Political Philosophy*

As I mentioned briefly in the introduction of the thesis, loneliness is a topic that has recently received increasing attention in both the public and political spheres. Many recent news articles have discussed the effects of loneliness from a variety of perspectives. For example, some articles have attempted to break the taboo in speaking out about loneliness.[[89]](#footnote-89) Other articles have drawn on empirical research to demonstrate the effects loneliness has on the body[[90]](#footnote-90). Other articles have discussed loneliness as a problem in relation to modern times.[[91]](#footnote-91)

The BBC recently conducted a survey called the Loneliness Experiment. Over 55,000 persons from 237 countries, islands and territories completed the survey.[[92]](#footnote-92) They answered a variety of questions on loneliness, including questions about how often they felt lonely and what they considered to be the loneliest time of their life. Notably, one of the results of the study produced an unexpected result: the age group that reported feeling the loneliest was not the elderly as researchers had hypothesized, but rather the age group of young adults from 16 to 24.[[93]](#footnote-93) This result was constant across all countries, territories and islands. What these results indicate to loneliness researchers is that focus on understanding and alleviating loneliness should be diversified across all age groups. It is not only the elderly population that suffers from loneliness; feelings of loneliness can occur at any age.

Studies like the BBC Loneliness Experiment are extremely useful in bringing needed awareness to the topic of loneliness. Specifically, studies like this bring *public* awareness to it. Reading articles, listening to podcasts and viewing the results of surveys on loneliness may enable persons feeling lonely to feel comfortable talking about loneliness with others. The increasing public attention and awareness of loneliness makes the topic less taboo: it is becoming socially acceptable to admit that one is or has been lonely. The influx of media attention on loneliness over these past few years means that feeling lonely is no longer a secret you have to keep to yourself; it is now a problem recognized by society.

Until recently, loneliness was not considered a topic of political relevance. Now, different countries have made it part of their political agenda to alleviate loneliness. The UK, for instance, has now appointed an MP, Tracey Couch, to tackle loneliness.[[94]](#footnote-94) As I mentioned previously, Teresa May has recently stated that GP’s will be permitted to help lonely patients by prescribing social activities to them (such as attending an art or music class) by 2023.

In addition to the UK, other countries have recently started to acknowledge and seek to alleviate loneliness on the political level. In Australia, MP Fiona Patten has proposed that Victoria appoint a loneliness minister to tackle the growing health problems of loneliness.[[95]](#footnote-95) The proposal is supported by the Australian Coalition to End Loneliness but is yet to be put to either of the major parties. The recent political interest in loneliness testifies to Kimberly Brownlee’s work on loneliness (2013) I mentioned previously; politicians are beginning to agree with her and recognize that feeling well-connected and not lonely is a human right.

Outside the political and social spheres, loneliness may be considered an issue that requires reflection from different religious perspectives. Below, I briefly consider some possible questions philosophers of religion may wish to consider regarding loneliness.

*Philosophy of Religion*

Looking at loneliness in relation to topics in philosophy of religion may be fruitful for both philosophers of religion and religious scholars. One question that thinkers who hold a monotheistic view may wish to consider is whether persons can still experience loneliness if they are connected to God. Another possible question is: What is the difference between being meaningfully connected and not meaningfully connected with God? Do persons need to feel recognized by God? Considering questions about the experience of loneliness in religious contexts could lead to some more insights into the phenomenon of loneliness as well.

Followers of each religion may find it fruitful to pursue studies on loneliness in relation to their particular religion and the ideologies it holds. For instance, Christians may wish to contemplate what it means to be lonely as a Christian; Buddhists may wish to contemplate what it means to be lonely as a Buddhist. Followers of all religions may find it useful to contemplate what role (if any) loneliness plays in their personal relationship to their religion. Do feelings of loneliness block the pathway to redemption? Do they block the pathway to achieving nirvana? Those are just a few examples of questions philosophers of religion, religious scholars and followers of religions may wish to contemplate and pursue further research on. Now, I shall turn to look at the types of questions philosophers of emotion may wish to pursue. Emotional experience, like religious experience, is deeply personal and may offer valuable insights into what understanding the experience of loneliness may contribute to understanding emotional experience.

*Philosophy of Emotion*

In chapter 1, I briefly discussed whether loneliness should be classified as a mood, an emotion or a feeling. I argued that loneliness should be classified as a feeling. However, much more work on how to situate loneliness affectively needs to be done. One interesting research topic could be looking at how feeling lonely influences emotions such as sadness, happiness and anger. Another potential research topic would be looking at the relationship between loneliness and shame (doing so could be especially useful for better understanding persons suffering from Borderline Personality Disorder, for instance).

For those philosophers of emotion wishing to take a more basic approach, more arguments could be made in which proponents contend that loneliness is an emotion, mood or feeling. There has been very little philosophical work done on how to situate loneliness affectively, thus some articles or books defending a particular approach would be a welcome addition to the literature on understanding loneliness. Perhaps a better understanding of loneliness as an emotion, mood or feeling could tie in well with insights loneliness may provide to philosophers of psychology and psychiatry. An understanding of how loneliness feels and thus should be situated may aid psychologists and psychiatrists in developing a better understanding of loneliness.

*Philosophy of Psychology/Philosophy of Psychiatry*

As I discussed in my thesis (especially in chapters 4 and 5) a better understanding of loneliness has both broad and deep implications for philosophers, psychologists and psychiatrists. I discussed how van den Berg claimed that ‘loneliness is the nucleus of psychiatry’, and how he then demonstrated how the primary complaint of all of his patients was loneliness, independent of their diagnosis. As I have shown in this thesis, the effects of loneliness on one’s psychological health can be great. Recall that I proposed in Chapter 4 that feelings of loneliness can cause auditory verbal hallucinations in a subset of voice hearers. In Chapter 5, I proposed that loneliness plays a central role in the experience of depression. These chapters help highlight the need for a better understanding of loneliness in the contexts of psychology and psychiatry.

A better understanding of loneliness and its possible effects could be very useful for psychologists, perhaps especially counseling psychologists. If they understood that a patient was experiencing loneliness, they would be in a better place to recommend different methods to help endure the pain of it. If a patient was isolated and experiencing loneliness, they could suggest going to group therapy to discuss it, or for them to find a class to attend in a topic that interests them. They could focus the therapy around how to better deal with the person’s interpersonal relationships.

A better understanding of loneliness would also be beneficial for psychiatrists. Distinguishing between loneliness and psychiatric diagnoses such as depression, bi-polar and schizophrenia could aid in ensuring that persons are prescribed the correct medication (or no medication at all, as it were). If a psychiatrist determined that a person was experiencing loneliness, she could refer the person to individual counseling or group therapy rather than writing a prescription for a medication such as an SSRI (Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor).

Studying the phenomenon of loneliness could be beneficial in understanding many different diagnoses. For example, many persons who are diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder struggle with loneliness. It may be fruitful to have a closer look as to why this is. It would also be fruitful to gain a deeper understanding as to what the tipping point is between loneliness and depression. When does loneliness turn into depression?

Another possible area of interest could be to look at loneliness in relation to eating disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa. Looking at work from e.g., Legrand and Briend (2015) and Bowden (2012) suggests that the body becomes a conspicuous object in the experience of Anorexia. One interesting question would be whether the body also becomes a conspicuous object in the experience of loneliness. Another question to ponder may be whether persons diagnosed with anorexia experience feelings of loneliness.

Research on loneliness and its effects has only just begun; we will likely discover much more in the coming decades and garner a much deeper understanding of it than we have now. My aim in writing this thesis has been in part to raise awareness of the importance of understanding loneliness. My thesis has sought to show that feeling meaningfully connected with other persons is no small matter. Feeling recognized by others is important to one’s well-being on multiple levels. Feeling recognized by others helps one to not only experience well-being, but to feel as if they are living a good life.

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1. Recently, however, there have been a few attempts to rectify this. Most notably, Lars Svendsen (2017) has published a book entitled *A Philosophy of Loneliness.* Additionally, there have been a couple of notable articles on loneliness: Kimberley Brownlee’s ‘A Human Right Against Social Deprivation’ (2013), and M. Shuster’s ‘Language and Loneliness: Arendt, Cavell, and Modernity (2012). Much more work needs to be done, however, in order to garner a better understanding of loneliness. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See J.S House *et al.* (1988), W. Lauder *et. al* (2006), Page and Cole (1991), Ponzetti (1990), J. Cacioppo *et. al* (2000), J. Cacioppo *et. al.* (2002), Kiecolt-Glaser *et. al* (1984), Lynch (1977), and Cacioppo & Patrick (2008) for evidence of the effects loneliness has on physical health. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Russell *et. al*. (1980) for more information on the UCLA Loneliness Scale. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. I will expound on the three levels of recognition in chapters 2, 3 and 6. This is just a very brief overview. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 5 For example, the UK Parliamentary Commission has recently announced that part of their strategy for combating loneliness will be for all GP’s in England to be able to refer patients experiencing loneliness to voluntary services and community activities by 2023. See <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2018/october/statement-on-loneliness-strategy-in-the-commons/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 6 By this, I mean that there is too much cognitive effort. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 7 I am not asserting here that cognition is fundamental. Rather, I am arguing that cognition is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition for loneliness. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 8 Though he phrases it ‘metaphysical’, he uses it in a way that is more akin to ‘existential’. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 9 To clarify, Mijuskovic does not hold that persons experience *feelings* of loneliness all of their lives. Rather, he holds that persons view the world from the vantage point of loneliness. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 10 I will discuss this in more detail in later chapters. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 11 E.g., see Goldie (2000); Solomon (1993; 2006); Damasio (2000; 2006); Ratcliffe (2008) and Price (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. I will go into more detail about this below. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This is certainly true of ordinary cases of loneliness. One could argue that cases of chronic loneliness do exemplify loneliness colouring everything they do. However, I think these cases often have overlapping depression. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, depression is related to loneliness, but a distinct state. I will argue in Chapter 5 that one of the factors that distinguishes loneliness from depression is that loneliness is a feeling whilst depression is a mood. Furthermore, as I will go on to argue below, chronic loneliness can be viewed as a character trait. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. By ‘valence neutral’, I mean that the experience is neither necessarily negative nor positive. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Creativity is here defined as ‘forming associations between previously unrelated ideas and giving expression to those ideas in ways that are useful or valuable to the self or others’ (Long & Averill, 2003, p. 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I wish to highlight here that I am not equating being alone with being in solitude. I am simply using this as an example of how being by oneself does not necessarily lead to the ‘bliss of solitude’ Wordsworth spoke of. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The phenomenological reduction is the cornerstone of Husserl’s work. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are both suspicious of this core method. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. It is important to point out, however, that Husserl himself also believed that a complete reduction was impossible. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For example, I will look at work from Gallagher (2005), who emphasizes the intersection between cognitive science and phenomenology, and Reddy (2009), whose work looks at studies from neuroscience and social science to support her work on infant development and phenomenology. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I do think they are necessary, however. Having empirical studies to draw from does aid in supporting the case studies I will present here. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. I will return to the relationship between loneliness and empathy in Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. This manual was declassified by the Pentagon in 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This is whilst one is feeling lonely and unrecognized. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. \* Indicates that name has been changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. To clarify, I am not equating the punishment of prisoners in solitary confinement and the punishment of persons feeling lonely; these are obviously two very different experiences. I am just noting here that both experiences involve punishment in different ways. The person in solitary confinement is, as I mentioned, being punished by the government for an alleged crime she committed. The person feeling lonely may experience feelings of punishment by way of not appearing before others, or not appearing before others in a way that he is able to receive recognition from them. Thus, lonely persons may experience a punishment of not appearing before others that is either self-imposed (in instances of e.g., shyness), or imposed by others (in instances of, e.g., ostracization). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. In both *Being and Nothingness* and the *Notebooks*, Sartre tends to identify the Look with objectification and alienation. My reading of Sartre on the Look is similar to Catalano and McBride’s (1996). One of the main points I agree with them on is that our ‘awareness of our exteriority is not the same as objectification. (…) I do not experience shame because you have objectified me as shameful but because you reveal me as possibly shameful to myself, (1996, p. 31). Dolezal (2012) offers an excellent interpretation of the Look by way of emphasizing the important role the Look plays in understanding intersubjective relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This is the orthodox reading of Sartre. However, some philosophers (e.g., Heter, 2006), along with myself, have a more positive reading of Sartre’s intersubjective relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. I will outline the second and third levels of recognition in chapters 3 and 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. This point will be made clear in the next section. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. I will discuss this third level of recognition in detail in chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. In this chapter overall, I have asserted that many of Sartre’s ideas, (for example, the Look and shame), have immense value in understanding intersubjective relations. However, as I previously mentioned, there are many scholars who do not see Sartre’s work on intersubjectivity valuable. One of the most famous examples of this is the logical positivist A.J. Ayer (1945), who holds that Sartre has mistakenly granted ontological status to the purely linguistic category of negation. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. I would like to note that I have used Sartre’s ideas in order to illuminate the nature and complexity of interpersonal relationships. Understanding the structure of interpersonal relationships is vital in understanding the experience of loneliness. That said, I have not engaged in an in-depth scholarly discussion of Sartre in this chapter, but instead chosen to look at the broad themes he raises that I think are particularly helpful in understanding certain aspects of interpersonal relationships. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. I use the term ‘love relationships’ in this chapter to signify various kinds of relationships in which persons regard each other with love, including but not limited to: the love between parent and child, love between siblings or other family members, and the love between romantic partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. \*Real name has been changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. I will discuss depression and the changes that often accompany it at length in Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Rotenbeg’s inclusion of the UCLA Loneliness Scale as part of his study was based on Russel’s (1982) idea that this scale is the most widely used measure of loneliness and has demonstrated reliability and validity. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. I have chosen to only include the first phase of the study here, for the sake of brevity. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. This was done in order to minimize feelings of suspicion students might have about the confederate. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. In Rotenberg’s study, trusting behavior was conceptualized as promised cooperation across interactions between subjects and confederates. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Though Duck *et. al* do not offer a definition of global negativity in their work, I interpret them to mean an all-around negative perspective. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. By ‘lonely social cognition’, they mean that the way the person ordinarily views themselves and others has been altered. Having a lonely social cognition means that you are looking for social threats and may not be able to accurately interpret social cues. See Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) for more on this. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. There are many different forms of self-regulation. Cacioppo and Patrick do not specify which form they are discussing here. Two of the main types of self-regulation are 1) Behavioral self-regulation*:* the idea that one is able to behave in a way that is consistent with one’s core beliefs and values, and 2) Emotional self-regulation: the idea that one is able to calm oneself down or cheer oneself up accordingly. In short, self-regulation means acting in a way that is appropriate to the situation and healthy for oneself. For more information on self-regulation see, e.g., Baumeister, R.F. *et. al* (1994) and Zimmerman, B.J. (1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. I will return to this idea in Chapter 5, where I have included a more in-depth discussion of empathy. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Cacioppo and Patrick do not clearly state what they mean by this. Roughly, co-regulation is the idea that individuals are constantly modifying their behavior in accordance with other individuals. Through doing so, they are modifying the other’s behavior and willing to modify their own behavior according to the other’s wishes. For more information on co-regulation, see e.g., E.A. Butler and A.K. Randall (2013); also see D.A. Sbarra, and C. Hazan, (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. I chose to center my discussion round close companionate friendships rather than the oft-used starting point of Aristotle’s three forms of friendships (utility, pleasure, and virtue). It seems that what many lonely persons are seeking is not just *any* friend they can, e.g., play basketball with, but a close friend that can provide a much deeper form of recognition. It is agreed by many philosophers that close companionate friendships consist of, as Cocking and Kennett put it, ‘reciprocal deep affection, well-wishing, and the desire for shared experiences,’ (p. 502). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Aristotle’s view is that friends are ‘other selves’, meaning that we choose to be friends with persons whom resemble likenesses to ourselves. Most importantly for Aristotle, we choose to be friends with persons who hold similar virtues to ourselves. For a discussion, see Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics,* Book VIII (1980). For current versions of this theory see, e.g., Helm (2010). I, like Cocking & Kennett, fail to see how similarities account for our close friendships. It seems to be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of close companionate friendships that persons have similar interests or moral characters. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. For more on the secrets view of friendship, see, for example, Thomas (1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Cocking & Kennett are careful to note that this does have limits. It would be absurd to suggest that a person is willing to do any and everything their close friend suggests. Say, for example, you are deathly afraid of heights and your friend suggests bungee jumping. Whilst you may appreciate and admire his bravado, bungee jumping is an activity you can never see yourself doing. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The examples given here are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Or at least, they shouldn’t be. A stranger making such a detailed assessment of one’s character would be puzzling. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. For more information on implicit trust, refer back to the introduction and section 3.1 of this chapter. In those sections, I discuss what implicit trust is and then go on to focus on Løgstrup’s ideas on it. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. I will discuss the complex relationship between loneliness and depression at length in Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Their use of ‘attachment figure’ can be thought of as analogous to a person one loves and, at least in healthy love relationships, experiences a sense of belonging and feelings of love from their involvement with them. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. \* Indicates that name has been changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. I will discuss the idea of interpersonal dialogue providing recognition in section 4.4, where I also discuss the role that interpersonal dialogue plays in the second and third levels of recognition. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Notably, there has been some recent work that seems to rectify this gap in the literature. Ratcliffe and Wilkinson’s (2016) article ‘How anxiety induces verbal hallucinations’, as well as Ratcliffe’s (2017) book *Real* *Hallucinations: Psychiatric Illness, Intentionality, and the Interpersonal World*, both highlight issues with verbal hallucinations and sociality. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. However, there are also many studies that argue that AVHs have nothing to do with our interpersonal relationships. For example, Stephane, Barton & Boutrous (2001) argue that ‘AVH is a symptom of brain disease just like blindness or hemiplegia’ (p. 186). Additionally, even some of the scholars who endorse the idea that AVHs are linked with interpersonal relationships admit that the idea is in its infancy and needs more scientific evidence. For instance, in a study conducted by Hardy *et. al* (2005), only five out of seventy-five participants (12.5%) had a direct link between the personal trauma they had endured and their voices. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. As discussed in Chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. For more information on hermeneutics, as well as an excellent overview of hermeneutics across several disciplines, see *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. by J. Malpas and H.H. Gander (2014). Also see Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (eds.) *The Phenomenology Reader* (2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. For Gadamer, the term ‘interpretation’ is achieved through understanding. From forming an understanding of something, through our own horizon and through fusing horizons with another, we are able to interpret it, he holds. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. I will explain Gadamer’s ideas on effective history in the next section below. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. It is important to note that, through realizing his former prejudice towards becoming a doctor, prejudices have not been all together removed. After all, Gadamer believes that we always live through different prejudices. Rather, Gadamer would argue that during his experience in university, the young man has formed new prejudices. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. I discuss schizophrenia here and throughout this chapter in relation to AVHs. This is because there is a high correlation between the two (e.g., McCarthy Jones, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. I will discuss this at length in section 5.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. I will provide a definition of depression on page 126 of this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Arguably, there are many different experiences one could have that involve significant alterations to the way they normally experience the world and interpersonal interactions. One example is anxiety. During the experience of anxiety, the way that one relates to other persons and the world is undoubtedly altered. However, I have chosen to focus on depression in relation to loneliness because of the way the similarities and differences between the two experiences help in better understanding them. Additionally, loneliness and depression are experiences that are often conceived as the same experience, whereas loneliness and, e.g., anxiety are not. Later in this chapter, I will show why understanding the differences between loneliness and depression is vital in treating psychiatric patients. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. \* Indicates that names have been changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. By ‘career possibilities’, I mean that depression can affect one’s career in several ways, e.g., one may not advance as quickly in their profession as they could due to depression; one may suffer from doubt and feelings of disbelief, which could also hinder progress. A person experiencing depression may not have the confidence in himself to apply for positions of interest in the first place. By ‘possibilities in everyday functioning’, I mean that persons experiencing depression may experience, e.g., a lack of motivation to care for themselves. They may not be motivated to take showers or get dressed, for instance. They also may require more or less sleep and experience a change in productivity as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that loneliness and depression are two different experiences, thus it is important to distinguish between the two. However, I am not suggesting that the two are mutually exclusive; in many cases, persons experience both loneliness and depression. Here, I am suggesting that feelings of loneliness play a central role in experiences of depression. Thus, better understanding loneliness could aid in better understanding depression, and vice versa. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. By ‘basic simulations’, I mean the main idea of Simulation Theory (ST): that is, that we can understand other persons’ mental states by putting ourselves in their shoes. See e.g., Robert Gordon (1986), Jane Heal (1996) and Alvin Goldman (1989; 2006) for work supporting simulation theory. For updated hybrid versions of simulation theory (arguing that persons rely on simulation in some instances, and theory in others) see e.g., Nichols & Stich (2003) and J.P. Mitchell (2009). For critiques of simulation theory see e.g., Ratcliffe (2006), Gallagher & Zahavi (2008); Hutto (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. This testimony is taken from an online depression questionnaire conducted during 2011 as part of the AHRC and DFG funded project, ‘Emotional Experience in Depression: A Philosophical Study’. The project was based at Durham University and Osnabrück University. The questionnaire was formulated in collaboration with researchers at the UK mental health charity SANE. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The term ‘emotional contagion’ refers to the phenomenon of people experiencing the emotions of others around them. For example, if others are feeling joy, one catches the emotion of joy from them and experiences joy themselves. Emotional contagion does not require an awareness of the mental states of others; rather one experiences them as one’s own emotion (see Scheler, 1973, p. 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. This refers to Simulation Theory (ST), the process of attempting to understand the mental states of others by putting oneself in their shoes, thus trying to ‘simulate’ how they might be feeling. For more information, see footnote 1 in this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Here, I am referring to what is known as the ‘Theory-theory of mindreading’, which holds that a psychological theory underlies our ability to understand others’ mental states. For more information on Theory-theory, see e.g., Carruthers and Smith (1996); Scholl & Leslie (1999); Gopnik & Wellman (1992); Gopnik & Meltzoff (1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Broadly speaking, phenomenological theories of empathy propose that the contemporary mind debate is not useful in understanding empathy. Rather, empathy occurs as a type of direct perception (e.g. see Zahavi, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. \* Indicates that name has been changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. I will discuss the clinical implications of understanding loneliness and why it is important to distinguish it from other experiences such as depression more in the conclusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. I will elaborate upon this notion of confidence in section 6.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Recall the case study of Emily White (2010) in Chapter 3 for instance. White was given the opportunity for developing close friendships on the cycling trip, yet she was not able to capitalize upon it. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. For more information on A theories of time, see e.g., Prior (1967), Crisp (2005), Markosian (2004), and Merricks (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. I do not at all discount this possibility. Surely it is the case that persons who have been subjected to physical violence, ill health or other bodily maladies often experience loneliness as a result of it. Unfortunately, due to the scope of this thesis, I am unable to cover that here. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. I will take Løgstrup’s use of the term natural to indicate the usual way of things (nothing more technical). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. By ‘ingrown distrust’, Løgstrup means that the other has shown proof of his unreliability (Løgstrup,1997, p. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Løgstrup contends that providing an adequate account of why the picture breaks down is ‘impossible’ (p. 13) and can only be explained through ‘paraphrase and metaphor’ (p. 13). From his writings, it can be inferred that the false picture one has created from the other may break down when one directly encounters him, and/or develops a friendship or love relationship with him. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Løgstrup interprets the gift of life in theological terms, and many of his ideas take this for granted. However, looking at his argument from a purely philosophical perspective, his idea of the gift of life is simply that there are given conditions for all human life, and that with these conditions ‘is the difference in ontological status between trust and distrust’ (p. xxix). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. However, as I will discuss below, according to Hardin (2004), distrust can be instrumentally beneficial in some circumstances. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. I will return to this discussion of the clinical implications of a better understanding of the differences between loneliness and depression in the section Philosophy of Psychology/Philosophy of Psychiatry. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See, e.g., ‘Loneliness: the last of the taboos’ <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/loneliness-the-last-of-the-taboos-1.1696319> and ‘Loneliness: the cost of the ‘last taboo’ <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-41349219>. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See, e.g., ‘Loneliness linked to 30% increase in heart disease and stroke risk’ <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/apr/19/loneliness-links-to-30-increase-in-heart-disease-and-stroke-risk> and an interview with John Cacioppo, ‘Loneliness is like an iceberg—it goes deeper than we can see’ <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/feb/28/loneliness-is-like-an-iceberg-john-cacioppo-social-neuroscience-interview>. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See, e.g., ‘The age of loneliness is killing us’ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/14/age-of-loneliness-killing-us>, and ‘Loneliness is a modern illness of the body, not just the mind’ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/01/loneliness-illness-body-mind-epidemic>. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3MQ6z2vJGGtPFL71Ns3XPNB/take-part-in-the-bbc-loneliness-experiment>. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/loneliest-age-group-radio-4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See <https://www.traceycrouch.org/campaigns/loneliness>. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/19/loneliness-minister-proposed-to-tackle-australian-social-isolation>. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)