

Abstract for the General Public (English Version)
»Towards a Depth Phenomenology of embodied Individuation«

This project is a contribution to research in philosophy undertaken in interdisciplinary work between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. The aim of this project is to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of personhood as a lived bodily reality ('embodiment') rooted in bodily drives. The main goal is to provide a philosophical foundation for the psychoanalytic theory of 'individuation', i.e. an account of how the human subject becomes a person among other persons. On the level of the individual person, the main research question is: "What are the lived experiences that turn bodily drives into gendered personality?". On the interpersonal level, the main research question is: "How do bodily drives enter social reality as lived experiences of gendered subjects?". The guiding hypothesis of the project is that a phenomenological investigation into subjective life in bodily and psychic acts can provide full descriptions and explanations of the way bodily drives manifest in and between persons.

Over the course of four years, the project undertakes the philosophical study of theoretical texts written by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), as well as new work on personality development and the experience of the body in order to develop a novel 'Depth Phenomenology of embodied Individuation'.

Despite its attention towards concrete aspects of personal life, phenomenology only recently started investigating sexual difference. A proper and encompassing understanding of the person, however, must acknowledge that personhood always already is 'embodied' and sexually differentiated personhood. Both, phenomenology and psychoanalysis investigate this existential fact from the ground of the body rather than the perspective of social construction that governs much of contemporary debate. Phenomenology is special in its research into the body insofar as it studies bodiliness from the inside of lived experience and not as merely a biological mechanism. With the tools of phenomenological research into sexually differentiated embodiment, phenomenology is uniquely fit to illuminate the foundations of bodily rooted personality development as described and conceptualized in psychoanalysis. Without reducing bodily experience to biological mechanisms, the phenomenological approach is able to account for the person in its full dignity by restoring the bodiliness of lived experience.

Expected results include the development of a new theoretical framework for the 'Depth Phenomenology of embodied Individuation' providing phenomenological accounts of: 1. bodily drives and their organization, 2. bodily rooted personality development, 3. anatomical difference as related to gendered aspects of personality and sexuality.

In realizing this research, psychoanalysis and phenomenology are intertwined in order to provide an understanding of personhood as embodied experience, thereby accounting for the bodily and psychic reality of bodily rooted personality development.