The Impostor Phenomenon, a hermeneutic analysis informed by Heideggerian phenomenology

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ABSTRACT

First described as a cluster of psychological disturbances "The Impostor Phenomenon" has become ubiquitously termed "imposter syndrome" (impostor and imposter spellings are used interchangeably). Broadly, it is a fear of exposure as a phony, an imposter. The term "Imposterism" has been adopted, as suggested by Morgenstern and Beck (2020) for ease of reading. The accepted academic view of imposterism appears narrowly defined as a measurable psychological or emotional problem requiring a remedy. I offer alternative understandings for imposterism with the aim of contributing to a broadening debate on the phenomenon both academically and practically. I have used a hermeneutic method informed by Heideggerian phenomenology and employed the Gadamerian concept of horizons for this work of theoretical psychology. In so doing I further aim to showcase this methodology for wider use. Since this is a somewhat unusual approach in psychology it has been necessary to explain the methodology at some length. I feel however that this methodology has allowed the freedom needed to approach this subject anew and I hope it's use will increase. The theme which runs through this thesis is an adaptation to the method suggested by Crowther and Thomson (2020). I work from my twelve new suggestions for horizons to make a phenomenological interpretive "leap" by applying Heideggerian philosophical insight. In doing so, I note Paley's observations about such a method and devote some time to reconciling them. The output is akin to what Van Manen (2014, p. 19) describes as *agogic* or story-like and seeks to elicit a "phenomenological nod" of recognition rather than offering a generalisable result or conclusion. Its aim is inductive in widening the debate and encouraging more diversified work rather than a deductive discovery. I have brought imposterism to light as a multi-dimensional spectrum of twelve new horizons fused in two points of meaning. These I have located in four Heideggerian concepts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Every one of us is somewhat like others and somewhat unique". (Egan, 2012, p. 290)

Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes first described "The Impostor Phenomenon" in 1978 in their article *The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention* (Chrisman et al., 1995; Clance, 1985, 1986; Clance & Imes, 1978; Clance & OToole, 1987; Mak et al., 2019). Originally described as a cluster of psychological disturbances resulting from a feeling that one is regarded as a "phony," the imposter phenomenon was observed and described in 150 female academics as "generalised anxiety, lack of self-confidence, depression and frustration" (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 242). The terms imposter (also spelt impostor) phenomenon or syndrome are used interchangeably depending on versions of English used. For ease of reading I am using the term "imposterism" (Morgenstern & Beck Dallaghan, 2020).

The academic work and popular understanding of imposterism has developed along a rather narrow track of being a psychological problem requiring therapeutic intervention, as suggested by the title of the original work (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241). Understanding has remained narrow in the decades since 1978 and the assumption has been that psychology will name, measure, and provide solutions for its ill-effects (Bravata, Madhusudhan, et al., 2020; Bravata, Watts, et al., 2020). I feel that this narrow approach has led to imposterism being medicalised, something which as a person trained in person-centred therapy (Sanders, 2006) I am not given to accept. To look beyond is to theorise, which is the thrust of this thesis. I propose that psychology in general would be well served to consider alternative ways to view and understand imposterism such that the pantheon of theoretical psychology and the options for providers of talking therapies in particular are expanded.

My contribution to the expansion of the understanding of imposterism has been made by the application of a hermeneutic method informed by *Heideggerian* (as espoused by Martin Heidegger)

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phenomenology which has been adapted from that suggested by Crowther and Thompson (2020). In so doing I have creatively reconsidered existing lay and academic texts. This led to the bringing to light new "horizons" of understanding and a "fusing" of meaning for imposterism (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 102-103, pp. 114-125; Vessey, 2009, p. 525) followed by a Heideggerian analysis in making the "interpretative leap" described by Crowther and Thomson (2020, p. 2). Martin Heidegger was a pivotal part of what has come to be termed "the late 19th and early 20th century continental philosophers" (Gutting, 2008, p. 139). Heidegger, as is explained in the sub-section *A scholarly timeline* has become an increasingly influential figure in psychology and related fields. It is my hope that, in demonstrating the use of this methodology, I make a contribution toward the momentum of its popularity and utilisation.

There is a wealth of existing material regarding imposterism. General searches using Google, Google Scholar, and my academic library at the University of Auckland yielded results or "hits" in the tens of thousands. I found that imposterism is generally described as a person's inability to accurately evaluate the evidence of their own abilities and achievements resulting in feelings such as "fraudulence," feeling "phony" or "fake" and fearing exposure as such (Clance, 1985, 1986; Clance & O'Toole, 1987; Cowman & Ferrari, 2002; Downing et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2008; Schubert & Bowker, 2019). The preponderance of the academic work on imposterism has been and continues to be done with cohorts similar to where Clance and Imes began, in academic and medical professional populations (e.g., Bravata, Madhusudhan, et al., 2020; Bravata, Watts, et al., 2020; Henning et al., 1998; Hutchins, 2015; McGregor et al., 2008; Peteet et al., 2015; Sonnak & Towell, 2001; Topping & Kimmel, 1985). I have found imposterism to be ubiquitous in modern society and usually accepted as a negative, limiting experience or feeling which requires remedying (Borhart, 2015; Vaz, 2020; Young, 2021).

From reading accounts of people expressing that they "have imposter syndrome" and the common solutions suggested in lay texts and in wider academic texts I formed the view that there is

a lot more to understand, that the focus was narrow, and I could perceive other ways of looking at imposterism. As such, I felt that a wider debate and more nuanced appreciation may be useful to those experiencing it, those engaged in psychological or allied fields of practice and psychology and academia in general. Many of the solutions suggested seemed to lie in simply refuting the negative connotations of imposterism (for example Borhart, 2015; Young, 2021). It is my view that lay practitioners such as life-coaches and self-proclaimed or even certificated coaches have seized upon imposterism as an acceptable opportunity to make money from providing pop-psychology to the "worried well" (Pontious, 2002). This is evidenced by the plethora of self-help and "how to deal with" advice and offers of coaching that exist online. However, they take their lead from academic and practised psychology it seems. It is not the business of this thesis to test, refute or build upon existing knowledge and models but rather as suggested by Crowther and Thomson and the many references they make to preceding work, the goal for the methodology I am using is instead to add to existing knowledge and in so doing to open and widen debate in general. I am not offering alternative ways of looking at imposterism as alternatives to existing models, but to coexist with them.

When considering the current tests and scales available to psychology, Bravata, Madhusudhan et al. (2020), commenting upon their own systemic review (Bravata, Watts, et al., 2020, p. 12), declare in the introduction we evaluated the 62 peer-reviewed studies of 14,161 individuals with imposter syndrome published between January 1966 and May 2018. I note here that 1966 is before the original research that named The Impostor Phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) but cannot discern why this study did go back this far. I wondered whether all these 14,161 individuals could truly be said to have experienced the very same phenomenon, whether imposterism could be so precisely identified. Further, I was unsure that the detection of the psychological and emotional issues associated with imposterism together with a claim to have imposterism must necessarily mean that imposterism is detected. In psychology, neither the

International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD-10) nor the *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5) describe imposter syndrome or phenomenon; they do not recognise imposterism as a medical condition. I am not making this point in any way to attempt to discredit the work, but I do wonder if standardised tests and evidenced treatments (Bravata, Watts, et al., 2020) can be applied to a phenomenon which itself is not officially recognised in clinical psychology. Mak et al. (2019) conclude in their systematic review of measurement scales for imposter phenomenon:

> Extensive variability in the methodological quality of impostorism validation studies currently exists. This review identified a gold standard measure is yet to be established and this has been limited by conceptual clarity around the dimensionality of the impostor phenomenon, its operationalization across measures, distributional properties across different groups (e.g., clinical samples, gender, age, cultures) and it's [sic] reproducibility. Quality ratings identified longitudinal research as an area for future directions and the need for consistent reporting of essential psychometric data to aid researcher and practitioner purposes. If scores are to be trusted as true representations of the impostor phenomenon, sufficient evidence of adequate validity, reliability and responsiveness of measures are necessary. (Mak et al., 2019, p. 14)

I would both echo and advance the concerns raised in the above quote which I believe point at the need for a re-examination of and widening of the ways in which imposterism is understood, as my thesis seeks to do. If the "validity, reliability and responsiveness of measures" is being questioned then perhaps a reason is the lack of consideration given to imposterism outside of the accepted model? Creative hermeneutic Heideggerian thinking which seeks to expand psychological understanding of imposterism in a general way is I feel a good way in which accepted wisdom, which can be detrimentally limiting (Rorty, 1976), can be expanded and made more accessible and useful. I came to believe there are important 'side-roads' that could lead to new understandings. As

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is the way of my methodology, rather than isolating specific data-sets, I looked for meaning in plain

sight, in "ordinary everydayness" which was concealed or as yet unnoticed (Wollan, 2003, p. 33).

The origins of my interest in imposterism

      It is fair to say that my interest in imposterism came from my interest in hermeneutics and in

Heidegger. I was looking for a suitable candidate for applying my worldview. That said,

conversations with business colleagues (I work as a personal development coach helping people in

senior positions in business) originally sparked my interest in imposterism as just such a candidate.

One in particular was with a partner in a large Auckland law firm who was talking about the process

of being made partner. More specifically, the idea that the transition is a difficult process, and it

takes a considerable time to adjust. I know for instance that partners in at least one major Auckland

law firm are waited on at lunch in their own private luncheon room and I suggest this is outside the

experience of most people. What this partner was more specifically talking about was the realisation

that one becomes "one of us" and the world treats you differently. For example, preferential credit

facilities are opened up, something I know about having worked for two large banks myself. Such

attendant reverential advantage and privilege being bestowed as a function of a change of title and

status was the crux of what my friendly law partner was talking about. In this I saw the possibilities

for imposterism.

      I began to notice reports of ostensibly successful people experiencing imposterism. I heard a

podcast by Ronsley Vaz with an interview with David Cohen, a wealthy and successful founder and

chairman of a technology incubator and start-up operation in Colorado. Cohen related feeling like

an imposter and feared exposure on a regular and recurring basis, in fact, "daily" (Vaz, 2020). How

could this be? Having been trained in counselling psychology and in a person-centred Rogerian

approach which borrows much from phenomenology (Raskin & Rogers, 2005) I became aware that

when I heard imposterism talked about, it was sitting within a much wider context than 'just' a

problem. On first investigation I felt there was more than a cluster of testable psychological and

emotional problems at play. Early ideas included questioning whether imposterism is a natural or even protective experience or, whether it is necessary in providing drive for a person to strive for improvement. On the other hand, there are people I have encountered who claim to have imposter syndrome and I've thought; "I'm not surprised, you probably should feel like an imposter" because I thought perhaps, they were indeed a fake or a phoney. As a Heideggerian scholar I was aware that I was beginning to form forestructures (see later sub-section), a sure sign to me that there was substance to my thinking.

On further reading there were indications that I was not alone in questioning received wisdom with respect to imposterism. For example in recent papers an emerging idea is that, for some, the feeling of imposterism is a rational one and not an error of self-appreciation (e.g. Slank, 2019). Other ideas such as the concept of "liminality" also began to emerge in early reading – the feeling of being "betwixt and between" – neither one thing nor the other (Bilgili et al., 2020; Söderlund & Borg, 2018; Szakolczai, 2015; Ybema et al., 2011). I wondered if the experience of liminality was extended somehow in the context of not being able to move forward and fully inhabit a new identity. It was becoming clear that there was certainly more to imposterism than the accepted medicalised psychological position. Might the experience be explained with reference to external factors such as sexism, elitism, or racism which were prevalent at the time Clance and Imes did their original work with female academics in the 1970s (Malkiel, 2016) for example?

The aim of my study of imposterism then is to explore the ways in which imposterism is experienced and to expand the landscape, ultimately offering alternative ways that imposterism can be viewed and undertaking a deep Heideggerian analysis for imposterism. I offer new understandings which will offer stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners some different and I hope thought provoking ways to consider the phenomenon. The subject of imposterism has been dominated by a rather narrow medicalised perspective, to which I believe it may be helpful to begin to add new thinking and debate.

METHODOLOGY and Method

Hermeneutics, Heidegger, and phenomenology

My methodology employs a hermeneutic method informed by Heideggerian phenomenology to bring to light new understandings and ways to consider imposterism. This is sometimes referred to as "Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology," for example in Miles et al. (2013). Broadly, I follow the methodological suggestions of Crowther and Thomson (2020) who use this term (along with "HP" to denote "hermeneutic phenomenology") and state that it is a methodology which has had increasing use over the previous two decades in health and social care studies. I say broadly, because although I do follow the flow of their article in making a first interpretation followed by the application of Heideggerian philosophical and phenomenological principles and precepts to make an interpretative phenomenological leap, unlike them, I do not use first person interviews as a data source. As a methodology, Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology has a significant detractor in John Paley (Paley, 1998, 2014, 2016) and it is because of his arguments that I have not found it necessary to use first person interviews. I agree with Paley that, although many who state that they are using this methodology are doing useful and credible work, their use of this term for their methodology is questionable. I am encouraged by a 2021 article which calls for methodology in psychology to be more "liberal, pluralistic and more tolerant" rather than have discovery diminished in favour of well-travelled methodology (Zitzmann & Loreth, 2021, p1). This thesis is an exercise in theoretical psychology; it is theory making in its intent. Therefore, I am encouraged by such calls as I feel that the findings of my thesis would not have been possible within a stricter adherence to a methodology and method. As an example of this I have found a middle way which manages to use the well-established principles of those who have used a methodology they describe as Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology to produce useful and insightful work, while accommodating Paley's objections. In stepping slightly sideways and finding a new path, however, I have been aware that I must rightly devote a considerable amount of

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my thesis to explaining and justifying how and what I have done and why this is academically reasonable. Hence the reason for describing my methodology in detail as I have, although the term Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology would certainly describe it to those who use this methodology.

As the title of this section suggests, my methodology is the sum of three parts. Phenomenology has been described as the study of lived experience, hermeneutic refers to the method used to do this and Heideggerian relates to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (Leonard, 1989; Miles et al., 2013; Smythe et al., 2008). Each of these words has its own weight and gravitas separately and must be understood separately as well as together. The words are both specific and elastic in that the understanding of each of these words and their bearing upon each other does not have a concrete and universally understood (let alone accepted) position or definition. None of this has been an impediment however to a goodly body of work having been done using this methodology and this continues to be the case. I take from this observation that openness to new ideas and pre-understandings of them can actually be two parts of the possibility of interpretation (Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001). It is also noteworthy at this point to say that Heidegger is well known for having invented his own lexicon in explaining himself. This is demonstrated in dictionaries of Heidegger's words which do much more than attempt to translate German to English, such as Dahlstrom's *The Heidegger Dictionary* (2013). As such, I have on occasion in this thesis done likewise.

Explaining the methodology

Thinking reveals itself in the 'ah ha' of words jumping off a page, in conversation that gives insight, in writing where sentences seem to fall onto the page of their own demanding. Thinking is everything. The researcher is as-thinker, and so too is the reader who is called to think about 'this' and not so much about 'that'. All is in-play, being played and sometimes out-played (Gadamer, 1982) [sic]. There is little that can be pinned down without losing the

salient nature of the quest. Nevertheless, a 'showing' requires that the pause button be pushed

to allow us to see a still frame of being before the play button once again activates that which

in the living can never be stopped. (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1390)

Professor Liz Smythe is a recently retired Heidegger scholar and nursing and midwifery

practitioner from my first psychology alma mater, Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I

count her as an informal mentor in my journey with Heidegger. Neither she nor I are philosophers

nor German, and Martin Heidegger was both. Philosophy however, and the philosophy of Martin

Heidegger in particular, is the basis of my interpretivist worldview, and it looms large in my thesis

and in my understanding of psychology. A hermeneutically reflective and reflexive method using

the lens of Heideggerian phenomenology is particularly useful in getting outside of mainstream

thinking because it fundamentally differs from more traditional Cartesian rationalism which

underpins most of modern science (Çüçen, 1998; Gendlin, 1978; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016).

Indeed, philosophy and phenomenology are part of the root of theoretical psychology (Giorgi,

1975). I am following a long line of scholarly practitioners and theorists as seen in the sub-section *A*

scholarly line.

There is a history in psychology involving philosophy and my methodology that is re-

emerging (Gendlin, 1978; Giorgi, 1971; Heotis, 2020; Krägeloh, 2020; Stenner, 1998), a

developing use in psychotherapy (King, 2015, 2021) and it is recognised for its application in

qualitative research (King, 2021; Laverty, 2003). Further, it is established in related disciplines such

as nursing, midwifery and pedagogy (Cowles, 2018; Leonard, 1989; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009;

Miles et al., 2013; Paley, 2014; Smythe et al., 2008). Its use is also seen in the areas of business and

leadership where I have a particular professional interest (Cowles, 2018; Rolfe et al., 2017; Segal,

2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). Heidegger's work was however, not designed for use in

examining specific phenomena within particular disciplines, and so adaptations have had to be

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made by practitioners. We who are practitioners and theorists must find ways to use philosophy

rather than attempt to conduct it (Crowther et al., 2017; Crowther & Thomson, 2020).

I have adapted the method described by Susan Crowther and Gill Thomson (2020) because

it contains a rationale for the basis upon which I have conducted my research. The main adaptation

has been to use existing texts rather than first person interviews. I am theoretically considering the

entire subject of imposterism and not, as Crowther and Thomson have done, interpreting individual

cases or situations. However, their method has provided an extremely useful track upon which to

run. I have used their process of an initial interpretation (in their case called "Lived Experience

Descriptions" ("LEDs" – first interpretations of interview transcripts)) to which philosophical

principles are applied to make an "interpretative leap" (p. 2). Where Crowther and Thomson

describe LEDs, my equivalents of these became the *foreconceptions* and *post foreconceptions* (see

later sections for these). Thus, I have used my own foreconceptions from which to make

interpretative philosophical leaps and to make a Heideggerian analysis for imposterism.

Considering for a while, the hermeneutic method. It is important that, during the

investigation of phenomena, where there are glimpses of other possibilities they must be "allowed"

(Spence, 2017, p. 841). It is in allowing these glimpses to become large and following that,

hermeneutic discoveries are made. My adaptation of Crowther and Thomson's LEDs is an example

of this. These glimpses, in the case of the subject of imposterism are I would suggest, less easily

found by interrogating one piece of documentation after another per se, in perhaps the way of a data

set used in other methods of research. Rather they might better be found in allowing one notion, one

spark of something to lead to another in the way of hermeneutics because this I suggest may be

more likely to lead to new and novel ideas and insights.

I can be driving home, not thinking about anything much, when suddenly a thought comes

that seems to resonate with whatever I've been grappling with in my writing. Suddenly I see

a way forward. I let go of all the clutter and focus on this one clear insight. Thinking becomes

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energised, eager to be set free in writing. Often it sends me back to find a bit of Heidegger

half-remembered that somehow seems to connect. (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1394)

The hermeneutic method was originally designed specifically for the purposes of

interpreting existing documentation such as biblical and other religious texts (Dilthey & Jameson,

1972; McLean, 2012; Packer, 1975). A small glimpse of what a bit of text might mean was

compared to what is known and back and forth; the whole understood by the parts and the parts

understood by the whole. It has a circular or spiral rather than linear nature (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007;

Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014; Koch, 1996; Paterson & Higgs, 2005, pp. 342-343):

This circularity could be termed the epistemological sense of the hermeneutic circle. It is what

one traditionally associates with the term, namely, the principle that one can understand the

whole from an understanding of the parts, but also that one can understand the part only from

the understanding of the whole. In rhetoric one has long recognised the interdependence of

parts and whole within a sentence or larger text where the specific meanings of words of a

sentence depend upon the meaning of the whole sentence and vice versa. (Schmidt, 1996, p.

263)

As Max Van Manen explains, it is central to the use of hermeneutics to remain open-minded

and maintain a sense of wonder and that the output of hermeneutic investigation is hermeneutic

writing which he described as *agogical* writing (Van Manen, 2014, p. 19; Willis, 2014). I would say

this speaks to the inductive nature of this style of research as I am not looking to narrow down a

search by a system or proofs and deductions. Rather, I seek to broaden out from observations in a

way which is open to creative thinking and theorising. I may move between considering the whole

of the subject to the parts and from the parts of the subject back out to the whole (Paterson & Higgs,

2005, pp. 342-343). It is a process of gathering data, considering, making notes, talking about

findings, leaving the process for a while even, and coming back at various points. The output should

enable a reader to gain their own experience of the work rather than ask them to judge whether or

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not the research is 'right' (Loftus & Trede, 2009). Hence, "The aim of hermeneutic-phenomenology is to create a dialogical text which resonates with the experiences of readers while, at the same time, evoking a critical reflexivity…" (Geelan & Taylor, 2001, p. 2). Hermeneutics has been described as a matter of logic justification rather than technique, technique being more linked to empirical data analysis (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). It is not a linear construction of problematisation, design, data capture, analysis, and reporting of findings.

Horizons, as described and referred to often by Hans-Georg Gadamer, can be described as new ways to understand something by changing one's point of view or reference. They are different angles as it were on the same subject and as such are meaningful ways, as Gadamer put it, to fuse them together, to bind them in some manner (Gadamer, 2013, p. 317, 415; Spence, 2017; Vessey, 2009). This is the first step in what I have sought to do with imposterism, to find new and different perspectives to add to the existing one and to find commonality between them, to meaningfully fuse them. I like to understand horizons as different people in different circumstances looking at the same thing, perhaps a ship at sea where the ship is the fusion point in this example. From the same point on land, it is difficult to get different perspectives and understanding of the situation of the ship. From nearer, or further away, perhaps going aboard the ship or regarding it from the air or from the sea many new perspectives are possible. Also, different people in the same situations will likely make different reports of their experience, however similar they might be. As has already been alluded to and will unfold herein, I believe imposterism has been largely regarded from one perspective thus far. A wider debate considering many other perspectives will be useful both to practitioners in gaining different ideas about clients' situations and to theoretical psychology generally.

A scholarly timeline

The phenomenology, philosophy, precepts and claims of Martin Heidegger which inform the basis of the methodology of this research largely have their foundations in his magnum opus

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Sein und Zeit (*Being and Time*) (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962). There is an unbroken professorial and scholarly line which predates Heidegger and continues from him through philosophers to scholarly practitioners and to students and to me. To wit, the scholarly timeline is traced from: Descartes (Çüçen, 1998) and Kant (Heidegger, 1997) through Husserl to whom Heidegger dedicated *Sein und Zeit*, Marvin Farber founding the English (speaking) journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* in America in 1940 (Schuhmann, 1990) to scholars such as Hans-Georg Gadamer (Gadamer, 2013; Vessey, 2009) and Hubert Dreyfuss (Spinosa et al., 1997, p. 26, 44, 154), John Paley (Paley, 2014), David Vessey (Vessey, 2009), and Jean Grondin (Grondin, 2001, p. 43, 46). In my own personal experience then to professors and scholarly nurse and midwifery practitioners like Liz Smythe (Crowther et al., 2017; Flood et al., 2019), Susan Crowther (Crowther et al., 2017; Crowther & Thomson, 2020), Gill Thomson (Thomson & Crowther, 2019) and their contemporaries whom I have come to know from my reading such as Sandra Mackey (Mackey, 2005), Tracy McConnell-Henry (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009) and Maura Dowling (Dowling, 2007). Later on, in producing this thesis, I discovered links to the field of psychotherapy (King, 2015, 2021; Romaioli & Faccio, 2012). In my area of professional interest, that of business leadership and personal development, the use of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, although still somewhat radical, is producing some valuable thinking outside of the established 'black box' model of management and leadership (Hovey & Segal, 2014; James et al., 2006; Seymour, 2006). As Seymour put it:

> Clearly, the writings of one philosopher (and writings principally from one major work) from last century are not a usual path to enlightenment for the field of international entrepreneurship. Heidegger's early philosophy (and especially Being and Time) has, however, become a foundation for almost all the major strands of postwar [sic] continental thinkers, including Arendt, Gadamer, Satre, Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, and Foucault. (Seymour, 2006, p. 138)

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It was at a previous Alma Mater, Auckland University of Technology (AUT) that my association with Heidegger, hermeneutics and phenomenology came by way of Liz Smythe and Susan Crowther (whom I regard as informal personal mentors and have the pleasure of citing in this thesis on several occasions). My discipline of psychology was part of the same faculty as nursing and midwifery where Smythe and Crowther both held or hold (respectively) professorships. We psychology students had exposure to this methodology by way of a qualitative methodology course. So it was that this scholarly line found its way to me at a personal level. In New Zealand there is a significant interest in this methodology and there is a monthly reading group chaired by Susan Crowther to which I belong.

Introducing *Dasein* and Being

Being and Time (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962) was written in high German almost one hundred years ago. As such, much of the reference to use of this book has come from the increasing body of secondary literature associated with it. This is important because as will become apparent, Heidegger requires careful translation. This is not always easy because he occasionally introduces a lexicon of his own making. Heidegger's philosophy and phenomenology relies on his laying out a fundamental ontology which rejects the accepted subjective/ objective dualism of modern science (Çüçen, 1998; Paley, 2014). Heidegger insists that before we enquire into the *being* of anything, we must first understand the who or what is enquiring after it. Thus, put in simplistic terms, all perception and understanding can only be carried out by each of the individuals doing the seeking since it is that individual making the enquiry. Each enquiry is an individual enquiry, only understood absolutely by the individual making it (each individual understands its own enquiry absolutely, others may not have this absolute understanding). This is a complex and difficult claim as it goes against accepted Cartesian rationalism, but I have been grateful to be able to return on many occasions to the You Tube explanation for it given by Mark Thorsby, Professor of Philosophy and the Chair of the Philosophy Department at Lone Star College in Houston, Texas (Thorsby,

2016). In these videos Thorsby explains that Heidegger has it that the being of any entity is given by the only entity which is capable of enquiring into its being which means us humans. He does not use human however as what Heidegger wants to do is indicate the Being (Heidegger differentiates Being humans have from being that humans can give to entities) of people, rather than humans indicated by a physical entity, and he calls this (us) *Dasein*. Dasein is a complex philosophical concept which can translate as there-being (Da sein), one can point at it on any given occasion. Thus, Dasein is the Being that enquires after being and is unique in doing so (Leonard, 1989; Smythe et al., 2008).

The question of being of entities, of things and phenomena (the *Seinsfrage* – the being question), is central to Heideggerian philosophy and phenomenology. Being is given by Dasein, by Dasein's comportment toward a thing. My current comportment (my interest, my care and concern) is my research and in doing this, as I type using my keyboard and my screen, I am giving these things being they are being used by me as tools to help me with my comportment and in doing so I comport toward them. They are what Heidegger calls ready-to-hand, this is what they are to me as I use them, rather than what they would be if I examined them in cold isolation (which Heideger calls present-at-hand) (Chillón, 2017). As Heidegger importantly states, I am therefore prior to the being of things and phenomena. Therefore, I must be prior to the entity being given the being. Thorsby (2016) is extremely useful in laying out and explaining some of the lexicography which Heidegger uses (invents in some cases). Of particular importance, in explaining Dasein, Heidegger tackles the difficult question of ontology which I explain further in a separate section called *The ontological difference*. Basically, as Dasein is prior to being, then only what Dasein gives being "by taking hold or by neglecting" (Thorsby, 2016 57' 27'' approx. onwards) has being and Dasein can give this being to all things in-the-world (a specific Heideggerian term), which includes solid entities and, for example, feelings. Therefore, before we can ask the question of being, or what is being in relation to a thing, we must first ask the question who is the Being who is concerned with being? This is

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Dasein (Thorsby, 2016). As such, the being that each Dasein gives is its own, but will be similar to that given by other Daseins. This similarity is how the species of Humans which are Daseins may make everyday sense of the world and of being-in-the-world.

I am attempting to simplify a crucial point about analysis done using Heideggerian phenomenology by saying that any analysis given belongs to the giver. Once given, it is only a sensible invitation to the reader or other person to make their own sense, interpretation, understanding or opinion. As such does Heideggerian phenomenology, among many other attributes, lend itself to theoretical psychology? I say this must be the case since psychology can only be one person's best efforts at understanding others. This is where Heidegger's rejection of objective/ subjective dualism occurs – in the analysis of being (what it is to be – the *seinsfrage*). Heidegger centrally gives a description of ontology quite different to that which most of science gives due in large part to this rejection (Çüçen, 1998; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Heidegger insists that the being is given by a Dasein and is not an attribute which an object or entity has of itself and so subjectivity and objectivity are not available. As such, what science describes as ontology should actually be denoted as ontic, or ontical (Nicholson, 1996), because a science can only give features from within its own discipline and not the being of something (which is given to it by Dasein). In giving being, what a thing does is reveal itself as itself to Dasein. Thus, as Dasein comports toward things they reveal themselves to that specific Dasein and are given being by that Dasein. This does appear to be a circularity but, once again, I return to Thorsby (2016) who explains that this is more of a push-pull than circular. Hence, I am the Dasein looking to give my understanding of the phenomenon of imposterism. I am not, and cannot, attempt to generate a repeatable generalisable result and it is this important aspect which means that all Heideggerian enquiry is only ever a contribution to wider debate and never a this, therefore that situation. This can leave readers who are more used to looking for results cause to pause, but it must be understood that what agogical hermeneutic writing does, what Heideggerian analysis does, is not more than add

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to or open up a debate and invite readers to have their own experience. I am looking for new

Gadamerian horizons such that I can fuse them in meaning and then proceed to offer a Heideggerian

analysis of what I find, readers are invited to make their own discoveries and have their own

experience of what I write.

The "Phenomenological Nod"

Since using this methodology I cannot make a generalisable repeatable result, I must present

my findings in such a way that they can reasonably "make sense". As proposed by Max van Manen

(2016, p. 2) and quoted by Dowling (2007, p. 133) "a good phenomenological description is an

adequate elucidation of some aspect of the lifeworld – it resonates with our sense of lived life".

Known as the phenomenological nod, it is "something we can nod to, recognising it as an

experience we had or could have had" (p. 2). This is of course quite different to the reporting

structure of most Cartesian rationalist scientific works, whether they be qualitative or quantitative

investigations.

The experiences which different people have of ostensibly the same event is a good example

of how different Daseins recount their stories and how the meaning for each often varies

considerably. Each will have their own interpretation and will make their case. This will allow

others to gain a greater, wider appreciation of the one event, from many angles. There will be

similarities in many cases, but always nuanced by the individual making the interpretation. This

ability to present different points of view makes Heidegger's phenomenology also useful for

incorporation in both empirical research and in practice (Wilson, 2014). For example, if I say that a

mother having given birth will interpret things her way having had her own experience and that an

attending medical doctor theirs and perhaps the midwife and the partner of the mother, theirs, I

think I could at least get a metaphorical nod, if not an actual one. My interpretation of the meaning

for the woman in question may not be the same as the interpretation of a midwife or a

husband/partner because we each bring with us our own experiences which are informed by our

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own histories. To a lesser or greater extent, we each bring ourselves with us. It is this unique aspect of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology which has made it increasingly useful in midwifery and nursing; it makes it possible for such practitioners to better understand the lived experience and meanings which their patients and clients have (Mackey, 2005; Miles et al., 2013; Thomson & Crowther, 2019; Thomson et al., 2012; Wilson, 2014). I believe this must be part of the increasing interest in this methodology in psychology and psychotherapy.

The ontological difference

As I have explained above, Heidegger calls for an analysis of Dasein before all else. Taking this one step further the *Daseinsanalytik* is both prior and primordial: not just 'before', but 'before before'. In this way we see that as far as Dasein can determine, Dasein 'is' the world, it is in-the-world with other entities, but the world of a Dasein is the world for that Dasein (Boss, 1988). Dasein*'s* ability to experience themselves and other entities as themselves, rather than merely not the same as themselves or other entities, is unique and this attribute leads to what has been described as the "ontological difference" in a paper of the same name (Nicholson, 1996). Heidegger begins to explain this ontological difference early in *Being and Time* (p. 41) in "*The task of destroying the history of ontology*". Ontology must be the result of an enquiry by a Dasein since it is a revealing of an entity of itself, not because it is ontically different from other entities. In other words, and in my own words, but with ideas borrowed from Egan (2012) – only Dasein can denote a shoe as a shoe. The shoe reveals itself to Dasein of itself and its being is given to it because Daseins are uniquely capable of making this analysis. To a dog for instance a shoe is not revealed as a shoe, it is another available thing that smells right and is chewable, it might be the same as handbag. In fact, and this will become a highly important part of my final analysis of imposterism, 'shoes' are understood to be shoes because they are part of the social norms which Heidegger calls *Das Man* (The "They") (Carman, 1994; Dreyfus, 1991, 1995; Egan, 2012).

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I have mentioned previously that there is not uniformity of understanding regarding hermeneutics and phenomenology, and it is important I feel to give a brief summary at this point as to why. I am using Heideggerian phenomenology which brings with it implications for the hermeneutic method I employ. Other approaches to phenomenology however do exist and in thinking about phenomenology based on this fundamental point, there are multiple factions or stances held: the positivist (Husserl), post-positivist (Merleau-Ponty), interpretivist (Heidegger) and constructivist (Gadamer) (Dowling, 2007; Racher & Robinson, 2003). Husserlian phenomenology for example persists with subjective/ objective dualism (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Indeed, a fundamental difference between two of the main protagonists of Heideggerian phenomenology is the inclusion of the enquirer in the phenomenon or enquiry since it belongs to the enquirer. However, according to Husserl a thing, and entity or phenomenon has its own essence which can be discovered (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Husserl was initially the more academically eminent (and can be said to have supervised the early work of Heidegger) and held that the enquirer and all other things should be bracketed out leaving the essence (Laverty, 2003; Nicholson, 1996; Reiners, 2012; Smith, 2013, p. 135). As such, Husserl followed a scientific, rational Cartesian lead in attempting to isolate a phenomenon by extracting all that is not the phenomenon, leaving its essence (Smith, 2013, p. 135, 136, 137, 139, 316). Fundamentally, Husserlian phenomenology lacks Dasein but to my reading all who come after Heidegger lean toward Heidegger (including Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer) and perhaps this is the root of the current sense that phenomenology is linearly polarised between Heidegger and Husserl. In terms of theoretical psychology, I believe the Heideggerian approach has more to offer since it is free from a Cartesian reliance on empiricism and essence finding, it is free from the Platonic understanding that things make up the world without an understanding of their relatability. Heideggerian phenomenology is free from proposal and the binary system of agreement and refutation which exemplifies scientific reason.

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The *temporality* and *historicity* of Dasein

Two primary features of Dasein – temporality and historicity – are examples of the elusive nature of Dasein in terms of pinning down just who or what Dasein is in its ordinary everydayness. Ordinary everydayness is an important concept because it is here that Heideggerian phenomenology looks to bring to light that which is hidden (Alvis, 2018). Temporality is I believe the key feature of the Time of *Being and Time* since, in understanding the influence of time in the Being of Dasein, is found the understanding that such Being is only glimpsed at and is far from a definite, solid feature. One could say that a recognisable person is being like this, or that, from time to time. The two related concepts of temporality and historicity are the subject of an entire chapter (IV) of *'ENIGMATIC ORIGINS Tracing the Theme of Historicity through Heidegger's Works'*, a book which I feel is essential in understanding the course of the historical influence in Heidegger's phenomenology (Ruin, 1994). Indeed, Ruin says (pp. 145-146) at the beginning of this chapter:

> To elucidate the sense of temporality in Heidegger's work is certainly no small matter, not least considering the claim in *Being and Time* that the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time. In a sense the problems of time and temporality are the phenomenological problems *par excellence*. Not only do they designate a route travelled by Heidegger, but time is also the problem toward which Husserl turned after Logical Investigations and to which he would continue to return over the following decades as the deepest and most elusive level of phenomenological reflection. Furthermore, it is the principal ground on which later generations of phenomenologically oriented philosophers, notably Lévinas, Ricoeur, and Derrida, have expanded the conceptual limits of the founding fathers. In other words, it is a theme whose broad ramifications in and outside phenomenology are not easily assessed (Ruin, 1994, pp. 145-146).

I cannot hope to do justice to this subject in a short section of this thesis, but a working explanation of its importance must I feel be attempted. Ruin points out in the introduction,

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interpreting from Heidegger's text in German "Das Fragen nach dem Sein, das hinsichtlich seiner ontisch-ontologischen Notwendigkeit angezeigt wurde, ist selbst durch die Geschichtlichkeit charakterisiert" (p. 2), interpreted as "the inquiry into being...is itself characterized by historicity". Ruin continues "Macquarrie and Robinson translated Geschichtlichkeit as 'historicality'". He also points out that historicity has subsequently become the most used interpretation, as opposed to historicality. Here we can access the idea that it is not only the personal history of a Dasein that forms the Dasein who is encountered (when you meet someone, you may know things about them), but the entire historicity. One will be informed by the society and time in history into which they were born and have lived. Thus, a person's Being might be more easily understood in the context of a temporary state in which they are encountered – the information you have about them will include their bearing, countenance, attitude, or mood – but overall, this will be within the bounds of possibilities associated with them. There are myriad possibilities for the way a person might come across or appear when we encounter them, and this will change not only from moment to moment but over time and as they age and gain more personal experiences. A person then, a Dasein, the Being there of a person, can be thought of as the person we can point at in a situation. This is far from being a simple fixable entity and depends on the cares and concerns they have at any given moment, to their comportment, toward what interests them. Dasein is temporary and authentically all the possibilities of its historicity. As such:

> Temporality is not "located" in, nor localizable to, anything other than itself, it is the ungrounded ground. The examples of such reservations could be multiplied. Together they indicate an origin, with reference to which every other possible determination should be ultimately explicable, while itself being inaccessible to the descriptive schemata to which it gives rise. (Ruin, 1994, pp. 153-154)

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A *clearing*, part 1

  To highlight the circular, spiralling nature of the methodology at work in the writing of this thesis I relate the examples given by Rupert King, a psychotherapist who like me (the surname is coincidental as far as I know) has a great interest in how hermeneutics and Heidegger can provide unique and valuable insight in his discipline. In his 2021 article King relates his experience of research in psychotherapy using phenomenology. In particular the Heideggerian concept of *the clearing* (*die lichtung*). I return to this concept later in my own analysis of imposterism in a sub-section entitled *The clearing* (*die lichtung*), *part 2*. What is valuable about this article is that it came to me because of the hermeneutic pursuit of an idea which in itself was a clearing in which the article could arise. Before I was led to King's 2021 article I first discovered '*Light and shadow in the forest: A phenomenological exploration of Heidegger's clearing (die Lichtung)*' (King, 2015) which if the pun may be excused, did indeed shed some light on my thinking. My eye was truly caught by both the article and the name of its author; such is the way of hermeneutics. I looked up Rupert King and found him on the business-based social media site called LinkedIn. As a result of making contact, we began a conversation on its messenger app. I might suggest in other methodologies the fact that we share the surname 'King' might be left out, but with this methodology it does demonstrate that being open to the merest of glimpses of something can be pivotal if not lead to somewhere of interest. There was something about this 2015 article by King which describes honing the ability and skills needed and trust which must be placed with the mystical and poetic aspects of Heideggerian phenomenology. As it turned out, not only did Rupert King send me his 2021 publication himself, but also his author's proofed copy of a book chapter he is contributing to a yet unpublished book. Whilst this too has been helpful, I cannot cite it of course. What this demonstrates is that we two 'Kings' have been able to come together in the very circumstances King's research describes, in a clearing of common interest. I have been able to relate this concept to the whole of this thesis. I have created a clearing where my concerns and care,

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my comportment, is with the subject of imposterism as a whole and not on individual pieces of evidence. Yet, the individual pieces of evidence, as they are in the clearing with me, help me to understand and explain the whole, which describes the hermeneutic method. I do realise that this section is a little out of phase as it begins to use concepts which have not yet been properly explained. However, I am hopeful that upon reading the thesis as a whole an enquiring reader will remember this section near the beginning and that they will experience the circularity of the methodology for themselves. It is almost impossible to explain the circular and spiralling nature of hermeneutic phenomenology in a linearly written thesis and I suspect therefore such a lot of the word count of this thesis and other academic texts where this methodology is used is dedicated to explaining the methodology.

In a further example, at the time I originally wrote this section, relatively late chronologically, I noticed an online article. It proposed that the universe is circular, nothing is real and we are imagined; that "A new hypothesis says the universe self-simulates itself in a "strange loop" (Ratner, 2020). This article, although not a serious academic piece, is based upon the work of philosopher Nick Bostrom (Bostrom, 2003) and reports on work done in the realm of quantum physics (Irwin et al., 2020). In keeping with the poetic and mystical nature of Heidegger's later writing which includes his explanations of the clearing, perhaps there is at least an echo of hermeneutics and phenomenology in other areas of research where it may not be expected. Heidegger and his philosophy and phenomenology should not then be thought of as contentious or quite so novel in mainstream psychology, but more so as a great opportunity.

Doing Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology without first person lived experience

The methodology of this thesis is often referred as Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology by practitioners like, for example, Miles et al. (2013). Crowther and Thompson (2020) refer to just HP (hermeneutic phenomenology). In most cases practitioners using this methodology to investigate phenomena use first person lived experiences collected through face-to-

face interviews or other means. This approach has yielded much excellent, useful, and indeed ground-breaking research. I believe however that it is not necessary to follow this approach to data gathering and it is not the approach that I have pursued. I believe this for two reasons: firstly, that this is a theoretical analysis and not one of a particular event or phenomenon and, secondly, because I agree with John Paley in that I do not believe that an interview or diary account is actually capturing a lived experience. This is the problem Paley has with practitioners naming this approach as Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. Paley (2014) points out that there is no translation for the English word "experience" in any continental language (Wierzbicka, 2010). The "German word for experience-as-observable-event is *Erfahrung*, while the German word for experience-as-a-subjective-stream is *Erlebnis"* (Inwood, 1999, p. 1522) and Paley indicates that Heidegger himself disowns the latter but not the former.

Paley is a philosopher, and I am a practitioner and theorist using philosophical concepts to make explorations in theoretical psychology. To my reading Paley is correct in claiming that the description given by a person of their experience of something is not actually their experience but rather a mixture of observable events and subjective streams, neither of which is experience per se. I must therefore tread carefully since I know how useful gathering first person interviews is for many well-respected researchers and practitioners. However, I feel it is not only not necessary for this research but could be counterproductive because I am not looking at specific phenomena or events which involve a particular data set. Therefore, I am confident that I can use existing literature in conducting theoretical psychology rather than use first-person interviews.

I believe a simplified explanation of Paley's objections may be found in Heidegger's introduction to *Being and Time* in *The task of destroying the history of ontology* (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962, p. 41) where he begins to dismantle the duality of subject-object. This is reinforced in Section IV called the *Being-in-the-world as Being-with and Being-one's-self, The 'They'*. "They" (in simple terms "they" as in "as they say," it is a social norm) Heidegger calls *Das Man* and this is a pivotal

concept in my later deep analysis. As Paley puts it (2014) "Dasein is not an 'experiencing subject' and the world is not an 'experienced object'. This dualism is replaced by the singular phenomenon of Being-in-the-world" (p. 1522). Paley quotes Sheehan (2001, p. 194) in claiming that "'Being-in-the-world' actually means '*being*-the-world'". Also, that "Being-in-the-world is not an alternative name for 'subject', 'consciousness', 'person' or 'that which experiences'" (p. 1552). As Paley points out (still in his 2014 article) when considering the point made by C. Wright Mills in relation to accounts of lived experience:

> …the person concerned is 'not trying to describe his experienced social actions (p. 907) but drawing on a shared vocabulary of motive to justify the action under scrutiny. His reply is not an 'index of something in the individual', but rather refers to 'the typical constellation of motives which are observed to be societally linked with classes of situated action' (Mills, 1940, p. 907, 910).

Paley (2014) makes the point that "In phenomenological interviews one does not hear the voice of a unique human being. Rather one hears the voice of *Das Man*". He cites an example (Shank & Abelson, 2013) in saying:

> A qualitative interview respondent's narrative should not be construed either as an account of 'what happened' or as a description of 'lived experience' while it was happening. It should be construed, instead, as an example of what 'they' say about events of the kind being narrated. It is merely the 'script' – incorporating a series of stereotypical assessments, roles and imputed motives – which *das Man* provides. (pp. 1527-1528).

Neither Heidegger nor Husserl ever did any small in-person interviews, a point I make to show that adaptation is required to make use of phenomenology. Many practitioners using Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, or elements of it, use in-person interviews and transcriptions and they claim (and I don't disagree) that being there seems to be an important aspect

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of data gathering (for example, Ahrens & Khalifa, 2013; Crowther et al., 2017; Smythe et al., 2008). John Paley argues with, I feel, the merit of accuracy if not usefulness, that whatever practitioners are doing they are not gathering "lived experience" from these interviews and not 'doing' Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology (Paley, 1998, 2014; 2016, pp. 2-3). I believe Paley is correct in his philosophical reasoning but that the practitioners in doing what they are doing are still making useful contributions and using Heidegger's philosophical and phenomenological work to great and useful effect. I know from personal connection with Susan Crowther than she has made a point made by other practitioners that we are not philosophers, our role is to find useful ways of using this philosophy. As such, and I agree, it can often be counter-productive on a practical level to run a purist philosophical argument against the use of this methodology.

This thesis is a work of theoretical psychology and as such it is appropriate that what 'they' think or has been accepted is if not challenged, since this is not a Heideggerian thing to do, then certainly added to. I am putting forward my own ideas and analysis from within the research, which I am part of. Hence, I bring with me my own history and historicity, my own *Das Man*. This is not quite the same as reflexivity, but it is practically speaking very close and actually, close enough. Certainly, the researcher must understand that they are part of the research as reflexivity demands. However, from a Heideggerian perspective, bringing *Das Man* into the discussion brings with it a level of nuance and complexity which I suggest goes quite a way beyond reflexivity. *Das Man* is a Heideggerian precept which plays a large part of my final analysis of imposterism so I feel it would be counter-productive to expend word-count on it here.

Therefore, notwithstanding the translation inadequacies which Paley points out, and in agreeing with his philosophical point, we have to do something as practitioners and our aim is to better understand a situation from points of view at a human level, when the human is not us. Here, we can usefully regard reflexivity as the way in which practitioners conceptualise and allow for themselves in using Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology (Segal, 2010a; Shaw, 2010). I am

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looking to ride both horses as it where, both the purist arguments of Paley and the practical

practitioner making use of philosophy for the benefit of theoretical psychology. I therefore feel

justified in adapting Crowther and Thomson (2020) to my uses without the imperative to have first

person interviews. Further, I have adopted the approach, supported by Zitzmann and Loreth (2021)

and my reading of Paley (1989, 2014, 2016), that it is not necessary for me to interrogate and

analyse individual texts or documents in hermeneutically considering the general subject of

imposterism in the pursuit of adding to the theoretical psychology associated with imposterism.

Bringing forth what is hidden – Heideggerian phenomenology

The basis of Heideggerian enquiry lies in bringing into light that which is hidden, in finding

the hidden in ordinary everydayness. Ordinary everydayness includes what is accepted about

imposterism. Heidegger referred to this in his last lecture in 1973: "phenomenology of the

inconspicuous" (*Phänomenologie des Unscheinbaren*) (Alvis, 2018, p. 211).

Alvis explains that the term '*unscheinbar'* is all important in understanding what 'is' when

it is not obvious. What is, despite there being the very obvious. *Schein,* being the root of the word,

is the term used in German for a ticket or license, something offered that is obviously what it is and

demonstrably so. However, this understanding of what is obvious is taken from a sense of what can

be surmised or be presumed to be true rather than what, as Alvis puts it, "shining" (2018, p. 213) in

its factuality. *Der Fahrschein* means the travel ticket. Waving a travel ticket at a guard, the guard

will have a sense of what is and what is not a genuine travel ticket:

> This is perhaps one reason why *unscheinbar* has taken on the more everyday colloquial
>
> reference to the "wallflower," which is fully present, yet absent to conscious awareness. Thus,
>
> for a phenomenon ontologically to be *unscheinbar* it would need to not-be, while still maintain
>
> the status of being inconspicuous or "inapparent". (Alvis, 2018, p. 212).

This is one Heideggerian way into the hermeneutic analysis of imposterism as a subject as a

whole. What is there that is obvious in its ordinary everydayness but is hidden or at least

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overshadowed by the obvious? What is *Unscheinbar* about imposterism is what I seek. Importantly, making the thing itself seen however is different from a semblance which is rather like a reflection in a mirror; a facsimile of the person looking into it. I am attempting to bring forth imposterism for what it is rather than what it seems to be like, yet what it is like is a reasonable starting point. A mirror may give strong indications of aspects of the person, but it is not the actual person, and it cannot be the Being of that person. As such, imposterism or, The Imposter Phenomenon of the original Clance and Imes (1978) work, is like a cluster of psychological symptoms but is not the symptoms in and of themselves. We might get a good idea of the phenomenon without allowing the phenomenon to show itself of itself and it is this I am looking for.

Heidegger gives an analysis of the Greek root of the word phenomenology in three parts: "*A. The Concept of Phenomenon*" (pp. 51-55), "*B. The Concept of Logos*" (pp. 55-58), and "*C. The Primary Conception of Phenomenology*". A simplified explanation of the outcome of these passages is that phenomenon broadly means to show itself, and Logos is a discourse which can be either true (manifest) or false (covered up, a semblance). Thus, phenomenology means "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962, p. 58). Thus, using phenomenology we seek what is manifest, what is true, rather than a semblance or clue to what is true. The *Seinsfrage,* as Heidegger describes it, the fundamental question of being is answered first with Dasein and not with a comparison to that which is not Dasein or is like Dasein. Imposterism should be seen for what it "is" not what it is like. I wonder whether the psychological cluster which has come to represent imposterism actually represent themselves and are sometimes a facsimile of imposterism. As such, must they always be present to make measurements or assessments of imposterism? I think not, hence this research.

Phenomenology shows what is "proximally and for the most part hidden in its ordinary everydayness" (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962 pp. 37-38). A route to bring this forward then is to bring forward different horizons of understanding for imposterism and to find meaningful ways they can

be fused as parts of the same phenomenon. This gives to psychology a more accurate, nuanced, and useful understanding of imposterism which has the advantage of many points of view and is open to development and re-interpretation. Thus, psychology will have more ways in to the phenomenon of imposterism which are opened up by taking this theoretical rather than empirical route.

Returning to the *unsheinbar*, this may be revealed instantaneously, and often the skill is learning to grasp what is sometimes only glimpsed "out of the corner of the eye" (Inwood, 2011, pp. 56-57). For the purpose of this study, I have hermeneutically read accounts of imposterism in the news, in research articles and in magazines and I have watched televised interviews. In keeping with the method of this methodology, I am not presenting these as my data sets, but rather noting the kinds of places I have derived information which has driven the hermeneutic thinking. In reading and thinking about accounts of imposterism generally I have been prompted to look for academic notations that have occurred and vice versa. I have been able to use my training in psychology to help me in this as I have followed the reflective practice of listening to and sitting with a feeling. I have learned through practising humanistic person-centred psychology (Rodgers & Tudor, 2020) that this often reveals important information. In this way I am interacting with what text gives me in a similar way to that of a person being interviewed, I am aware of context and congruence of the entity of a text, not just the words. This is all in the nature of the hermeneutic method, one of considering the parts while continuing to be aware of the whole, particularly the case with language and texts; "Understanding text takes place within the historical context that permeates all understanding and through which understanding becomes meaningful" (Rapport, 2005, p. 129).

Heidegger describes this as *Befindlichkeit*, it is a way of gathering information according to what one is (putting it simply) interested in. It is part of the battery of senses with which Dasein (me) gathers information not in a formal note taking verbatim sense but in a feeling, or how I find myself being (Gendlin, 1978). Being led by how I feel, what I am led to reading, the use of and

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being in tune with *Befindlichkeit* (the way or skill of feeling) is a legitimate Heideggerian function and aligns with the hermeneutic process and being open to wonder (van Manen, 2017). As with the sea, the tide goes in and out. The sea is the same thing, a body of water in the context of a shoreline for instance, however the same shore and seabed is revealed differently depending upon the direction of the tide. I live near the shore in Northwest Auckland, New Zealand and have used numerous walks along the shore at different times to think about my research. Particularly at Wenderholm regional park where there is a beach on one side of a sand bar and a shallow but large lagoon on the other fed by the Puhoi river. As a fly fisherman I am always interested in the seabed as it is revealed. This is a metaphor I find for the revelation of what is hidden but suggested and then reveals itself. The way water moves at different stages of the tide reveal what is beneath, but this is a facsimile of what is actually there. Heidegger himself is well known to have taken walks in the Black Forest in Bavaria, Sothern Germany, to consider his research (Heidegger, 1944/45/ 2010). I suppose I am following his method in taking my own walks, bringing forth what is hidden.

Horizons and the hidden nature of things

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a contemporary and developer of Heidegger's work, made valuable additions to this body of work. Of particular interest to this thesis is what he wrote about the limitations of the horizons of understandings which might be derived in looking only from one vantage point and the usefulness of "expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 302). An example serves here to bring together the concept of horizons and some of the key features of Heideggerian phenomenology. Heidegger famously employed a hammer as a prop to explain an important aspect of his thinking (Packer, 1985, p. 1083) so using the same prop slightly differently, yet still linked, I offer an example, for which I can return directly to Heidegger's own writing.

This summer my wife and I built a ten square metre summer house. We used one hammer in particular, the one I have in mind as I write this. That hammer had been sitting in a toolbox for

months since we last did work on the house the summer before. This hammer, although it has been there all the time, has not or only fleetingly and inconsequentially come to mind until it was needed. In using the hammer, it was used as a tool (and this is how Heidegger employs the example of a hammer); we did not examine the hammer as a hammer in terms of its features, we just used it. In doing so we brought out its meaning to us at that time. The meaning of that particular hammer to us is that of calm and shelter. The summer house was initially used as a place to sit and chat and for yoga and has since been filled with the equipment my wife needs to make jewellery (she is a hobby silversmith). In turn the pieces she makes will go on to others and for them the fact of the hammer will be hidden but still part of the meaning of the piece they are wearing. The hammer brought forth its meaning from being hidden and we would not even be aware of it but for my interest in this methodology. The hammer revealed itself, of itself in its ordinary everydayness, but without a Heideggerian perspective that meaning would remain hidden. This very same hammer was manufactured somewhere, and the people who were involved in its manufacture will not have considered that particular hammer in an active way since. Even in its manufacture it is unlikely that this hammer was in any way remarkable. Yet this hammer in particular has a meaning to each of the persons involved in its manufacture, however small and hidden. Its meaning is one of economic security as I think about those people now, which is not unlike calm and shelter for us. These are two horizons of understanding of the hammer. One might think they are completely different however there is a fusion of meanings – that of shelter perhaps? In the meaning of shelter, both ourselves (myself and my wife) and the people involved in making the hammer have a common meaning. The nature of the hammer, or a hammer like it, or hammers in general may bring this meaning to many others through different means of use. In a similar way imposterism may have different routes to a common meaning which is a fusion point for different horizons.

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Horizons explained through aesthetics and art

I am a painter. This is something which has developed while I have been involved in this research. I did not know I could paint but I thought I could, so I tried, and the rest has been personally therapeutic and a source of accomplishment – I've sold a painting, have enquiries on others and I am planning my first art gallery exhibition in early 2022. I have had the practical experience of creating artistic work and allowing many people to have their experience of it by sharing it on various social and business media platforms and in various groups connected with my adopted style called Tonalism (Cleveland, 2010). I have been surprised at the different reactions; how people are drawn to some and not others and how this differs from person to person and painting to painting. Each Dasein encountering my work is experiencing the same work and bringing themselves to it. A number of horizons of understanding my work have emerged as I ask people about their reactions.

Hans-Georg Gadamer wrote extensively on the subject of the hermeneutics of art and aesthetics and in his 1960 essay *Aesthetics and Hermeneutics* he makes this important point very early halfway through the first paragraph (p. 181):

> The reality of the work of art and its expressive power cannot be restricted to its original historical horizon, in which the beholder was actually the contemporary of the creator. It seems instead to belong to the experience of art that the work of art always has its own present. Only in a limited way does it retain its historical origin within itself. The work of art is the expression of a truth that cannot be reduced to what its creator actually thought in it. (Gadamer, 1960)

An example of a painting which has I feel sparked a notable range of responses across a wide timeframe is shown in the journal *American Art* (Burns, 2009). In this piece entitled *How words matter* author Sarah Burns, an art scholar, lays out the differences of opinion which critics have had over the years of a simple painting of a woman sitting in a chair. The painting, Thomas

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Wilmer Dewing – *Lady in White #2* [c.1910] is a tonal painting, using a simple restricted pallet. In her first paragraph Burns says:

> …why does it take ten thousand words to equal the visual eloquence of a picture? And, by the same token, can we take it for granted that the meaning, or message, or expressive content of any picture is necessarily so self-evident as to obviate textual mediation? (Burns, 2009, p. 2)

Burns gives examples of many different critiques and meanings that have been attributed to this painting over time:

> One picture, many words: "bloodless," "minor," "mysterious," "poetic," "high-bred," "high-strung," "grotesque". All of them represent attempts to give verbal form and assign meanings to whatever it is about Dewing's art, his atmosphere, and his image of the enigmatic female that attracts and fascinates, repays or repels, our interest. (Burns, 2009, p. 3)

None of these words used to describe this painting are "wrong," they are bound by the experience of the critic or reviewer, their history, historicity, and context. At different periods in time with such variables as fashions and world events the encounter with the very same painting changes dramatically. These are all horizons of understanding the painting which I suggest are not available to a cohort of similar people within a short period of time. In a similar way by broadly considering and from reading widely regarding imposterism over a longer period with myriad people and influences rather than a selection of interviews, one expands beyond a narrow cohort based in one time and place.

In respect of this painting then, at the personal level of the reviewer there will have been a swath of pressures and considerations. Perhaps political or career-oriented favour was being sought or, maybe a deliberately provocative critique could have been made to mark the critic in a certain light? The point is made, however, that each saw the same painting. I might draw this point toward imposterism in that the phenomenon has been written about and commented upon in many

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academic and popular lay publications yet the horizon from which it is regarded has remained relatively fixed. Indeed, in my experience few people will not have a pre-formed understanding of what imposterism is when it is referred to as imposter syndrome. Clance and Imes in 1978 describing The Imposter Phenomenon had studied a particular cohort at a particular time and this has become a generalised way of understanding imposterism. The painting has had the benefit of many critiques over a long period of time, each would have been aware of the previous one or ones, but each was made from a different perspective, a different horizon. Now we have a much richer and fuller understanding of the painting. This is a metaphor for how the expansion of the discussion on imposterism from a theoretical point of view may be a practical benefit to psychology. Imposterism seems to be stuck, despite the advancing years.

A person expressing the experience of imposterism will have their own situation which belongs to them but the expression of that experience in association with a suggestion of "imposter syndrome" seems to me to bring with it a set of pre-conditions and understanding about what has actually been experienced. The words I have encountered on many occasions when people relay their experience of imposterism indicate that it is something they feel they have 'got. Like 'I have the flu' people often say, 'I've got imposter syndrome'. This supports Paley's (2014) position that accounts of an event cannot be considered a first-person experience because the voice of They, *Das Man* is for me quite clearly heard in the medicalised way that many talk about imposterism.

In summary, the hermeneutic method affords the freedom to explore possibilities which occur in the fantastic number of abstracted connections any researcher may bring by dint of their humanity, their being human, their being a Dasein. I suggest that people use this method naturally to make connections and certainly to make breakthroughs in understanding and appreciation – the cathartic experience of talking therapy for instance. Heideggerian phenomenology allows a way of 'getting at' or more accurately bringing to light that which is hidden yet important in ordinary everydayness or is inconspicuous (Alvis, 2018). We are able to appreciate and even to some degree

inhabit the world of or at least the point of view of another as well as in an abstract way, to look for different points of view. The combination of these elements are where we come to a fusion of horizons or possibilities (Clark, 2008) and who involved in psychology or any of the related disciplines would not be interested in that?

The usefulness of a fusion of horizons

In their 2011 paper discussing inter-group solidarities, a concept I will return to in my analysis of imposterism as *social cohesion*, Stavroula Tsirogianni and Eleni Andreouli put the value of the fusion of horizons succinctly:

> This process can enable a 'fusion of horizons', which is linked with a broader understanding of the other in light of the various contexts which shape the other's and one's own perspective. This process leads to a joint creation of a new understanding about oneself, the other, the subject of discussion and the encounter as well as about the limits of knowledge. (Tsirogianni & Andreouli, 2011, p. 5.2)

The Gadamerian term "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 102-103, pp. 114 -125; Vessey, 2009, p. 525) can be explained as a commonality of meaning found in different points of view. This notion is found at use in many varied disciplines, for example: medicine (general practice in this case) (Clark, 2008), politics (Tsirogianni & Andreouli, 2011), Asian studies (architecture, culture and religion) (Snodgrass, 1992). An excellent example of its application in interpreting religious texts can be found in the book *Hermeneutics and Hindu thought: Toward a fusion of horizons* (Sherma & Sharma, 2008). Another good example is in relation to finding and fusing horizons of biblical text in Masters theses (Robinson, 2003; Wood, 2018).

This thesis is both offered as an example of how hermeneutics and Heideggerian phenomenology are useful in theoretical psychology and in bringing to light new ways in which imposterism can be approached and considered. I hope that I am able to demonstrate just how

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useful this methodology can be by undertaking a serious investigation and analysis of the phenomenon of imposterism:

> To think phenomenologically is not to follow a structure, to solve, to work out; rather it is to let what 'captures thinking' stay in thought and speak to understanding... But the solving is never 'done'. Thinking always takes one on to the next question. Phenomenologically, it is persistently thinking that matters. (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1394)

The article from which the above quotation is taken also contains the quote "You do not sit down and solve problems: you bear with them until they somehow solve themselves" (Merton, 2007, p. 23), which I have included here because Merton himself is a good example of the use of and impact of the hermeneutic application to thinking and writing. We learn in the introduction to the 2007 book *Echoing Silence: Thomas Merton on the Vocation of Writing* that he progressed from art and poetry to Christian asceticism, Catholicism and found his way to a Trappist order during World War II. His writing about his hermeneutic interpretations is an exceptionally long example of the fusion of many horizons yet is not written in terms of results.

Thinking and space for thinking rather than pouring over data has produced powerful insights and has led to the development of some great theories. For example, Albert Einstein in the development of the theory of special relativity famously imagined himself sitting on a beam of light and thought about what he might see (Norton, 2012). This, however, was not the result of a single 'ah ha' but actually more like a series of open-ended questions than as anything systematic (Sussman, 2021). Einstein, the famous theoretical physicist and mathematician, had first to allow a hermeneutic thinking process to develop before he was able to step outside of the accepted and develop this theory. It was *his* thinking, belonging to him as the Dasein enquiring into the being of the entity of light; Einstein *gave* light its being. He did not begin with what *Das Man* had already said but he was able to fuse different horizons in forming a new theory and so open a debate which continues today.

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As previously mentioned Heidegger was well known for his need to contemplate and write in his retreat in the Black Forest in Southern Germany (Sharr, 2006). He would take long walks in the forest; talk with local country folk he encountered and observe the flora and fauna. This in and of itself exemplifies the practice of being open. A good example of this is the book *Country Path Conversations* (Heidegger, 1944/45/ 2010) whereby Heidegger sets down three imaginary conversations. In so doing Heidegger was practising a form of reflection and reflexivity and following glimpsed conversations and thoughts which allowed horizons to show themselves from different experiences. Indeed, producing a thought experiment whereby imaginary conversations took place is part, I suggest, of the fusion process.

Considering alternative methodologies

I am aware that there are other qualitative methods available and that it is expected that I explain why I have not selected them. However, I must state that I became aware (in the spirit of declaring forestructures) during this thesis that in fact I found my subject because of my interest in the methodology rather than finding a methodology to suit a question. I wanted to demonstrate working in a Heideggerian way for the benefit of psychology, as my worldview is predominantly Heideggerian and interpretivist. I'm sure I would not have embarked upon this degree if it were otherwise. Theoretical psychology was my means of situating my research within psychology. The spark of the conversations which led to this thesis; the discussion I had with my lawyer connection for instance was actually a realisation that imposterism is an ideal candidate with which to use a hermeneutic method and Heideggerian phenomenology because it is a subject which is narrowly perceived, but where I could see other possibilities coming to light. I was not fully aware of this until later on in writing. I am aware that the methodologies I will now mention are more nuanced than I can give credit to in this space, but the point is made, I feel. I did not consider other methodologies because I was looking for a subject to suit a methodology. Rather like a mountaineer looking for a mountain that had one well-worn path to the summit – such a person would look for

new ways to understand the mountain using their chosen way of climbing and the equipment they know works for them. They would then share their story and show how they went about it, opening up the mountain for others to find their way.

What this research is not

I am not gathering biographical or situational details as per narrative or case-study research (e.g., Etherington, 2013). Neither am I primarily concerned with structural conditions leading to imposterism as would be the case with ethnography (e.g., Littleton et al., 2008). Nor am I inductively developing a theory using empirical data as would be the case with a grounded theory approach (e.g., Kelle, 2010). I am also not looking for the emergence of themes and laying out themes in the data as would be the case with thematic analysis (e.g., Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

What this research is

I have an interpretivist worldview, I am a Heideggerian, a hermeneut and a phenomenologist. Interpretivism allows research to come to understanding rather than explanation (Mackey, 2005, p. 179). Data is not systematically "coded, sorted, abstracted, and… analyzed [sic]" (van Manen, 2017, p. 180). In fact, as a brief aside, my having an understanding of a subject rather than a more fixed and rigid blueprint or recipe-like approach and applying that understanding to interpret situations has been extremely useful in a therapeutic or coaching setting. By which I mean, as a practitioner it has been of great benefit to allow understanding to emerge in a more humanistic Rogerian manner (Rodgers & Tudor, 2020), rather than trying to apply a narrow range of therapies in which I might be expert, to every situation I encounter. Academically then I think it follows that I would be interested in applying these attributes to the advantage of theoretical psychology.

In a somewhat ironic twist when thinking about other methodologies and the similarities some have with phenomenology I come across a recent paper by Chris Krägeloh extolling the virtues of philosophy in the founding of psychology (Krägeloh, 2020); Chris was the person who

lectured and marked my level 8 quantitative methodology paper and taught me SPSS – he is looking forward (I got in touch) to receiving a copy of this finished thesis.

My own journey into Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology

I am a 'mixed bag' when it comes to scientific and artistic bent. My first applied chemistry degree was highly positivist, yet I am an artist: a singer, musician and latterly painter. A huge change occurred for me when I stopped trying to apply rationalist science to everything. This happened when I underwent treatment in a private rehabilitation hospital in 2012 for alcoholism after my epigenetics, business career, and emigrating to the other side of the world and initially living in a small, rented unit with no support network, collided. After getting sober I embarked on a level 7 GCert BHSc so as to get on to the postgraduate (honours) degree in psychology. At the time of writing (2021) I am still in sober recovery and very happily so. I was required to take a level 8 paper on methodologies in preparation for my dissertation which began with a two-day block of seminars whereby lectures on a great number of different methodologies and methods were given. When I saw the presentation on Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology it was a revelation. It seemed and still does that I had found my place in the world, and everything made more sense. My scientific positivist self and artistic creative self finally became one 'me'.

I think the person who gave the lecture was none other than Professor Liz Smythe, a world-renowned Heideggerian scholar who went on to become an informal personal mentor of mine. Another pivotal experience was the recommendation of a film (movie), available on YouTube called *Being in the world* (Ruspoli, 2010). I go back to it on occasion as it reminds me that Being, happens temporarily and constantly. It is our role as phenomenologists and mine as one working within psychology to capture and describe these moments and to interpret meaning from them. It has been tremendously useful in working with clients directly and now I have the chance to do this for the benefit of psychology in general.

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Source material

It is worth repeating, but not to labour the point, that this is a theoretical thesis regarding the subject of imposterism rather than one of empirical investigation. It is a hermeneutic and therefore reflective, and reflexive analysis of the documentation regarding imposterism which in Heideggerian terms I am in-the-world-with or more specifically *mitsein* (with there). As such, there are not predefined data sets which I am investigating. There is not limit or limitation to what is or is not data. The source material is whatever I am hermeneutically led to which leads to theoretical breakthroughs rather than discrete and isolated data. As I have previously mentioned, there is no shortage of academic and lay written, audio and visual documentation, the formats for which include books, journal items, social media, conference notes, business websites and blogs and Youtube. I do however feel it is in keeping with the spirit of my methodology and theoretical basis to give some indication of the kinds of data available. To wit, a Google search using 'Impostor Syndrome' on September 4, 2020, produced about 1,400,000 results (as Google puts it when numbers of hits are very large). I found performing simple search engine searches enlightening and heartening because consistently, the first "hits" (search results) exemplified the popular/ lay understanding of imposterism as a disorder or cluster of symptoms to be beaten (Wilding, 2020). A Google Scholar search of "Impostor Phenomenon" on September 4, 2020, produced about 20,100 results showing there to be extensive literature. A Quant (Quant is a search engine which does not store previous searches and so does not form a personalised search based algorithmically on previous searches and preferences; Google does do this) search on March 6, 2021, for the limits "New Zealand" and "at any time" produced an interesting mix of results. The first page included results from: en.wikipedia.org, psychologytoday.com, medicalnewstoday.com, verywellmind.com, verywellhealth.com, positivepsychology.com, time.com, abc.net.au, bbc.com, and fastcompany.com (the same syndicated piece (Wilding, 2020) as appeared in the Google search some six months previously). Academic and lay information is presented side-by-side as is often the case with

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generalist search engines, something which can confuse the lay enquirer I feel. High hit rates numbering in the thousands were achieved with searches on "imposter syndrome," "imposter phenomenon" and "imposterism" on google.com, scholar.google.com and a search on the University of Auckland library service on the "search everything" setting.

What was personally particularly illuminating has been the evolution of this research from potentially empirical (I began in a more empirical mode of thinking) to theoretical. This has happened naturally because of the hermeneutic process. I have been led by the process, which is as it should be. Also, this shows that I was indeed forming foreconceptions before I had begun the research officially and this is something to which I allude in the next chapter (3).

As per the methodology and its characteristic freedom to follow hunches and glimpsed possibilities and openness to anything which might be important or inciteful, I could (and have) been driving and hear an interview on the radio which sets me off on a fruitful train of thought. Some researchers have set out a structure to the process of their hermeneutic thinking and investigation (for example, Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014) but I feel that imposing a structure upon something which by definition does not have a structure is restrictive if not erroneous. I can however see that once one is following a particular strand of a horizon that this might have an application. However, at this stage I am seeking the phenomenological nod at the logic and flow of the world-story which is created (Van Manen, 2016, p. 27). As such, the source material for this research is hermeneutically open in character.

2. BEGINNING THE PHENOMENOLOGY – FORESTRUCTURES

Openness and pre-understanding are far from mutually exclusive, they are two parts of the possibility of interpretation and pre-understanding and in Heideggerian terms are described as '*forestructures*' (*vorstruktur*) (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962, pp. 190-193; Nyström & Dahlberg, 2001; Popa, 2021). Forestructures are given in three parts or structures as: forehaving (*vorhabe)*, foresight (*vorsicht*) and, foreconception (vorgriff) (Dahlstrom, 2013, p. 93). This is to record what is a priori to the analysis and interpretation, it is what I bring personally. It tells a reader what I think I knew and what I expected to discover. This is not to isolate me from the phenomenology in a Husserlian way (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; Reiners, 2012), but to show a difference between and the entanglement of what I thought, and why and what I brought to light as a result of the hermeneutic process followed by Heideggerian analysis. In Heideggerian phenomenology, because Dasein is prior, research can be said to have begun before the formulation of the question or subject. This is because its enquiry does not suddenly start at some arbitrary date or time. We seek to bring to light the inconspicuous, which is a particular form of hiddenness and as such "There are likely varying shades of inconspicuousness that phenomena can bear, and those shades tell us more about ourselves–what we care about, how we ignore, disguise, and select data–than they do about the phenomena" (Alvis, 2018, p. 236):

> Within Heidegger's forestructure of understanding he provided the opportunity for interpretation to explore Dasein's existence through the structural moments of forehaving, foresight, and foreconception from the emic perspective (Heidegger, 1927/2011). From this position, Heidegger explicated the concept of interpretation as being an integral part of

being in the world acknowledging presupposition as a concept that formulated part of Dasein's existence (Heidegger, 1927/2011). (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016, p. 4)

Using the three parts of forestructure I explore my own forestructures with respect to imposterism. At this juncture it is worth remembering that in the case of this research the method suggested by Crowther and Thomson (2020) has been adapted and as such my own foreconceptions have happened while I have been actively doing the research, which has had the effect of them becoming my adaptation of the Lived Experience Descriptions (LEDs) described by Crowther and Thomson. Forestructures are a necessary part of the disclosure required of my methodology (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016; Mackey, 2005). Indeed, as Mackey points out Heidegger is specific about this:

a circular process whereby the fore-structures of understanding are made explicit, then considered in terms of the whole of the understanding of something, and then re-considered in new ways. Methodologically, this is seen in the concept of the hermeneutic circle. (Mackey, 2005, p. 182).

The researcher is involved in a hermeneutic circle of discovery which involves understanding the whole from the detail and the detail from the whole and hermeneutics demands a level of reflexivity here which is heightened and explicit. Similar is required of the reader as they move from their own experiences into the text and back again to form their own understanding. Perhaps in the case of imposterism, some new horizons of understanding will arise. New horizons emerging would be an ideal outcome from my point of view and would show the hermeneutic process, informed by Heideggerian phenomenology at work, to the benefit of psychology. In giving forestructures the researcher may not see the relevance of something they impart but a reader may do. To some, forestructures may appear to be over-disclosure or overly long-winded but to a hermeneut and/ or a phenomenologist it is absolutely necessary. Indeed, I have been party to many discussions about this in the New Zealand Heidegger reading group to which I belong, which is

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chaired by Susan Crowther. Thus, in the spirit of Zitzmann and Loreth (2021) and their "Almost Anything Goes" attitude toward methods in psychology article and in the interests of making my contribution to theoretical psychology using an unusual methodology for investigating imposterism, I present my own forestructures laid out as proposed by Heidegger, which are required to enter and stay within the hermeneutic circle in the correct way (Kinneavy, 1987).

Forehaving (*vorhabe*)

Forehaving considers the general attributes of a Dasein's history and historicity (personal history and the life, times, culture and geography of one's birth, upbringing, and life) as it comports toward something about which it cares (in the Heideggerian sense). As part of forehaving it is necessary to understand why I care about the subject of imposterism in particular and why I am determined to pursue it at this and higher levels of research. Some great amount of personal introspection was necessary for me to understand this. The following then, lays out what I believe, on reflection, to have been important to my interest in Heidegger and in imposterism and my drive for academic recognition.

The 'headlines' that have come from this process and remain on-going are that as a person I am in constant pursuit of a platform or stage, somewhere to perform and be recognised for my own brilliance by an audience of the praiseworthy. I am a musician, a singer and player of a number of instruments. I've been performing for decades and have fronted well over a thousand gigs (performances). I have natural talent and little training in this respect. I cannot sight-read music but have a basic understanding of music theory. I am compelled to perform nonetheless and have always sought out the best musicians I can access with whom to play. They are generally surprised at my capabilities (I am a surprisingly good singer with a wide vocal range) and a more than competent player (bass and percussion mainly). Did I feel like an imposter I have wondered, and the answer is I'm not sure and I'm not sure I haven't. I have been in the company of some musicians who have scoffed at my lack of formal training, but I've always redressed this balance with natural

ability. In every case I've found that the classically trained have spent years of study and practice trying to look as natural as I am. I have not been inhibited by my lack of training but then I have not had ambitions to become a classical musician. I know I always stretch myself, but I do it incrementally, so the jumps aren't too big, and I don't do things I know I'm not capable of. Live music performance is a good example. I have always managed to be good enough to play with a succession of people that are a bit better than I am. 'On paper' I shouldn't be able to do this, but I suspect I'm a good mimic (*mimicry* is one of the horizons which comes to light for imposterism). I may feel a frisson of nervousness but do it anyway and I expect that people will be pleased and surprised by what they see and hear. I have had highly accomplished classical musicians recently react in this way, however, and I recognised that I seek their praise. So, maybe I do have some feelings of imposterism but not in the way that I fear I'll be found out because I'm not claiming to be anything other than I am. Nor have I accepted a title or role which would require me so to do. It is interesting though that I can take or leave the opinions of audience members at the end of a gig, although in the moment I feed off audience reaction. It's interesting because I do need a positive reaction to feed from and this is the case in all aspects of my life, I'm not good with blunt confrontation or criticism whereas I'm very good with critique and advice that can help me.

I have come to understand that I feel I know what it is to really feel like an imposter in the way of not being one, but feeling it, because I am compelled to put myself in that situation. However, that does not mean I feel the negative aspects of imposterism. I am not perturbed. I do not feel like actually being a musical imposter (in terms of classical training or technical knowledge) diminishes my own knowledge of my own ability for example. I am looking for a stage so that my own ability can be recognised by the worthy for what it is, ability and talent rather than taught. I am the same in business and in my academic ability, but I must confess that the experience of doing this MSc has taught me that what I think I'm experiencing is an innate connection with my own capabilities and capacities, rather than my accomplished and finished self, ready for praise and

recognition. That has been a revealing and exciting consequence for me and only served to deepen my desire to explore imposterism since, prima facie, I don't understand why people appear to be self-limiting in the way which imposterism, or at least its expression in popular/ lay culture, suggests. I have come to realise that sitting powerfully in the background to all of this is the feeling which my friend and colleague Dr. Amrit Kaur (a clinical psychologist in practice) was able to help me find; the rage and frustration of a highly intelligent and talented young boy that was assumed to be and told he was, stupid. The story behind which I shall now expand upon. As I review this now, I can certainly see the seeds of an interest in imposterism which is interesting because, I say, I haven't felt like I was in the wrong place, but I have felt that other people have thought I have been. So, whereas I have not considered myself to be an imposter, it seems I may always have been one, but to me it has always felt like working my way through the next level.

Going back to the beginning, I didn't know as a very young child that I was any different from the other kids, but I was the son of a single parent mother in the late 1960s. At a small market town infant school in the UK the state education system (1973/ 74) at age six or seven I believe I was placed into a remedial class. I was disinterested in practising copying out handwriting and learning multiplication tables etc. and I have to assume this led the teachers to assume I was educationally "slow". I was interested in accumulating facts and knowledge about the natural world and dinosaurs in particular. My family had previously been posted to two different places in Germany and then Northern Ireland for a few months before the IRA blew up our street and we had to come back to the UK (being homeless), leaving dad (who at my age 17 turned out not to be my dad) behind to finish his tour of duty. I was an 'army kid', a name used to denote children of serving soldiers.

From this UK infant school, I next found myself in a junior school in the New Territories of Hong Kong where I encountered the wonderful Mrs. McDonald, my main class teacher. She was an inspiration, allowing me and a few other kids to explore the local bush and bring back creatures

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which we were required (this was the deal) to look after for one week before releasing. We had to research what they ate and the conditions they needed to thrive. My hero at this age was Jacques Cousteau, I was certainly going to become a marine biologist and discover amazing things. This was what lay behind my route into science in the first place.

Posted back to the UK, I attended a boys' only school in which I continued to flourish academically but then at age of twelve, the final army posting in the UK saw me put into a huge, anonymous comprehensive school (I passed my 11 plus in Hong Kong but was required to take it again in the UK, which I failed). These four years were dreadful. It was more about physical and emotional survival than education. I left with meagre qualifications. I moved out from my family home at sixteen and went to live with my Nan and attended a 6th form college where, amongst people committed to furthering their education, I gained back the qualifications I'd missed at school in the first year. I went on to get the qualifications I needed to get on to an honours degree course in the next two years. I chose chemistry because I was good at it, and it was a science.

During my childhood, I had remembered events which I was told had not happened. I had a sense that there was something that everyone else knew but was being kept form me. I think this is the most overt experience of others considering me an imposter (because they knew I was not who I thought I was) and me not knowing but suspecting there were forces at work that I wasn't aware of. I asked about this on occasion but was rebuffed. At the age of seventeen, in the middle of my sixth form experience, my mother revealed that my dad was not my father. If there was ever an event in my life which gave me an acute and intense feeling of being a fake, a fraud, an imposter, then surely it was this.

A similar situation occurred with my first degree which was downgraded from an honours sandwich degree in applied chemistry to an ordinary BSc. I didn't know this until the awards ceremony. I now know and have done for some years that I was 'taxed' (made to suffer for something by people exercising the power they have unjustly) because of my vegetarianism and

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objection to animal experiments. In any case, I had made the scientific discovery I'd wanted in pursuing an environmentally friendly research project regarding crop protection for my dissertation and gained a good mark for it. However, I was disillusioned when it became apparent that identifying the active chemicals at play meant petrochemical synthesis rather than natural protection would be the inevitable end point of my work. Once again, forces were at play that I was not fully aware of.

Frustrated, I gave up on science and entered the world of business via a sales role in financial services. I was good at this, I just had to rely on my talent and survival instincts. However, the praise felt shallow as money didn't make up for my disappointment that my scientific career had ended. I also did not have respect for my fellow co-workers who measured success in monetary terms. I was very much a part of that world yet not "one of them". I don't think I felt this overtly at that time but now I can see that others probably (rightly) saw me as not really one of us.

When I emigrated to New Zealand in 2007 and lost what standing I had built up in the UK I was made to feel like an outsider in no uncertain terms. The global financial crisis occurred and as a non-New Zealander I was told outright on many occasions that I and any expertise and knowledge I could bring were not wanted. "We look after our own". I fell apart emotionally and psychologically and after a few very dark years found myself in a private rehabilitation hospital having almost drunk myself to death. This was April 2012. I have not drunk alcohol since, and I re-entered academia in 2013 studying psychology. This was both an attempt to find out what had happened to me and so I could help others. This experience however had a familiar echo to it when I found myself in the half of a group not selected to go on from a BHSc (Hons) to complete the second years of a Master's degree and PGDip. I was never given a reason nor offered any supportive advice. I felt extremely let down by this and actually, still do. It's part of what drives me (*drive* being another horizon for imposterism which this research has brought to light). I immediately enrolled at the University of Auckland (UoA) in a PGDip in Alcohol and other Drugs (AoD) at the School of Population Health

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and once again flourished. UoA encouraged intellectual and scholarly exploration and expression. I was awarded (to my great surprise) two "best in class" awards. I had won praise from the praiseworthy. These are people I respect, and this includes one of the course leaders, Professor Peter Adams, whom I hold in great regard.

This is the pattern I experienced with my teacher Mrs. McDonald. Professor Lee who was the supervisor on my first applied chemistry research and Professor Adams had similarly allowed me to be creative and challenged me with the responsibility to prove myself to a certain standard. The same can be said of every time I get on a musical stage. I have had a sense all of my life of being bright but unfulfilled or recognised. I have come to understand this is linked to having been told I was stupid as a child when I knew I was not and not actually being the person I had been told I was.

In the course of engaging with this thesis I have discovered in my conversations with my wife and Dr. Kaur that I have never lost the rage of that small boy when being treated unfairly and unjustly as an adult. However, each time I've been given the opportunity to flourish by those I respect, I have. I need to show myself, for myself, as myself. I need to reveal the Being of me in what I do. I feel this is therefore a huge draw for me to the subject of imposterism from the forehaving of my life to date.

Foresight (*vorsicht*)

It is noteworthy that although I officially began my work on this thesis on 1st December 2020 and it is a one-year full-time research degree, I started reading around and thinking about the subject a year previously. As such, what I expected to see in the sense of the seeing of foresight, rather than physically seeing, in advance of beginning my analysis, has been part of the deliberate study of the subject. It is not purely a reflection of personal biases for example. A particular idea which permeated my foresight was that a relatively newly signed on undergraduate could not be

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experiencing the same thing as a professor of many years, yet both might use the term imposter syndrome or phenomenon. This seemed to me anathema. I thought (could see) that the young and relatively inexperienced could not claim to be something which it was not yet possible for them to be. Also, I thought that some would claim imposterism as a way to engender themselves with a group to which they aspire or attach themselves (*newness*, *social cohesion* and mimicry are horizons this research has brought to light). A further foresight was that I felt I knew several people (and read about more) that were actually inept, which would explain their fear of exposure and feelings of imposterism (*ineptitude* is another horizon). Largely, I was sceptical to say the least that all claims to imposterism or of imposterism were created equal nor, perhaps, anything reasonably close.

It seemed reasonable, and still does, that no-one likes to feel 'out of place' or inadequate and that feelings associated with the cluster of psychological disturbances associated with imposterism would be manifested in such circumstances. Such disturbance experienced as feelings of anxiety, depression, etc. would be reasonable in people feeling, for whatever reason, that they did not belong or were not good enough. I could see that there was a problem with tests and scales which identified recognised psychological disturbances and attributed them to imposterism since what they measure does not have to be due to imposterism (Bravata, Madhusudhan, et al., 2020; Bravata, Watts, et al., 2020; Mak et al., 2019), but rather what is 'like' imposterism, a facsimile of it, in the same way that a reflection of something in a mirror is not the something. A further foresight was the role of life-coaches and 'self-help gurus' – the role of pop-psychology in imposterism. There appears, from search engine hit rates and walking through airport bookshops, to be a lot of money to be made from people experiencing imposter syndrome in the way of it being like an illness or disturbance, a thinking mistake to be remedied. I have long been suspicious of 'off the shelf/ peg' pop-psychology solutions, particularly when they come in the shape of "five things you can do to combat…" slogans and headlines.

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Foreconception (*vorgriff*) and candidates for horizons of understanding

This section refers to constructions of possible outcomes which I bring into the research. In reference to the disclosures in the previous sections (forehaving and foreseeing), these have emerged in the course of personal hermeneutic reflections and reflexivity and remaining open to allowing the hermeneutic process. It is worth noting that these foreconceptions are followed by what I have called 'post-foreconceptions' which did chronologically occur later in the hermeneutic process.

In making these suggestions of foreconceptions I feel bound to point out a clear prejudice in my thinking. This being that I have far more time, sympathy, respect, and empathy with people who declare imposterism who are demonstrably accomplished or successful. These are people who have "done the hard yards" and have shown themselves to be worthy of their peerage by dint of review, examination and obvious track-record and results. I am aware that I hold people who have gained their positions by political manoeuvring and guile in lower esteem. I am also aware that I may well be wrong in having these inclinations, but I declare them here, nonetheless. It has been argued with some merit that people at the top of both politics and business (professions largely based on reputation) are "just winging it" (Burkeman, 2014). This is something I had to be aware of as I'm investigating the phenomenon of imposterism and not using this research as a platform to make judgements on the deserving or otherwise.

Foreconceptions have also formed the new horizons of understanding for imposterism. These are 'my' foreconceptions, postulations I am making with a view to widening the discussion on imposterism generally and to provide ideas and platforms for further research and discussion. They come from my own reflection and reflexivity and are not required to be proven by reference to previously peer reviewed findings. They are collected here without particular reference to any data *as* foreconceptions where they may at least elicit a hermeneutic nod of 'that could make sense'. I am preparing the ground for making the interpretative phenomenological leap of Heideggerian

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analysis. This is what is referred to as "leaping ahead" rather than "leaping in" which is explained in the next sub-section.

Leaping ahead

I might appear to be leaping ahead in suggesting that my foreconceptions may be candidates for horizons of understanding before I have applied philosophical precepts ala Crowther and Thomson (2020). However, there are two things to note: firstly, that I am not interpreting data sets and secondly, this research is a hermeneutic contribution to theoretical psychology with a Heideggerian phenomenological analysis and the flow of Crowther and Thomson is adopted here, rather than its rigid application. I feel this second point is much in the spirit of hermeneutics.

The Heideggerian concept of leaping ahead is important. There is a difference between leaping in and doing the work for or instead of someone and leaping ahead, which prepares the ground. I am leading an enquirer to see their version of what I see rather than insisting they see what I see. This is a vitally important feature of Heideggerian phenomenology and one which has been taken up by psychotherapists and psychologists in terms of the self-discovery required in therapy (Glover & Philbin, 2017).

A multi-dimensional rather than linear spectrum for imposterism

At the beginning of my thinking, I had thought that imposterism might only be valid in those who were genuinely established, respected and by all estimation successful. I later thought that there may be a linear continuum between such people and 'wannabes' at the start of their career or endeavour who were claiming expertise and reputation to which they were not entitled. I originally discounted people who were actually inept and were actually imposters. I have concluded however that the subject of imposterism is far more complex, nuanced, and multi-dimensional and not a linear continuum. Thus, I now set out twelve foreconceptions as theoretical proposals for horizons of understanding imposterism. I have listed these horizons in the order in which they occurred to me and as such there may be some innate logic or flow to them, but I am not claiming there to be.

Newness

I hold that some anxiety is a normal reaction to being new and therefore a feeling that, in such a situation, one is not as good as more experienced, knowledgeable peers, is natural. Many who claim to experience imposterism are in new situations. Newly promoted, new into a job or academia or an activity which requires some degree of expertise and acuity which they may not yet possess. In many cases of newness, the person concerned is in a situation of being given the chance to show that they have the potential and proclivity to make a positive and successful go of the position they now have. I suggest that it is to be expected that people feel at least unsettled and nervous and that perhaps experience some degree of low affect. This does not mean they are imposters in the sense that they are in a position of claiming to be something they are not or, have been deemed to be. They are just new and feeling quite normal emotions and thinking in ways which are to be expected.

This does not mean such people do not experience the feelings of imposterism in as much as they may feel they do not quite fit because they do not have the standing of their peers. They may fear that they will be judged to be less than worthy, and I believe this may have the feeling of imposterism. They may fear exposure as an imposter but really, they are putting themselves forward to be judged as worthy of the level for which they seek confirmation. It is not wrong nor discountable and if a person in this position feels imposterism then it must be a horizon for understanding imposterism. This takes us back to the image in the mirror not being the same as the thing the image is of, the facsimile. A claim of imposterism and resultant tests may confirm imposterism, but the way to understand this horizon of imposterism is quite different to, for example, a manager who has been in place for some time and is actually promoted beyond their ability. I am suggesting then that tests for imposterism are the facsimile and that newness is a genuine horizon of imposterism for it is showing itself, as itself. This leads me to the next horizon where people are not new, ineptitude.

Ineptitude

There have been many people whom I have encountered that in my estimation are not up to the job, not good enough, or out of their depth as it were. They hold a title or position which is beyond their capabilities. I suggest that such people are not experiencing being an imposter for any other reason other than they are, in fact, an imposter. The person is in a situation that does not match their perceived and/ or actual level of expertise or competency and they are personally aware of this and fear detection and exposure. I posit that such a person fears that discovery will lead to their status and economic situation and future prospects being damaged, but many are 'stuck' to use a popular term, because they are on a particular career path. Thus, the feelings of imposterism linger.

Too often I see pop-psychology advice like "fake it 'til you make it" – a saying I have heard used in relation to alcoholics who relapse but are trying to quit. I am not suggesting that this device is not legitimately used in circumstances where someone is perhaps nervous about trying something new. It can be as I have witnessed and am advised by supervision, a useful device. I am suggesting that is not a tenet by which someone should live instead of actually gaining the knowledge and experience they require. Having to face one's own fakery and maintain an outward appearance must take lot of energy and I can well believe that this would result in a prolonged heightened state of anxiety. I regard this as imposterism by dint of the possibility that one feels like an imposter because one is an imposter. Whereas I had been pre-disposed to discount this horizon previously I now see it as valid, a person having this experience is still having it and it is not for me or anyone to invalidate it. There is distress which comes with potential discovery and exposure.

I believe and have witnessed in myself and others that some people feed off this heightened energy, nervousness, anxiety. They do not intend to stay in their current situation and need these feelings to drive themselves on. Perhaps often their actual knowledge and ability is always

somewhat behind where they are but is developed at enough of an equivalent pace as they progress, which leads me to the horizon of drive.

Drive

Feeling that one has something to live up to, being uncomfortable and possibly somewhat anxious that one does not want to be found wanting seems to me to be a condition whereby some people will be driven to do better and achieve the results they desire. Having come from a sales environment some decades ago I remember the feeling that having the sales table (a league table showing how much money each salesperson had earned) up in the office gave me. Eventually for some it makes them despair, and these are not the right people in a sales job. Others took this as a challenge. I was somewhere in between; it was nice to do well but I was more concerned about doing what was right for my clients than 'anything to get a sale'. It has been my experience over decades in business that being made to feel uncomfortable and question your worth constantly is part of the toughening up process. One is never allowed to settle and if the business dries up one can find oneself frozen out. In these situations, should a person feel the rewards are worthwhile, a constant feeling of imposterism may be part of what drives them to strive.

In employed positions, salary, and bonuses, etc. are (some of) the reward and compensation for personal time given to the job. In this situation expertise and qualifications are among other more nebulous factors, like how well one fits in. These all indicate how a person might preserve their position or progress in or from it. In such an environment, hierarchical status gives esteem and financial advancement. Here the drive is for elevation to and within a hierarchy and with this comes titles in the hierarchical sense and that of status. I'm not sure if this comes from the military but it makes sense that it does. Status and living standards are provided in a series of inclines and plateaus and within this there are a series of opportunities to experience the feelings associated with imposterism. Indeed, the horizon of newness is presented multiple times during a career. I feel that the uncomfortable feelings associated with imposterism are alleviated by time spent and

assimilation, but when it comes to looking at elevation, there is the possibility for the feelings of

imposterism to manifest again and drive will be required to get through this. Some, however, do not

progress, or not nearly quickly enough (in their view, or the view of others), or they continue to

progress without an associated increase in knowledge and/ or expertise. Some have achieved a level

past which it is difficult to proceed, if not impossible. These people are stuck, which leads me to

liminality, the feeling of being betwixt and between.

Liminality

I have encountered instances where feelings of imposterism do not seem to abate. They

seem to be feelings of imposterism which persist, sometimes it seems indefinitely, no matter what

some people achieve and no matter how often they are praised and recognised. Examples include

the great bass player Pino Palladino (Petridis, 2021) and David Cohen, the hugely successful

technology start-up entrepreneur (Vaz, 2020). This is the horizon of imposterism which first

captured my imagination on reading business related academic papers, in particular Bilgili et al.

(2020). This was a spark in the conception of this research. How is it possible that a person who is

so obviously 'the real deal' can express that they feel and continue to feel the emotional and

psychological cluster associated with imposterism? How can it be that highly accomplished and

praised people, praised by the praiseworthy, can report that they feel like a fraud and fear detection

and exposure? Perhaps I will feel this way once (if) I achieve a PhD? I hope not, but it will certainly

be interesting if I do. It seemed to me that there must be something going on here that was

unexplained. Learning from a more quantitative study looking into the attributes of Chief Executive

Officers (CEOs) stepping down from their positions (Bilgili et al., 2020) and succession in

companies generally was where I first encountered liminality. The term comes from anthropology

where it was developed in the context of adolescence – the leaving behind of one existence and not

yet having entered a new one (Ybema et al., 2011, p. 22). I discovered that liminality had been

considered in a business context and in management in particular (Söderlund & Borg, 2018). The

idea which came to my mind was that imposterism might be a state of long-term if not perpetual liminality and it was interesting to see that Ybema et al. were thinking in a similar way, at least in terms of an extended period of liminality.

During my pre-reading liminality had possibilities for being that one idea I was going to pursue. It particularly fits with the way I was thinking at the beginning of this work, that I was looking for a better way to describe and consider imposterism. As previously stated in my own foreconstructions I certainly had the view coming into this research that those who were manifestly successful were legitimately able to lay claim to feelings of imposterism and I had thought that there was no other "true" category. Such people it seems to me now may be stuck in a place they cannot leave, as I alluded to in the last paragraph of *Drive* above. They are in a place which is not what they were before and is not where they might be if they felt their abilities matched the position they have. I suggest they are never free from a self-induced sense of incredulity about their position or the regard which others have for them. They are at a point, constantly, to a greater or lesser degree, that they fear their powers may either desert them or that they are eventually found lacking. They are in a place of flux between the boundaries of their former unrealised selves and the safety of the self-knowledge that they are indeed where they should be and that there is no danger of having that taken from them.

Liminality remains core for my thinking about the multi-dimensional idea I now have of imposterism. Liminality is the experience of a feeling of being somehow not yet the real deal, which can apply as well to newness as it can for people with long and successful careers, with the marked difference being the period over which the experience of liminality extends.

Mimicry

Mimicry came to me as another early idea but after I had officially begun. It came very much as a consequence of being hermeneutically open to allowing ideas rather than an analysis of a data set and excluding data from outside of a data set (Crowther et al., 2017, p. 827). I was driving

and listening to Radio New Zealand, there was an interview with a linguist from Wellington who was talking about the mimicry involved in early child development. A chord was struck in me which resonated with the idea that younger people claiming or describing having imposter syndrome, who at the time I considered not to be reasonably able to claim imposterism, may be exhibiting some form of mimicry. It seemed to me that these claims of young inexperienced people must have some other root than a genuine sense of not being taken seriously, or fearing being taken for a fraud or fake. I thought this because they hadn't yet had the experience for this to be the case. I have in mind undergraduates when I think of this and I am mindful of the fact that the original cohort of 150 upon which Clance and Imes (1978) reported when first describing imposterism, were mainly undergraduates. I began to form the view that it seemed 'cool' in the sense of being admired or popular, to claim to have imposter syndrome because in doing so a younger inexperienced person is laying claim to expertise and experience they don't yet have. It may elevate them in their own mind to a status closer to one to which they may aspire. To have people take one seriously when laying claim to status, expertise, or experience which one would like seems to me to be an attractive proposition. When someone sees this happening and the attention it gets, along with the platitudinous efforts expended on reassurances that they are as good as they think they are (or should be thought to be), it must be desirable to be part of that. Where one's peers are behaving in a certain way and are getting attention that is desirable, I would think that mimicry would be something which naturally happens. I am not however qualified to make this claim confidently but, along with all the other horizons for understanding imposterism proposed here, I would suggest this as an area for more focused future research.

Thinking about mimicry led me to the idea that social cohesion might be one of the factors influencing experiences of imposterism in the much-studied body of undergraduates. Being 'in the gang' or feeling included, but also of claiming an elevated status and feeling victimised if this is not soothed and placated with remedies and support must be attractive. Indeed, the University of

Auckland is among those organisations facilitating such support and has a web page dedicated to the subject offering advice and showing where help and support can be accessed (University of Auckland, 2020). As I know from many years' experience, being a student is a unique experience and one does feel part of cohort with a shared aim and often shared values, hopes and aspirations. It is not surprising then that social cohesion is a factor in taking part in student life.

Social cohesion

Social cohesion came, as stated above, from thinking about the aspect of mimicry. Here, I am not examining social cohesion theory in higher education (Moiseyenko, 2005) in an academic way, although of course I do acknowledge the work in this field and this is largely what I am referring to. To be cohesive, socially, and to feel one is amongst peers, a herd, a tribe, to fit in and feel that one is part of a time and experience is what I mean. This sense of social cohesion is a similar thing to the fans at a pop concert (akin to attunement), more so than an academically referenceable field of study. Mimicry led me here because what I thought I got a sense of was a body of people mimicking words, actions and claiming similar experiences and emotions as a means to feel they fit in. There are benefits to fitting in of course and possibly there is a "sympathy dividend" to be had by latching on to something which causes the educational establishment and others to offer support. I don't want to get caught up in an ethical discussion here about whether or not these feelings are genuine and whether they do or could influence performance or student achievement, I merely note social cohesion as a possible horizon by which imposterism may be understood.

I remember that in the 1980s when I was first an undergraduate "being depressed" was de rigueur and cool, as was being repressed, victimised and misunderstood, so perhaps I'm being unfair with today's cohort of students. I grew up in 'Thatcher's Britain' and was a somewhat active member of the Students' Union. I was involved in organising and participating in protest events against such abominations as the abolition of Student Grants and the introduction of loans. It might

be true that each generation of young adults feels something similar, a sense that they are here to bring enlightenment to the generations who've gone before and for the good of all in the future. There is certainly a comfort in being a part of that, it was meaning-giving and gave one a status and standing. Without getting side-tracked into whether imposterism is evident, how evident, whether it is truly justified or justifiable, how much imposterism there is and who experiences it, a simple Google Scholar search, limiting the dates of publication to 2020 and 2021 on 4th November 2021, searching the question "percentage of higher education students reporting imposter syndrome," the hit rate was about 3,800 results. It seems reasonable then, that I am suggesting social cohesion as a horizon for understanding imposterism and that students in higher education are an example of this.

The overtness of imposterism in higher education.

In this subsection of the proposed horizon of social cohesion, I am noting, and no more, the current prevalence of imposterism in higher education and noting that I see parallels and differences with the original research by Clance and Imes (1978). Although it is the case that the original work by Clance and Imes (1978) was with a cohort of mainly undergraduates, the time context I suggest is quite different because there is now an acceptance of females in higher education and opportunity for them are available now that would have been unrecognisable then (Malkiel, 2016). Further, imposter syndrome has been adopted as something which students are believed to require help with or, that Universities seem to feel they should offer help with (for example, University of Auckland, 2020). In the original study of Clance and Imes (1978) I feel there were concrete reasons why the participants felt the psychological and emotional disturbances they did. The world then as evidenced by Malkeil (2016) was a place where othering, sexism and racism were not only accepted and mainstream, but also demonstrated openly by many. This is not case now by any measure (at least not legally or according to current societal norms), which is not to say there is not work to do on maintaining and furthering equal and meritorious opportunity. I feel that the imposterism claimed by many current higher education students may have more to do with social cohesion than

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the genuine individual experience of being in some way anxious or depressed as a result of some kind of perceived disadvantage of the *same* kind as that experienced by the cohort studied by Clance and Imes. Further, in making these observations, we are still discussing imposterism, but from a quite different horizon or point of view.

'isms' (sexism, ageism, racism etc.)

This foreconception/ horizon is in effect the identification of a category of reports of, and work on, imposterism in which the imposterism may be attributed to othering (Canales, 2000) or because of some personal attribute which sets the person apart from the majority or more prevalent or powerful group (Brons, 2015). This may happen implicitly or explicitly, and I suggest it could certainly have been the case with the participants in the original work by Clance and Imes (1978). They were a cohort of female students in a small number of American Universities and Colleges in the mid-1970s. They were also mainly of a similar demographic and all of them already known to the researchers. The original title, often forgotten, was "*The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention*". The mix of subjects, the relative status of the institutions, and their geographical situation is of interest:

> Included in our sample have been 95 undergraduate women and 10 PhD faculty women at a small academically acclaimed private Midwestern co-educational college; 15 undergraduates, 20 graduate students, and 10 faculty members at a large southern urban university; six medical students from northern and southern universities; and 22 professional women in such fields as law, anthropology, nursing, counseling, religious education, social work, occupational therapy, and teaching. They were primarily white middle- to upper-class women between the ages of 20 and 45. Approximately one-third were therapy clients with specific presenting problems (other than the impostor problem); the other two-thirds were in growth-oriented interaction groups or classes taught by the authors. (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 2).

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These are not the most prestigious universities then and now that we have rankings, and at this time in the 1970s coeducation was new and often still resisted (Mahony, 2012). The top establishments in the USA and UK had yet to experience anything like the current gender balance. This resistance (for want of a better word) is the subject of an acclaimed book with the shocking title *Keep the Damned Women Out': The Struggle for Coeducation* (Malkiel, 2016). It is also interesting to note that all the participants in the Clance and Imes research were either in psychotherapy with the authors or attending classes run by them. Contemporary commentators and researchers take the implication of sexism head on, for example, "Impostor Syndrome is a pop-psychological diagnosis, employed to explain the low presence of women in STEM fields, business and academic administration and 'thought leadership' in the public sphere". (Simmons, 2016, p. 106). While I don't agree with Simmons that imposterism was manufactured to disadvantage anyone, let alone women and I find that imposterism is claimed by many women for themselves rather than having the label put upon them, the shift in how works like this considers imposterism is interesting. It shows I feel that imposterism may be being recognised as a victimising or othering device rather than being a consequence of othering or victimising.

My June 2021 copy of the American Psychological Association *Monitor on Psychology* has on its cover page *IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON Ways to overcome these feelings and help others do the same* (Palmer, 2021). The featured article reiterates the medicalised model but goes further in attributing imposterism to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous (and) People of Colour). The victimisation or othering aspect of imposterism has gained traction in recent years it seems, and has made its way to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and colour. A Google Scholar search on "othering imposter syndrome" on 26th July 2021 showed 8 of the 10 hits on the first page to have been published in 2019 to 2021. I believe it may be the case that the horizon of social cohesion is again at play. By social cohesion I do mean socially cohesive and I am distinguishing this from an academic understanding of social cohesion which brings with it modalities such as belonging, inclusion, and

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recognition (Jenson, 1998). However, I am aware that this certainly is an area which requires more

substantial attention than the word count limitations of this allow. Social cohesion therefore is noted

rather than explored in great depth at this point. I think this is also a further demonstration of the

multi-dimensional nature of imposterism.

Definition threat

As I have previously said I have long been better disposed toward people with clearly

established expertise and careers who report feelings of imposterism. However, I was wrong in

trying to define only this as imposterism. It seemed to me when I first came to consider imposterism

that I would have to differentiate what I thought to be truly imposterism and what might be other

things. At that time, I thought there was a clear difference between a person who is manifestly

expert or successful who may be making an error of self-analysis in terms of their ability and,

people who have some position or title and lack such ability and expertise. I now consider that it is

not for me to make such a distinction. By analogy, I cannot reasonably tell someone saying they

have a headache that they do not have a headache because they don't have the kind of headache, or

cause of headache, that I find acceptable. It is only another horizon in the multi-dimensional

phenomenon that is imposterism.

For people who are manifestly accomplished and/ or successful therefore I have proposed

the term *Definition threat* as another horizon. These people have a lot more to lose than others

claiming to have or exhibiting imposterism. They are in a more visible and elevated position. They

will often be financially wealthy by dint of their reputation and position in the hierarchy of

organisations and will be aware that they have been at least fortunate to be pre-eminent in a field in

which there are many others who are at least as accomplished or expert as them. They rely on

reputation for their status in many respects. This is a more precarious position than any other group

because getting to the top and achieving fame and status are desirable things (for some, not all) and

people will do some creative things to claim a seat at that table. Getting 'knocked off their perch' as the saying goes, is a real, clear, and present danger.

This completes twelve new suggestions for horizons of understanding imposterism which are my versions of the LEDs suggested by Crowther and Thomson (2020); what follows is the phenomenological leap, the Heideggerian analysis.

3. ANALYSIS AND A FUSION OF HORIZONS

Setting the scene for interpretation

In many ways this section is an extension of the forestructures which are themselves first interpretations and thus fit the over-laid adaption of method proposed by Crowther and Thomson (2020). This is because the forestructures must inform what I find and what I am able to interpret because they are an analysis made from my own history and historicity. I think of this current section as a joining rather than a leap, as per Crowther and Thomson (2020). It is the beginning of the Heideggerian phenomenological analysis in which the foreconceptions, the horizons of understanding imposterism, are explained from a philosophical perspective. The word join has a specific meaning for me as it is central to a Japanese martial art called Aikido which I practised for many years and still use in everyday life as a way of being. Aikido is most often translated as "the way of harmony" (see next sub-section *Aikido and Joining*) and although still martial it is more of a training method. Rather than the use of force and aggression, joining and harmonising are practised. In the context of this research the Aikido meaning of joining is for me extremely useful as it encapsulates what I understand by fusing, or at least the way I have read and understood fusing, as in the fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 102-103, p. 114-125; Vessey, 2009, p. 525).

Aikido and joining

I include this section here since it gives strength to the idea of joining. I feel a fuller explanation will be useful and will help to set the scene for interpretation. It also demonstrates the hermeneutic process at work. Aikido is a Japanese martial art or more correctly put, a system of training and of being (Ueshiba & Ueshiba, 1985). The reference I have used here for Aikido is a book with no specific page indicated, deliberately so, as explaining all that Aikido is using academic referencing would be distracting and very long. I want to show that it is recognised internationally rather than explaining it with academic rigor. It is notable however that this book

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was written by two of the sons of the founder who is known amongst Aikidoka (people who

practice Aikido such as me) as O'Sensei or big teacher.

In Aikido the phenomenon of being attacked by an aggressor is treated differently to every

other martial art I know. There is no attempt to vanquish an attacker by force. Instead, the person

initiating the attack (referred to as Uke) is joined by the person (Tori) who creates a harmonious

completion of the attack. In doing so Tori must take responsibility for the safety of Uke. I liken this

to Heidegger's fundamental analysis of ontology since Dasein is responsible for the being of entities

and phenomena. In the case of Aikido, directly and physically so. Aikido can also be thought as

analogous to the fusing of horizons. In Aikido being is created in the instant of the attack since Tori

(Dasein) must create a harmonious outcome, Tori gives the phenomenon of the attack its meaning.

In this instant Tori's training has made them aware of situations which might lead to an attack and

so they are attuned, open, interested, they care and are concerned more so than an average person

may otherwise be. They do not bluntly meet the aggression and their aim is not a victory, it is

bringing the situation into a harmonious understanding. This is a higher path for a martial artist to

travel, it is more evolved than all other forms of martial art I know. Perhaps this is an explanation

for the worldview I have with respect to psychology? I do think it must have an influence.

To continue the thought, Tori joins with Uke in a way which creates in an instant or at least

no more than a few seconds, a union which means the two have a shared experience. Each is

entangled with the other until peace is achieved. Each Aikidoka is different, each Tori brings

themselves to the training mat as does each Uke. They bring themselves in that instance and at that

time with all they are and all that has gone before. They inhabit the same world – the Dojo – the

place where a Japanese martial art is practised, and all that that means in terms of its history and

protocols – the *authenticity* of being an Aikidoka inside a Dojo is specific to that situation. Their

experience within that world becomes acute with each atemi (attack or blow). Aikido is practised

with and without weapons. The attacks can be potentially extremely damaging but still Tori must

take care of the welfare of Uke, the attacker. This, like the joining I am suggesting, is not only possible but essential, as it is in understanding how to approach the result of research conducted hermeneutically and informed by Heideggerian phenomenology. The will to approach the work with the purpose of creating one's own understanding such that the world has been enhanced in a positive way. It is not the intention to find mistakes, errors, or alternative views which will vanquish, but rather to bring a harmonious and more enlightened understanding for the benefit of all. This is a strong link to the purpose of my thesis. Perhaps the test is the nod which Van Manen describes (Van Manen, 2016, p. 27)? Can an interested reader nod at what they are reading as an experience they have had, or could have and if so, this is quite different to challenging them to change their thinking. Thus, bringing the reader along into a *life-world* where they can experience a phenomenon for themselves. Just as a General's reading of the experience of a Sergeant in a situation of conflict is likely to differ from that of a private soldier. Neither is 'right', and all are right.

The contextual nature of imposterism

In this section I discuss the importance of context. I believe, whereas specific cohorts of volunteer interviewees may offer a researcher in the moment context, I am compensated in the rich information available in the broad chronological aspect of the data available from decades of existing data. As such, this affords a wider contextual landscape which I feel may be better suited to theorising.

In both a cohort of interviewees and a wide-ranging hermeneutic exercise such as this thesis there is always the temporality of Daseins. Imposterism will be experienced and expressed differently by the same person at different times and by different people in a similar situation. Not only at different times during their lives but even from hour-to-hour as they sit with or cogitate upon an experience or feeling (Gopnik, 1993). Indeed, some psychological therapies such as Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy, a precursor of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, depend on

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manipulating this to the benefit of a person experiencing the mal-effects of experience, thoughts and feelings (Dryden, 2005). For example, legal witness statements are known to be 'malleable', as in changeable by the interviewer or, by the interviewee (Luus & Wells, 1994). The explication and discourse regarding an experience, the certainty of events, the feeling associated with it, etc. will vary in the telling over time and the interpretation of it likewise.

As I have stated, I believe imposterism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and not a simple universal experience. Therefore, testing for evidence of the symptoms associated with it may not be as accurate, valid, or repeatable as previously thought. These symptoms may only be facsimiles of imposterism. I suggest that the tools that have been developed may well measure the symptoms but to what are these attributable? – not a singular phenomenon. I am suggesting then that the contextual nature of imposterism may be a cause of the concerns expressed by Mak, Kleitman et al (2019) who stated in their conclusion that:

> Extensive variability in the methodological quality of impostorism [sic] validation studies currently exists. The review identified a gold standard measure is yet to be established and this has been limited by conceptual clarity around the dimensionality of the impostor phenomenon, its operationalization across measures, distributional properties across different groups (e.g., clinical samples, gender, age, cultures) and it's [sic] reproducibility (p. 14).

The fact that the original work by Clance and Imes (1978) was with a narrow cohort in all respects gives us an example of the contextual advantages which are possible over a wider period of chronological time. It allows the possibility of comparative interpretative context. The mid-1970s was a time quite different to now in terms of the participation of females in academia. The findings of Clance and Imes' research can be set against this context and compared with findings today. Are the conclusions necessarily the same or, could this be a reason for the caution of Mak, Kleitman et al.?

Context, place, and time are moving parts for the hermeneutic researcher and so anchoring data as fixed and labelled and attributing numbers and scores, or themes is anathema to the hermeneutic method. The researcher can be and must be attuned to the slightest of hints which can lead to discoveries that a different rational examination of the evidence may miss. I suggest that this has largely been the case with imposterism to date. This leads back nicely, hermeneutically, in a circular fashion to the wider suggestion I make that imposterism is highly contextual in nature and not a phenomenon fixed to a claim of imposterism at a point in time and measurement of a set of associated symptoms resulting in a confirmation that a person is or has experienced imposterism or has imposter syndrome.

Post foreconception candidates for horizons of understanding

During the course of writing and re-writing, additional candidates for foreconceptions and horizons came to light. I have included these here to show this chronology and the circularity of hermeneutics.

Conditions of worth

If as I claim, the voice of social norms, of the They, of *Das Man* is central to the subject of imposterism then it is a small step to the realisation that what others are thinking about us has at least a probability as a horizon. One could not feel like an imposter in isolation, an important consideration in my later analysis. The opinion others have of us must be important in imposterism and so imposterism might be understood in terms of the horizon of Conditions of Worth (CoW) (Rogers, 2000, p. 112). I am aware of CoW having been trained in Rogerian counselling psychology. CoW is an explanation for the worthiness we feel we need to derive from the regard in which others hold us. In some cases, peoples' wellbeing and functionality may be adversely affected. They place their own worth in pleasing or being valuable to others. Worth becomes conditional upon other people. As such, when a person is psychologically and emotionally invested in this way, they exhibit the symptoms associated with imposterism and feel like their belonging is

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in question. I suggest that such a person may self-diagnose imposter syndrome if they find

descriptions of it in lay texts or even in talking about their feelings in general. Understanding that

people reporting imposter syndrome may be helped by Rogerian counselling psychology may be an

important insight.

Locus of control (LoC)

In reflecting on the meaning of Heideggerian structures for Dasein and thinking about

hierarchical power structures at work and in society, even within family and with friends, I came to

thinking about the well-known psychological theory, Locus of Control (Lefcourt, 1991). Thinking

about all the candidates for horizons I find that a feeling of a lack of personal control is a feature of

them all and may be a psychological construct which links all possible horizons. As such it may be

a central point for the fusing of all horizons. Lack of control is described in many ways in

psychology and psychotherapy. LoC and Rogerian CoW are linked since, when our worth is

invested in the opinions of others, we have a loss of personal control (Klassen & Turgeon, 1981).

The experience of imposterism has associated with it the element of the control that a person can

expect to have over the outcomes that eventuate for them. The fear of discovery comes with a fear

of loss of status, etc., which leads us back to the horizon of definition threat. This is always to a

lesser or greater extent in the hands of others. In other words, there is a fear in any current situation

in respect of the future. The anxiety, etc. experienced in imposterism may be experienced in the

present due to future uncertainty and that future uncertainty may be due to a lack of perceived

control over what others are thinking about us now. The length of the now being experienced may

vary considerably but does also link to the horizon of liminality because of elongation of the now

feeling of liminality when one is in it.

Adequacy

This expression of imposterism I have categorised as recognising that there are always more

obviously talented, charismatic, academically able, and recognised people in a profession or any

social group. Having a notion something like "that's not me, but hey, aren't they impressive" can be a squashing realisation I would venture. This is a quite different experience to a person who is compelled to attain title, status, recognition and reward and them feeling they may be an imposter because they are not (yet, or never will be) as good, or expert, as they want others to think they are. Good and charismatic are very different things, a person can appear to be good, as in good at their job, but this may be more impressive, stylish, with a swagger or, sure of themselves, than competent. Both are people who may have a fear of professional discovery and exposure, but I suggest that this would manifest as small increments of such a fear in an "oh well, so how do I do that then" way. A person experiencing this would not attempt to hide her lack of knowledge or technique, they wouldn't bluster and conceal. Perhaps they would not treat such a fear as a career threatening experience to the same extent as others might because they may not have that ambition. I wonder though if they would still think they might be found out, discovered, revealed in a bad way, all the time. I think the difference is the horizon of adequacy is linked to that of definition threat therefore.

Some strive for adequacy, and they have *drive* to do the best job they can. Others are driven to achieve irrespective of their adequacy. Adequacy is a difficult horizon to grasp I feel but that may be because it isn't something which appeals to me. I want to be surprisingly good. That does not mean I have blind ambition though; praise must come from (and for) the praiseworthy. I feel adequacy needs more development as a horizon therefore, but I mark it out since it has a different feel to it than definition threat or liminality. I have a feeling that this difference is apparent but subtle. Perhaps adequacy is better linked with social cohesion and wanting to belong, or perhaps wanting others to feel that you earned the right to be in this position?

Entitlement

I think the horizon of entitlement has come from me reflecting on my own experience as a child, teenager and young adult and how it seems to contrast with the anecdotal view that young

people these days are entitled. There has been some work done on this phenomenon and I do feel that Nozick's theory of entitlement (Nozick, 1974, pp. 150-152) does at least describe characteristics attributable to many of our young people today. I would go further and suggest this building sense of expectation through generations may in no small part be responsible for our current and prevalent capitalist acceptance that wealth is in and of itself a suitable goal for all. I am however wary of opening up a political aspect to this research, however noteworthy.

Nozick (1974) proposes that property may be justly acquired where it is voluntarily given and that such a transfer makes the current owner of property entitled to it. In saying this he accepts the proviso of John Locke (th*e Lockean Proviso*) that a system of welfare should be maintained to intervene when there is sufficient wealth so to do. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve deeply into this socio-political area. Instead, I would note the time Nozick was published (1974) which corresponds with my own personal experience of being a child of that time. Nozick published in 1974 and in 1987 Michael Douglas, playing the lead role of Gordon Gekko in the box office hit and multi-award winning movie *Wall Street,* famously delivers the phrase "Greed is good" (Oka & Kuijt, 2014, p. 31). There is 13 years between the two events, a period which encompassed the rise of Reaganism, Thatcherism, and the championing of the neoliberal free-market capitalist economy and trickledown economics, whereby money flows down from the rich (upon which I make no judgment here, much as I would like to) (King & Wood, 1999). Generational differences regarding expectations, if not a sense of entitlement, are noted, and research is ongoing on this topic, for instance:

> …their differing habitus rooted and formed under circumstances unique to their period of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. Given this emphasis on socialization during early development, it is not surprising that many of the social conditions that have been highlighted in explaining Millennials' sense of entitlement have focused on parenting techniques of the original "Me Generation," the Baby Boomers. (Allen et al., 2015, p. 17)

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I am only just Generation X, and my generation was the age then that millennials are now. We grew up with neoliberalism and the privatisation of state-owned industries; the idea that making money trumped everything and everything had to show its worth in terms of its profitability. In my experience it was Generation Y, the later children of the so-called Boomers (Baby Boomers) and Millennials and later generations which began to exhibit overt entitlement. It is my own personal experience that. while we Gen X were told we could attain what we wanted by cunning and hard work, later generations have an air of expectancy that they should be given what they want.

Again, it is my own experience of being involved in business for decades, particularly in financial services, that Gen Y were noticeably more focused on title and status than my own generation who really were more about money, plain and simple, in a similar vein to the Boomers who benefited directly from the 1980s neoliberal reforms. Since I am using this paragraph as a more personal experience-based reflection and observation, it seems to me that the imperative projected onto children changed after my own Generation X. I was told that if I did not do well academically, I'd have a lifetime of factory work to look forward to. In the case of my wife, also Gen X, coming from a rural background in Ireland the spectre was farm work or a trade for boys, secretarial or nursing for girls. Anecdotally, and I am 56 years of age now and make no comment of the morality of this, I am bewildered when I hear parents negotiating with children who are spitting bile (metaphorically) at them regarding what they do or do not want to do or to happen. Certainly, there seems to have been a change in the bargaining done with children who may be being increasingly taught that their expectation of being given what they want is commensurate with the amount of pressure they can bring to bear on those able to give it to them. These are, I say again, my own observations and I make them as a background. However, there does seem to be some empirical evidence for the idea that Millennials in particular are an 'entitled' generation (Allen et al., 2015). Entitlement then is I suggest a significant factor in the rise in claims to imposter syndrome seen among Generations Y, Z, and millennials, who are generally speaking lacking in worldly experience

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and knowledge. The horizon of entitlement then is, I suggest, connected to that of newness. However, one does not have to feel entitled to feel new.

As a brief summary to add to my suggestions for horizons of understanding imposterism, I feel it is worth stating again that I have been better disposed or given more credence to the idea that a person with a recognised and manifestly illustrious career may legitimately claim to experience imposterism. However, I can now see that the horizons of definition threat and adequacy are better suited than a blunt claim of imposterism. Many people experience the ill-effects of a loss of LoC or are under a situation of poor CoW. Those whom I had previously been inclined to discount may be better thought of as being overly entitled, they may be new, and they may be using mimicry to attain some social cohesion. Some are fearful that that which defines them after a successful career may be taken away while others need this fear to drive them on. Some are suffering the injustice of othering and experiencing the ism given to them. Some are actually inept, and this easily explains why they feel like they are an imposter. I do not have to make an either/ or judgement, it is not mine to make. By the application of the concept of Gadamerian horizons I am able to see the same phenomenon from many different perspectives and this must be helpful to me and indeed anyone considering the subject of imposterism, for any reason. I suggest that this exploration finding new horizons of understanding from what is hidden in ordinary everydayness shows the usefulness of the hermeneutic method in the field of theoretical psychology. The next task is to find meaningful ways to fuse these horizons with the phenomenon of imposterism. This has actually already been happening in my writing, but it is useful to name the fusion since, from there, understanding of horizons may be better understood and unified. Then a deep Heideggerian analysis must take place.

Beginning the phenomenological interpretative leap

In order for there to be imposterism, there must be people who are considered the 'real deal', there can be no imposters without those who are not imposters against whom a judgement can be made. There must be situations which people experiencing imposterism seek to attain. If they are

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genuinely already the real deal as much of pop-psychology seems to claim, then they must be making some internal error of judgement of their own abilities. As I have shown, I don't think this is necessarily the case. I feel we must be extremely careful not to assume that anything is accepted about imposterism. The fact of Heidegger's Dasein indeed depends upon a fundamental ontology in which the assumptions that what has gone before must be accepted, is not accepted (Rorty, 1976).

In Being-in-the-world Dasein must be in the world with other Daseins and Heidegger gives us that Dasein is equiprimordial with Being-in-the-world:

> Our analysis of Dasein's disclosedness showed further that, with this disclosedness, Dasein, in its basic state of Being-in-the-world, has been revealed equiprimordially with regard to the world, Being-in, and the Self. Furthermore, in the factical disclosedness of the world, entities within-the-world are discovered too. (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962, p. 245)

Thus, Dasein is not an isolated figure that is ontically in-the-world with other entities, but which ontologically gives itself, of itself and gives being to things in-the-world, as such Dasein is the world to each Dasein. Any entity or subject to which Dasein comports is given its being by Dasein. Therefore, the being of a thing cannot be without Dasein. So, who is the Dasein that is equiprimordially with being-in-the-world? Thus, the question of who is the Dasein that makes any enquiry is an important one because we must be clear on this. We must also be clear what relations Daseins have with each other and since imposterism requires others, here we have a start, I suggest, of the analysis of imposterism.

On page 149 of *Being and Time* a most important section (IV) in my analysis of imposterism begins, called *Being-in-the-world as being-with and being-one's-self", The "They"*. On page 150 Dasein is explained *"as something selfsame in manifold otherness"*. I consider this short phrase to be vital to this thesis. Dasein is described as itself (selfsame) *in manifold otherness*. In this otherness (p. 152), the I of the who is both an obvious ontological entity from an internal

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consideration (we understand ourselves as ourselves) and also temporary (we know we can be changeable), a characteristic quality which can be expressed as "*Befindlichkeit"* (often translated as attunement or disposition) and "*Stimmung"* (mood) (Elpidorou & Freeman, 2015, p. 661). As such, we people are both obviously us as an identifiable entity but also subject to a variety of ways of being and all of this is the Being of Dasein. Perhaps common expressions of this might be "they're not themselves, "what kind of mood are they in" or, "I'm not feeling quite myself". Dasein is at all times a range of possibilities and not a singular and neatly contained and defined unit engaged in giving things being. It is certainly not static but its Being is a consequence of temporality and indeed, each Dasein can give being to other Daseins as they encounter them. The Being of a Dasein is the being of its mood, concerns and cares which are changeable and this I believe is a path to "The clearing" (King, 2015, 2021) which is the range of possibilities for each Dasein.

For selfsameness and otherness to be the same thing yet different there needs to be others (more than one of the same thing, such as a species of humans) in order to exist. We cannot have otherness without others. These others are the They, the others with which a Dasein is, and which make up its history and historicity, its social norms. This Heidegger denotes as *Das* Man. The existence of a human requires there to be a species of humans. What I mean by this is that a person requires other people to be able to recognise itself as one of them, to be like them and not like other things. One *Dasein* cannot pop into existence and then disappear utterly, and this is true for all species. Members of a species are required for there to be a species and for them to recognise each other.

Putting this in a less complicated way, others give us meaning. Here we have a route to imposterism, we take our meaning from others – others give us meaning, are two sides of the same coin I suggest. The others are the accepted Them of *Das Man* in Heideggerian terms and it is *Das Man* which will be the subject of much of my analysis of imposterism in the remainder of this thesis. In particular, the philosophical correspondence between Dreyfus, Olafson, Carman and Egan

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in the journal *Inquiry,* beginning with Dreyfus's book *Being-in-the-world: A commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* published in 1991 and ending with Egan's 2012 *Das Man and Distantiality in Being and Time* (Carman, 1994; Dreyfus, 1991, 1995; Egan, 2012), are key to my Heideggerian analysis of imposterism.

Imposterism in the meaning of self from others

The apparent need to have support for a body of undergraduates (University of Auckland, 2020) who claim imposter syndrome and the example of a Prime Minister who does likewise (Mentemia, 2020) can be understood in terms of the horizon of social cohesion. Politicians' tenure depends upon popularity and creating and maintaining a following. The famous musician Pino Palladino who is afraid of "fucking it up" at every new recording session (Petridis, 2021) can be understood from the horizon of definition threat. They are all deriving meaning from others. The focus of this meaning shifts from fear of judgement in a negative way to fear of not fitting in, but the protagonist is disturbed in all cases by concern over what They might say or think. In the case of Palladino the consequences of this usually sink in after having agreed to do something and doing it, but still there is the don't you make a mess of this feeling beforehand. I can identify with this as a fellow musician and bass player, it sinks in afterwards so it doesn't stop you doing the thing (the same could be said of my doing this thesis). In all respects, however, meaning is being derived from others.

Thus, our comportment toward the regard others have toward us must be a critical factor in the overall effect which imposterism has and can have. We care and are concerned (in a Heideggerian sense) about the way in which we are in-the-world of other Daseins. We care about how we are in their world, for them, or perhaps the extent to which their regard represents a threat at some level. This is put well at the beginning of an article about an extreme version of such a threat, that of mortal danger. Although extreme it nonetheless sums up my thinking here and draws together important strands of psychology:

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> Multiple theorists working within existential, psychodynamic, and humanistic traditions converge on the notion that individuals strive to imbue their lives with meaning and significance in order to protect themselves against the threatening awareness that their existence is inherently uncertain, arbitrary, and destined to end. (Landau et al., 2011, p. 64)

I am not suggesting that the threat experienced with imposterism is existential in a necessarily mortal sense. Instead for us and of us as a recognisable identity, the threat is to our ability to function and to prosper. It may be that with imposterism we feel there is a mismatch in the way we feel we should or would like to be regarded. Perhaps we fear that the way we may be being regarded might have an adverse impact on our lifestyle, rewards, esteem, recognition, etc. If we are in some way conditioned to the understanding that such desirable attributes only accrue to the worthy and rightful, we may therefore feel lessened. We may feel like an imposter since imposters must live under the threat of discovery, exposure and potential removal or denigration in some way. Therefore, we are in the realms of authenticity. It might be that we inherently understand that Imposters are on borrowed time, always afraid of discovery. We need to consider then, who is the I of us in relation to others? Who is the I of which They are making a judgement when the I is temporary and always changing yet still recognisable as a named person? Might They regard a person differently if this was someone they got to know better for example? Is the I we wish to be known authentically as what we mostly are or is it in some way manufactured and is this a root of imposterism? I am leaving these questions unanswered here as there is no solid answer without further analysis.

I suggest that the manifold otherness of Dasein is central to understanding our ontological givenness which is only obvious to ourselves as we live with its temporality and changeability in our everyday ordinariness. So, which aspects of our manifold otherness are at play in relation to others and how are we regarded by them? This is an extremely important question and one which is actually never finally answered because of our temporality. The answer is all of them according to

the time, place, and circumstance and the Daseins involved. Some will become prevalent and present-to-hand and others remain ready-to-hand, still more will be concealed, hidden and in shadow, yet still present.

The importance of "staying with the work"

I am particularly encouraged by reading King (2015 & 2021) in which he gives an honest and excellent account of the need in hermeneutic enquiry to remain open and retain a sense of wonder as recommended by Van Manen (2014).

Both King and I have been drawn to scour the literature for back-up to find secondary sources of corroboration. However, this is not required of this methodology, at least not in the same way or to the same extent as with many other methodologies. To explain, King is involved with the application in therapeutic practice of a 1935 lecture given by Heidegger at Freiburg University entitled *The Origin of the Work of Art* (OWA, which King points out was published much later in *Poetry, Language and Thought* and *Basic Writings*) (Heidegger, 1971/ 2001, 1977). These writings were between 1971 and 2001 so represent a collection. The part of this collection to which I'm referring to was from 1977. I feel a parallel with his case-making since I have used art to access the relation between Heideggerian phenomenology and my own thinking. I am encouraged for the sake of the validity of my findings that King also found staying with the work and not looking for secondary back-up difficult yet rewarding. In fact, King says (2021) "Critical to the success was my willingness to work **with** [sic] the poetic images and metaphors and to use them as part of the research process" (p. 105). In saying this he cites the struggle with doing this which Romanyshyn has within the discipline of psychotherapy (Romanyshyn, 2020). The irony is not lost on me of citing King as a well written fellow traveller in explaining that such a citation might not be necessary. The 'Sc' of MSc must be playing on my mind, but so it should. With that said however, I do feel emboldened in that I should not seek to round this thesis off in a neat discussion and conclusion as that would be anathema to the whole methodology. However, I know I will since not

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all who read it will necessarily have an interpretivist Heideggerian worldview and this thesis must be of use to as many as possible.

The clearing (die lichtung), part 2

Given our ontological selves and our manifold otherness we understand that we have different persona in different situations and with different people. Thus, the question of the who of us from moment to moment is in-the-world, is complex. In a later work written after the *Kehre* (the turn) Heidegger describes Dasein as existing in "a clearing" (*die lichtung)* by way of explaining the difference between what might be "true" and a*lethia* – "the interplay between unconcealment and concealment that occurs in the open," what "comes to light" (King, 2015, p. 104).

Paraphrasing King and more widely *die lichtung*: in the clearing things show themselves, some are ready-to-hand and Dasein is aware of them but not necessarily using them for their purpose, whereas some things are present-at-hand and others ready-to-hand and being used. Dasein uses equipment according to its cares and concerns showing itself by its *Be-ing*. A person happening upon another or being with another in some way will have a particular impression of them, a temporary truth will have revealed their Being. Thus, Dasein is ontologically showing itself as itself to another Dasein and that Dasein*,* that other person who is doing the encountering or being-with owns their own ontological experience of the other. This experience might be one which will be different to that which the original Dasein has of itself. The *uncertainty* is two-fold, neither being able to have the same being of the other, that the other has of them. There is a flux of possibilities which exist in the event of the clearing.

A master of some activity or concern completing its tasks in flow, using the ready-to-hand things it needs (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), observed by another, is in a clearing. I am saying they are still not alone as they bring myriad possibilities of history and historicity. Thus, They (*Das Man*) is ever present and so even in the clearing of our own possibilities there is always a force of many others. If this is true and I believe it is of anyone who is not psychologically

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disturbed, for example by psychopathy, everyone must at all times be aware of *Das Man* even as social norms if not of the expectations of the interaction of two people. This awareness is innate, it develops naturally and perhaps without recourse to retrospection, un-noticed rather than being overt and always of concern to a greater or lesser extent. The spectre of imposterism begins to take shape here and starts to be given meaning because, how we are regarded and what that might mean, is a knowledge unavailable to us and changeable within us at all times due to us being ourselves and our manifold otherness.

King (2015, p. 104) notes that some have maintained that Heidegger's works became somewhat mystical and poetic (Khong & Churchill, 2013, p. 201). For me the clarification of the mental imagery of the description of *die lichtung* makes the temporality of the who of Dasein in *Being and Time* more accessible. We see that when encountered in different "tableau" from moment to moment that Dasein in a given moment can be experienced in a number of ways depending upon what is revealed as owned by the encounterer. A Dasein who is greatly or significantly concerned about the regard of others, especially if they are influential, is I suggest, concerned about what impact this might have. One is concerned then about what aspects of the I of me in my everyday ordinariness has become a more fixed, pervasive, and 'sticky truth' about me, both in general and with significant others. In other words, what do They (*Das Man*) think about me? What is the social norm of me? Also, what do particular people perceive of me? I believe imposterism is not the fear of one known person having a specific detrimental impression, but in a more general sense. There is a temptation here to relate this consideration back to the horizon of social cohesion, however this is and is not what is meant. Social norms in this context relate to historicity (the world into which we are born and raised, put very simply) and not specifically to belonging to a particular group or cohort at a particular time. Either way, imposterism is a general and not a personally specific concern. When we are in the clearing of our own possibilities, what are we emitting is thus a

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concern and thus we are bound to conceal or cover up aspects which are detrimental to us. This leads us back to authenticity.

Foreconceptions and post-foreconceptions as horizons of understanding

The foreconceptions and post-foreconceptions which came to light in this thesis are somewhat analogous with the LEDs (Crowther & Thomson, 2020) and are in and of themselves the horizons of understanding (Vessey, 2009) of imposterism.

Putting myself in the first person in relation to the concept of the clearing, the locus of control is elusive to me. I appear to others in a clearing of my own Being, and I am not a stable entity. I have no way of knowing what influence I may have on others nor quite how I am received. If I act in a way which is inauthentic then others may notice the incongruity. Going back to the foreconceptions/ horizons, if I am new will I be thought inept and unworthy of being, given time? If I am actually inept will this be noticed, should I cover this up? If I feel my potential is under-estimated, will I have the drive to change and improve? Am I liminally suspended in a situation whereby I do not seem to be able to attain a situation of contentment? Have I taken on the attributes of those I see around me and become fused with a group identity as a source of comfort? Might I have mimicked those around me to do so? Is all of this wondering or even angst regarding what others make of me a problem in terms of the worthiness I feel toward myself? Might I feel that actually I am comfortable in the adequacy of my own Being but periodically I notice attributes that others show of themselves, and this unsettles me? What if that is how I am supposed to be? Do I feel that I have a right to be recognised and rewarded as I have been before, for merely Being?

The above paragraph is almost chronological with the foreconceptions and post-foreconceptions, the horizons I have previously laid out. They are all different yet connected ways of looking at experiences of imposterism or different positions from which to regard imposterism. Rather than forming a generalisable result or finding for the question of imposterism, I am looking

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to find a way to fuse (Vessey, 2009) these horizons along with the existing medicalised model. Perhaps other horizons of understanding might come to light in subsequent times and fuse with the same or similar points. My hope for this thesis is that it finds its way into a much wider debate, and that psychology may have access to a broader understanding of imposterism. This will be of benefit to therapists and practitioners and to those experiencing any ill-effects. It may also be of benefit, for example, to coaches who are working with drive. I also hope that this thesis helps to demonstrate the usefulness of my methodology to psychology.

Given the great prevalence of imposterism expressed via social media and lay-coaching and in academia I wonder whether we are all, always, to a greater or lesser extent, in a state of imposterism? Perhaps on occasion, sometimes fleetingly or for a prolonged period, we notice a meaningful "separation" within ourselves, within our manifold otherness. A separation in the understanding we have of ourselves when we recognise that we are a collection of possibilities, a clearing. In the temporary Beingness of ourselves we seek to understand which who of us has been encountered. If there is no singular who of us which is concretely manifest to ourselves, then by what means can we be regarded by others, what are They able to say of us, what is the *alethiac* truth of what is disclosed and undisclosed of us? Hence, I wonder if imposterism can be anything other than a normal state of being which sometimes has a detrimental effect.

Separation – a meaningful fusion point for horizons of imposterism?

I propose that separation gives meaning to the various horizons of understanding. I mean the separation we feel from others *and* the separation we feel from and within ourselves. We feel separation at all times due to our ontological Being which is in a state of perpetual temporality according to the possibilities of our history, historicity and our cares and concerns. I believe the latter point is the root of the separation because it behoves us to identify ourselves ontically as "not others" rather than being able to show ourselves, as ourselves. The problem with this is, the ourselves which are revealed belong to the Dasein who perceives our Being. Hence, imposterism

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may be linked to our ability, or otherwise, to access our authenticity because we must ontically

compare ourselves to others.

I believe separation to be intrinsically linked to Dasein's awareness of *Das Man* and to

understand this, we must be clear in our understanding of what authenticity means in the

Heideggerian context. To do this I come to the vital and pivotal debate (to my explanation)

involving Dreyfus, Olafson, Carman and Egan alluded to previously. Authenticity is a sticking

point in this debate because first one must alight upon what is meant by *Das Man*. I have used the

term *Das Man* often already but in this deep analysis there is a problem in that Heidegger himself

was unclear about the definition of *Das Man*. Certainly we can cope with *Das Man* as a

disembodied They, as social norms, but as this debate shows, there must be a more exact

understanding to get at the importance it has in relation to imposterism.

Here Dreyfus attempts a conciliatory position regarding *Das Man* and authenticity:

In Being and Time Heidegger says both that 'authentic self-being is an existentiell
modification of the "one" ... as an essential existentiale', i.e., that the individual supervenes on
an impersonal, structural feature of human being, and that 'the oneself is an existentiell
modification of the authentic self, i.e. that the individualized self is basic, and the impersonal
supervenes on it. Olafson, in conformity with the second claim, maintains that the one is 'a
distorted modality of Mitsein (being-with)'. He sees the one as a transitory stage of
socialization in which the human infant is dependent upon the social and holds that this
deformation is corrected when an authentic Dasein 'breaks out' of the one and assumes
responsibility for its beliefs and actions. Carman counters this existentialist reading with a
Wittgensteinian one, … denotes the anonymous social norms that give equipment and human
roles their intelligibility. Authenticity on this view would be a specific way of taking up these
constitutive norms, not a way of breaking out of them. (Dreyfus, 1995, p. 241)

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I am aware that in order to explain the significance of this quotation I will need to give some explanation of the Heideggerian terms I need to use. These are "Categories" ("existentiales," and note that this is not another spelling of existentiell) of Dasein which are laid out in the introduction to *Being and Time*:

> *Existentiales* do not express any essence of humanity; rather, they create a framework that leaves room for the developing of this essence by every human being on their own. Indeed, *existentiales* create a specific framework in which it is only possible for humanity to manifest. (Franeta, 2021, p. 76)

Existence is what Dasein comports itself toward – thus Dasein is the being that enquires after Being. The understanding of oneself by existing is called the existentiell, existentiality is/ are the structures of existence and the analytic of existentiality is categorised as existential (the analysis of the structures of existence). Thus, Being-in-the-world is something which belongs to Dasein existentially. It follows then that an existential threat is one which threatens Dasein's Being. Not just in a mortal sense, but in any sense which compromises the ability of Dasein to be, to comport itself toward that about which it cares and is concerned. Hence, Dasein's analytic is that it is a being, in-the-world. It is, as Heidegger puts it, thrown into the world (Cowles, 2018).

What is happening in the above article by Dreyfus is a highly philosophically detailed reply to Olafson (1994) where Dreyfus is conceding that Heidegger can appear to be unclear when it comes to *Das Man*. Olafson claims in his ill-tempered article that Dreyfus in his book (Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 321-323) and Carman (Carman, 1994) are wrong in their Wittgensteinian understanding that authenticity is a function of Dasein's own history and historicity – the social norms which Heidegger calls *Das Man*. Olafson contests that authenticity is gained when a Dasein gains adulthood and therefore must be something which is imposed upon a basic pre-adulthood self. This must mean as a result of being-with others (*mitsein*). As such, the one is a modified Dasein. I agree with Carman and Dreyfuss, however, and not with Olafson, in part because the "others" are already

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there in-the-world with Dasein in Dasein's own history and historicity. Thus, the history and historicity of Dasein permeates its chronological existence. Therefore, Dasein and authenticity are always present (although sometimes hidden or overshadowed) and not a stage of biologically expected transition. I feel that Olafson is missing this point.

In fact, there could be a case for Olafson's view in the analysis of the foreconception of liminality and Dreyfus allows for this (not liminality, but he allows for Olafson's analysis of Heidegger's analytic of *Das Man*). As such, if a horizon by which imposterism is understood is that Dasein is in an extended experience of never reaching 'full' self, then the thresholdness of the lack of such a transition might lend itself to Olafson's view. I'm unsure about this but it is worth noting and, as Dreyfuss and later Egan (Egan, 2012) point out, there is room for both claims (that authenticity is always present and that it is bestowed or imposed) in the 'fuzziness' which is Heidegger's analytic of *Das Man*. Here there is a strong indication for the horizon of liminality and the way in which people who have achieved success and recognition seem to be stuck with a feeling that it may be found out or discovered and the status and lifestyle they have accrued be taken away.

To explain my reading of *Das Man* largely concurring with Carman and Dreyfus (which I return to in the sub-section *Imposterism as a natural state of Being, rooted in authenticity and linked to distantiality*), who suggested that we are authentically our own history and historicity, I will try to use standard English rather than a Heideggerian flavoured grammar and lexicon. Thus, people understand themselves as being a product of their own life and the society and times into which they were born. To pretend to be other than this is possibly where problems occur with respect to our authentic selves. What Olafson is suggesting is the notion of coming of age which gives us our authenticity. Olafson reads Heidegger as suggesting that one gains their authenticity when this happens. Dreyfuss and Carman and I read him as saying that this process is always happening, but I suggest that there is not a linear change. Pretending to be other than we are, is part of how we develop and make sense of the world and develop in it. We must copy others in gaining

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understanding of our social norms. In this, ongoing striving for personal improvement in some way is laudable and taking on certain characteristics and affectations in doing so might be advantageous. I channel people when I'm performing and according to my wife, the difference when first encountered is startling. There is also the Alcoholics Anonymous (I know this from when I went to meetings early in my own recovery) 'fake it 'til you make it'. Thus, both academically and in terms of common sense, I concur with Dreyfus and Carmen that, rather than authenticity being imposed on a rather inert being, it forms over the course of the life of that being and is ever-present yet changeable according to experience of the world.

Later I will come to Egan (2012), whose ideas I believe bring this debate to a satisfactory close and leads us into another meaningful point of fusion for imposterism, that of *uncertainty*. Egan explains that we are, at all times, both a product of the possibilities which our social norms (*Das Man*) give us and are distanced each from each other by distantiality, the German word for which (or at least a transliteration) is *Abständigkeit*. I begin this analysis in the section *Imposterism, authenticity, Das Man and abständigkeit.* First however, the next section is another small insight in support of Dreyfus and Carmen.

The Himba and the Ancient Greeks in support of Dreyfus and Carman

The Copula is the vital demarcation of being as Mark Thorsby explains (2016) the sky IS blue is a phrase which gives the sky the being of blue, the sky has been given being. We might consider that all Daseins that can see colour have given it the being of blue. We might say that the sky is being blue and that it has blueness. However, remembering that Dasein is prior to the sky in terms of its present-at-hand state. When being considered as the sky, Dasein gives it its blue upon a its comportment toward it, its being blue is a consequence of the comportment of Dasein's Being. In another way of putting this, it is accepted that the sky is blue when the sky is present-to-hand because this has both been the experience of Dasein and the *Das Man* which pertains to that Dasein. Thus, the social norm for me as an English person is that the sky is blue.

However, neither The Himba people of Namibia nor Ancient Greeks have or had a word for blue. The Himba see what I as an English person would regard as very obviously blue, as a shade of green. They also see shades of green easily compared to Western eyes (Evans, 2017a). In fact, Evans, a lecturer at Birkbeck University, has written a book about the language of colour in which he explores the attributes which colours are given (Evans, 2017b). So, just which They, which *Das Man* must be an important question – which social norm do we mean? This is a good example of the history and historicity of a Dasein being of vital importance to their authentic Being. The colour being seen does not change once the experience of adulthood is acquired, there is no imposition of realising that "oh yes, that's not green after all is it…". This is also vitally important in what Egan has to say, since social norm is 'fuzzy', when we think of what this might mean for ourselves and others we may know personally, let alone across cultures which barely experience each other or existed eons apart.

Let's assume that I am a lay person on the subject of imposterism and I claim to have imposter syndrome. Thus, one might say I have imposter syndrome and that gives imposter syndrome to me. I can give myself this being because I understand what They say imposter syndrome is. Imposterism has been given a structure and *Das Man,* broadly speaking (as They do) accepts what that structure is. *Das Man* is present then in the background of both the sky being blue and me having imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is given being by my comportment toward it, my concern about it. The being of imposterism was given to a cohort of mainly undergraduate females in mid 1970s American Universities by two therapists looking for some commonality of experience. All the participants were known to the therapists Clance and Imes (1978) and all were included *because* they had reported a similar experience. This experience, then, in this cohort was *given* the name imposter phenomenon in respect of their common experience and their assessed or identified psychological and emotional disturbances. This cohort does not exist within my own social norm now. At least, not enough for what they experienced to be part of my own They as *Das*

Man applies to me. Therefore, can I be experiencing the same phenomenon and is this actually a problem with the generalisation of scientifically derived results when it comes to psychology? Certainly, I feel that this musing upon the fact that *Das Man* is different for each Dasein, however subtly or glaringly, supports my hope that the methodology and Heideggerian phenomenology I am employing is considered more favourably in psychology. I concede that there are times when psychology needs to be generalist but then at other times, where nuance is more important, I hope that Heidegger has an increasingly important place.

Imposterism as a natural state of Being, rooted in authenticity and linked to distantiality

> Das Man is the socially constituted set of norms to which we necessarily belong, and distantiality (a*bständigkeit*) is our equally inescapable awareness of the difference that sets us apart from others. Every one of us is somewhat like others and somewhat unique. (Egan, 2012, p. 290)

David Egan's contribution to the debate in the journal *Inquiry* over the explanation of *Das Man* is pivotal to my analysis of imposterism because it brings together the concepts which I believe are necessary in a Heideggerian analysis of the phenomenon. These are Dasein (people)*, Das Man* (The They, our social norms), a*bständigkeit* (distantiality, our separateness) and, authenticity. I have not found, nor can I think of a more elegant introduction to a paper which I believe holds a key to fusing the horizons of imposterism than Egan 2012 because it resolves all of these in a satisfactory way, according to Heideggerian phenomenology and philosophy.

In *Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Volume 1* (Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 321-323) Dreyfus gives an analysis of Heideggerian authenticity which begins with the comparison to the widely (and I would say still so) accepted Kierkegaardian preposition of authenticity as a conscious decision (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 321). I think that one of the problems with Olafson's (1994) explication of authenticity is that in some ways it harks back to Kierkegaard in

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suggesting that authenticity is imposed on a modified self (an existing self is modified as Olafson

claims). I further think this modified idea may be where some of the lay/ pop-psychology version of

authenticity stems from in that one should in some way identify a 'new you' in some manner; find

ways in which one might stand out. I don't believe authenticity means making oneself purposefully

different or adapting norms for the sake of it, as is my reading of the pop/ lay descriptions of it (for

example, Neptune, 2019).

Dasein authentically being the possibility of its own history and historicity is for me

Heideggerianally accurate therefore because we see that Dasein is its own history and historicity

which gives rise at any given moment to a range of temporary possibilities. Thus, I am persuaded

by Dreyfus (1995) and Carman (1994). Egan (2012) gives us a path between Dreyfus and Carman

on the one hand and Olafson on the other by steering the debate away from an either/ or and looking

at the relationship between *Das Man* and distantiality in explicating authenticity.

Egan develops the conciliatory stance of Dreyfus (1995) since Dreyfus concedes that

although he has a preference, Heidegger is not clear on *Das Man* (which Olafson makes much of in

objecting to Dreyfus). Dreyfus also introduces *abständigkeit* (distantiality) into the debate which

Egan ceases upon giving a sense that *Das Man* and distantiality work together in a kind of magnetic

manner, both pulling toward and pushing apart. Thus, *Das Man* and distantiality are as the attractive

and repulsive forces of magnetism; they are of the same thing and will be both cohesive and

separational.

I believe that, whereas Dreyfus and Egan speak of distantiality (*Abständigkeit),* we must

also consider our individuality having discernible and recognisable characteristics. Our "existence"

is often translated from Heidegger's use of *Inständigkeit* (steadfastness) (Dahlstrom, 2013, p. 71).

As such we, as discernible us, we are involved with (thrown into) such states as *Being-with* and

Dasein-with (*Mitsein and* Mit *Dasein* respectively). These are grounded in the mode of everyday

Being-one's-Self (*Selbstsein*). Thus, and as alluded to before in the sub-section *The clearing (die lichtung), part 2*, the everyday Being-one's-selfness of Being must include those we are with, in the sense that they are in the world with us. Our Beingness then is necessarily outward looking and we cannot ever be sure what impression we are having on others. We cannot know absolutely how we are in-the-world of another Dasein. This must include therefore the risk that others are not experiencing us as we would like, and perhaps we may be regarded as imposters. We are therefore naturally in a state of imposterism since we are both always part of *Das Man* and distantially separated from it, we are also in our temporality in the same (perhaps liminal) state within the clearing of possibilities which is us.

Uncertainty and separation as meaningful fusions and how Abständigkeit was pivotal to imposterism

Before moving on to a deeper analysis of the importance of Egan (2012), I would like to highlight what was a vital breakthrough in coming to Egan. This was in Dreyfus (1995) where the explanation of *Abständigkeit* involves the difference between "being-with-them-there" and "being-there-with-them" (Dreyfus, 1995, p. 427). The former is inclusive, Dasein belongs to a group and the group is there. The latter is exclusive, Dasein is joining a group that is there, but is only there with the group, not part of it. It was this insight which opened up imposterism for me. As such, returning to the horizons chronologically again: If I am new, inept, am driven to attain a status, feel suspended in liminality, am mimicking those I wish to be like, feel the safety of the herd in lieu of feeling included, experience the othering of an 'ism, have a feeling that I may be exposed and ousted, rely on the approval of others, do not feel I can control how I am perceived, am less than adequate or, feel I should be afforded status; then I am "there, with them". I am joining others who are already there, together. If imposterism is a natural state of being then perhaps this is the side of the equation which gives rise to its ill-effects.

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I suggest the desire to be "with them, there" even in a case where someone would like to stand out or distance themselves from a group they are ostensibly with, is personally self-confirming. One would like, however, to feel self-confirmed, to feel authentic, when one is with others rather than feel like an outsider joining a group. One would wish to be with people *and* be identifiable as an individual, however closely allied or aligned. The distantiality that is felt with imposterism then is exclusive, we feel imposterism when we are "there, with them," rather than when we are "with them, there". I believe the reasons for this are manyfold and complex but above all, imposterism is a natural state of being because we are always in a state of possibilities of our temporality and subject to the opposite ends of the magnet (which are both inclusive and separating a la *Das Man* and distantiality). I was both amused and intrigued to see an newspaper article which has a sense of this – '*Everyone is totally just winging it, all the time'* (Burkeman, 2014). The article suggests that no-one is fully equipped and able to be what they purport to be, even at the top of hierarchical life or work trees, we are all just winging it, all the time. We are all to some extent imposters all the time and there is not gold standard of proficiency to which to adhere.

I venture that *Das Man* as our social norms, our history and historicity is for the most part our ordinary everydayness. Herein we are always uncertain of our place, of how we are or are perceived, but we are aware of the possibilities of what we are, as in the clearing. We experience exclusivity and thereby *separation*. because we are always to some extent 'there, with them'. We are never a 'solid' us, even alone. Our separation within ourselves and with and from others and our uncertainty are how we live our lives naturally, always in a more or less unsettled state, which I believe is the root of imposterism. These then are my two suggestions as meaningful fusion points for the dozen horizons of imposterism presented here: separation and uncertainty.

In all cases one could say that for a person experiencing both separation and uncertainty, the psychological or emotional disturbances associated with imposterism such as anxiety or depression may reasonably be present. This does not mean that I concur with a person reporting that anyone

has or has got imposterism. I do not believe it is given, rather it is always present and felt more or less from time to time. Thus, I do not believe that recognised psychological tests detect imposterism. I believe what they detect at the facsimiles of imposterism when it surfaces. The experience of imposterism, ubiquitous as it seems as a natural state of being, may therefore be a *necessary* state of being that contributes to our human need for socialisation and connection (Barber & Olsen, 1997).

Where there is an extended situation of liminality and a lack of means to achieve human cohesiveness (at a species level rather than being socially cohesive), we may experience a period of schismogenesis. Positions become polarised and politics more extreme and divided as people are persuaded into a 'them and us' way of being (Szakolczai, 2015) and social cohesions become exploited. This is an extreme example I believe of the natural state of imposterism being expressed in *Das Man.* This state of extremism has been expressed in conflicts and wars, it seems that humans have a tribal tendency in this respect and thus it is part of the historicity of us all, unfortunate, and unwanted as this may be. Distantiality disturbs the historicity of *Das Man* and the ends of the magnet become opposed.

I suggest that we are naturally motivated to extract ourselves from situations which are uncomfortable. However, the pseudo-diagnosis of imposter syndrome has turned this into a medicalised problem. Imposterism as a medical problem is being addressed by means other than understanding it as a natural state of being that can be seen from a number of different, but connected, horizons. All the horizons by which I suggest imposterism is experienced suggest it is part of our normal everyday ordinariness. Indeed, advice I have not seen, anywhere, is "keep going, it's fine, everyone feels like this to some extent, all the time". Am I suggesting that we are all doomed to feel separated and uncertain? No! We are not doomed, but we will/ can feel separated and uncertain at times. I do not believe that imposterism is a problem which requires correction; I

do believe that the mechanism by which we experience it is something to be understood rather than necessarily corrected (especially by denial or refutation).

Perhaps imposterism may have served to aid the advancement of humanity as a species which achieves things through cooperation because feeling a little uncomfortable and unsure in a group is protective and/ or creative (provide drive for example) as some, but not much, of the popular literature is beginning to express (for example, Castrillon, 2019; Rubinstein, 2021).

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Imposterism, die lichtung, Das Man, and Abständigkeit

If Egan (2012) had only a few changes it might be a paper which describes imposterism. Our social norms, which we are tied to in making sense of the world (we do not use a shoe to knock in nails), are bound with what sets us apart as individuals within them. This is the somewhat dialectic (somewhat because both apply not either/ or) "push/ pull" nature of *Das Man* and *Abständigkeit* (distantiality). Our social norms are "existential structural features of Dasein" (Egan, 2012, p. 289) and "Every one of us is somewhat like others and somewhat unique" (p. 290). I would say that Dasein is held in a suspension of uncertainty, always. It is always a range of possibilities of itself and both its social norms and differences from others within those social norms. It is important to remember, however, than whereas Dasein has distinctness, *Das Man* is what one *does* or what is *done* and therefore *Das Man* does not have being. Also, the distantiality denotes the gap between Daseins who have Being; *Das Man* and distantiality are what happens *to* Dasein. Therefore, *Das Man* is not a distinct They but a colloquial expression of what is reasonably expected to be happening or to happen. In this way it is a mechanism by which Daseins can navigate the behaviour and intentions of each other in a society. There is more work required here, as I feel that in this is the answer to how the ill-effects of imposterism surface, but I have not come to that analysis yet.

In Egan's interpretation of *Das Man* we are reminded that we encounter others without the need to analyse what they are, we are in-the-world with them and them with us. Indeed, "Our own sense of who and what we are is shaped by our engaging with others whom we deem to be our fellows". (p. 291). Also, "While each of us makes sense of the world in our own way, the very notion of making sense of the world… as well as the concepts with which we make sense of the world, are things we articulate together" (p. 291). Egan uses shoes as an example. We do not examine each shoe to see if it is a shoe, we know what they are. We "accord ourselves with das

Man unthinkingly, allowing our actions and opinions to be dictated to us by what one does or thinks" and "avoid acknowledging that there is even a choice there to be made" (p. 292).

In this interpretation of *Das Man* I first saw the twist which is revealed by Egan, and it comes when he is writing about Dreyfus and Carman in putting forward a Wittgensteinian view of *Das Man* – Egan brings us to Wittgenstein and *language* which is a primary way in which we communicate our common sense of the world. I can remember feeling dumbstruck when a Hare Krishna Devotee told me straight faced that he could not perceive the earth orbiting the sun, but he knew I could because I had inferior and imperfect knowledge. I had no idea what to say – it is not only the spoken language which shows up different worlds, but language itself allows us to see into different worlds or in this case alerts one to the fact that someone else has a worldview incomprehensible to one's own. The way we speak, what we speak about and with whom we speak even in the same language denotes a different world. Conformism with what links us as humans of the same species does not mean we have a conformity of understanding of the world – think of the Himba people, the ancient Greeks, and the colour blue. However, broadly speaking, although the Devotee and I were engaged in the same process with the same tools, in the same place (gardening) and both wearing similar clothes items, the world we were in, or at least the way we understood the same world, was quite different. We have a Human conformism but not a conformity of being-in-the-world. Social norms are not universal and so *Das Man* is an influence on each Dasein and is not universal. Therefore, we must all have a different *Das Man,* however great or slight those differences must be. Authenticity then, taking either the Dreyfusian or Olafson explanation (but more so Dreyfus) must be different for all. Within a corporation, a university, a sports team or any endeavour or group, how different is *Das Man* to each Dasein and therefore how different must the feeling of authenticity be? Might it be large enough to knock a person 'off centre' or to feel somewhat unstable or not quite as they would like, and cause a feeling of otherness and might this have something to do with imposterism? This is part of the analysis to which I alluded earlier; I am

sure there is something in this but I'm not quite sure what. Having said that, however, perhaps my explanations have already been sufficient.

Egan uses analogy and disanalogy to great effect in explaining *The way of being Das Man* (p. 294) in saying that what one "does" lacks particularity. One cannot say that the "what is done" of *Das Man* is the same as "what 'one', does" (as in, actually does as an individual). For instance, and mirroring his example, I want the All Blacks to win the Rugby world cup. A disinterested New Zealander (there are a few) may want New Zealand to win the cup but, one wants one's favourite team to win the Rugby World Cup is not the same as being broadly supportive of a team representing one's country in a sport. Another example, in New Zealand I can choose to be an academic, a farmer or an office worker – my situation allows this. I cannot choose to be "a conquistador or a warp drive engineer" (Egan, p. 294). Thus, in fact *Das Man* is an individual thing, it is owned by each Dasein and even more tricky than this, it also changes all the time as our history and our comportment, cares and worries move around constantly.

Choosing to be something far from guarantees an anchoring place where exactly what's expected or required is utterly known, far from it. The differences, nuances and possibilities become, I suggest, ever more subtle and difficult to grasp as we get down to the level of dealing with being-with and being-in-the-world-with other Daseins. The smaller the group and the closer to individual connection the trickier this gets. I would never put milk into a teacup before the tea and some would find the idea of milk distasteful but would understand that milk is put in tea. Others may find the very idea of milk anathema because tea is taken with a twist of lemon, and then we come to sugar. The temporality of Dasein and its associated and changeable *Das Man* and distantiality is a minefield; what in here can be authentic and what is not, to some degree, an imposter? I suggest that the imposter is ever-present but is drawn in and out of the shadows, it can be ready-to-hand and used as a tool and it can be present-to-hand whereby we stare at it and study it for itself.

Imposterism is like a game of football

Egan uses Association Football, also known as Soccer, to further explain the "way of being of *Das Man*" (p. 296) and here the spectre of imposterism revealed itself to me with great clarity. If life is a game of football, it is one thing to think you know the rules, but you do not know for sure everyone has the same understanding of them. Further, even if there is a broadly good understanding of the rules, how it is played, what skills are needed, what training one has had, what style of football is being played, the conditions of the ground, the age we are when we play it and the strategies and tactics used overall and in playing the game as it unfolds; from moment to moment, things are never fully known and these things and many more make each game different. Yet each game is a game of football. As if this is not difficult enough, the referee is a shadowy, uncertain presence in life, more obvious in football, as the ultimate arbiter of what is done. The 'ref' may blow up at any time and give you a yellow card, or a red and send you off. If you get too many citations for foul or wrongful play, you maybe be fined, suspended, or sold off. Your career can be over at any moment. It gets worse. The referee may very well be making things up as they go along! What does one do then but look at other games, their history, their historicity and try to make the best sense of it all that one can? Dasein will look at other players in the game of life or work, etc. and try to figure out where they are relative to them, but Dasein can never be sure of what is good or right. Dasein is generally unable to concretely connect with authenticity because authenticity is difficult to define from one moment to the next. I hope this makes as much common sense as it does in the 'Van Manen nod' sense (Van Manen, 2016, p. 27). To be more Heideggerian – Dasein "is" its world as Dasein is prior to understanding and equiprimordially in-the-world-with other Daseins. Existentials are "not separable from each other and equally involved in our disclosure of the world and ourselves, they are in Heidegger's term 'equiprimordial'". (Wollan, 2003, p. 35).

This leads back again into the horizons of understanding for imposterism. I am here deliberately cascading the horizons and fusions in a link with the football analogy. If we are new, how can we have a good understanding of the game as a whole, let alone how to play it well? If we are actually inept, how do we "get by" in the game without being discovered and sent off? If we are driven to get better, is this better at the politics, the skills required for the game, or both? Will we be permanently 'suspended', in a sense that we're just never sure what we really should be doing? Do we try to mimic or automatically mimic those things we think are 'getting it right'? Should we hide in the crowd and take comfort there? Are we unfairly singled out or feel singled out because there is something about us that is not like those, we think are getting it right? Are we out there doing a great job but feel the ref could blow up at any moment for some unknown reason? Do we rely on others for reassurance that we're doing okay, are we always fearful that we're not in control of our own destiny? Are we actually doing a perfectly adequate job and don't know it because we're aware of other impressive star players? Do we feel that we're owed a place in the top team and should be awarded a prize because that's what we expect, that's what we've been told to expect?

In life one never knows, no matter what, if or when the ref is going to blow the whistle and it's all over. No-one knows who the ref actually is or quite what the rules are or how to play the game right at any given moment. However, we all exist, so what can we do, what do we do? We are all in this 'game' and we will all have a surfacing of uncertainty and separation from time to time, which will lead us to feel we're not as good as we should be, or the 'others' are.

What we do, how we live naturally is in a constant state of concealment and cover-up. This leads me to the single most important quote from any paper I have encountered in explaining imposterism in the co-existence of Dasein*, Das Man* and *Abständigkeit,* as they are in *die lichtung* which is authentic Dasein:

> Authentic Dasein is still absorbed in the public norms of das Man, but in anxiety, Dasein confronts the groundlessness of these norms. This groundlessness is a fundamental feature of

Dasein's existence. Anxiety and guilt are not features of a stable and autonomous self but are rather precisely ontological features of a Dasein that is never entirely itself. Dasein's existence, constituted as it is by shared social norms (das Man) but not exhaustively so (distantiality/Abständigkeit), is fundamentally unstable. Dasein is rooted neither entirely in das Man nor in itself alone, it is thrown into a world that it did not choose, and it faces the burden of choice as to how it will project itself into the future. Unlike present-at-hand entities, Dasein lacks the constancy (Ständigkeit) of simply being what it is. The term Heidegger gives for this instability is Unheimlichkeit, uncanniness or unsettledness. Dasein is fundamentally not at home in the world. This uncanniness is disturbing (or indeed unsettling), and Dasein is tempted to cover it over. Uncanniness can be suppressed but it cannot be escaped: "Uncanniness is the basic kind of Being-in-the-world, even though in an everyday way it has been covered up" (BT, p. 277/322) [sic]. (Egan, 2012, p. 303)

I believe the best way to continue to consider the implications of this quote and the research as a whole is now to consider it in the context of a conclusion and suggestions for future directions, which leads me to summarise.

Summarising

The mission for this research has been to consider imposterism as a whole rather than examine small samples of where imposterism may be present. This is a work of theoretical psychology using a methodology which I hope to commend to psychology. In so doing, my aim was to approach the subject from a theoretical rather than empirical basis so as to open out the subject for wider debate and to promote my methodology in its usefulness to psychology. The hermeneutic method was ideal for this purpose since it allows a ranging, flowing, unbounded inquisitiveness. The Heideggerian phenomenological analysis which followed has given I believe a unique insight into the phenomenon of imposterism. This thesis has allowed my creative mind to hermeneutically freely associate in a way which echoes the very beginnings of psychology in Freud

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(Kris, 2013). Heideggerian phenomenology, indeed Heideggerian philosophy, requires a self-immersion which is quite different to rational methodologies. Becoming immersed in the subject as a whole, reading widely and being hermeneutically led can be difficult to stay with, but is certainly rewarding (King, 2021). I feel that having been able to consider the whole subject of imposterism from an outside-in perspective is what has allowed me to identify twelve possibilities for new horizons and fusions of meaning for them. I do not believe this would have been possible using an inside-out methodology of analysing and interpreting individual pieces of evidence or personal accounts and making a deductive analysis. Mine is a theoretical investigation of 'imposterism' and not a study of individually derived data and experiences. I could have followed existing research and conducted interviews. My title could have been something like "The incidence of reports of imposter phenomenon in populations of undergraduate students". I did a Google Scholar search using "imposter phenomenon in undergraduates" on 1st September 2021 and this yielded 8,980 results. I'm not sure there is much more to be wrung out from that particular garment. I hope my research serves to expand the debate on imposterism beyond what some excellent but rather narrowly focused work in these thousands of papers.

Having identified new horizons for understanding imposterism, I have located them in practical examples of a general rather than specific nature (although specific examples are pointed to also) at several points within the thesis. The objective, as explained earlier, is to elicit a phenomenological nod of understanding and not a generalisable, repeatable scientific discovery (Van Manen, 2016, p. 27). One of my suggestions for future directions then is to encourage the expansion of these horizons and to look more deeply at specific instances of them. In this way the understanding which psychology and associated caring and therapeutic disciplines has of imposterism may be better applied in real situations rather than reaching for cures for the resulting symptoms.

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I believe imposterism is ever-present and mostly hidden or "in shadow" in the clearing of the possibilities of us. I have highlighted that I have not been able to make conclusions about certain aspects of the role of distantiality in surfacing imposterism, so this is an area which requires deserves further consideration and analysis. It isn't that I haven't given this my attention but that hermeneutically, I haven't found the spark that will lead me through from where I am to a deeper understanding. This is something I suggest is worth of future research. However, I have a sense that there is much more to say in relation to the dialectic relationship between *Das Man* and *Abständigkeit*, or distantiality and the role of the latter in particular. What is the force of the force which differentiates us from others and from ourselves is where I think I want to go with this. In saying that we are authentically our own history and historicity and in regard to distantiality the difference between being "there, with them," rather than "with them, there" is crucial because one is inclusive, we go "there" with a group to which we belong otherwise we seek to join a group that is "there". I would say that Dasein is held in a suspension of uncertainty in this respect, always. Perhaps in a liminal sense? It is always a range of possibilities of itself and both its social norms and differences from others within those social norms.

In terms of a conclusion, I believe that imposterism is an expression of the temporality of Dasein itself and of the world in which each Dasein has its Being. Dasein is the fundamental ontological analysis which Heidegger makes in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/ 1962). This informs my worldview generally and not just in respect of psychology. I believe that since this is a fundamental ontological analysis of humans and how the world is to be understood, *for me*, there is no other way to approach psychological research or indeed, psychology. Therefore, my contribution must come from a methodology using a Heideggerian perspective, using a hermeneutic method, and employing phenomenology. The tricky bit for (us) hermeneuts, phenomenologists, and Heideggerians is that the field is not unified, and I am coming to the view that it will not be, and neither should it. To do so puts a rather positivist flavour upon something which is fundamentally

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not positivist. In understanding that the contribution of my methodology and worldview is always to contribute and not arrive at generalisable results, it is perhaps fitting that the approach remains open to debate itself. We do our best to make useful contributions at which we hope to gain a "nod" of understanding. I am hopeful that like-minded colleagues will take my suggestions and apply different methodologies in widening the debate around this ubiquitous "condition," expanding its understanding manyfold. I am also hopeful that Heidegger's phenomenology is either seen as a useful tool in psychology for those new to it or, that those already involved with it are encouraged. The work of Rupert King (King, 2015, 2021) is important in being a reminder to stick with the hermeneutic process, to have faith in it. It has been some comfort to see him explaining how difficult this is in the contexts of his related discipline of psychotherapy.

In Heideggerian terms, we are all of us a collection of possibilities and changeable constantly within the confines of our experiences and nature (history and historicity). We do not have the stability of being a tool which has one obvious use. The world in which we exist is also a place of many possibilities and there is ultimately no rule book, rather only the guidance we accumulate. There is no solidity to being a person in a world of other people, we can never be absolutely sure of anything, but we can and do operate within expectations. We strive therefore to cover this as best we can so that we may make some meaningful headway but can never know if what we have concocted for and of ourselves is going to 'hold water'. We do not know if at any given moment a 'leak' may become serious. I have discovered, by the application of Heideggerian philosophy, using a hermeneutic method (the only way I believe I could have come to this discovery), that in the great inescapable game that is life we are, naturally, in a state of constant flux whereby we may become aware that an unknown arbiter using an unknown way of knowing and applying an unknown law, may stop us at any time and show us that our cover-up has not gone un-noticed. This is the feeling of imposterism, we can never be sure of ourselves or our place in the world and the anxiety of this is natural. Thus, we may strive to be better or look for comfort in the

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herd, throw ourselves at things in a way informed by experience, hope it will all be okay, demand that what we have been told is waiting for us is true, etc. However, we can never be sure that what we are doing is right, okay or enough. This is Imposterism. This is imposter syndrome. This is 'The Imposter Phenomenon' (Clance & Imes, 1978).

I believe that imposterism is given to us by ourselves, we have learned to label ourselves with this accepted problematised, medicalised phenomenon and require solutions for it. A diagnosis is not available, however, because it is not described in the diagnostic manuals of psychology. As such imposterism, mainly as imposter syndrome, has been given "thingness' in a way similar to Plato's "things," rather than Heidegger's analysis of the being of things which requires Dasein (Blitz, 2014, p. 76). Imposterism has become a "disorder" without a diagnosis and is bandied about in lay terms in the category of psychological and emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression. As such, imposterism is something which the less than qualified can 'have a go at' as evidenced by the plethora of people offering ways to combat imposter syndrome. We give ourselves imposterism as a thing, rather than understanding that it is a naturally occurring phenomenon which can be accessed from many horizons. As a Heideggerian researching within psychology I have made the contribution that I believe these horizons may be fused in the meanings of separation (of ourselves, from ourselves and from others) and uncertainty (of ourselves and ourselves in our social norms).

The interpretative leap I have made in my analysis of imposterism has its roots in Part I, section IV of *Being and Time* (p. 149) '*Being-in-the-world as being-with and being-one's-self. The "They"*. The They (*Das Man*) is Heidegger's way of explaining the social norms to which we Daseins more or less adhere. As we discover in reading *Being and Time* with some vital secondary literature, this is a concept which Heidegger has not robustly resolved. This secondary literature is primarily the articles published in *Inquiry* whereby Olafson (Carman, 1994) takes issue with the explanation Dreyfus gives of *Das Man* (Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 321-323). Dreyfus then counters with a

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conciliatory article (Dreyfus, 1995) and I believe the issue is satisfactorily resolved by Egan (2012). Egan's article actually contains what I consider to be the most important explanation for this thesis in resolving the issue of *Das Man and abständigkeit* – what brings us into authentic conformity with social norms and what separates us, the distance between Daseins (a*bständigkeit*).

The temporality of Dasein in being at any moment a range of possibilities according to its interests and situation, adds to the elusive nature of the norms to which Dasein is bound. Our anxiety in not being confident that we are who we would be and fearing detrimental exposure is inevitable since we can never be sure what we are supposed to be and also never a stable unchanging entity nor among other stable unchanging entities. This means we are always to a greater or lesser degree separated from ourselves and our societal situation. We are in a constant state of separation. This separation means that we live at all times in a state of uncertainty and it is this which, if we are to have a position, status or identity in-the-world, must at all times be "covered up" (Egan, 2012, p. 303). This separation and uncertainty which is covered up is, I believe, the meaning which imposterism has for us.

The horizons by which imposterism may be manifested are contained in the foreconceptions and post-foreconceptions: Newness, Ineptitude, Drive, Liminality, Mimicry, Social cohesion, 'isms' (sexism, ageism, racism, etc.), Definition threat, Conditions of Worth, Locus of Control, Adequacy, and Entitlement. I believe that all these horizons or ways of looking at, accessing, experiencing imposterism are mechanisms to access the meanings for us of separation and uncertainty, which are points of fusion in understanding imposterism. The psychological and emotional experience of imposterism, of imposter syndrome or imposter phenomenon, and the subsequent psychological tests for them are indicative of some of the symptoms of imposterism. However, the wide array of alternative horizons of understanding imposterism shows, I believe, that there is a far wider (and more interesting) debate to be had and much more work to be done, rather than accepting the narrow, medicalised model which both the lay and academic literature seem to have settled upon.

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