Alienation in post-traumatic experience

Traumatic experiences disrupt not only psychological stability but also the tacit metaphysical frameworks through which reality is ordinarily apprehended. This paper takes alienation as its point of departure, arguing that it is intrinsically relational, unfolding as an disturbance across the dimensions of intersubjectivity, temporality and self-relation, spanning different levels of selfhood.

By scrutinizing alienation, this paper illustrates how the continuity and coherence of identity over time is affected in post-traumatic experience. Alienation thus reflects "existential shattering": not merely a loss of meaning, but a fragmentation of the structures that mediate continuity itself, including intersubjective trust, temporal synthesis, and pre-reflectively grounded identity coherence.

Drawing on phenomenological and existential philosophy, I claim that these layered feelings of alienation are dialectically intertwined with the collapse of so-called "metaphysical illusions" (e.g. predictability, control and inviolability). These implicit beliefs are primarily embedded within the pre-reflective Self as conditions of possibility for coherent world-disclosure. In trauma, a form of ontological lucidity is induced in which these implicit assumptions shift to the foreground of consciousness through their collapse, thereby contributing to feelings of estrangement.

By centring on alienation, this analysis reveals trauma's impact on identity, addresses clinically and philosophically urgent questions, and advances interdisciplinary debates on subjectivity.

[200 words]