On The Essence of Drunkenness and the Pathway to Addiction: A Phenomenological Contribution

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Abstract

This essay aims to examine the essence of drunkenness in its temporal and spatial dimensions. Despite the interest shown by phenomenological literature in the study of psychopathological consequences of acute and chronic drunkenness, the essential characteristics of drunkenness have not yet been addressed in depth. This essay claims that the temporal essence of drunkenness is the overwhelming, disintegrator of temporality’s condition, which converges to its own extinction in a temporality, thus encompassing a distinct ability of assimilatory magnetization of the temporal dimensions. From the spatial standpoint, the essential manifestation of the condition of drunkenness is increased materiality, expressed by means of compression and exclusivity. At last, we show how the essence of drunkenness gradually leads to instability and decrease in the consciousness’ ability of temporalization, which are both typical of a general condition of addiction.

Keywords:

Phenomenology of drunkenness; Essence of drunkenness; Temporo-spatial analysis; Phenomenology of addiction

Introduction

To investigate the treatment that phenomenological psychopathology has given to the subject concerning the issues of drunkenness reveals its long-term interest for the possibility of the latter’s manifestations in human consciousness. This interest is clearly seen in the problem of temporality, understood as the exclusively human bosom within which human existence acquires its ultimate meaning. To temporalize is to be, since man is a product of a specific form of time, which is life, and thus he capable of experiencing increase, transition and expansion, whereas he can never let go of fate, heteronymy and death.

If human experience actualizes itself in temporality, we must seek its deepest roots in biographical development. Therefore, every life experience is illuminated by its own meaning, which lays its roots in the texture of biography. Drunkenness, everyday and ubiquitous in human life, could but abide to this guiding principle of analysis. The modalities of the relations between drunkenness and the individual historical consciousness are the driving forces behind the study of Hans Binder, a pioneer of the phenomenological investigation of drunkenness: "Über alkoholische Rauschzustände" (On the condition of alcoholic drunkenness) [1], published in 1935, addresses the problem’s inner characteristics in depth and proposes a stratified concept of human consciousness, wherefrom drunkenness ends up revealing the main structures of existence.

The anthropology revealed by Binder is characterized by a hierarchy, a downward movement starting from the habitual experience of the self to the foundations of life’s own matter. To this path’s descending movement corresponds an ascending gradation of clinical severeness, that is to say, a kind of deformity hinders the human tendency to unfold from temporalization. According to Binder, drunkenness erodes human temporalization in two stages: an upward, fleeting illusion, manifested in euphoria; and a gradual and direct fall, enacted in the meandering deformity of the habituality of the conscious personality. Put in the twofold terms of nature-history, Binder’s conception describes the alcoholic fall as a transition from the historical form of development to that of nature. What, however, are the singular characteristics of this twofold temporality? Where might we make a distinct diagnosis of these two temporalities from, in order to reach the human drama of the double nature-history conceptual kinship in its inner core? Binder’s chosen perspective forgoes the problem. His appreciation is essentially clinical and, in so being, turns its attention to the description of the phenomenic portion of life’s experiences, deviating from its structural conditions of possibility. For a proper investigation of the anthropological problems of drunkenness and addiction, we must address other pieces from the phenomenological psychopathology corpus.

The second paper we ought to survey – and the first admitted focused in anthropology - is "Zur Anthropologie der Sucht" (On the anthropology of addiction), published in 1958 by Zutt [2]. The unsolvable ontological duplicity of human temporality unfolds in a pole of involuntary and autonomous becoming, as in voluntary action. To be is to find a place in the threshold between these two foundational potencies. It is from the pole of autonomous becoming that man achieves his own hues of continuity and his stream of being, and it is by the aspect of active will that man is assigned to the discontinuity that builds his personal history. It is against such discontinuous irreversibility that we must understand the specific nature of the temporality of autonomous becoming. The time of nature within ourselves is the time of repetition, of reclaiming that which is identical, that which is deprived of historical directionality. Indeed, it is within the stream of nature – it reigns over us from inside out – that drunkenness and subsequent addiction act. Unmeasured drunkenness forces the subject to the reduction of nature’s own temporality, to the peculiar streams of nature’s cycles.

Let us take a closer look at the temporality of the abashment caused by the stream of cyclical movement. As the tenure of such temporality is exempt from voluntary human action, the characteristics specific to historic discontinuity are lost. Human history, which is whittled off from time’s winged chariot, is defined by a threefold division of temporality: the past, wherein what has been abandoned and shall never return lies; the present, in which everything simultaneously subserves to the dynamics of decision-making; and the future, virtuality of expansion and renewal arising from the unknown. None of these dispose of the proper temporality of cyclical nature, whose
stand is a sempiternal present, an overwhelming joy conducted from inside out. To be abashed by the stream of natural continuity is to reject the right to the threefold temporality and therefore to merge with nature the time-giver.

The primordial temporality of the merging is the present. However, we cannot misconstrue this present with the original presentation of the world to perceptive consciousness (in Husserl’s sense), as it occurs in the act of perception, and in that of reflection and of imagination as well. In these acts, there remains a distance between consciousness and its purported objects. The merging of consciousness in unmeasured drunkenness has another nature altogether, paradigmatically described by Bin Kimura [3]. The most accurate chronicler of the present’s place in pathologies caused by drunkenness is the eternal instant. The material instrument the instant uses to be fixed upon a temporal crystallization of a pure present is bliss, given by a condition of overabundance. It is through unbearable abundance that the consciousness, unable to process it, petrifies in atemporization, as if broken by a light too bright to its delicate eyes. Imprisoned in the always- eternal-present, human life loses its “... individual historical form...” [2] and is thus reduced to a temporality that is all but human.

As it were, this temporality is also lost by human life, for it turns over to a life ran by the now, in which the present reigns over the temporality of being, the future and the past are besieged, and life shapes a condition that, in its specific generality, characterizes addiction [4]. Kemp suggests that death itself may be a kind of experience sought after by the addicted so as to find whichever form of meaning to his so corrupted existence.

The distinctive features of a temporality missing the links that constitute history also discriminates the psychosis produced by drunkenness from those arisen from “pure” mental diseases. Losing stability in human reality, a consequence from the habitual use of intoxicants, pushes psychotic consciousness to become “... more than a definable disorder, a floating ensemble, pervasive and little modifiable, of delusional experiences, hallucinations and humour alterations” [5]. The undifferentiation caused by the naturn of drunkenness ultimately amounts to the pathological forms of the diseased consciousness, producing psychotic deformity itself, making it “... a kind of psychosis with no straightforward psychotic symptoms whatsoever”. In “pure” mental disease, however, one can still catch a glimpse of the fleeting personality kept in one’s ability to historicize oneself and to call for help from interpersonality. Differently, toxic psychosis forgoes this last hope of salvation, allowing a much smaller breach to interpersonal psychotherapeutic contact. The closure for interpersonality thickens the dividing barrier between the drunken man’s consciousness and his therapist’s. Without the echoes of the other’s pain within his own self, the therapist loses his ability to interweave his life with the others. Should he not yield to the inter-human world, the patient plummets ever deeper into the infernal vortex of drunkenness, an ever-renewing maelstrom that ultimately drags him to his death.

The depletion of the nutrition nexus between consciousness and the inter-human region may be followed by a intermediary level. The phenomenon that best represents this mid-stance towards the inter-human region may be followed by an intermediary level. The phenomenon that best represents this mid-stance towards the inter-human region may be followed by an intermediary level.

We have so far addressed the role alcoholism plays in accelerating the decay of existence. We must now inquire how far these findings can be employed. Zutt [10] turns to the consequences of pervitin use – his findings can also be applied to cocaine, he stresses - on the human structure. This stimulant provokes an excessive approach of consciousness to the objects of the world of work and intensifies the degree of interest in the latter, thus resulting in a deformity of the consciousness’ basic form. The first consequence following this deformity is that the objects lose their relevance: as everything consciousness’ instinctive potency, tightens the sexual bonds connecting two lives in love, in spite of the connections of the soul. The aftereffect of such naturant unmeasured is the height of sexual desire, and the criteria of relation-shaping dragged down to the sexual sphere.

The characteristics of this passage, from the field of feelings to that of instinct, delineate the spatiality as lived by the alcoholic. The sphere of intimacy, which is always smoothed to subjective interiority, opens its windows wide to the streets, unfurling in obscenity and turmoil. Bilz [7] helps us illuminate this kind of intimate experiential prolapse in collective and multiple spaces; on alcoholic hallucinosys, he says that it “indeed the ‘spatialization’ of an intrasubjective conflict...”. This absolute spatiality outlines the pathology of jealousy and tells it apart from schizophrenic trouble [8]. Sexuality ceases to be the private sphere between two persons, so as to become the region of Dionysian orgy, in which rubbing bodies merge and engulf and consume their selves in the blind fury of sexual desire.

But to return to Lagache; jealousy’s reign slides away from the hands of the logic of personal relations and its idiosyncrasies, thus becoming a feeling regulated by nature’s own metronome, i.e. the season of the year and the end of the day when drunkenness falls in, deciding the culminating moment of jealousy’s pathology. Individual consciousness thus remains helpless before natural laws, as a puppet of the gods of Greek mythology. The reflection on the engendering factors of jealousy renounces the life story of merely two people, but goes rather through the reflection of what meaning the end of the day and season change, has to man. The most conspicuous manifestation of this tyranny of biology over the forms of inter-human relations is seen on how jealousy disappears as soon as abstention settles. No essential human act quenches jealous thirst: but, only a natural act – abstention – determines, from inside out, the fate of this double relation.

But consciousness struggles before plummeting straight forwardly to frenzy. From the depths of its self, it gathers its farthest energies to cling to the walls of reality, whereas its main connection to inter humanity is already lost. Consciousness’ last stand not to drown: the phenomenological compensation. By applying his phenomeno- structural method to analyze Rorschach tests in alcoholics, Barthélémy [9] demonstrates how, beyond the dismantled historical bonds dissolved from the tread of life, withering consciousness evokes, by means of disfigured elements still at its grip, the simple possibility to tie two elements. Any relation, however strange, is to the patient better than the incondensable maelstrom of monstrosities in any whichever point. A patient of the phenomenologist may well try to fix butterfly wings in a fish, or another draw “butterfly ears” in it. By the same reasons, an occasional, and even a seemingly justifiable addition to the hues of affectivity on the brink of mental breakdown ought to be explained as consciousness’ attempt to redeem a world lost by means of a kind of agonizing hylistic.
becomes interesting to consciousness, there are evidently no objects of lesser value to be elected by the awareness of attention.

In extreme conditions, this condition of hypervigilance of the workspace can produce psychosis that will attain to the overall picture of unmeasured adherence to the world of interest, wherefrom emerges the experience of a paranoia distinct from other functional paranoiae, precisely owing to the foundational alterations in consciousness [11]. The same observations, here taken in their spatial character, may yet be seen through the lens of temporality. The excess of interest for the world, rather than a renewal, takes the cloak of conservative negation, refusing the emergence of what is properly new. The comparison between the psychosis caused by alcohol and by intoxicants helps us enlighten the similarities of the effects of drunkenness on consciousness.

If, with alcohol, the monstrosity of a temporal abyss lurks behind human consciousness, with the stimulant the risk is that of the transformation of man into an automatic manager of the world. The verticality of alcohol and the horizontality of the stimulant both have, in this case, the reduction of free mental life’s growth potencies in common, the calcification of the primordial tempo-spatial form that makes human life what it really is.

It is in this powerful tradition that we place our contribution to the phenomenological psychopathology of drunkenness. Aware of the complexity of the problems concerning drunkenness and of the virtual endless collection of similar perspectives from a phenomenological standpoint, our contribution presumes that to distill the very essence of drunkenness is still necessary to fully understand the subject. Although the studies aforementioned have all identified fundamental, existential, and anthropological structures in order to understand the pathologies caused by drunkenness – sooner in its chronic conditions, as virtually nil in its acute ones – it seems to us, however, that a subsequent indispensable step has been neglected, or not carried out to its utmost consequences, leaving the analysis somewhat incomplete; a neglect or incompleteness that surely is due not to haste or intellectual fancy, but to the way phenomenological studies were hitherto conducted. The bibliographical references address both the general anthropology of addiction [12] and the psychopathologies caused by drunkenness. Consequently, they take for granted an epistemological basis emphasizing the longitudinal aspect of temporality and the individual structure of being, hence inferring that studying the latter is the same as assessing the former. As it is, to investigate the essences is the same to operate a transversal cut on existence. In other words, scholars have so far thoroughly investigated the drunken men’s anthropological structures in respect to their transformations, but not the essence of drunkenness that, personified in these individuals, provokes such modifications. The only piece of work devoted to an investigation on essences has, however, uniquely assessed the essence of drunkenness [13]. Our notion of phenomenological psychopathology refers that albeit structures are individual and particular in their biography, the essences are universal and generic; also, that each individual gathers and adapts in his own fashion the essences of the genre – among which drunkenness lies – or of the pathology, lending them specific tones.

Therefore, although the psychopathologist’s main investigation is to find the meaning drunkenness takes in relation to the individual structure of each consciousness, be it normal or psychotic [14], for his professional and practical activity lies therein, the latter will constantly be modified by the imprint of a general essence that never unfolds completely: being invariably instantiated, it never emerges in its pure form. The so-called pure essential form, however, is seizable by intuition and active in moulding the individual structures; to shy away from its identification is the same as to renounce the very phenomenological exercise of searching to untie reality in its most intrinsic knots. Likewise, it seems to us that the blind leap over the ultimate phenomenological reduction – that of finding the essence of drunkenness – begets the vision of the phenomenologist-psychopathologist in trying to understand in detail the conditions of possibility of the patients’ experiences, whether they be pathological or not. We understand that one may only try to fully (that is to say, nearer to the specificities of man’s drunken being) comprehend the plurality of the manifold pathologies caused by drunkenness (from addiction to psychosis) only after its general essence is assessed. Indeed, it is in his application of a similar strategy thatBinswanger [15] was able to enrich the phenomenological psychopathology on schizophrenia. By studying three general anthropological essences, Binswanger demonstrated how they configure different modalities of schizophrenia.

But, there still remains a problem. If the general essence of drunkenness is not distinguished from the individual mode of drunkenness pertaining to each existence, the results following phenomenological investigation tend inevitably and dangerously – to wind up in generalization. As the typical essential and the structured individual are seen as intertwined, i.e. as a single object, the investigator, as soon as he reaches specific conclusions, may be rash in taking these results as alike to every person who goes through the hardships caused by drunkenness. If he acts that way, he forgets that global results are only relevant to the essences, and not to individual existences. Also, on the other hand, he will deem unimportant every result not inclusive of such similarity, leaving behind specific manifestations of the individual that could be relevant to his analysis.

Even though such considerations may, in the general philosophical and in the anthropological sense, not be hazardous in the long run, in the psychopathological sphere they might suppress the necessary accuracy needed to the shaping of a science. To find the modalities on how to apply the general in the particular are the cardinal object of the psychopathologist, and for him to perform his task, the reductive discernment of phenomena is indispensable. To unveil these modalities is so important because they ultimately unfold in multifarious ways, so long as constantly emerging in individuals. It is imperative to deeply and broadly know the general so as to find the particular. Indeed, a phenomenology of the general cannot address every concern of phenomenological psychopathology, let alone safeguard it from the traps of mechanisms, whether biogical or psychological; these, in the search for general laws to explain their phenomena, are taken as the final goal of the phenomenologists’ scientific research and consequently disroot the integrity of human existence of its soil, in which phenomenology aims to harvest it once more.

Therefore, the present essay must be primarily interpreted as a first step towards a more accurate understanding of the psychopathology of the issues related to drunkenness, by means of identifying the general essence of drunkenness, and the pathways leading to addiction subsequent to it. In this manner, our method of presentation will be to demonstrate, after the essence of drunkenness has been distilled, the general modes by which this essence gradually misshapes the structure of consciousness. We first and foremost assume that, as much as each inebriating substance provokes a local diversity of effects in
consciousness, all of these effects can be reduced to a comprehensible unity in respect to their fundamental spatio-temporal dimensions. As soon as that essential unity is comprehended, it is possible to return to the diversity of the manifestations of consciousness-altering substances, as well as to identify their presence in each and every existing individual embodiment, providing the psychopathological act in phenomenology with a deeper meaning, and therapy with a clearer goal to reach. The intention of our study is hence to play the role of a prolegomenon to a more thorough study of the addictions and the psychosis caused by drunkenness.

Towards the General Essence of Drunkenness

The problem concerning drunkenness is one enshrouded in the big question of dietetics. To get drunk is to willingly elect one of the many choices from the dietetics menu; and to willingly increase or reduce specific possibilities which relate to how matter acts over the global constitution of consciousness in the world. To get drunk is, therefore, in principle a movement starting from a certain and stable condition and moving to another, necessarily fleeting, bolstered by the transitory but efficient action of the inebriating drug. To understand the vectorial inebriating act, one needs evidence for the relation between the starting stage and the transitory arrival condition, as the latter gravitates around the former and there exists a dialectic relation between them. Language grasps the meaning of drunkenness in the word “ecstasy”. The ecstatic condition, despite not especially bonded to drunkenness of an exogenous origin, to which we limit our present study, reveals the human possibility of leaving oneself, of ek-stasis, i.e. a thrust in the sense of “leaving a permanent individual self,” while the latter, in normal conditions, remains nonetheless chained to biographical temporal identity.

Outlined by the same particularity of the ecstatic vector of drunkenness is, from the very start, the epistemological nucleus from which the phenomenology of drunkenness should be framed. Every investigation of a phenomenological nature can only grapple with the issue of drunkenness through the investigative spectrum of its meaning; and one must understand meaning as the manner by which the consciousness’ structure begins, and not to be taken in a sense that rules out the expression according to psychopathological tradition, i.e. that which is contrasted to pharmacological drunkenness by two fundamental elements.

a) We have already mentioned the first element, namely the openness to the world. Even in the loneliest conditions to which trance lead us, there remains the thread binding the consciousness to the primary source experience of rapture; even if displaced to the bottom of the state of consciousness, there remains in the person enraptured a link to exteriority, alongside the radical alterity of the musical work (the same is true to rapture coming from interpersonal duality, in spite of their specific characteristics, which are not our main interest here). In sum, rapture is an individual experience grounded on primordial and repetitive communication with the pathic world. Even when rapture goes on after that communication is already spatio-temporally split, (e.g. we may still be stunned by the music’s spirit for a while after the concert per se is finished,) we might still claim to have the experience of alterity echoing in our consciousness.

The very opposite happens in pharmacological drunkenness. In it, it is from the external and autonomous bottom, transcendent to the primordial interpersonality of conscious existence (and “mineral” of the living being,) that springs the consciousness-altering condition. Although one of the most important roles of drunkenness is exactly to phenomenologically expand the social network of the inter-human world, such expansion is essentially and solely an increase in the visualization of the noematic pole of the drunkenness’ intentional act; it is a movement of addition causally subsequent to the exterior of one’s own structural self from the very start, and so initially lets loose whichever fundamental and deep link with the world it may hold. In this essential sense, drunkenness is similar to a mental biological disorder [16]. In drunkenness, the inter-human world is not the place to dive, connect, rest or suffer or fail; drunkenness’ empire is the exterior-transcendent world, its potencies and rules.

Bearing in mind that situation of an effect produced on the consciousness, initially through its disconnection with the primordiality of the world, or simply rejecting such connection, (we may recall, however, that a vicarious primordiality might be temporarily fabricated) we may then employ the adjective “exogenous” hereon. We will nevertheless use the well-established expression according to psychopathological tradition, i.e. that which points to a cause of movement on or over consciousness not coming from the opposite field, viz. the “endogenous”.

Understood in this sense, an act will be exogenous only in respect to the locus from which its effect of moving the consciousness’ structure begins, and not to be taken in a sense that rules out the endogenous pole, as normally goes in descriptive psychopathological activity [17]. The endogenous is an indispensable field of formation for the consciousness’ structure; in fact, it is the arterial network in whose gaps the egoic pole, the interpersonal pole and the world pole intermingle; a fusion that makes even the effects initially coming from exogenous causes provoke a secondary impact in the original articulations between the egoic and the world poles. Within the
endogenous field, there always emerges a structure in search of a form, albeit a pathological one (according to Binswanger [18], the “form of nature” in melancholy.) The primordial strife between such endogeneity, interpersonality, and the world in constituting the embodied consciousness of the empiric “I” was already recognized by Husserl [19]. Let us then follow the scholar through one of his “Cartesian Meditations”. In this connection we see that the temporal community of the constitutive interrelated monads is indissoluble, because it is tied up essentially with the constitution of a world and a world time.

The claim for an exogenous movement initially exterior to the structure’s own self should not, however, be confused with the concept of the being’s potential to expand the possibilities of the individual. Although drunkenness may also reveal an overflowing source of individual differentiation, we may apprehend an other, and more dangerous, formulation: drunkenness might frequently play a secondary, epidemical role to fill a primordial absence of qualitative transit resonating with the pathic world.

b) The second differential element of drunkenness in respect to other types of trance-induced experiences claims its temporal dimension, hence our defining it above as “sudden”. Evidently, being “sudden” cannot be measured quantitatively, in units of seconds, minutes, and hours. Its notion must but attain to the idea of a movement delimiting an experiential contrast with the prevailing global condition of consciousness. For instance, the progressive improvement of a case of melancholy depression treated with antidepressants cannot thus be characterized as “drunkenness-induced,” even if it may resemble drunkenness at some points. “Sudden” must be here understood in relation to the global condition of the consciousness immediately prior to it, a touchstone from which the individual consciousness perceives a conflicting difference. Consequently, two conditions coexist in the consciousness’ structure of a man who is drunk: the basal condition, and the altered condition; the latter of which may completely fill the experiential field in a given moment, but its place on globality has meaning only in relation to an essential dialectics with its underlying previous stable condition. Without a dialectics between a roughly stable condition of consciousness and an altered experience orbiting around it, there is no drunkenness. (Ps. we may once again differentiate drunkenness caused by the effects of anti-depressive action, wherein, if effective, the very global structure of experience must be altered.)

A nature of irresolvable connection between the altered condition of consciousness and the stability of the structure underlying it is what tells pharmacological drunkenness apart from mystic trancesses, because in these – after the trance condition per se or even during it – there is either a renewal of the consciousness’ global structure or the very same structure reaches a new global form, fleeting as it may be. The mystic becomes another being, while the drunken man merely forgets that what he goes on being. The mystic’s day after is one of purification, while the drunken man’s is but one of trite hangover.

In trace of these initial considerations, we will now investigate the temporal and spatial essences of drunkenness.

The Temporal Essence of Drunkenness

It should be stressed at first that there is an asymmetry between temporality and spatiality in respect to the conditions ensuing pharmacological drunkenness. The temporality of drunkenness is unique, while its spatiality, (as Aristotle [20] had already remarked on his 30th problem) is manifold (1957). The temporality of drunkenness is that of the instantaneous, the enthronement of the instant as the preferred modality of being-in-the-world. From a temporal standpoint as well, the enthronement of the instant is defined by a change in the habitual relations among the dimensions of temporality. The instant, despite fastened to present time, detaches a slice of and transfigures it. Present time has meaning to the extent that it is infixed in the past and inevitably slides down onto the unknown. Present time is, as it were, a short-lived and in a way purely conceptual stop on the continuous flow of experience. The instant detaches itself from the flow, longing for shelter in a unitary sphere beyond time, thirsty for temporal independence. In other words, in the enthronement of the instant there is a desire to reject temporality, a desire that is never quenched but is invariably pursued.

Spatiality, on the other hand, the younger sister of temporality, thrives exuberantly on the elusive, if ambitious, ground that temporality offers it. Detached from the flow that fastens its role to existence, the spatiality of drunkenness spreads out in a propagation of possibilities. To say that the instantaneous displacement of temporality gives total freedom to spatiality may be defensible at hindsight, since it allows the latter to draft shapes denied by daily life’s gravitas. Carved in between horizontality and verticality [15], the structure of the consciousness in the world is grounded on the threefold composition of temporality: should time sway, spatiality winds up rolling around upon the horizontal (as shown by the Aristotelian approximation-deviation duality of the world (op.cit.)) and the vertical (Biswanger, idem) axis with no restraints, producing an architectonic diversity to be later addressed in the present essay.

But let us remain on the grounds of temporality. To affirm that drunkenness enthrones the instant is not enough. We have to conduct the phenomenological reduction of the instant to its essence. As we have stated, the crowned instant is a tendency of rupture in the ternary flow of time, but which still maintains connections with this stream (without which we would be in face of an experience of utter shattering of temporality; indeed, that point is sometimes reached, but, generally, it’s just a tendency horizon). Therefore, the instant must be equally understood the way it appears within the continuous flow of consciousness. The way the instant appears will be indicative of its temporal essence. Typical of the instant, from the essential point of view, is the overwhelming, the dragging force experienced under the most exiguous temporality, from the form of temporality towards a fixed point in atemporality. Thus, an heterogeneity in the timeline is opened during drunkenness: a rhythmic time that is protentive, linear and customary, contemporaneous (except in cases in which there is a complete subordination of the past stable consciousness to the drunken one, but these cases are rare and terminal) and subject to an invasive, exuberant and tyrannic time.

The exiguity of this tyrannical time leads us to the second essential characteristic of interest to us: the experience of temporal compression that the path towards atemporality happens through a funnelling of the consubstantial route into the reduction of the experience of time, until it coalesces in atemporality. (Ps. the reader will notice that, to demonstrate the essence of the drunken instant, a spatial comprehension was needed. This happens because of the nature in the genial limit between temporality and spatiality in the deepest origins of the conscious experience). It’s important to highlight that the aforementioned temporaity has nothing in common with the notion of eternity as perceived by the free spirit, as a stable form beyond time. Here, atemporality is the deprivation.
of the time’s conditions of possibility, the time deformed until it no longer is complacent with anything that is not identical to its compressive form.

Overwhelming, which is the dissolver of temporality’s composition, converging to its own extinction in atemporality seems, therefore, to be a definition of the temporality of drunkenness that can appease us for our introductory purposes. It should be stressed that, here, the notion of extinction must not be mistaken for the pharmacological disappearance of the inebriating action. Pharmacodynamics, though relevant to the clinical treatment of the drunken, says nothing about the essence of drunkenness. Extinction, from the essential point of view, indicates that drunkenness itself contains, in its dragging force, the tendency to paralyze while it annihilates. The evident clinical manifestation is just an ulterior find and thus not necessary to the essence of extinction. Even a tiny pharmacological inebriating action already contains the germ of extinction, of the ecstatic exit of the flow of temporality.

But, bearing in mind what we have just unraveled, we cannot yet abandon the notion of the instant without pointing towards another of its essential characteristics: the magnetization force. By forcing the rupture of temporality’s dynamic skeleton, the dissolving overwhelming of the drunken instant not only fractures it, but also pulls its remains closer to itself, both from the retentive past and from future protention. The tendency to atemporality, a characteristic of the instant, marks its essence on the remaining temporal dimensions. Let us see how this happens in a typical clinical example: the resettlement of addiction in ex-addicts (PS, in this example, we will momentarily be moving away from the theme at hand, i.e. the acute effect of drunkenness, to further enter the zone of its chronic alterations, best expanded upon below). Quickly, the old habit, rooted in the grounds of the past, takes the front stage. Swiftly, that which was sediment becomes vivid present. From a structural standpoint, this finding highlights a deformity in the past dimension, usually as accommodated and stable as a flatland, and which now transmutes into the brilliant activity of the present. The past loses its stability, becomes prey to a completely foreign essential particularity, overwhelming. There is, so to speak, a presentification of the past connected to the sphere of drunken behavior. The instant pulls the past closer to itself, not allowing it to disperse or to act tacitly, as it would, composing an instantized past, bound to affix the temporality of existence in its instantaneous transience. (PS, we must point out the possibility of the occurrence of another structural style as regards what in the practice is called resettlement, in which, in reality, there would not be a deformity in the “reactivation” of the past, but only an innate tendency of a determined structure to exalt all of its temporal dimensions each time it is moved by drunkenness. In this possibility, the term resettlement would only have a descriptive meaning, nominally similar to the other meaning, but reflecting structural diversities. Here, the past temporality is not called into question, which would indicate, in the psychopathological plane, a lesser degree of severeness.)

The same takes place with the future. A life project, for example, always meanders the borders between present and future, in so far as the future is an objective and the present is a material instrument to its execution. For the project to assert itself as reality, it is imperative that there be a gradual transition of the presentation of such project’s themes from the future form to the present form. In other words, it must essentially move from an imaginative state of daydreaming to the daily efforts to turn it into reality. This operation of content sliding from future form to present form is lost in the condition of the instant’s empire, wherein the appearance of the project in the consciousness petrifies into the instantaneous freezing form, making it so that it never substantiates its manifestation on an authentic future, that is, a future continually implicated in the present. The clinical results are the typical life projects of the addicted person, which get lost in their own euphoria, never embodying actual realization.

Therefore, the final sentence with which we want to define the essence of pharmacological drunkenness from a temporal standpoint is: the overwhelming, the disintegrator of temporality’s condition, converging to its own extinction in atemporality and with a notable assimilative capacity of magnetization of the temporal dimensions.

The Spatial Essence of Drunkenness

Now that the annotations regarding temporality have been laid out, we can turn to spatiality, to that which we have recently stated to be plural thanks to the liberation of the fundamental rails of temporality. It is namely from temporality that we can extract the meanings of spatiality in pharmacological drunkenness. The funnelling of temporality towards its paralysis needs an adequate “materiality”, that is, to paralyze time is actually only or “materially” possible by means of a hardened spatiality. Without it, temporality itself would wind up into a new invigorating stream, losing its essential aspect of tendency towards immobilization. Thus, it is important to stress once again that even the temporality of drunkenness - the ultimate structure in the settlement of the consciousness on the world - needs a simultaneous spatiality for its phenomenological manifestation, a spatiality that, in its case, will be responsible for the multiplicity of the appearances of drunkenesses.

The most adequate essential spatial manifestation for the condition of drunkenness is increased materiality. The more compact the phenomenic appearances are, the higher the chances of their serving the tendency of temporal flow paralysis, the same way a higher compression of the walls of a dam provides a stronger blockage to water forces. There must be, thus, a minimal interstice in the spatial drunken experience for the execution of its temporal task. Should we phenomenologically reduce the materiality’s state of increase, we will arrive at the spatiality of the two typical essential components of pharmacological drunkenness: here we once again we encounter the aforementioned compression, with the addition of exclusivity. In every moment of drunkenness, the appearance of objects follows a rule, which is to be determined by a compressed and exclusive spatiality. Due to this double determination, they must appear very closely flanked by its neighbors (the remaining objects that appear both in succession and in simultaneity), in such a way that there is an overall tendency to appear only as objects and not non-objects.

Emptiness is a luxury that drunkenness seeks to banish in any way, since from a temporal standpoint it is an invitation to the emergence of novelty, enemy of the desired paralysis.

Going back to the consciousness’ experiential extract we will see that, in drunkenness, the experiences are intense, cohesive, compressed in relation to one another, with no room for unforeseen emergences that are incompatible with the instantaneous global texture. That is how the exclusivity component of drunken spatiality must be understood: not as an impediment of any experience, but of experiences that are in disharmony with the compression of syntonic experiences of the drunken condition. In sum, it can be said that the individual, in drunkenness, is surrounded by experiences over

which he has very little power to block or change. Drunkenness is, nomotically, the prime of objectal focus, while noetically it is the shrinkage of the “I” before the greatness of the object (even if it is the intimate experiences of the self, such as, for instance, sadness or ideas and fantasies).

This is how, for instance, when drunk during a celebration with friends, we are completely and exclusively taken by the affections partaking the meeting, be they pleasant, like the sentiment of friendship, or unpleasant, like rage. One may argue to our disadvantage that this statement would be far too detached from the description of a global condition, suited for some situations but not others. Let us regard, for instance, the case of cannabic drunkenness. In this case, it is not rare for the drunken man to start crying out of the blue, revealing an incompatibility with the surrounding affection. We would have to acknowledge the ordinary and real aspects of this event. However, it does not seem to be of use to weaken our assertion. The origin of the cannabic condition is the benumbing detachment of interpersonality and, consequently, the helpless and lonely surrender of the consciousness to itself or to the disarranged products of its depths, as the anchors drift away in interpersonality. That way, in this condition, the crying rupture would reveal both the essence of compression - unfolded in the experiential intensity-and of exclusivity-exposed in the individual’s inability to seek an alternative mental condition to the one that has been imposed on him from the inside.

Bearing this in mind, we must introduce a few observations regarding the three fundamental phenomenological formations that arise from this kind of spatiality. In every one of them, despite their diverse aspects, we will notice the same common function, which is to offer materiality to the temporality of drunkenness’s penchant for paralysis.

Interpersonality

We have stated above that interpersonality represents a secondary role in the movement of drunkenness. However true, this observation cannot be taken with no further development, for we would risk neglecting one of the most important aspects of the meanings of drunkenness. Whereas the initial causal movement of drunkenness as an experience does not depend on interpersonality, its movement often seeks a relevant approach to it. It is important to mention that the approach to interpersonality serves also as a paralyzing pole of temporality. By profoundly strengthening our relationships with the human world to the point we reach its necessary compression and exclusivity, we can transiently escape the natural mundanity of our being. The diversity of this approach will not be examined here. Nevertheless, we must point out that this sort of spatiality is a truism. This could not be more evident, since corporeity is the instance of the materiality more inclined to the exclusive compression demanded by the drunken spatiality is a truism. This could not be more evident, since corporeity is the prime of objectal focus, while noetically it is the shrinkage of the “I” before the greatness of the object (even if it is the intimate experiences of the self, such as, for instance, sadness or ideas and fantasies).

To affirm that corporeity is the instance of the materiality more inclined to the exclusive compression demanded by the drunken spatiality is a truism. This could not be more evident, since corporeity is the most sought-out condition by the drunken man is perhaps that of sentimental lightness, the experience of suppression of the earthly weight shouldered by everyday life. However, the immediate correlation between this observation and what we have just seen regarding corporeity may leave us before an astounding paradox. How can an action simultaneously offer corporeity and incorporeal lightness? Is it possible to assemble seemingly antagonistic poles without incurring in crass analytical mistake? The use of the distinction between the structure of experience and its experiential manifestation seems to allow a positive answer to the question. Indeed, a few sips of an alcoholic beverage might leave us walking on air, make us forget the acrimonies of the day and numb our consciousness with an experience of desirable lightness. Yet, if we look into this experience from the point of view of its structural conditions of possibility, we will see that it harbours the essence of having been imposed from the outside, of obviating the connections to the world (at this moment, in a desirable way) and of spatializing itself in an exclusive and compressed manner (that is why it does not allow the emergence of suffering to bother us), precisely like any experience that emanates from corporeity domains in drunkenness. Hence, despite the experiential dissimilitude, there is a cohesive identity between the sentimental states of lightness that are innate to drunkenness and the increase of corporeity that typifies them.

Corporeity and the sentimental states of the “I” have another aspect in common that distinguishes them from interpersonality in drunkenness. It is in the body and in the solitude of the sentimental envelope that the strongest temporal paralysis force needed by the temporality of drunkenness takes place. Even when there is an evident difference between body and feeling, the paralysis force is powerful in both; consequently, the exits of the paralyzing structure are narrower, making the consciousnesses that tend to give prominence to the body or sentimental lightness in drunkenness more inclined to lose themselves in biographical deviation, since they cannot lead themselves through the complexities of interpersonality in order to return to the vital progression line.

From The Essence Of Drunkenness Towards Habitual Drunkenness (Or The Pathway To Addiction)

If, from a structural standpoint, drunkenness is a movement flowing to its own immobilization in the fabric of time, it is self-limited from the point of view of its somatic temporal dynamic. Its condition depends closely and substantially on the energetic force that comes from the inebriating drug’s action over the brain’s physiology. Consequently, drunkenness is, from a natural point of view, an
acute physical-somatic condition that produces an atemporalyzing structural composition. Due to this need of continued and intense material energy for its maintenance (the drunkenness system is, ultimately, one of high instability), the drunkenness condition does not resist for a long time, and quickly disappears. Likewise, the demands on the soma’s physiology for the sustenance of drunkenness are taken to an extreme, easily leading to tissue overload accompanied by functional compromises, e.g. on the heart as in intoxication by cocaine, or on the gastric or hepatic systems as in by alcohol. In sum, the drunkenness condition, although powerful in its action on the structure of the consciousness, is limited in time due to biological issues. This temporal limitation of the biology of drunkenness has some consequences that interest us directly. The first one examines the moment in which acute drunkenness ends, which we name here “the exit from drunkenness”.

Biologically, the exit from drunkenness means the end of the highly unstable condition that is kept by the pharmacological action on consciousness, with a return to the previous stability profile. Structurally, to exit drunkenness implies abandoning the tendency to immortalize oneself in atemporality and to return to the temporal grounds of everyday biography. The exit from drunkenness is a condition of intense contrast within the temporal a priori of conscious life, a way back from an atemporal pole to the habitual temporal ground. When drunkenness’ acute and destructive high is over, its wreckage can be gathered both structurally and phenomenically, revealing the consequences of drunkenness on the consciousness’s habitual structure.

Experimentially, the condition that immediately follows drunkenness can be summarized in the broad concept of hangover. Bodily weakness, headaches, nausea, dizziness, insomnia or hypersonmia, irritation, sadness or distress, feelings of guilt or of failure are some of the conquests of the exit from drunkenness (PS. we will stick to the generic features of hangover, leaving aside the specificity that exist for each inebriating substance). All of these findings show us the attrition of somatic, corporeal and sentimental - or interpersonal - material generated by their excessive usage for the sustenance of drunkenness. Corporeity and feelings, both used and abused, are depleted, and hurt the totality of the experience the same way excess in physical exercises would leave the muscles fatigued the following day.

When observed through structural lenses, however, these clinical observations manifest a common characteristic that must be addressed. Let us describe it in two steps. We recall at first that drunkenness increases atemporality in the totality of consciousness, thus emphasizing the aforementioned elements that are responsible for the expression of this atemporality. There is, so to speak, more body and feelings of the “I” during drunkenness (we could also affirm that drunkenness is “made” of body and feelings of the “I”, for these are its materiality); therefore, with the exit from drunkenness, there remain residues of this corporeity and an exacerbated sentimentality left on the totality of the consciousness’s structure. These residues could be explained by the same logic of material attrition, now in the form of excessive use of materials that leave marks on the global structure.

However, a more thorough investigation needs to identify more than that in the exit from drunkenness. The residue excess in drunkenness’ materiality reveals, structurally, an excess of unstable elements in consciousness. Temporally, this is equivalent to pointing out an excess of elements detached from the consciousness’ habitual temporality. The atemporality that is generated and kept at a high energetic cost by drunkenness is exhausted, giving rise, through the attrition of temporality’s atemporal factor, to a condition of “temporality weakness”, whose exterior expression is instability. Here, the experience of drunkenness differs from the example of muscular fatigue resulting from physical exercise. In it, there is intentionality in the physical action, which causes its materiality to be exterminated. The extinction of muscular force hinders the practice of more exercises during a time gap; nevertheless, the intentionality of the action, in other words, the muscle coordination for a concerted end, remains intact. Physical action must retreat temporarily in order to reach the same goals. What happens in drunkenness is quite different: in this case, the concerted effort of the sober consciousness is abolished and the material attrition increases the tendency to atemporalization in a consciousness that is essentially temporal. This increase in the tendency towards structural atemporalization makes the phenemonic elements of drunkenness work like loose parts in the consciousness, useless to the temporal flux. These elements, disconnected from the temporal totality of the consciousness, are ruled by the logic of instability, as if lost in the vacuum, gravitating around nothing or around each particular region’s own mechanical biological laws. (For instance, circadian humoral fluctuations are intensified.)

It is exclusively through this logic of instability that the habitual conditions of drunkenness can be understood. The structure and the being are gradually transformed by the diet, which adds or subtrahs elements to its general proportion. Drunkenness, a component of the diet, if habitual, unbalances the global structure of the consciousness towards an increase in atemporalization, unfolded in the increase of its instability. This instabilization is originated in the deviation of the consciousness’s temporal vocation, which is struck in its center with each drunken act. Every drunken act promotes a momentary suspension of temporality. After all, the universality of the consciousness’ solidity in the world loses its temporalizing power and becomes unstable due to this loss, the same way an airplane stalls if it loses its propulsive moment or a cyclist staggers if he does not move forward. There is no middle ground for human existence: it either goes forward or it sinks. Instabilization is the moment that precedes full collapse (PS. though this preceding moment can last an entire lifetime without reaching collapse) and already reveals the faltering of temporalization that is typical of psychosis. Instabilization manifests itself in the corporeal realm, for instance, through the phenomenon of alcoholic tremors, which indicates lack of existential stability, a subject studied by Barthélemy (op.cit.).

Destabilization and the reduction of temporalization capabilities are therefore two sides of the same coin and a common general aspect of the habitual conditions of drunkenness. The ways this structural frailty manifests itself are individualized yet manifold, but in the points in which its emergence is verifiable we may claim forthright that it appears as a condition of habitual drunkenness. The chronic drunken man is an individual who already advances through detemporalization after the consciousness’s abusive and insistent practice of transient atemporalizations. It is precisely because of this that drunkenness radically differs from remaining elements of the diet, understood in its original sense from the Greek as something that contemplates habits of drinking, eating and exercising. In all these cases, insistence leads to the differentiation of man towards some existential path; in drunkenness, it leads him to annihilation.

It must be emphasized that, at the end of the day, even though...
any component of the diet - physical exercises or sex, for example, or even gambling and activities on a computer - can become an object of compulsive action that is superficially similar to drunkenness, leading to changes by chronification; should we abide by the formal principles of the latter, we will find that destabilization is the fundamental structural difference between it and other habits. Because they are originated from an unrestrained regional approach between the consciousness and the world, the remaining chronifiable compulsive habits generate their changes through the hegemony of certain experiences to the detriment of others. Even if significant, this hegemony is like the hypertrophy of capacities that already takes place beforehand in the consciousness, much like, for instance, compulsive eating as a nutritional imbalance. Even if it eventually unbalances the equilibrium of the forces of the organism, it lays roots in existential normality and acts thereafter over a structural underground of stability. After its initial exogenous action, habitual drunkenness, on the other hand, promotes the manifestation of conscious experiences that are not necessarily contained in the historical habitual relations between the consciousness and the world, imposing on the consciousness these experiential "foreign bodies" that are guided by the aforementioned principle of instability. In more elucidating terms, it is irrelevant whether these "foreign bodies" are experienced as mystic, like in cannibalism, or merely as sudden movements of irritation or humoral instability, such as in the affective cases with alcohol or cocaine. Therefore, the psychopathologist cannot let himself get carried away by the apparent similarity of dysphoric irritation caused by abstinence from computer abuse, with the impulsive irritation of an unyielding drunken man. They are both rooted in distinct conjectures and hold different meanings.

The line of thought we have been following so far helped us understand two typical phenomena of habitual drunkenness, one from synchronic, and the other from diachronic observation. Initially, the synchronic record is represented by the craving for the drug. This phenomenon is particular to chronifications and can be understood more evidently through an investigation of the need-satiation polarity. Every relationship with a material element from nature is ruled by the experience of a specific need, fulfilled by its particular object, leading to satiation. Thus, for instance, the experience of hunger leaves the consciousness uneasy, elevating the body's participation in the consciousness's double undulation is undone. The bodily sensation disappears and the specific transitory link between consciousness and world is split. The consciousness is satiated, freeing itself to continue its typical fundamental development. Therefore, the condition of satiation turns the increase of corporeity over to its basal style, even if temporarily, until a new need is established. The experience of hunger, on the other hand, in its return, stays similar to the previous condition the same way satiation takes after the chain of previous satiations. Over the course of time, in most cases, there tends to be qualitative differentiation in the relationship between need and satiation, leading to taste enhancement. Even though it keeps the relationship poles' essential styles of bestowal unaltered, temporality allows for its delight and approaching manners to progress and deepen over time. Ultimately, a temporalization of the material relationship of the consciousness with the world takes place; moreover, it is strictly due to its solid insertion in this temporal chain that hunger remains hunger, satiation remains identical to itself and the junction between them both crowns itself through enhancement. In short, the need-satiation relationship based on temporality offers us means for a continuous learning unfolded in the progressive differentiation of the fruition ability.

Craving does not abide by the same logic. A usual product of the consciousness’ loss of structuring temporalization, the irrepressible desire for the drug is not established, as we have seen, on the axis of time. By letting go of the temporality that gives it balance and foundation, the desire for the drug is no longer fit to keep a relationship of need-satiation in the temporal line. The phenomena ensuing need and the search for satiation tend to coagulate temporally, giving rise to a continuous fusion between both poles (wherein, clinically, the habitual and unstoppable use of the substance is fixed) that prevents the enhancement and deepening of their relationship.

Thereby follows not a progression in the relationship between consciousness and the chemical substance over time; on the contrary, an undifferentiated regression of this relationship is noticed, whose most elusive description used by the patients is the “I don’t know why I use it anymore, I take no pleasure in using it, but I have to use it”. When temporality is abolished, the rift between objects and the consciousness is abolished, and the chance for a prolific relationship between consciousness and drunkenness is minimized. No prolific relationship can overlap a distance that, through successive approaches and removals, leads to the aforementioned enhancement. The consciousness that is instabilized loses itself in empty space and falls prisoner to the piece of the world it lacks, resuming the fusional movement that we have already addressed in the first section. In settled habitual drunkenness, there is not a desire per se, but a deformity in the desiring pole of the consciousness, adhering to a world only to petrify within itself and onto a distorted state of consciousness. The habitual record of pleasure does not remain either, for it cannot let go of a perspective prompting from the poles, with pleasure being the celebratory contact point between them both. The chronic drunk continually abuses substances because he is no longer capable of acknowledging them in their alterity. He becomes one with them, in a lethal embrace that is almost mineral. In this sense, the phenomenon of craving reveals, from a structural standpoint, an attempt to keep the integrity of the continuity of the consciousness’s structure in time, since the separation of the inebriating experience no longer brings about a sentimental or bodily need, but a rupture from the very continuity of temporality, a rupture from which the “I,” the world and reality in its entirety would be left in ruins. In other words, the intensity of craving reveals a final structural attempt to avoid a psychotic fracture. The idea that craving is a common example of an attempt to keep - or even restore - the consciousness’s structure in the world does not relate to the idea that this is a psychological attempt to do so, as a mechanism of defence or compensation. One should grasp the meaning of this sentence only through the deepest levels of the structure of the world and of identity, as the external and psychological aspects of experience are but its epiphenomena.

The diachronic record follows the consequences of habitual drunkenness over the ability of the consciousness’s structure to, by temporalizing itself, bloom in a singular biographical destination. The consciousness’s atemporalizing shutdown in the instant, projected over the biographical timeline, bars the temporal flux from which the individual consciousness handles its changes towards maturity. Maturity is a form of expansion that is typical of the human being and that is characterized by the progressive and continuous transformations of its basic settings of temporality, spatiality and interpersonality [22]. For maturity to occur is necessary that – should we stick to the example of temporality - retention elements.
be abandoned so that new experiential elements may be taken, but, above all, it is necessary that the proportions of temporal dimensions be recalculated continuously. For instance, the protentive dimension, in youth, is more powerful than in old age and, inversely, in the latter, the retentive dimension is more powerful. This plastic ability to recalculate allows the human being to go forth in every phase of his life fruitfully. Habitual drunkenness prevents this structural remodelling of the human consciousness, obstructing the unavoidable entry in the stages of life and thereby binding the entire existence to a determined period, forging the falsification of its authenticity. These observations on phenomenology are also supported by the field of neuroscience, where it is demonstrated that the effect of cannabis on the brain in adolescents thwarts the loss of certain neural connections that are important to the organ’s maturity. Once these connections are kept, the brain remains in an undifferentiated condition that is an obstruction to its maturity and in a state of vulnerability to schizophrenia outbreaks [23].

References