Matthew Ratcliffe
Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality.
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This book is a volume in Oxford's 'International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry' series, the aim of which is to cultivate a mutually enriching dialogue between naturalistic and humanistic traditions in philosophy and psychiatry. While the value of such interdisciplinary work for psychiatry is clear, it is potentially no less significant for philosophy, given the broad overlap between the two disciplines with respect to such central themes as subjectivity, experience, and rationality.

Ratcliffe's contribution to this Oxford series is interesting and bold. Anchored methodologically in the phenomenological tradition, his study undertakes to show that feelings of bodily states—termed 'bodily feelings'—can and do have world-directed intentionality. Ratcliffe's basic claim is that how one's body feels is 'utterly inextricable' from 'world-experience', that is, from how one experiences 'things outside of the body'. He is specifically interested in what he calls 'existential feelings', bodily feelings that are also 'ways of finding oneself in a world'—that is, 'background orientations through which experience as a whole is structured' (2). His 'primary aim' is thus to 'offer a phenomenological account of the structure of existential feeling in psychiatric illness and in everyday life' which will show how 'a sense of the reality of the world and of one's being situated within it' is 'experientially entangled' with bodily awareness (3).

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 introduces and develops a phenomenology of existential feelings, Part 2 refines this account while bringing it to bear on the psychiatric domain, and Part 3—probably the most contentious—considers the role of existential feeling in philosophical work itself.

Part 1 is comprised of three chapters. In Chapter 1, Ratcliffe sets the stage by surveying recent philosophical work on feeling and emotion, and arguing that there are persistent yet phenomenologically false tendencies to link world-directedness with emotion in ways that occlude the specific category of existential feeling. Chapter 2 introduces this category through a critical discussion of Heidegger's notion of 'attunement'. Ratcliffe contends that comparable existential significance is possessed by certain 'bodily feelings', supporting this claim with descriptions drawn from autobiographical accounts of psychiatric illness, as well as other sources. Turning from the experiential role to the actual nature of existential feeling, Chapter 3 offers a phenomenological account of touch by way of clarifying how something can be both a bodily feeling and an experience of something other than the body—the point being that existential feelings are structurally analogous to

tactile feelings in terms of the indissociability of proprio- and exteroception.

Part 2 contains four chapters. In Chapter 4 Ratcliffe extends the account of the 'background' nature of existential feelings by showing how they 'constitute the general space of possibilities that shapes ongoing experience and activity' (121f.), a point he then develops in terms of the phenomenological notion of 'horizon'. Over the next three chapters Ratcliffe then brings this account to bear on the psychiatric domain proper. In Chapters 5 and 6 he discusses, respectively, the Capgras delusion (the belief that familiars have been replaced by impostors) and Cotard delusion (the view that one is dead or otherwise disembodied or non-existent), while in Chapter 7, based on the work of Louis Sass, he considers schizophrenia. In each case the discussion shows how the psychiatric conditions can be helpfully reinterpreted in terms of changes at the level of existential feeling, while at the same time developing the account of the latter in greater phenomenological detail.

The three chapters comprising Part 3 are primarily of methodological significance. Here, drawing on the work of William James, Ratcliffe addresses 'the role played by existential feelings in philosophical enquiry' (219). Chapter 8 lays the ground for this by rehabilitating James' theory of emotion, including the claim that our sense of belonging to the world is based on what James called 'the feeling of reality'. In Chapter 9, Ratcliffe follows James in linking different existential feelings to different philosophical positions. In particular, he relates this to Bas van Fraassen's idea of 'the empirical stance'. More generally, and with an aim to shore up his own phenomenological commitments, Ratcliffe contrasts authentic and inauthentic 'epistemic dispositions', and he concludes the chapter with a provocative discussion of the existential underpinnings of philosophical conviction and doubt. This leads to the topic of the final chapter, to wit, the distinction between pathological and non-pathological existential feelings. Here Ratcliffe draws the general conclusion that existential pathology involves 'a complete or partial loss of openness to interpersonal possibilities' (269), that is, either an impaired sense of others as people, or an inability to connect with them. Following from this, the book concludes by taking a critical swipe at scientific naturalism as being based upon a form of skepticism that is at least epistemically—if not fully existentially—pathological.

This is clearly an ambitious study. The foregoing summary touches on but a fraction of the wealth of detail found throughout. The work can thus seem overextended. This is particularly the case with regard to the critique of naturalism, the justificatory basis for which will strike some readers as insufficient. The underlying concern here is with the apparent tendency to conflate reality *per se* with 'sense of reality'. It may be objected that Ratcliffe's work deals with psychological curiosities that are far removed from genuine philosophical concerns—that his phenomenology of existential feeling could be rectified by a properly conceptual third-person discourse. But Ratcliffe's argument is effectively premised on the rejection of this objection. His thesis is that all experience of reality structurally presupposes some 'sense' of it which—since grounded in embodiment—

is irreducibly multiple. Any *a priori* assertion of a univocal meaning of reality must therefore rest on an unwarranted separation of body and world and the illicit privileging of a particular epistemic standpoint.

By radically problematizing the meaning of reality in this way, Ratcliffe's book helps to show why it is that some of the most interesting current work in phenomenology has connections with psychiatry. While his attempt to apply this self-referentially to philosophy in general may resonate only within methodologically like-minded circles, the work as a whole nonetheless makes a valuable contribution toward clarifying some of the basic problems and challenges facing *any* philosophical interest in 'reality'.

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