Privatio Dialogus: Toward a Phenomenology of Aloneness for the Philosophy of Communication

Timothy Michaels

Follow this and additional works at: https://dsc.duq.edu/etd

Part of the Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Commons

Recommended Citation

This Immediate Access is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.
PRIVATIO DIALOGUS: TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF ALONENESS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Tim Michaels

May 2019
PRIVATIO DIALOGUS: TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF ALONENESS FOR
THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

By

Tim Michaels

Approved March 29th, 2019

Janie Harden Fritz, Ph.D
Professor of Communication
(Committee Chair)

Ronald C. Arnett, Ph. D.
Professor of Communication
(Committee Member)

Richard H. Thames, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of Communication
(Committee Member)

James Swindal, Ph.D.
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts

Ronald C. Arnett, Ph. D.
Chair, Department of Communication &
Rhetorical Studies
ABSTRACT

PRIVATIO DIALOGUS: TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF ALONENESS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

By
Tim Michaels
February, 2019

Dissertation supervised by Janie Harden Fritz, Ph.D

The intent of this dissertation is to utilize the phenomenological method to elucidate the experience of aloneness and its relationship with human communication. Aloneness, for the purposes of this research, is understood as the broad experience of feeling alone. This dissertation first seeks to understand some essential principles of previous interdisciplinary literature on this topic before establishing a typology of experiences of aloneness, including isolation, escapism, and solitude. I present a phenomenology of each of these types of aloneness through a representative philosopher for each one, with Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, and Henry David Thoreau, respectively. Finally, I conclude that the experience of aloneness is fundamentally a privation of interpersonal dialogue and that the type of aloneness experienced is a result of who initiates that privation.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who suffer the anxiety and pain of chronic loneliness. May they forever find peace when they are alone and communication when they need it.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Though this dissertation may be about being alone, it certainly could not have completed alone. I would first like to thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Janie Fritz, for all of her quick and thorough revisions and commentary, not to mention the constantly optimistic encouragement. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my committee for their guidance and feedback.

To my colleagues, I could not have done this without such a tremendous sense of community. Thank you to Allison Peiritsch and all of my my co-workers at Slippery Rock University for your unending encouragement. I also must note the members of my cohort who constantly brought insights, advice, and, most importantly, levity to this project and so many other pursuits. Thank you to my conference crew of Bobby Foschia, Jenna Lo Castro, and Margaret Mullan; to Hongchao Qian for writing alongside me in nearly every coffee shop in Pittsburgh; and to Matt Corr for losing a friendly wager over who would submit their dissertation first (pony up, Matt).

Lastly, thank you to my family for their encouragement throughout my pursuit of a PhD and to my girlfriend, Kelly, who had incredible patience and unwavering support as my free time became nonexistent. Without you, this process would have been a lonely unbearably task.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI:</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION:
Premise, Methodology, and Overview

“We're born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we're not alone.”

—Orson Welles

Epoche

This opening is a brief epoche, an acknowledgment of my own presuppositions and judgments on the topic of aloneness, which will then be put aside as a first step in the phenomenological method. The pages of this dissertation were written in many different locations. In seeking to complete this long and time-consuming task, I weaved together brief moments of free time otherwise lost between other duties of life and vocation. As a result, the following pages represent a sort of tapestry of locales. Of course, many sections are the product of extended working sessions in multiple libraries. Even more of this dissertation was conceived in coffee shops—some in bustling and dense urban neighborhoods, others in quaint small towns and suburban sprawl. Sometimes I wrote in my home; sometimes I wrote in other people’s homes. I summarized Arendt’s work on totalitarianism in my family cabin in the Pennsylvanian Laurel Highlands mountains. A small town in Ontario was the backdrop for crafting this dissertation’s typological framework. A reading of Thoreau’s *Walden* was partly written at a hostel on the wintry coast of Iceland during a sandstorm. As I write this very paragraph I am on an early morning flight to the west coast. Offices, airports, lobbies, campfires, porches, train stations, classrooms, hammocks, tents, kitchens, and couches all share a claim of the work that follows.
What is it that connects such a diverse list of places beside my use of them? In all of these places I am alone. While in some cases I am miles removed from the nearest neighbor, and in others I am enveloped in the busy clockwork of a community, I am still alone. Even when I am joined by a fellow sojourner in the dissertation process to write at the very same table, I am alone. We are both alone. To be alone in this task is a necessity. In the moment that I write, I engage with the writings of others and the ideas I conceive, and no one else. If I am interrupted and my aloneness is shattered, I am removed from that space of thought. I can return to being alone, and yet I do not feel lonely.

I venture that I have spent an inordinate amount of time alone in my lifetime, having enjoyed the peacefulness of tents and cabins, canoes and kayaks for extended periods of time. It was in the quiet of my mountaintop retreat, working as an outdoor guide, that I became interested in what it meant to truly be alone, especially when confronted by the astonishment of others that I could tolerate so much time away from the company of others. To be alone is a familiar yet uncanny phenomenon, something experienced by all but articulated by few. It does not require the physical separation from others but can result from it. It may overwhelm us and force us to feel lonely, at which point we sternly reject it. On the other hand, we can require it and seek it out in order to stimulate our thinking and productivity. Any dissertation—surely not just my own—is arguably a compilation of the author’s time alone. While this is certainly true of the project that follows, the intent of this dissertation is to face being alone on its own terms, to get to the thing itself of aloneness as a phenomenon in the human experience. From here on bracketing my preceding presuppositions, I can now start with a deceptively simple query: what is “alone”?
Central Research Question

Oftentimes, to understand what something is, we must also understand what it is not. To wit: in *Enchiridion*, St. Augustine of Hippo assessed that evil was not the opposite of good, but rather a lack of good, and consequently “we enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the evil”. Augustine’s framing offers significant opportunities to understand not just evil or good but the relationship of the two. Perhaps far too often, the communication discipline, due to the expansive nature and application of its inherent scope, overlooks opportunities afforded by a similar approach that considers what interpersonal communication is not—or, more precisely, being alone. The power of communication is in its ubiquity to unite person to person, to establish togetherness; however, despite the well-known axiom that one "cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967, p. 49), much could be learned about communication by assessing the nature of not communicating The absence of communication to the individual is to be alone, a state that for purposes of this project will be considered as the collective term “aloneness.”

One must then ask, as I did to conclude the preceding epoche, what is it to be alone? Both the word and the experience are taken for granted as givens that are easily understood because they are so commonplace, but actually trying to answer the question with any degree of clarity and consistency would immediately prove difficult. We are tempted to equate it to mere loneliness as though they are purely synonymous, but further provocation reveals that loneliness is a feeling or an emotion that is derived from being alone, yet being alone does not always prompt it (Thoreau, 1854). Rather than being a universally negative experience, at times we actually crave aloneness— we actively seek out a state of being alone in order to relax or work or read or contemplate, and under these conditions we are not lonely but rather content in our
solitude. This means that loneliness is but one of several possible results of aloneness rather than a concrete alternative term, a potential result but not the only reaction. At this point, one might also then find aloneness to be a physical state, one that is described as the proximal removal of others or distance between them; for example, there is a correlation between loneliness and communicating by cell phone rather than in person (Jin & Parke, 2013). Yet most people can also deflate this line of thinking from their own interpersonal interactions, as it is a pervasive experience to often feel alone despite being amongst many other people. The solitary shopper in a crowded market, for example, may feel very much alone as he squeezes through the crowd in a bustling market, while the solo trekker deep in a forest may feel very much connected as she reads a caring note from a loved tucked away in her backpack. So while lack of proximity may cause one to feel alone, it is by no means a necessary antecedent, as even those in well-connected social networks can be subject to the experience of loneliness (Cacioppo, Fowler, & Christakis, 2009).

Such preliminary thoughts reveal that aloneness is both commonplace, an intrinsic experience of the human condition, but also complicated and therefore worthy of a more stringent analysis. There are essential question marks as to what aloneness is as well as how it is actually experienced, both under extraordinary circumstances as well as within everyday life that beg to be contemplated through the philosophy of communication. Furthermore, such exploration is an apt way of adding to the discipline itself. In the remainder of this introduction, I will propose a central research question, establish a methodology, provide a brief overview of the project’s intended chapters, and finally conclude by arguing for a rationale and contribution to the discipline of communication.
The introduction of this prospectus above implies a multiplicity of potential questions emerging from the topic of aloneness, and as such the task now turns to outlining one that will guide the dissertation. Because the topic of aloneness by its very nature is a disconnection from the traditional views of communication (e.g. Miller, 1966; Hoben, 1954; or Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p. 254), there is a significant risk that a dissertation about it may stray too far from the discipline. With this considered, the framing of the central research question will be essential in directing this project’s scope within communication’s periphery, yet it must remain sufficiently broad in order to ensure a wholeness of the pursuit. Under these conditions, I propose the following: this dissertation will seek to answer how the divergent experiences of aloneness are both complementary to and a function of interpersonal communication and how such a connection further elucidates the philosophy of communication. Additionally, because aloneness, as we have seen, manifests itself in a variety of different forms, a major task in answering this question will be to offer a framework for how these divergences can be best understood—that is to say that this dissertation will not only consider the meaning of aloneness and its connection to communication but also clarify and individually explore its essential modes of existence. Because this question inherently explores a phenomenon in the human experience, phenomenology will be employed as the central methodology to explore the correlates of aloneness.

**Methodology**

The crux of this dissertation will be to clarify the myriad terms and approaches for the notion of aloneness by reconsidering the way in which one actually experiences being alone. To reduce the discord and ambiguity with regards to an otherwise very commonplace experience
that is part of the human condition, I propose that phenomenology is the worthiest methodological approach to achieve such goals. Doing so will enable the dissertation to reconsider the phenomenon of aloneness as it presents itself to the individual through highly descriptive means. To clarify this argument, I will further assess what phenomenology consists of, when it was developed, and how it has already been utilized as a methodological approach for studies of topic related to aloneness.

According to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, phenomenology “consists in an analysis and description of consciousness,” but it otherwise lacks a formal philosophical system (Kockelmans, 1995). Dermot Moran (2002) notes that phenomenology is, above all else, a philosophical methodology rather than a philosophical system, or “a way of seeing” rather than a set of doctrines” (p. 1). As a method, phenomenology seeks to return to the things themselves, to explore the world and our experiences through meticulous description of how they are encountered consciously. The intent of a phenomenological approach is, as Moran explains, “to illuminate issues in a radical, unprejudiced manner, paying close attention to the evidence that presents itself to our grasp or intuition” (p. 1). This careful attention to detail of phenomena has been at the heart of phenomenology from its very inception as a mode of philosophical observation. This work is, of course, not merely limited to a philosophical pursuit; however, it can be argued that in “the realms where human communication and philosophy meet there is significant overlap” (Cook and Holba, 2008, p. xvi). Phenomenology, then, is particularly apt to be a method for pursuits in the philosophy of communication, embracing and elucidating this immense and rich overlap where aloneness most resides.

The roots of phenomenology can be traced back to the continental philosophical tradition of the early twentieth century. One of the earliest progenitors of the phenomenological method is
often traced back to the work of German psychologist Franz Clemens von Brentano (1838—1917). While his writings were primarily oriented toward establishing an empirical psychology, Brentano (1874) placed significant emphasis on “presentations” and classes of mental phenomena which are presented to us directly. Much of these elucidations in phenomena, however, would be extricated— and critiqued— into the philosophy of Edmund Husserl (1859—1938), who had been one of Brentano’s most prominent students (Moran and Mooney, 2002, p. 59). Husserl is to some degree responsive to the crisis of the European sciences and instead seeks to return to ‘the things themselves’ through phenomenology. “Analytic phenomenology,” Husserl asserts, “is concerned ‘among other things’ with ‘presentations’” and “more precisely, concerned with those presentations to which expressions has been given” (1913). As Husserl’s conception of phenomenology would shift and expand throughout his career, his colleague at Freiburg, Martin Heidegger (1889—1976), would work to bring the phenomenological method into prominence for continental philosophy (Moran and Mooney, 2002, p. 245). In his most important contribution to the literature, Being and Time, Heidegger reasserts the position of phenomenology as “primarily a methodological conception” which “does not characterize the what of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter, but rather the how of that research” (1927). Furthermore, Heidegger stresses the “maxim” that phenomenology is oriented “‘To the things themselves!’” (1927). Since Heidegger, phenomenology has expanded beyond its continental heritage to be used as a philosophical methodology for such important figures as Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida, to explore a near limitless array of subjects that arise in the human experience.

The utilization of phenomenology as a methodology is perhaps essential when exploring the topic of aloneness; however it is not entirely a novel endeavor. Loneliness, for example, has
found itself in the periphery of phenomenologists from time to time. Karin Dahlberg (2007) published an article in which a phenomenological lens was applied to twenty-six interviews of people who felt lonely in order to accrue the essence of loneliness. Clark Moustakas (1989) also attempted find the root of loneliness through phenomenology, finding it essential to the human condition. Such explorations, however, are deficient in two important aspects with regards to the scope of this project: (1) most efforts, such as these, consider loneliness only, leaving other conditions of aloneness underexplored, and (2) communication is approached perhaps implicitly, but communication does not find a role in the foreground of these phenomenological investigations of aloneness. This means that phenomenology has already been proven to be an effective medium for exploring some modes of aloneness; however, there is still a large space for further provocation, particularly with a focus on the philosophy of communication.

Chapter Overview

Having now established a research question and methodology for answering it, this dissertation can now move forward with its investigation of aloneness as a communication artifact. The remaining structure of this dissertation can be thought of as having two distinct sections. The first two chapters work in unison to first establish some necessary notions of aloneness derived from the extant literature which can then be used to develop a typology of aloneness. The subsequent three chapters maintain the bulk of the second section of this work by exploring each type of aloneness individually through a representative philosopher to serve as an appropriate phenomenological lens. The final chapter will seek to reconnect both sections more distinctly to the philosophy of communication.
Chapter I: Aloneness and its Correlates

The first chapter will provide an overview of the existent literature with regards to aloneness, similar to the brief overview in the previous section but certainly much more expansive. Because aloneness has been studied under differing terminology, the scope of the literature review will by necessity include various correlates of aloneness, including but not limited to: loneliness, isolation, solitude, alienation, exile, lonesomeness, abandonment, hermitude, and solitariness. While the literature review will open with an explication of relevant literature in the communication discipline such as that of Turkle (2011; 2015) the review will extend into interdisciplinary reviews to include the wealth of research from philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology, literature, suicidology, and other fields. Because the interdisciplinary literature on the topic of aloneness and its correlates is expansive, this literature review does not intend to be exhaustive, but rather to be representative of the diverse perspectives on what constitutes aloneness and how it affects people from a wide variety of approaches. The chapter will conclude with summary observations extrapolated from the scholarship covered.

Chapter II: Typologies of Aloneness

If the literature review of the first chapter reveals the chaos of aloneness as a subject for academia, then the primary goal of the second chapter is to instill some semblance of order upon it. As such, this chapter will examine and assess various typologies of aloneness in order to establish a working framework to continue from. Sociological and psychological dichotomies of being alone are the norm, but many philosophical approaches exist as well. Rubin Gotesky (1965) argues for a phenomenological typology that divides aloneness into loneliness, isolation, and solitude—though Gotesky’s distinction between loneliness and isolation is vague at best. A
stronger typology comes from an article published by David A. Diekema (1992), in which he categorizes modes of aloneness as a function of social form. This methodology is based on the relationship of the self and other which dictates the resultant form of aloneness: “other-imposed” aloneness creates isolation, “self-imposed” aloneness creates escapism, and “mutually constructed” aloneness creates solitude.

Despite examining many proposals for an aloneness system, this chapter will argue that Diekema’s typology is the most accurate portrayal of the modes of aloneness for communication scholarship. The primary strength of this model is in the manner in which it foregrounds the communicative relationship between the self and the other, ultimately using this framing to categorize the experience of being alone. Further, while Diekema is working from a symbolic interactionist perspective, the manner in which he arrives at his typology lends itself particularly well to phenomenology. As a result, the next three chapters intend to open each mode of aloneness more comprehensively by grounding each in the work of a representative phenomenologist—–isolation through Hannah Arendt, escapism through Emmanuel Levinas, and solitude through Henry David Thoreau.

Chapter III: Arendt and the Phenomenology of Isolation

The third chapter will be the first of three phenomenological investigations of a specific mode of aloneness as derived from Diekema’s typology, together forming the heart of the dissertation. This chapter, as the title suggests, establishes a phenomenology of isolation as an other-imposed form of aloneness by drawing from the work of political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt. Arendt’s work is expansive, influenced by and responsive to the political upheaval of the twentieth century and World War II (e.g., Arnett, 2013), and though her work
certainly often maintains a political flair, she is also attentive to the human condition and often employs phenomenology as a philosophical methodology.

Arendt’s elucidation of isolation is relatively brief but content-rich, tucked away in the final pages of her major political treatise The Origins of Totalitarianism. Like Diekema, Arendt is careful to separate isolation from solitude, the latter a mutually constructed aloneness in which I am “together with myself” and conduct “a dialogue between me and myself” (p. 476). The result is a positive situation to accomplish thought and work. When isolation manifests, on the other hand, it “becomes altogether unbearable” (p. 475). Arendt situates isolation as a condition in the “political sphere” but it can also emerge in the “sphere of social intercourse” (p. 474) in the form of loneliness which she goes on to define as “the experience of being abandoned by everything and everybody” (p. 476). While Arendt oscillates between considerations of solitude and isolation, it is clear that her primary issue is with the latter and the loneliness that can result from it. This chapter will outline Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation while also situating it within her broader work on totalitarianism and further extending it by arguing that it arises only upon the deprivation of dialogue.

**Chapter IV: Levinas and the Phenomenology of Escapism**

Following the phenomenology of isolation, this chapter will turn to a phenomenology of escapism, which I contend is an inversion of isolation. While the previous form of aloneness is always imposed by the other when the self desires otherwise, escapism can only be actuated by the self when the relations and callings of the other still persist. If the self undergoes abandonment under isolation, escapism is best characterized as the self abandoning the other. This immediately evokes notions of the major themes and metaphors throughout the
phenomenology and ethics of Emmanuel Levinas, and his early *On Escape* (1935) is well-suited to be the primary source for this chapter.

One of the primary tasks of Levinas’s phenomenology is to resituate the Other rather than engage otherness in reduction. In *On Escape*, however, his focus is on the self and the call of escape, which he describes as “the need to get out of oneself; that is, *to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself [soi-meme]*” (Levinas, 2003, p. 55). Levinas passes through the metaphors of need, satisfaction, pleasure, shame, and malaise in an effort to uncover the “world-weariness” and “revolt” that escape constitutes (2003, p. 52). This chapter will extend this metaphor of escape, as I argue that in the face of the inherent impossibility of escape from oneself we turn instead to escapism, the escape from the other, which Levinas elucidates in his later work on the primacy of the face of the other. Levinas proclaims that “the face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation” (1969), but I argue that it is in escapism that we decline the invitation of the face of the other, cutting off the opportunity for meaningful discourse and creating dilemmas recognizable in communication ethics.

**Chapter V: Thoreau and the Phenomenology of Solitude**

In the fifth chapter, I will turn the focus away from the negative forms of aloneness—isolation and escape—to explore, instead, the phenomenology of solitude and its potential benefits. Unlike isolation and escape, solitude occurs when there is a mutuality to cease communication. Perhaps no philosopher has considered solitude more thoroughly in both thought and practice than Henry David Thoreau. Through Thoreau’s phenomenology, the benefits and necessity of solitude can be ascertained with significant clarity.
While most often associated with transcendentalism, it has often been noted that Thoreau’s approach to understanding nature and the senses most closely follows a phenomenological methodology, despite predating its formal development in continental philosophy (Furtak 2005). For example, Christina Root (2005) has situated Thoreau’s philosophical endeavors, particularly within his expansive journal, as a practice of Goethe’s phenomenology of nature and language. Similarly, Jonathan McKenzie (2016) centers the metaphor of “wildness” in Thoreau’s work in order to establish it as the key foundation of a phenomenology of freedom (p. 107-134). While such interpretations are an important stepping stone, this chapter of the dissertation will contend that much of Thoreau’s philosophy explicates a phenomenology of solitude.

As a defining metaphor of Thoreau’s phenomenology of the senses, solitude is derived first from the work of his mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson in self-reliance and extended significantly in his second book, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. As a result, *Walden* is the primary source for this chapter, though supplemented from some of Thoreau’s relevant essays. It is in *Walden*, after all, that Thoreau famously proclaims, “I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude” (p. 128). But Thoreau looks beyond mere aphorisms, instead looking to ascertain the actual experience of being alone, and while he clearly has found comfortability in his own solitude, he also recognizes that it differs greatly from other experiences of aloneness that exacerbate loneliness. As a result, Thoreau considers solitude as a peculiar phenomenon prompting him to chase the question, “What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary?” (p. 126). The overall argument of this chapter is that Thoreau’s efforts to address the intrinsic paradox of aloneness stemming from this
question result in a phenomenological meditation on solitude, offering essential perspectives on its necessity for the development of the self.

Chapter VI: A Return to Dialogue

The final chapter will seek to resituate the phenomenology of aloneness into the realm of communication by attaching it to dialogue. The argument developed in this chapter is the most important argument of the dissertation: that aloneness is not a thing in and of itself, but rather aloneness is a lack of present interpersonal dialogue. This contention is the origin of the defining metaphor of the dissertation—privatio dialogus as the condition of aloneness, roughly adapted from Augustine’s definition of evil, privatio boni. This chapter will return to isolation, escapism, and solitude and observe how each mode of aloneness is manifested from the privation of dialogue.

The primary text of this chapter is I and Thou (2010), in which Martin Buber develops a twofold framework for understanding phenomenological dialogue. Buber crafts two primary word combinations: I-It, in which the other remains an object, and I-Thou, in which the I approaches the other through the “world of relation” (2010, p. 6). In this chapter I contend that aloneness is the upheaval of the I from the world of relation Buber describes, and that the way in which this upheaval is brought about dictates the mode of aloneness we experience as a result. Isolation and escapism both represent the realm of the I-It, where dialogue has been retrenched against the wishes of the self or the other; in escapism, we transform the other into an it, whereas in isolation, the self experiences being cast as an it. Solitude still maintains the dynamic of being separated from dialogue; however, it is divorced of the ‘it’ in an I-It altogether; the self becomes the I which can engage in reflection. Solitude, then, is in a careful dialectic with dialogue—its separation is a necessary but temporary state that allows the self to step back into the world of
relation, fulfilled and well-defined. This last argument is the dissertation's most prominent contribution to the philosophy of communication and will be followed by directions for future research to conclude this final chapter.

**Rationale and Contribution**

Given that aloneness is inherently a lack of communication, the contribution for such a topic may not immediately be obvious for communication scholarship. However, by framing the central research question such that aloneness is reconstituted as inherently in constant tension with dialogue—which, according to Baxter and Montgomery (1999), is “characterized by the presence of at least two distinct voices” (p. 25)—the project will ultimately prove useful for the philosophy of communication and future research endeavors. With that being said, the specific justification for this project is threefold.

First, because the communication literature on the topic of aloneness is at best sparse, the project will help to solidify aloneness as a topic that is indeed of great importance and relevance for the philosophy of communication and the communication discipline. Second, through both interdisciplinary review and phenomenological investigation, this dissertation will untangle the overlapping and conflicting ways in which the correlates of aloneness, such as loneliness, isolation, and solitude, are utilized in relevant literature, prescribing instead a consistent framework to understand the differing experiences of being alone. Finally, the most unique contribution of this dissertation to the discipline of communication emerges from its final argument: that aloneness is a phenomenological counterpart to dialogue.

In 1959, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann lamented that psychological and psychiatric research has for far too long ignored loneliness as a subject of inquiry. Over a decade later, Robert S. Weiss (1973) made a similar declaration for the state of sociological research on loneliness.
Since that time, both of their respective fields have made significant strides in studying loneliness more seriously. The same, however, can hardly be said for the discipline communication. While research efforts exist from communication scholars, it is doubtlessly incomplete. As such, I am invoking the same call-to-arms as Fromm-Reichmann and Weiss and extending it by insisting that the communication discipline should more frequently consider not just loneliness, but aloneness in all of its correlates as a topic for research. This dissertation is but one offering to that much larger conversation.
CHAPTER I:
Aloneness and its Correlates

“But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god.”

—Aristotle

Introduction

As this dissertation seeks to answer what it is to be alone, it must first be noted that it is by no means the first work to ask such a question. The confluence of the discipline, approach, and methodology of this dissertation may make it novel, but it simply adds to an ongoing conversation that has existed in western thought since the roots of academia. The various voices of this conversation must of course be acknowledged in order to properly place the task of exploring aloneness for the philosophy of communication into the proper context of humanity’s age-old contemplation of being alone. As such, this chapter consists primarily of an interdisciplinary literature review followed by essential implications.

Tracking the relevant literature of the study of aloneness for the communication discipline, however, is a difficult task for two reasons. First, aloneness is itself an expansive term with a long list of correlates, such as, but not limited to, loneliness (e.g. Gotesky, 1965), isolation (e.g. Arendt, 1951), solitude (e.g. Thoreau, 1854), escapism (e.g. Levinas, 2003), lonesomeness (e.g. Vonnegut, 2010) and alienation (e.g. Marx, 1954). These terms are not used in a consistently precise manner, and as such must be understood within each author’s own usage.
Secondly, while communication scholars have made great strides in covering some areas of aloneness and its correlates (e.g. Zakahi & Duran, 1985), with loneliness as a particularly notable example, its essential perception as the inverse of communication has often left it relegated to outside the scope of the discipline. This means that in an effort to resituate aloneness as a communication concept, extensive attention must be paid to literature from myriad other disciplines.

The following literature review, which is by no means exhaustive, will present just a few representative works on aloneness and/or its correlates from a variety of broad disciplines. Given that the purpose of this dissertation is as a philosophy of communication, the first section will summarize scholarship on aloneness from the perspectives of communication scholars. Because of the limitations of scope in aloneness research in communication, the subsequent sections will review books and articles from philosophy, psychology, sociology, suicidology, literature, popular culture, and religion, each of which addressing aloneness in one or more of its forms. Because this task could be carried ad nauseum due to the broadness of the topic, I will instead focus on literature from each discipline that is either novel or foundational in some way. Furthermore, the literature review will not address the work of the representative philosophers used in the next chapters (Diekema, Arendt, Levinas, and Thoreau, respectively) as they will be covered in depth later. Following the literature review, I will synthesize the most important aspects of aloneness that can be drawn from the extant research. These conclusions will serve as coordinates by which the remainder of this study of aloneness can be guided.
Communication

It is, of course, essential to understand what is already known about aloneness and its correlates in the communication discipline. Perhaps the most extended exploration of aloneness from a communication perspective can be found across the various works of media ecologist and psychologist Sherry Turkle. In *Alone Together* (2011), for example, Turkle compiles the results of hundreds of interviews to assess the manner in which various digital and robotic technologies have affected the sensation of being alone. Turkle succinctly states her argument that “[p]eople are lonely. The network is seductive. But if we are always on, we may deny ourselves the rewards of solitude” (2011, p. 3). Turkle makes it clear that aloneness is subject to both negative and positive states, and that the oversaturation of connected technology may in effect disrupt our ability to transform that aloneness into a positive state of solitude. To make this point, Turkle turns toward the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau and his refuge at Walden Pond as she nears the end of this work (2011, p. 274-277). Turkle ultimately interprets Thoreau’s pursuit of solitude as a call to return to more meaningful forms of communication.

Turkle continues questioning the role of communication technologies in exacerbating experiences of aloneness in *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (2015). If *Alone Together* presented the essential problem of technological isolation, *Reclaiming Conversation* stands as the solution. Additionally, Turkle returns to Thoreau’s philosophy, but rather than invoking him in concluding thoughts, she utilizes Thoreau’s metaphor of ‘three chairs’ as the defining framework of her entire book. Throughout this framework, Turkle posits a return to meaningful face-to-face conversation as the primary antidote for the kind of loneliness that an increasingly mediated society has fallen prey to. Turkle is careful to note that the book’s “argument is not anti-technology. It’s pro-conversation” (2015, p. 25). But for Turkle,
conversation is only possible when people are also willing to engage in solitude, the state in which “we prepare ourselves to come to conversation with something to say that is authentic” (2015, p. 10). Authenticity is derived from solitude, which Turkle defines as “the capacity to be contentedly and constructively alone” (2015, p. 65). Between both of Turkle’s major works on aloneness, it is clear that it is distinctly connected to communication in both negative and positive ways.

Turkle is by no means the only or even the first scholar to examine the role of communication technologies and resultant loneliness. In one study, Borae Jin and Namkee Park (2013) assessed mobile voice communication through the framework of the social skills deficit hypothesis. The authors utilized data from surveys to identify the difference of frequency of feelings of loneliness during face-to-face conversations and telephone conversations (Jin & Parke, 2013). Jin and Parke (2013) hypothesized and the results confirmed that there is a demonstrable correlation between loneliness and communicating by cell phone rather instead of communicating in person.

Not all communication scholarship on aloneness, however, is entirely focused on the influence of communication technology on loneliness. In one such instance, Walter R. Zakahi and Robert L. Duran (1982) sought a connection between loneliness and communication anxiety and communication competence. Analyzing statistics yielded two formations of loneliness as a communication issue for Zakahi and Duran (1982): (1) loneliness arising from a lack of intimacy with a romantic partner; and (2) loneliness arising from a dwindling or undersized social network and companionship. And while communication competence did predict loneliness, the authors found no correlation between loneliness and communication anxiety (Zakahi & Duran, 1982). In a follow-up study, Zakahi and Duran (1985) offered additional predictive factors for loneliness.
Social experience, social confirmation, and dyadic apprehension were confirmed by the authors as communicative contributors to loneliness (Zakahi & Duran, 1985).

Outside of the role of communication competence in loneliness, communication theory has also considered its relevance in relation to stigma. Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) defines stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3) which reduces someone “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). Working from this understanding of stigma, Rachel A. Smith developed a model to explain the way stigma functions in communication. Smith (2007) defines stigma communication as “the messages spread through communities to teach their members to recognize the disgraced (i.e., recognizing stigmata) and to react accordingly” which she further argues follow predictable patterns (p. 464). As such, the Model of Stigma Communication consists of (1) message choices, (2) message reactions, and (3) message effects (Smith, 2007). While Smith notes the probability of loneliness as a message reaction, it is in the message effects where aloneness—in the form of isolation—appears most significant. The model concludes that stigma communication creates three primary message effects, one of which is to “[i]solate and remove” those marked by a stigma (2007, p. 463). The forced isolation of stigma media effects has emotional consequences, as stigmatized people will be lonely enough to suffer from anxiety and stress (Smith, 2007, p. 475). The end result of the Stigma Communication Model is that some forms of communication can ultimately be used to isolate others, leading to negative feelings of aloneness.

**Philosophy**

While communication scholars have sometimes considered elements of aloneness in their work, some other disciplines have a more robust body of literature on this topic, particularly in
philosophy. Early philosophers often found themselves concerned with issues related to being alone. A prominent example from antiquity emerges from the *Discourses* of Greek philosopher Epictetus. This work covers wide variety of topics, including rhetoric, but in Chapter 13 of Book 3 of *Discourses*, Epictetus turns his concerns to understanding aloneness. Epictetus sees a binary of monos and eremos, or solitude and loneliness, respectively. Epictetus maintains a primarily critical stance towards solitude, which he refers to as “the condition of a helpless person” (3.13). He is further careful to distinguish, however, that merely being alone does not necessarily equate to solitude or loneliness (Epictetus, 3.13). Rather, Epictetus argues that “it is not the sight of a human creature which removes us from solitude, but the sight of one who is faithful and modest and helpful to us” (3.13). This marks an early trend in the philosophy of aloneness, in which analysis makes clear that merely being alone does not have a universal reaction of feeling alone.

Philosophical investigations of aloneness continued, and expanded, well into the modern era. One of the most notable examples of this is Karl Marx’s theory of alienation. Unlike loneliness or solitude, alienation is a complex condition intrinsic to the rise of capitalism (Marx, 1954). For Marx, it is in others that one affirms herself or himself, yet the labor system following the rise of industry complicates this. The laborer, according to Marx’s theory, is alienated by industry in multiple ways: from her product, from production, from her essence, and from others. As a central concept to Marxism, we may conclude that, through alienation, industrial societies, due to their very nature, must be built on aloneness.

In a more positive light, aloneness was one of the most important concepts for the American transcendental philosophy movement in the 1800’s. While Henry David Thoreau is most commonly associated with writing about being alone, particularly in *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* in which he considers “solitude” to be his “companion” (1854, p. 128), Thoreau
derived his thoughts from those of his mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson’s contributions to the philosophy of aloneness arise in two metaphors: solitude and self-reliance. The former, solitude, appears throughout Emerson’s corpus in both his philosophy and poetry, but is explored most thoroughly in his essay “Solitude and Society” (1870). In this work, Emerson (1870) describes solitude as a “necessity” for an enjoyable and moral life, as it offers respite from “vulgar” societies and an opportunity to seek “genius” and “civility”. Similarly, self-reliance is an ideal of high regard to Emerson (1983), in which an individual has gained a mastery of solitude. Self-reliance is the ultimate embodiment of freedom, at once in tune with nature and virtue (Emerson, 1983). Both solitude and self-reliance, for Emerson, are preferable to society yet achieved by only the moral minority.

A contemporary of Emerson’s, William Rounseville Alger followed up on the philosophical interpretations of solitude in his own expansive treatise. Alger (1867) specifically invokes the work of Thoreau, among a score of others, as an icon of American solitude. In particular, Alger (1867) starts by identifying types of natural landscapes which evoke solitude, such as forests, mountains, and the ocean. From these locales, Alger moves from the former, which he calls “physical solitude” to the human experience of being alone, which he refers to as “spiritual loneliness” (1867, p. 32). When one enters into the latter, it is a sort of solitude which Alger understands as “the reaction of the soul without an object and without a product” (1867, p. 33). Alger (1867) goes on to assert a variety of sensations and emotions which can contribute to the solitude of spiritual loneliness, including occupation, grief, individuality, and genius. And while Alger (1867) posits many helpful moral functions of engaging in solitude, he concludes in warning of the perils of becoming too disconnected from companionship.
In the philosophy of the twentieth century, the movement of existentialism has engaged with various metaphors for aloneness. Ralph Harper (1965) collected into one work otherwise scattered ruminations of aloneness from continental existentialists, which he refers to as “metaphysical homelessness”. Harper traces this concept originally to the fiction of Stendhal and his theme of the “étranger” which, he argues, influenced the metaphor of solitude across the works of Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard, Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, and German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, each of whom are essential in the early development of the existentialist philosophical framework (1965, p. 5). For Harper and the major existentialists he focuses on, solitude and loneliness are clearly essential parts of human existence, yet encountered differently from person to person.

Harper’s expansion of aloneness into multiple correlates was concurrently expanded even further by Rubin Gotesky (1965). For Gotesky (1965), to understand what it meant to be alone was a phenomenological question, and, in that spirit, he endeavored to return to the thing itself. As a result, Gotesky (1965) proposed a four-pronged classification by which to understand and classify the general phenomenon of being alone: aloneness, loneliness, isolation, and solitude. Aloneness is defined by actual “distance” or “interval”, that is, the “spatial” or “temporal” separation of one from the other, respectively (Gotesky, 1965, p. 215). Aloneness can become loneliness when he or she perceives that their aloneness is the result of rejection yet desires inclusion (Gotesky, 1965). Isolation differs in that it is a “rational recognition” of unwavering conditions which separates someone from others (Gotesky, 1965, p. 227). Finally, when the alone individual is able to escape the pain of loneliness or isolation, they have achieved a state of solitude (Gotesky, 1965).
Conversely, Ben Lazare Mijuskovic (2012) adamantly rejects the whole of Gotesky’s typology of aloneness. Mijuskovic argues that aloneness is the entire state of the human condition, that man is “not only psychologically alone but metaphysically isolated as well” (2012, p. 60). The overwhelming pervasiveness of aloneness drives all of human activity, with every action serving only as a means of futilely escaping it (Mijuskovic, 2012). However, the futility of escaping aloneness drives Mijuskovic’s critique of Gotesky: because it cannot be truly avoided, all aloneness is loneliness. For Mijuskovic (2012), there are no positive variations of aloneness such as solitude, and this is itself the motivation for civilization itself.

Phenomenologist Clark E. Moustakas (1989) also identifies aloneness as the center point of the human condition. More specifically, Moustakas (1989) claims that it is loneliness that is the intrinsic sensation of existence. And while such loneliness is so often a source of despair, Moustakas (1990) argues that is also a necessity for one to search for the self as well as expand the horizons of humanity. Like Mijuskovic, Moustakas (1989) believes that man has routinely sought to escape the grasp of being alone despite the impossibility of the task. Unlike Mijuskovic, however, Moustakas (1989) sees that coming to terms with the condition of being alone is indeed an enviable resolution, and that the proper recognition of aloneness as a condition of existence allows loneliness to be just as rich and fruitful as companionship.

In brief summation, the philosophy of aloneness is well-trodden territory without a total sense of cohesion. Many philosophers agree that being alone is at least to some degree an inherent and inescapable aspect of the human condition, if not it’s very definition. They disagree, however, in its complexity of forms and its general beneficence. While Epictetus believed aloneness was a simple binary, Gotesky demonstrated a complicated four-state typology to describe it. Emerson found being alone to be an ideal to be achieved, while Mijuskovic argued
that all we ever do is to avoid feeling alone. Aloneness, then, is complex; it is a philosophically deep conception that is central to the world of existence yet difficult to grasp and articulate, an issue that the succeeding sections will show across other disciplines as well.

**Psychology**

The field of psychology has understandably become interested in and concerned with aloneness, specifically in (though not limited to) its correlate of loneliness. Loneliness is not classified as a psychological condition in the current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5). That being said, however, it does play a prominent role as a symptom of a multitude of possible diagnoses according to the DSM-5, particularly in disorders extending from sociation and most notable with variants of depression. Despite its presence within the diagnoses of such common conditions, loneliness is still not even indexed, let alone given its own entry, in the DSM-5, but efforts to amend this oversight do exist.

Richard Booth (2000), for example, argues that loneliness is sufficiently problematic to mental health to be classified as a mental disorder, despite the present difficulties in definition. Booth (2000) goes on to establish four dimensions of loneliness as a potential starting place for diagnosis: “relational deficiency,” “social skills,” “cognitive,” and “affective” dimensions. Booth’s work is representative of many efforts to make the case for loneliness as a psychological issue but is unique in that he attempts to synthesize myriad prior approaches while calling for future reconsideration of his own work—it is an invitation to continue conversation on loneliness within the psychology discipline.

Other work in psychology with regards to loneliness has further considered the difficulties of its overlap with clinical depression. In an edited volume exploring depression as
result of interactional difficulties, Jody C. Dill and Craig A. Anderson (1999) consider loneliness to be a part of an overlapping triad, alongside depression and shyness. Dill and Anderson (1999) seek to reorient loneliness (as well as shyness) as a correlate to depression rather than a subcategory or symptom of depression as the common literature in psychology tends to do. They further argue, then, that loneliness should be understood as featuring factors and characteristics that are unique from as well as common to shyness and depression (Dill & Anderson, 1999, p. 98). Dill and Anderson go on to suggest that “high anxiety,” “poor social skills,” “lack of social networks” and “shyness” are the major antecedents of the condition of loneliness (1999, p. 107-109). Lastly, they consider various treatment options for loneliness by reviewing myriad prior studies (Dill & Anderson, 1999, p. 115). The work herein is crucial for a psychological approach to aloneness, as it helps to resituate the interconnected relationship of loneliness and depression, but also recognizes that being alone can have vastly differing effects on different individuals and different situations; loneliness is but a response to particular circumstances of being alone.

Studies of loneliness are so prevalent in psychology literature, in fact, that much of it utilizes a standardized system to quantify it in patients. Dan Russell, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Mary Lund Ferguson (1978) first proposed the creation of an empirical approach to loneliness in what would become known as the UCLA Loneliness Scale. In this original test, the authors utilized a survey covering twenty items with UCLA students as the respondents (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978). The UCLA Loneliness Scale would be revised in 1980 in order to prevent response bias by participants (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and updated again in 1996 to simplify the wording of survey questions to increase the accuracy of the results (Russell, 1996). The original version and Version 3 of the UCLA Loneliness Scale, as its current form is known, have been widely utilized in social psychology to provide empirical data of lonely sensations in
larger populations than just the individual (e.g. Weeks, Michela, Peplau & Bragg, 1980; Hojat, 1982; Austin, 1983; Knight, Chisholm, March, & Godfrey, 1988; Hartshorne, 1993; and McWhirter, 1990). Indeed, applications of the Loneliness Scale have been frequently used and deployed in a wide variety of contexts.

Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm also considers the psychology of aloneness, but rather than loneliness, his work is grounded in a theme of freedom. In his 1941 volume, *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm explores the shifting relationship of positive freedom and negative freedom in the twentieth century, assessing a “diagnosis rather than prognosis”. In seeking the source of melancholy arising in modernity, Fromm (2013) arrives at aloneness, or, more specifically, what he refers to as “moral aloneness”. Fromm (2013) writes:

To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death. This relatedness to others is not identical with physical contact. An individual may be alone in a physical sense for many years and yet he may be related to ideas, values, or at least social patterns that give him a feeling of communion and "belonging". On the other hand, he may live among people and yet be overcome with an utter feeling of isolation, the outcome of which, if it transcends a certain limit, is the state of insanity which schizophrenic disturbances represent. This lack of relatedness to values, symbols, patterns, we may call moral aloneness and state that moral aloneness is as intolerable as the physical aloneness, or rather that physical aloneness becomes unbearable only if it implies also moral aloneness. (Fromm, 2013)

Fromm’s description of aloneness, overall, is rather effective, as he carefully notes the separation of proximity as a precondition for being alone and foregrounds the role of disintegrated contact
with others. He further suggests two outlets for alleviating the psychological conditions that moral aloneness bears—love and work (Fromm, 2013). While Fromm deviates from the more theoretical or quantitative approaches to aloneness that most of the psychological literature utilizes, his understanding of the human experience of isolation and its connection to morality is an invaluable contribution.

Some psychologists have argued that aloneness is not just a part of life, but further that contemporary American culture is especially isolating. Jacqueline Olds and Richard S. Schwartz (2009) contend that many psychological conditions share a sense of loneliness and isolation as their root cause. In looking at various studies and datasets, they conclude that over the last several decades, citizens of the United States are increasingly experiencing loneliness (Olds & Schwartz, 2009). Olds and Schwartz (2009) identify a score of root causes for the issue, including an increased emphasis on being busy, changes in living arrangements, and, above all, the emergence of electronic communication media. Ironically, however, in spite of the increased levels of loneliness, Olds and Schwartz (2009) contend that loneliness is a stigmatized topic in American culture which few are willing to discuss.

Not all psychological texts on aloneness, however, have been focused on its negative impacts like loneliness. A widely-cited example of this is Anthony Storr’s work on solitude (1988). In Solitude: A Return to the Self, Storr (1988) critiques the notion that aloneness can be conflated to mere loneliness, instead suggesting that alongside a need for community is also a need for solitude. A problem arises in communication technology such as telephones, as their omnipresence ensures constant connectivity (Storr, 1988). Storr’s claim that “[c]ontemporary Western culture makes the peace of solitude difficult to attain” seems even more relevant today than in 1988, with the rise of social media and cell phones further contributing to the “noise” that
is “so ubiquitous” solitude can be prevented (p. 34). On the other hand, Storr also recognizes the negative aspects of unwanted aloneness, or, what he refers to as “enforced solitude” such as solitary confinement and shunning (1988, p. 42). Despite this, Storr’s work overall is an important contribution in recognizing some aspects of aloneness as an innate need of the experience.

While the psychology literature presented heretofore has primarily been descriptive and/or qualitative in method, there have been contributions to the psychology of aloneness that are more focused in the hard sciences. A major meta-analysis of decades of such studies by Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith, Mark Baker, Tyler Harris, and David Stephenson (2015) helps to condense these findings and assess the overall magnitude of aloneness on mental health. For the purposes of this meta-analysis, the authors reviewed available studies, published between 1984 and 2014, which focused on loneliness, isolation, and solitary living arrangements (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris, and Stephenson, 2015). They concluded that people who identify as lonely and those who live alone have a significantly higher mortality rate than those who do not (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). These results furthermore remained fairly consistent across gender and location (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). While not conclusive, Holt-Lundstad et al.’s study demonstrates the wide range of psychology’s research on aloneness as well as its continued justification as it continues to be recognized as a significant risk factor for both mental and physical health today.

**Sociology**

Like psychology, the social sciences have taken a similar affinity to research into the causes and effects being alone with an emphasis on the lonely. Sociology’s frequent use of quantitative methodologies means that much of (though not all of) the contributions to the
aloneness literature from this field provide helpful forms of data to highlight the scope as well as the frequency of the various ways in which people feel alone. Data on aloneness became a serious scholarly interest in the mid-twentieth century, and has since continued to accumulate, often focused on the apparent increase of aloneness in American culture in particular.

One of the earliest and most thorough efforts to provide a sociological account of aloneness is in a significant section of a cross-national study of the elderly. In *Old People in Three Industrial Societies*, which focused on the demographics of older populations in the United States, Great Britain, and Denmark, the authors postulated that “social isolation” would be more prevalent in their target population than with younger populations due to the inevitable loss of companionship, thereby leading to feelings of loneliness (Shanas, Townsend, Wedderburn, Friis, Milhøj, & Stehouwer, 1968). While they were able to confirm this theory in part, their overall findings are much more nuanced. The authors found that while most elderly people in these three nations experienced loneliness sporadically, relatively few felt lonely on a consistent basis (Shanas et al. 1968). British respondents also were disproportionately lonely compared to their Danish and American counterparts (Shanas et al. 1968). Factors that influenced the degree or frequency of loneliness included living arrangements, widowship, familial contact, and organizational involvement (Shanas et al. 1968). Gender also made a difference, with women more likely to feel lonely than men (Shanas et al. 1968). As Shanas et al. (1968) offer their interpretation of the preceding data, they promote the importance of the availability of social activity for aging populations in order to contend with the encroachment of social isolation and the loneliness it may cause.

According to some scholars in sociology, like Philip Slater (1990), the issues of aloneness are especially increasing in prevalence in American culture. Originally published in
1970, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* seeks to uncover the innate cause of growing discontent in American culture (Slater, 1990). Ultimately, Slater (1990) claims that the individualism and egoism that are central to the American societal makeup create privations that are responded to with unfulfilled desires. As the average person is subjected to a “desire for community”, “desire for engagement”, and “desire for dependence” (Slater, 1990, p. 8 [emphasis his]), he or she is left experiencing loneliness in place of collectivism. Slater (1990) contends that the continual reinforcement of societal values in the United States perpetuates a cycle of loneliness.

Shortly after Slater’s work, sociologist Robert S. Weiss (1973) continued to examine the role of loneliness, though expanded far beyond just interpersonal and communal contexts. To do this, Weiss (1973) identifies areas of loneliness within familial and romantic relations, such as, respectively, the sometimes forced separation between parent and child and the difficulties of married couples during a geographic relocation. In quantifying the effects and distribution of loneliness, Weiss (1973) is able to offer several key datums: the unmarried and recently widowed are statistically more likely to feel lonely, loneliness is a more prevalent issue for those in poverty, and women are more likely than men to experience loneliness, but not by a significant difference. Of course, in the nearly five decades since this study, these statistics have potentially shifted; however, Weiss is a foundational pioneer in justifying the study of loneliness while offering a profile of its prevalence in society. Weiss proves that loneliness is, to at least some reliable degree, a measurable phenomenon.

Decades later, Robert D. Putnam (2000) continued to assess the loneliness inherent to contemporary America like Slater using even more focused on data than Weiss. Rather than merely lamenting the ills of an expanding despondency in society, Putnam (2000) seeks to establish a quantifiable measure with which to explore and understand the issue which he dubs
“social capital” in his volume *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Putnam describes social capital as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (2000, p. 19). Putnam argues that communities low in social capital are overall less efficient and are unable to take advantage of the benefits of “civic virtue” (2000, p. 19). Despite the decline in social capital in the United States, Putnam remains optimistic that the negative forms of aloneness it has exacerbated can be corrected through social means.

Similar to Putnam’s concerns, recent sociological scholarship on aloneness has trended toward its intersection with the internet and social media. In a 2016 study by Matthew Pittman and Brandon Reich, for example, data suggested that loneliness is more prevalent in cultures where social media is widely used. For Pittman and Reich, this is contradictory to the alleged social connectivity of social media platforms. The study did, however, find some support that loneliness can be reduced with social media platforms that are based primarily on visual rather than textual communication, such as Instagram and Snapchat (Pittman & Reich, 2016). Social media, then, represents an important paradox of aloneness in communication that must be revisited in this dissertation.

**Suicidology**

One of the fields of study that has long utilized aloneness and its correlates at its heart is suicidology. Itself an interdisciplinary area of research, suicidology postulates theories to explain the human behavior that leads to the act of suicide and suicide ideation. Drawing at times on philosophical influences, suicidology typically works from both sociological and psychological approaches in order to ascertain answers to this form of behavior. Regardless of influence or
The role of aloneness in suicidal feelings was clear in one of the earliest works on suicidology, published by innovative sociologist Emile Durkheim (2006). Durkheim’s *On Suicide* (2006)—originally published in French as *Le Suicide* in 1897—is a seminal text on sociological methodology. After studying the available statistics of suicide victims in both England and France, Durkheim (2006) sought to uncover the underlying causes of most incidents. One of the most common factors, according to Durkheim (2006), was a privation of social integration. Looking at examples such as religious minorities, Durkheim (2006) concluded that suicides were most commonly the result of some social isolation or rejection, either real or merely perceived by the victim.

Like Durkheim, more recent studies of suicide have also focused on forms of aloneness as risk factors. For example, Shanas et. al (1968) theorized that the many of the suicides of elderly people are likely influenced by the higher rate of social isolation in their demographic. But the most prominent theory of aloneness’s role in suicide emerges from Thomas Joiner’s (2005) Interpersonal Model of Suicide. The task of Joiner (2005) was to synthesize the various explanations of suicidal ideation that preceded him, including Durkheim’s emphasis on social integration. The result, the Interpersonal Model of Suicide, argues that three components must be met for one to commit suicide: “acquired ability”, “perceived burdensomeness”, and “thwarted belongingness” (Joiner, 2005). The latter component of Joiner’s theory, thwarted belongingness, is in actuality a unique correlate of aloneness. Joiner (2005) contends that in almost any suicide or suicide attempt, the individual must believe that they have been rejected by their peers or
family, whether this is actually the case or not, and that the pain of feeling so alone in the world becomes an essential motivating factor.

Joiner’s Interpersonal Model of Suicide has become a ubiquitous explanation for the phenomenon of suicide, also been employed in a variety of subsequent research. One such follow-up is in a case study of celebrities’ suicide notes, assessing how fame can lead to the sort of isolation that brings about thwarted belongingness (Michaels & Corr, in press). From Durkheim to Joiner, however, the study of suicide has almost always recognized some form of aloneness as a contributing factor.

**Literature and Drama**

Variants of aloneness manifest themselves as motifs in literature as well, often appearing as dominant themes in some of the most prominent entries into the literary and dramatic canon. It should be noted that the extent of this has been the subject of some scholarly dispute. Gotesky (1965) made the claim that the concept of being alone is wholly a modern idea, absent from philosophy and literature prior to the Renaissance. This is, however, emphatically refuted by Mijuskovic (2012), who points to a plethora of examples of both loneliness, as a negative aloneness, and solitude, as a positive aloneness, throughout the early literary canon of Western culture, at least as far back as ancient Greek drama. Mijuskovic’s rebuke of Gotesky is more than thorough enough to accept, warranting a brief overview of significant uses of aloneness as a theme or motif in subsequent literature and drama.

Long after solitude as a theme in Greek tragedy, the tragedies of William Shakespeare also frequently portrayed variants of aloneness, though more commonly focused on loneliness than his ancient predecessors. In fact, some sources have claimed that the first recorded use of
the word “lonely” in the English language is found in Shakespeare’s late drama Coriolanus (see: Tatlow, 2001, p. 264-265; Stern, 2013, p. 119). The title character, who longs for self-imposed isolation, utters the seminal quotation: “Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen / Makes fear’d and talk’d of more than seen” (Shakespeare, IV.i.29-30; emphasis added). Though this makes Coriolanus historically notable in its own right, it is not the only example of aloneness to appear in Shakespearean drama. Hamlet has long been considered a masterpiece of not just tragedy but of the lonely hero, as its titular protagonist soliloquizes of his destitution and solitude (Worsely, 2015). Amelia Worsely (2015) argues that Hamlet should also be noted for its secondary portrayal of aloneness, as Ophelia represents a “silent” depiction of Shakespeare’s “paradigm for loneliness” (p. 521). Furthermore, according to Worsely (2015), Shakespeare’s lonely characters are most frequently silent or quiet women, with male characters more often desiring something more akin to a stoic solitude. Worsely’s theory is supported by Juliet, whose “suffering is the realization is loneliness and isolation” which, as Ruth Nevo points out, becomes the trigger for the “tragic form” of Romeo and Juliet (1969, p. 256). Other works of Shakespeare also place loneliness at the trigger for its tragic form, such as The Merchant of Venice (Deshpande, 1961).

Modern examples of aloneness in literature can be found throughout the fictional works of Joseph Conrad. In an extended inter-corpus analysis, Wieslaw Krajka (1992) argues that isolation is “central to Conrad’s literary output” (p. 1). Krajka (1992) identifies two types of isolation in Conrad’s works: external and internal, or, more specifically, geographic and psychological. While the external or geographic type of isolation merely involves characters journeying into deep wildernesses, the internal or psychological variant is self-selected and occurs when “Conradian characters separate themselves from reality, trying to replace it with an illusory world” (Krajka, 1992, p. 32). In continuing this analysis, Krajka (1992) ties this denial of
the real in psychological isolation as an effort toward escapism (p. 32). Internal isolation, then, can be understood as an attempt to escape from communicative bonds.

Postmodern literature continues to carry aloneness as thematic content, notably in the works of American novelist Kurt Vonnegut. Known for his black humor and satire, along with his use of nonlinear narratives, Vonnegut often portrays aloneness in a rather disparaging, depressing tone. In his semi-autobiographical work, *Palm Sunday*, Vonnegut (2011) boldly proclaims that loneliness is the most deadly affliction in the United States. This is, however, just a more direct declaration of a more subtle trope in his fictional works. Although aloneness appears variously throughout Vonnegut’s corpus, it is especially central to the plot of *Slapstick, or, Lonesome No More!* (2010). In this novel, originally published in 1976, the protagonist had previously been elected the President of the United States after making the elimination of lonesomeness a leading promise of his campaign platform (Vonnegut, 2010). From the campaign slogan of “Lonesome No More!” Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain developed an “anti-loneliness plan” (Vonnegut, 2010, p. 183) of establishing large artificial families. Swain, as a mouthpiece for Vonnegut’s own thoughts on the subject, was convinced that lonesomeness was the root cause of many of the ills suffered in American culture and thus wished to eliminate it.

**Popular Culture Studies**

The study of popular culture also has produced several contributions to the overall literature on aloneness, further demonstrating the reaches of the topic into the cultural zeitgeist. As a discipline, popular culture research typically analyzes, assesses, and critiques forms of contemporary entertainment outside of literature, such as television shows, films, music, animation, and comic books, often offering general perspectives of a culture and its tastes. This can be an apropos area to consider aloneness from, because, as Weiss (1973) points out,
“[I]oneliness is much more often commented on by songwriters than by social scientists” (p. 9). Aloneness tends to manifest in the study of popular culture in two significant ways: first, as a theme in media, and second, as an experience of subcultures and fandoms. This section of the literature review will briefly cover both of these areas of research respectively.

Throughout various mediums of popular culture, aloneness is a commonly utilized theme or motif that frames narratives, alternating between positive and negative portrayals of being alone. For example, Robert Kolker (2011) has explored the depth to which film has leveraged isolation and loneliness as a theme. According to Kolker (2011), some of cinema’s most revered directors, like Stanley Kubrick and Martin Scorsese, have frequently portrayed protagonists as solitary, lonely people in isolated settings to strike at the emotions of the audience. Certainly, movies are by no means the only artform to characterize aloneness in popular culture. Anime, a form of Japanese animated entertainment that has recently garnered international appeal, also commonly explores the complications of loneliness as a motif throughout the genre, notably in the popular series Fullmetal Alchemist (Raynard 2006). Additionally, music also often employs loneliness as a thematic device for framing lyrics. Martina Elicker (1997) thoroughly explored the predominance of references to feeling lonely in popular music, particularly in the genre of mainstream rock. Employing semiotics as a means of inquiry, Elicker (1997) concludes that because most listeners have at least some level of intimacy with loneliness, musicians can establish identification with them by maintaining it as a theme.

There are, however, many examples of positive portrayals of aloneness in popular culture as well. In Party of One: The Loners’ Manifesto, Anneli Rufus (2003) points out the relatively commonplacesness of the “loner” as a primary protagonist in entertainment, citing examples such as Batman and the Lone Ranger (p. 23). These loners, according to Rufus (2003), are almost
always portrayed as stoic heroes. Rufus (2003) further complicates this in noting that the creative work required to craft the stories of these heroes itself typically requires a sense of solitude, such that the creator of a fictional loner is often themself a loner.

Outside of the content, literature on popular culture has also discussed the role of aloneness in the mass followings of movies, television shows, and other forms of entertainment. Some studies of fandom have found an inverse correlation between fandom and loneliness—that is to say that becoming a dedicated fan of something is akin to finding a sense of community. This has been demonstrated, for example, in the culture of anime, or Japanese animation, wherein Ray, Plante, Reyson, Roberts, and Gerbasi (2018) determined that attendees of anime conventions were less likely to experience loneliness while in attendance, in part due to the increased amount of face-to-face interactions they would likely be involved in. Online interactions also appear to have the same effect amongst fandom subcultures, with a measurable decrease in loneliness for those involved (McKenna, Green, & Gleason 2002). Overall, it appears that there is a sense of community within popular culture that has the ability to reduce or alleviate loneliness within respective fans.

The degree to which one feels alone also has some effect on the way in which he or she appreciates forms of popular culture. To wit: a study by Gibson, Aust, and Zillmann (2000) found that listeners who felt lonely in terms of romantic interaction were more likely to feel connection with music that makes use of “love-lamenting” lyrics than those that were romantically content. Similarly, music can affect how alone a listener may feel; Sheibani and Pakdaman (2010) found that the elderly are less likely to feel lonely when exposed to music that they enjoy. Furthermore, it has been noted that music can serve as a means of coping with loneliness for youths and adolescents (Moore & Schultz, 1983). Aside from music, other forms
of popular culture can have a similar effect. Television viewing, for example, also has some ability to allow adolescents to cope with feeling lonely just as music listening can (More & Schultz, 1983). People of all ages are attracted to forms of popular culture that embrace and portray aloneness, and popular culture has the power to provoke or curtail how alone a person may or may not feel as well.

**Theology and Religion**

Religious philosophy and scholarship throughout history has had much to say about aloneness, with contributions from various religions and scholars. The role of aloneness in Christian theology has been thoroughly assessed by John D. Barbour (2004). The task is a complex one, as Barbour notes that “[t]here is not one simple Christian view of solitude, but a lively debate illuminating many dimensions of meaning of aloneness” (2004, p. 11). Barbour (2004) indicates that the early passages of the Bible promote solitude as a temporary aloneness that offers a ground to communicate with God, however prolonged isolation is a negative experience leading to loneliness. In the New Testament, Jesus was depicted primarily as sociable, but John the Baptist offered a precedent for self-imposed isolation (Barbour, 2004). The latter, according to Barbour (2004), helped to usher in the longstanding tradition of the asceticism of hermitude and monasticism. Solitude has spanned the history of Christianity as a moral practice that can demonstrate the moral way of a Christian life (Barbour, 2004). Barbour (2004) argues that one of the most compelling examples of the linkage between solitude and spirituality can be found in Augustine’s *Confessions*. Here, Augustine demonstrates that the “boundaries of solitude are spatial, or relational, as well as temporal” and that in solitude one can engage with God (Barbour, 2004, p. 38). Augustine, to Barbour, is a representation of the ethical solitude promoted by Christian thought.
More recent Christian thinkers have also pondered aloneness, including existentialist Paul Tillich (1963). In *The Eternal Now*, Tillich (1963) turns back to the creation myth of the Old Testament as a symbol for man’s inherent aloneness in the world. Unlike Augustine, however, Tillich (1963) recognizes a darker side of aloneness in spiritual life, noting the burdens of loneliness that exist in unison with the peace of solitude. Tillich writes: “Our language has wisely sensed these two sides of man’s being alone. It has created the word ‘loneliness’ to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word ‘solitude’ to express the glory of being alone” (1963, p. 17-18). Loneliness, for Tillich (1963), is typically the result of the rejection of love which “can be conquered only by those who can bear solitude” (p. 22). For it is in solitude, Tillich proclaims, that one discovers the divine and the eternal.

Aloneness appears as a philosophical metaphor in some explorations of Buddhist theology as well. To wit: Stephen Batchelor (1983) addresses the role of being alone in his work on Buddhist existentialism. Batchelor centralizes the dyad of “being-alone” and “being-with” as the two concurrent “ontological structures” defining the state of being (1983, p. 58). Batchelor uses phenomenological inquiry to assess the former, “concentrated on formulating the Buddhist answer to the conflicts involved within the region of man’s aloneness” (1983, p. 71). Although he finds that being-alone is a necessary “pole” of existence, it can also take the “inauthentic” form of “being-for-oneself” (Batchelor, 1983, p. 59). From this distinction, Batchelor (1983) goes on to explore the relationships of being-alone with both anxiety and refuge. Ultimately, the path to Buddhist spirituality is one that necessitates the careful navigation of being-alone into refuge and away from the inauthenticity of being-for-oneself. Furthermore, Batchelor argues, the peace of being-alone must also be able to coincide in balance with the aforementioned state of being-with-others (1983).
Outside of the thought of mainstream religions, aloneness has also been considered in the spiritual philosophy of controversial mystic Osho. Specifically, in one of Osho’s many written works, he proposes to explore the religious value of relationships through three connected phenomena of love, freedom, and — most notably — aloneness. Of particular interest with the third phenomena is that Osho (2001) elects to use the broad and unconventional term of aloneness rather than any one of its more specific and commonplace correlate terms. Although he does not appear to explain this choice, Osho (2001) defines aloneness as simply the “very nature” of the human condition, despite one’s continual immersion in relationships and communities (p. 171). This understanding of aloneness appears to encompass both its negative and positive functions, as Osho oscillates between describing it as both a “beauty” and a metaphorical “death” (2001, p. 172). As Osho seeks “the nature of aloneness” he conflates it with “nobodiness” as it is when the one is separated from others that he or she loses a sense of his or her own self (2001, p. 173). Osho compares this to “the true resurrection” of the individual (2001, p. 173). In recognizing the misery that aloneness can bring forth rather than a metaphorical resurrection, Osho argues that loneliness is “a misunderstood aloneness” that is “a gap” in which one lacks some form of connection but can be overcome through the careful practice of meditation (2001, p. 178). Osho (2001) concludes that mainstream religions overemphasize community, ignoring the solitary teachings of spiritual founders like Jesus and Buddha.

**Implications and Coordinates**

The sources reviewed in the preceding summaries are by no means exhaustive, but are intended to be representative of the approaches to aloneness in communication, philosophy, psychology, sociology, suicidology, literature, popular culture, and religion. While they are certainly diverse in comparison to one another, they reveal a few key conclusions that will be
essential to a project that endeavors to consider aloneness from a philosophy of communication perspective. In this section, the sources covered thus far will be synthesized to draw a series of key coordinates that will direct the remainder of this dissertation.

First, and most simply, *aloneness is a universal part of the human condition*. Aloneness may be experienced at different times and in different ways, just as the entirety of the above sources have made clear, but regardless of these divergences, aloneness indisputably exists in the lifeworld of humanity. This has been a truism throughout history, as it has been contemplated in antiquity by philosophers like Epictetus and continues to be studied today, especially as changes in communication technologies influence changes in aloneness like those covered by Turkle (2011). Furthermore, aloneness has not maintained just persistence but also pervasiveness. To be alone is an experience so familiar that it has been central to the arts, an important motif from ancient Greek drama to contemporary comic books—from Odysseus to Batman. In the same way that literature and popular culture depicts love and sorrow and comedy, we depict aloneness in the arts and entertainment because we know aloneness. Aloneness is not a topic that is frequently discussed, but nearly anyone can relate to it, as he or she has experienced feeling alone in some capacity throughout his or her life. To be human is to experience aloneness.

Secondly, although many present it as such, *aloneness is not reducible to proxemics*. Physical distance is not interchangeable with aloneness. This is not to say that proximity cannot play a role in making someone feel alone, as it certainly can in some instances. Emerson (1870) can attest to this, as his depiction of solitude is primarily based on one’s self-isolation in nature, and Alger (1867) describes the merits of different types of wildernesses to achieve solitude. Similarly, Jin and Parke (2013) concluded that people are more lonely when they lack face-to-face interaction. However, many forms of aloneness do not necessitate a proxemic variable such
as this. Turkle (2011) demonstrates this thoroughly with the paradox of being alone together. Similarly, much of the psychology literature on aloneness makes note that people often feel lonely around others (e.g. Olds & Schwartz, 2009), and suicidology models (e.g. Joiner, 2005) are careful to articulate that thwarted belongingness need only be perceived rather than actual. Fromm (2013) even goes as far as arguing that feeling alone is an internal, moral concept. As such, the central characteristic of aloneness is not proximic, but rather it is relational.

Because we can safely conclude that aloneness is a relational quality, we can also conclude that *aloneness is a communication issue*. Of course, the first section of the preceding literature review covered a variety of sources, such as Turkle (2011) and Smith (2007), from the communication discipline which attempted to assess aloneness as it relates to communication. But it bears repeating that the nature of what it is to be alone is intrinsically bound to the world of communication. All of the literature reviewed hitherto, regardless of discipline and regardless of stance, indicates in some way that aloneness implies a lack of connection with an other or others. A relationship or lack thereof is at the heart of every conception of aloneness. In short, it is a partial or full cessation of communication that makes someone feel as though they are alone. Because the preceding literature demonstrates that aloneness is an essential part of the human experience derived from one’s relationships with others, it is not just a communication concept, but further it is squarely an issue for the philosophy of communication.

As a communication phenomenon, *there are different, unique types of aloneness*. The preceding literature review makes it clear that aloneness is a rich, multi-faceted experience that is not reducible to mere loneliness. Rather, aloneness occurs in a variety of contexts with a variety of reactions, sometimes positive, sometimes negative. Many of the sources recognize some sense of a binary, starting with Epictetus’s division of eremos (loneliness) versus monos (solitude).
While loneliness breeds a sense of helplessness in the way it is portrayed by Slater (1990), solitude can be a desirable experience, a contentness that enables self-reliance vis-à-vis Emerson (1983). Any attempt to equate aloneness as only loneliness, like that of Mijuskovic (2012), is wholly insufficient. Even the Epictetain binary, however, misses an essential area of aloneness. Gotesky (1965) recognizes this inadequacy in creating a quadratic typology. This is also made clear by the communication literature of aloneness, in which Turkle (2011; 2015) as well as Jin and Parke (2013) point to a form of aloneness in which one has essentially withdrawn from others through technology. Other disciplines, as previously discussed, also point out this technologically-induced variant as well (e.g. Olds & Schwartz, 2009; Storr, 1988; Pittman & Reich, 2016). Technology may only be a contributing factor, but it reveals a unique form of the experience of being alone. The traditional loneliness/solitude binary does not include a proper placement for this self-imposed but negative form of aloneness, and, as such, this project must indicate one.

The final conclusion drawn from the literature is that the language of aloneness requires consistency, despite a current lack thereof. From the complexity of the previously-discussed variants of aloneness arises an issue of terminology, and in dealing with this issue thus far, the above literature review intentionally utilized the respective vocabulary in situ in order to respect the authors’ intentions. But this causes significant discord. For example, Turkle (2011) uses the term “alone” almost always as a negative, while others, like Gotesky (1965), place it in a more neutral light. Most of the preceding literature uses loneliness as an occasional state of sorrow, but Moustakas (1989) and Mijuskovic (2012) both use the term universally as describing being alone. Even those latter two have significant disagreement with the usage of loneliness; Moustakas (1989) applies it as sometimes content in aloneness, as Emerson (1870) or Storr
would (1988) solitude, whereas Mijuskovic (2012) sees loneliness as always depressive. Alger (1867) uses loneliness and solitude interchangeably, but Epictetus sets these as opposites. The way in which these same terms are utilized in common conversation are similarly, if not even more convoluted. There is a definitive then need to establish a more comprehensive framework and consistent nomenclature with which to discuss and understand aloneness.

These five conclusions derived from extant literature establish the primary coordinates that each of the following chapters of this dissertation must abide by. We must consider aloneness as a relational part of the human condition that is inherently a function of communication or a lack thereof. Further, we must not reduce aloneness to simple distance nor equate it only to loneliness. The major tasks of a phenomenology of aloneness as a philosophy of communication must establish a consistent language with which it can be discussed while developing a typology of its variants that incorporates more than the common dyad of loneliness and solitude. It is this final task which we will turn to in the next chapter, as I seek an effective typology of aloneness before exploring its individual types.
CHAPTER II:
Typologies of Aloneness

“My typology is far rather a critical apparatus serving to sort out and organize the welter of empirical material, but not in any sense to stick labels on people.”

—Carl Jung

Introduction

One of the most important aspects of aloneness is that it is inherently a complicated matter despite its commonplace role in human life. The previous chapter concluded that aloneness is a part of the human condition, yet depictions of it varied greatly. The convoluted nature of the literature review in the previous chapter is the direct result of just how dynamic it is to be alone; it is welcomed at times and despised at others, wanted in one moment and loathed in the next. To explore aloneness phenomenologically is to accept the multifaceted nature of it. But this task is likely an impossibility without a more structured understanding of aloneness in the place first. Such will be the premise of this chapter.

Over the following pages, I intend to move toward a typology of aloneness such that it may better be understood as a whole as well as in its individual variants. Utilizing typologies of aloneness proposed by several other scholars, this chapter will seek a typology of aloneness that is the most effective to be reappropriated for the philosophy of communication. Some, but not all, of the typologies covered in this chapter were also briefly summarized in the preceding chapter; however, in these cases, the typology in question will be reviewed both more thoroughly
and more critically than they were previously. The goal herein is not to simply describe each typology, but rather it is to examine their strengths, weaknesses, and overall viability for the ongoing task of this dissertation.

Structurally, this chapter addresses its aforementioned directive through two primary questions. The first of these questions addresses the necessity of a typology of aloneness to begin with. While the premise of this has been addressed, this section will offer a more specific rationale grounded in the extant scholarship on the subject. This section concludes by developing a sort of metatypology to critically assess prominent typologies that have already been proposed, culminating in a three-pronged test by which to consistently examine each candidate. The subsequent sections each put this method into action by first describing a particular aloneness typology and then submitting it to each prong of said test. The typologies tested in these sections include Weiss’s deficiency model, De Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders’ multidimensional model, Gotesky’s phenomenological model, and Diekema’s symbolic interaction model. At the end of this chapter, a conclusion addresses the reappropriation of Diekema’s typology moving forward for this dissertation’s own theory of aloneness. For now, however, the task turns to making the case for a typology of aloneness.

**On the Necessity of a Typology**

In the previous chapter, I drew five conclusions from an interdisciplinary literature review on aloneness, which serve as guiding principles for a phenomenology of aloneness. The first principle concludes that aloneness is a timeless experience in the human condition. The second principle argues that aloneness cannot be reduced solely to proxemics or physical distance. Furthermore, rather than a physical state, aloneness is based in or derived from
communication or a lack thereof. We also concluded that aloneness can be classified with multiple different types. Finally, the literature review demonstrated that those who discuss aloneness utilize its terminology inconsistently, marking a necessity for consistent terminology.

When considering these general conclusions, it becomes clear that before proceeding to understand the essence of aloneness, we must first develop an effective typology. There are numerous reasons for this. At minimum, the literature review of the preceding chapter reveals that the majority of research is an agreement that aloneness has both positive and negative correlates. This is most commonly displayed in the placement of a negative loneliness in opposition to a positive solitude (e.g. Tillich, 1963), even as early as antiquity with Epictetus’s dyad of monos and eremos (1897). We must recognize, then, that aloneness is a broad, overarching term that can take on different forms. Aloneness itself is a neutral with the possibility to be good or bad. Additionally, because authors have used terms interchangeably when discussing aloneness, a systematic way of discussing its correlates would affix a consistent vernacular. The development of a typology of aloneness effectively solves all of the preceding issues.

Is a typology of aloneness, however, even possible? For this proposition, Ben Lazare Mijuskovic (2012) would argue in the opposition. In his critique of Rubin Gotesky’s (1965) phenomenological typology of aloneness (which is discussed at length later in this chapter), Mijuskovic (2012) argues that all aloneness is loneliness. He criticizes not just Gotesky’s typology, but the very notion that a typology can exist (Mijuskovic, 2012). Death, Mijuskovic (2012) argues, is the only alternative to loneliness. For Mijuskovic (2012), any effort to forget or to come to terms with one’s loneliness is a momentary lapse in the entirety of the human
condition; they are not correlates of aloneness, but rather temporary distractions from the inevitable omnipresence of loneliness.

Although I also ultimately find Gotesky’s typology to be flawed in the following critique presented in this chapter, I wholeheartedly disagree with Mijuskovic’s rationale. Nearly all scholarship that expands its scope beyond solely loneliness—regardless of its discipline or methodology or era—acknowledges a positive, beneficial, or desirable form of aloneness. As previously mentioned, Greek philosopher Epictetus acknowledges this in his distinction between eremos and monos. Similarly, Christian existentialist Paul Tillich (1963) distinguishes between solitude and loneliness as glorious and painful respectively. In other cases, there are pseudo-typologies of aloneness, such as Kölbel’s four types of “Einsamkeit” (qtd. in de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982, p. 106) or Batchelor’s existentialist distinctions between “being-alone,” (1983, p. 56) “being-for-oneself,” and “being-with” (1983, p. 59). Mijuskovic’s flaw is that he does not account for the innate desire for aloneness that one feels from time to time; one does not always try to alleviate aloneness, but rather actually embraces and even seeks it. Our second guiding principle—that aloneness takes on several types—which has been thoroughly supported across the literature, not only refutes Mijuskovic’s proposition, but also demands the conception of a typology.

Before proceeding any further, an important caveat to the typology of aloneness must be recognized, based on the psychological work of Alfred Adler. An Austrian psychotherapist, Adler is best known as the founder of Individual Psychology, a philosophy of of psychiatric practice that foregrounds the individuality and character of the patient (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). A persisting element of Adlerian psychology is his theory of types, which identifies several personality types that a patient may be classified as (Adler, 1964). Interestingly,
however, Adler (1964) does not entirely support his own theory, as ultimately typologies are too rigid, such that they violate the principles of individual psychology. Despite developing a typology of personalities, Adler warns that a psychologist that relies on them “will also never be free from misunderstandings that will arise between him and the person whom he is treating” (1964, p. 72). Instead, Adlerian typologies are intended as “heuristic devices” to identify generalities while still acknowledging the uniqueness of the individual (Mosak, 1979, p. 192).

Similarly, I maintain no expectation that any typology of aloneness selected herein will be entirely definitive. As the literature review in the previous section concluded, the essence of aloneness is as an inalienable part of the experience of life; it is a part of the human condition. As something that is ultimately discovered through negotiation the life-world, aloneness is ultimately subjective, to a significant degree based on the perception of the individual. As such, no typology can possibly account for the infinite variations in how one may perceive his or her aloneness. While a typology may afford us an effective approximation to continue the endeavor of a phenomenology of aloneness, as well as achieve the previously stated goal of situating a consistent nomenclature, there will surely be exceptions and gray areas. As such, the following pursuit and implementation of a typology of aloneness is only provisional, and should be understood not as a fixed telos but rather as an Adlerian classification—that is, primarily an exercise of heuristics—to properly reflect the tentativeness of individuality.

Selecting a proper typology of aloneness, then, is a critical step in developing a phenomenology of aloneness for the philosophy of communication. This is, of course, not a novel proposition; scholars of various disciplines in different eras have undertaken this task already (see: Nissenbaum, 1984; Galanaki, 2004; and Hawkins-Elder, Milfont, Hammond, & Sibley, 2017), some of which were already briefly addressed herein (e.g. Gotesky, 1965;
Batchelor, 1983). In acknowledging these efforts, I intend to adapt the most relevant of the existent typologies as a philosophy of communication, rather than to develop one *ex nihilo*. The difference, however, is that any such typology must be bound by the guiding principles of aloneness that were drawn from the literature review in the previous chapter of this dissertation. In order to assess the efficacy of these typological schemes for this work and their adherence to those guiding principles in a consistent manner, I propose a three-pronged test—a sort of meta-typology, if you will—based on this dissertation’s guiding principles and the preceding rationale and discussion.

The first prong by which we may evaluate a typological model of aloneness is that it *must foreground the role of communication*. This is a necessity to ensure that the typology does not conflict with scope of this dissertation, as much of the literature focuses on the internal emotion of aloneness while others emphasize how it emerges from a fracturing of interaction. Because none of the typologies in question come from strictly communication literature, I will utilize a loose interpretation of communication herein, seeking typologies that are based in relationships between the self and the other. While this does not need to be the only consideration utilized by a given typology, a relational dimension should be the most prominent component that determines each type.

Secondly, any typology *must recognize the duality of beneficence and detriment of being alone* to be effective. Aloneness as a whole must be taken as a general, neutral state with correlates able to recognize that at times it is a positive experience while at others it is a negative experience. As discussed, most scholars who have considered aloneness beyond the feeling of loneliness have acknowledged that there is a desirable type of aloneness that we naturally seek. Clark Moustakas (1989), for example, frames this positive variation of aloneness as a ground for
self-discovery. Sherry Turkle (2015) argues that solitude, as opposed to feeling lonely, is not just helpful, but necessary in a widely interconnected world. As such, an effective typology of aloneness should be able to account for both the desirable and undesirable forms of aloneness, rather than just one or the other.

Finally, for a typology to be practical for the current pursuit, it must expand the traditional binary of solitude and loneliness to account for non-mutual self-imposed withdrawal from others. In the previous chapter’s section of guiding principles, I briefly mentioned that the common binary of loneliness/solitude vis-à-vis Epictetus and Tillich (1963) is insufficient. Solitude, for example, is always presented as a mutual aloneness between self and other. Negative correlates of aloneness such as loneliness, isolation, or alienation, on the other hand, almost always imply two basic components: (1) one has been rejected by the other, and (2) one does not desire that rejection. Unlike solitude, it is non-mutual. However, what if those basic components are inverted, such that (1) the self is rejecting the other while (2) the other does not desire or accept that rejection? Like loneliness, it is non-mutual, yet is distinctly different. Turkle (2011) most commonly depicts this correlate of aloneness as the titular “alone together”—a non-mutual withdrawal or escape, often through technology. Batchelor (1983), similarly, refers to this sort of nonmutual state as “inauthentic being-with-others” in which “we tend to retreat from him or her and close ourselves off to their plight” (p. 77). While not nearly as commonly discussed, this secondary type of negative aloneness is a significant enough issue for a communication-based aloneness that it must be represented in the requisite typology.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will utilize the three-pronged test to assess the validity and utility of multiple typologies as they pertain to the scope of this project, bearing in mind that the outcome is intended as a heuristic device for further elaboration. This does not of
course cover all typologies that have been proposed throughout time, but rather this chapter is limited to significant categorical efforts that have been utilized in subsequent scholarship and are at least at face viable candidates. Typologies that clearly disregard basic premises of aloneness as a part of the human condition will not be covered. Under these circumstances, I will assess that viability of four major typologies of aloneness, each with unique approaches and different methodologies: Weiss’s deficiency model, De Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders’ multidimensional model, Gotesky’s phenomenological model, and Diekema’s symbolic interaction model.

**Weiss’s Deficiency Model**

One of the most widely-cited examples of an aloneness typology was developed by Robert S. Weiss (1973). Weiss was primarily interested in understanding the experience of loneliness, which he described as “the absence of some particular type of relationship” (1973, p. 14). Based on this understanding, Weiss (1973) attempts to find potential remedies for the experience of loneliness, mostly considering the role of social networks more than just basic sociability. Recognizing that being alone can provoke divergent experiences to the individual, Weiss’s explanation is based entirely in deficiency—that is, that the way in which one experiences aloneness is a function of what sort of relation he or she is lacking. Though Weiss (1973) acknowledges positive reactions to aloneness, he develops a two-fold typology of only negative reactions: emotional isolation and social isolation.

The first type of aloneness that Weiss (1973) proffers, emotional isolation, is derived from the subjective feelings that an individual may feel when alone. Emotional isolation, according to Weiss, “represents the subjective response to the absence not so much of a
particular other but rather a generalized attachment figure” (1973, p. 89). Weiss argues that this type of isolation is likely impossible prior to reaching adolescence, after “parents are relinquished as attachment figures” (1973, p. 90). As Weiss (1973) explains, the degradation of systems of attachment are what can invoke and sustain emotional isolation, such as the end of a marriage due to death or divorce.

In contrast to emotional isolation, the second type of aloneness in Weiss’s framework is social isolation. Weiss situates social isolation within the “world of peers” and occurs when “engagement” or “participation” within it is reduced or eliminated (1973, p. 146). According to Weiss, people, particularly during adolescence, acquire “self-definition” through engagement with their peers, and when one instead is subject to social isolation, this process is stymied (1973, p. 147). Like emotional isolation, social isolation is a distressful form of loneliness that often brings deleterious mental aspects, such as anxiety, along with it.

With both social and emotional isolation in mind, we can assess Weiss’s typology of aloneness through the three-pronged test I have proposed in this chapter. Weiss does reasonably satisfy the first prong—his typology is based on the deficit of a relationship, such that the type of aloneness experienced is dependent on the type of other that is missing. Unfortunately, however, the Weiss typology fails from this point. While Weiss does acknowledge that a positive form of aloneness in which self-discovery occurs does exist, he does not place it within his own typology. Emotional isolation and social isolation are both subsets of loneliness rather than the broader aloneness, and both are associated with only psychologically detrimental experiences. Furthermore, the limitations of Weiss only offering two types of loneliness results in a failure of expanding the loneliness/solitude binary to include the requisite negative self-imposed withdrawal type of aloneness. As such, despite its ongoing prominence in psychological research
(e.g. Russell, Cutrona, Rose & Yurko, 1984; Ditommaso & Spinner, 1997; and Qualter & Munn, 2002), Weiss’s deficit model is incompatible for a communication-based typology for the phenomenology of aloneness.

**De Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders’ Multidimensional Model**

Another psychological approach to the development of an aloneness typology is found in the multidimensional model proposed by de Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders (1982). One of the stated goals of the authors is to expand Weiss’s long-used binary typology. Focusing on the psychological aspects of being alone, the authors’ methodology utilized surveys designed to describe the respondents’ feelings of aloneness across, as the title implies, three separate dimensions. The first dimension refers to “emotional characteristics,” focusing primarily on the shift of positive emotions like happiness to negative emotions like fear (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982, p. 110). The second dimension, the “type of deprivation,” is based on “the nature of the missing relationships” and is subdivided by intimacy, emptiness, and abandonment (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982, p. 110). The final dimension of this model is “time perspective,” which the authors also divide into three variations, being unchangeable, temporary, or caused by others (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982, p. 110). From the data acquired based on these three dimensions, de Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders (1982) propose four types of aloneness: nonlonely, dissatisfied hopelessly lonely, temporarily lonely, and resigned hopelessly lonely.

The first category of de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders’ (1982) multidimensional typology is the nonlonely. Those who fall into this type identify that they spend significant amounts of time alone; however, the nonlonely still have strong, interpersonal relationships and
appreciate their ongoing interactions. Those classified as nonlonely “score low on the three subscales measuring feelings of social deprivation” (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982, p. 114). Quite simply, the members of the nonlonely do not experience negative emotions regardless of their physical separation of others.

The second category from the results of de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders’ study has a much more negative experience of feeling alone. The authors label this variation as “The Hopeless Lonely Who Are Very Dissatisfied with Their Relationships” and note that its representatives typically lack a romantic or intimate partner (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982, p. 114). Not only do those representing this type feel disconnected from their peers, they are also subject to feelings of hopelessness, meaninglessness, and abandonment (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982). A lack of perceptible recourse for this experience is a defining characteristic of the dissatisfied hopelessly lonely (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982). This type of aloneness presents its desolation as inevitable.

The third type of aloneness for de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders is the “Periodically and Temporarily Lonely” (1982, p. 116). While those of this type may also experience the same sort of abandonment as the previous group, they do not have the same sense of infinitude to that condition (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982). Instead, their loneliness is less frequent and perceived as being only a momentary feeling (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982). Despite occasional loneliness, those of this type are able to escape aloneness altogether through social contact and interaction.

The final type of de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders’ aloneness typology is the “Resigned, Hopelessly Lonely” (1982, p. 116). Like the dissatisfied hopelessly lonely category, members of this type of aloneness do not perceive an end to their loneliness, instead believing
that it is an inevitable, ongoing state (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982). As the title, however, implies, they differ from that category in that they have come to terms with their loneliness and do not experience the same sort of dissatisfaction as the second category creates (de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders, 1982). The resigned, hopelessly lonely do not sense abandonment nor do they seek to blame others for their inherent aloneness.

Testing de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders’ typology reveals its impracticality for a communication-centric phenomenology of aloneness. The first prong of this chapter’s test, foregrounding communication, does exist in the de Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders’ model in part; however, it is significantly problematized by its namesake feature. The multidimensionality of this typology does offer a communicative dimension, as the deprivation type is drawn from classifying a missing relationship. This dimension, however, is only one of three utilized by the authors, and the final results of the typology emphasize the temporal dimension far more than the relational one. While the dissatisfied and resigned dynamics of the second and fourth types do help to satisfy the second prong of the test, the multidimensional typology fails entirely in the third prong. Without any type which can account for a nonmutual withdrawal, the de Jong-Gierveld & Raadschelders typology is incomplete. Overall, the failure of two of the three necessary prongs—as well as the overly-convoluted distinctions between types—prevent this model from being utile.

Gotesky’s Phenomenological Model

A specifically phenomenological typology of aloneness is offered by philosopher Rubin Gotesky (1965). Gotesky’s typology of aloneness is found within the volume *An Invitation to Phenomenology: Studies in the Philosophy of Experience*, published in 1965. Most of the
chapters in this work, including the one written by Gotesky, were originally presented at the meetings of the then recently founded Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in 1962 and 1963 (Edie, 1965, p.7). The volume’s editor, James M. Edie, notes that together these papers “fairly indicate the wide range of problems and areas of philosophy to which American phenomenologists have begun to make contributions” (1965, p. 8). Indeed, the papers within this collection cover a wide range of philosophical themes, from epistemology to existentialism. It is in the final section, dedicated to “Special Problems”, that the reader is greeted by Gotesky’s assessment of the various experiences of aloneness.

Gotesky begins his elucidation of the multiplicity of being alone by first situating the experience of aloneness itself. Aloneness, for Gotesky, is a “fundamental constituent of the psychological life” of a person, yet it is not a universal, constant state; aloneness comes and goes (1965, p. 215). To be alone is a function of “a social context or situation” (Gotesky, 1965, p. 214). Understanding aloneness phenomenologically, Gotesky argues, is to identify its two primary “constituents” that prompt its experience: “spatial separation” and “temporal separation” (1965, p. 215). Gotesky further differentiates these two types of separation as “distance” and “interval” respectively (1965, p. 215). As Gotesky positions aloneness in general as separation from an other, these two variations of that separation are clear—in the former, one is physically removed from the other, such as when one travels away from a loved one, while in the latter one is removed from the other in time, such as with a deceased ancestor (1965, p. 215). Importantly, however, Gotesky argues that it is by no means necessary that the distance or interval be truly physical, but rather aloneness is primarily discerned by individual experience and can be “social, psychological, intellectual, [or] moral” (1965, p. 215). Specifically, Gotesky claims, “[i]t is the mode of union or interaction, the moods or emotions, the dissatisfactions or frustrations which
determine whether ‘aloneness’ as *purely spatial or temporal* is neutral or non-neutral” (1965, p. 215). Through these aforementioned lenses, the neutrality of aloneness disintegrates as it is transformed to a specific mode of being alone: loneliness, isolation, or solitude.

The first type of transformed aloneness according to Gotesky’s typology is loneliness. Gotesky (1965) argues that loneliness occurs when two particular conditions are met. The first condition is a “feeling” that one has been “rejected or excluded from the activities of others” (p. 219). Gotesky (1965) further notes that such a feeling is entirely subjective, and whether or not it is true is irrelevant in comparison to the perception of he who is lonely. The second condition for loneliness is a desire for inclusion or connection with an other or others (Gotesky, 1965). The first condition is insufficient for loneliness alone; a lack of inclusion can be a desire for an individual, under which circumstance the first condition is a welcomed state (Gotesky, 1965). Gotesky (1965) further describes two feelings that are commonly associated with loneliness: “knowledge or lack of knowledge” (p. 220) of the rejection by the other or others, and “the collapse of *rapport*, between ourselves and others” (p. 221). Additionally, Gotesky (1965) offers four subtypes of loneliness— “exclusion from paradise” such as that of mythology (p. 222); “exclusion from society” such as exile (p. 222); “self-exclusion” such as split personalities (p. 223); and “exclusion from the Divine” such as in religion (p. 223). That said, however, Gotesky (1965) concludes that the most common experience of loneliness is at an interpersonal level, typically as a rejection from friends and peers.

Gotesky continues his typology by moving from loneliness to isolation. Isolation, according to Gotesky, occurs with “the rational recognition that men face conditions of existence in their relation to others which they do not know how to change” (1965, p. 227). Three important distinctions are that isolation exists in permanence rather than being temporary or
occasional, that the cause of one’s isolation is outside of his or her ability to control or to alleviate, and that there is a degree of acceptance by those who experience it (Gotesky, 1965). A frequent example used by Gotesky (1965) are minority groups, such as those based on races, religions, or disabilities outside of a culture’s majority. Gotesky (1965) separates isolation from loneliness based on the removal of perceived rejection as a requisite condition—it may be present, but it does not need to be.

Finally, the third type of aloneness explicated in Gotesky’s phenomenological model is solitude. Gotesky defines solitude as “that state or condition of living alone, in any of its many forms, without the pain of loneliness or isolation being an intrinsic component of that state or condition” (1965, p. 236). Solitude, as Gotesky conceives it, lacks the permanence of isolation; one seeks it when its “need or necessity” arises (1965, p. 236). Solitude furthermore lacks the negativity of loneliness—the pain of rejection is replaced by the “serenity” of acceptance (Gotesky, 1965, p. 237). Importantly, however, solitude must be an occasional hiatus from society, and the discoveries one makes within it are brought back to the other when the necessity of solitude has ceased (Gotesky, 1965). It is often portrayed as a religious phenomenon, but Gotesky (1965) concludes that it is not necessary, and that any person of any profession and any philosophical belief can and will experience solitude.

As the trifecta of types in Gotesky’s phenomenological typology have each been described, our task may now turn to assessing its efficacy for the project at hand. Gotesky’s typology does meet our first necessity in that it foregrounds communication to an extent—loneliness, isolation, and solitude are each attributed to a relation between the self and other. As Gotesky contends, the overall state of aloneness “can arise only within a social context or situation” (p. 214) and occurs from “spatial separation” or “temporal separation” (p. 215).
Arguably, however, in practice, the distinction between types is more about one’s own emotion; isolation differs from loneliness in the basis of acceptance, and solitude differs from both based on desire.

The second condition for an effective aloneness typology, a recognition of aloneness’s duality of positivity and negativity, is certainly met by Gotesky. In particular, Gotesky affirms that loneliness is a wholly negative experience in which the self is subjected to exceptional pain caused by perceived rejection from the other, whereas solitude is specifically referred to as a serene state of temporary respite from the other. While aloneness is a neutral concept, its three constituent forms are non-neutral.

Like the typologies previously reviewed herein, however, Gotesky’s model fails to account for the type of aloneness that is both non-mutual and self-imposed. Gotesky briefly mentions such a possibility as a subtype of loneliness, which he calls “self-exclusion” (1965, p. 223), but his description of this not only limited, but also is restrained merely to psychological conditions of fractured personalities. While Gotesky comes closest to fulfilling the three-pronged test thus far, merely hinting at self-exclusion is insufficient to satiate the third prong of the test and thereby the test as a whole as well.

**Diekema’s Symbolic Interaction Model**

Finally, we arrive at the assessment of David A. Diekema’s typology, derived from his article “Aloneness and Social Form” published in the journal *Symbolic Interaction* (1992). Working from a distinctly Simmelian approach, Diekema’s goal is to situate aloneness and its subtypes as a “relational” rather than an individualistic concept—a “property of groups or collectives” (1992, p. 481). Diekema (1992) immediately notes the varied nature of the way in
which an individual experiences aloneness, leading to its multiple forms. As Diekema describes, individual types of aloneness are “generic patterns of relations between an individual and a community that represent distinct ways of being alone” (1992, p. 482). This understanding of aloneness consists in the loss of relationships or interactions as the catalyst for its experience. As such, Diekema (1992) proposes three primary correlates of aloneness based on who imposes it—the self, the other, or both.

What Diekema deems as “other-imposed aloneness” is specifically referred to as “isolation” (1992, p. 484). For isolation to occur, the individual’s desire to interact with or relate to others is thwarted by those very others, and “can be relational, interactional, or a mix of the two” (Diekema, 1992, p. 484). Diekema (1992) is also careful to note the irrelevance of physical separation or proximity for isolation, as it is neither necessary nor predictive of this state. The author also notes that isolation can be essentially weaponized as a punishment, citing shunning, confinement, and snubbing as cultural, institutional, and social examples of intentional other-imposed aloneness (Diekema, 1992). The “purest type” of isolation, however, occurs unintentionally, as Diekema argues it arises “through the loss of familiar, desired, and meaningful relationships” such as through death (1992, p. 486). Diekema, furthermore, contrasts this with the multitude of contemporary interactions, mostly forming “trivial relationships” that cannot assuage isolation (1992, p. 486). As an other-imposed form of aloneness, isolation is a negative, asymmetrical type that the self does not desire yet for which she cannot seemingly find recourse.

The second type of aloneness according to Diekema (1992) is the mutually-constructed state of solitude. Diekema opens the notion of mutual aloneness with a discussion of privacy, which he describes as “a temporary withdrawal within the continuing and existing network of a
group” which the self desires and the other respects (1992, p. 487). But privacy is but a brief respite, “a temporary timeout,” the contents of which do not reemerge with the self to be shared with the other (Diekema, 1992, p. 487). Solitude, then, is a longer, more formalized withdrawal, and while the other must impose aloneness in solitude, it differs from isolation in that self has imposed it as well. Solitude, according to Diekema’s work, is “a symmetrical, willful, cooperative social form” that requires the “extended commitment” of not just the individual, but the community, too (1992, p. 489). Diekema (1992) highlights the prevalence of solitude as a good in religious thought, such as that of Thomas Merton, but it need not be a spiritual experience. At solitude’s core is an ongoing intimacy between the individual and community, the self and the other, as while the aloneness is mutually generated, it is also acknowledged that the relationship is still existent throughout and after the solitude’s duration.

Finally, Diekema (1992) presents a third entry to his aloneness typology that he terms as escapism. If isolation is other-imposed, and solitude is both other-imposed and self-imposed, this leaves the possibility for a formation of aloneness that is solely self-imposed, which manifests as escapism (Diekema, 1992). Unlike the solitary individual, the escapist lacks the consent of his or her community as they seek to withdraw from it and engage in “denial of the relevance of the community” (Diekema, 1992, p. 492). Diekema (1992) cites social issues such as addiction, suicide, and alcoholism as examples, but also points to extreme instances of hermitude and fantasy as well. Like isolation, as Diekema (1992) concludes, escapism is both asymmetrical (as it is not mutual like solitude) and negative (as it evokes harmful experiences), but it differs in that it is the self who has selected it rather than the other who has imposed it.

As each of the three types of Diekema’s typological model of aloneness has been reviewed, it now must be assessed through this chapter’s ongoing examination method.
Doubtlessly, Diekema’s symbolic interaction typology succeeds in the first prong of centralizing the role of communication. Each type of aloneness—iso|lation, solitude, and escapism—is explicitly derived from a relational dimension, from the loss of contact between the self and the other. As Diekema specifies, “[e]ach of these forms implies a distinct relationship between an individual and a community” (1992, p. 482). Indeed, the interactional nature of aloneness is the most important, if not only, factor in establishing its types in this model.

Secondly, Diekema’s typology satisfies the second prong of our assessment as well by sufficiently capturing both the negative and positive aspects of aloneness. Diekema’s specific approach to do this is in framing each type in terms of its symmetry—that is, if it is mutually enacted or unilaterally imposed. Diekema offers one form of symmetrical aloneness, the mutually-constructed state of solitude (though he leaves space for the related concept of privacy as a ground for solitude to be enacted), and this is uncategorically considered a beneficial experience. On the other hand, there are two asymmetrical, and therefore negative, forms of aloneness in Diekema’s model: isolation and escapism. Imposed by either the other or the self but not both, the detrimental implications range from depression for the former to addiction for the latter. Despite the imbalance in numbers, the duality of aloneness is indisputably recognized in the Diekema typology.

Finally, where all three of the prior typologies have failed, Diekema succeeds—this typology leaves space for the self-imposed yet nonmutual aloneness of the third prong. Escapism is the most unique feature of Diekema’s typology, perfectly encapsulating the possibility for a type of aloneness that expands beyond the typical loneliness/solitude binary. As Diekema explains, escapism represents “some types of aloneness that fail to fall under one of the forms explicated above” (1992, p. 492). While Diekema does not address the same instruments of this
type that I did earlier in this chapter—in which I drew on Turkle’s conception of internet and similar technologies leaving people in a state of being alone together—his depiction of escapism is an effective, overall type of aloneness which accounts for it and more. Escapism is the missing form of aloneness we have been seeking thus far.

With Diekema’s typology perfectly conforming to the three-pronged test, it is conclusively the best option to reappropriate for the philosophy of communication. While Gotesky’s phenomenological model may utilize the same intended methodology, it is not nearly as well-grounded in the relational dimension as Diekema’s, nor does it in any way account for Diekema’s accurate inclusion of escapism. We thus now have three types of aloneness to consider: isolation, solitude, and escapism. With this also comes the consistent nomenclature the previous chapter concluded was needed; aloneness refers to the overall, neutral state of the self being relationally disconnected from the other, and can be experienced as either isolation, solitude, or escapism depending on the manner in which the disconnection is imposed. Lastly, in addition to a fixed vocabulary, this model offers a structure by which to elucidate aloneness phenomenologically, one form at a time, in order to arrive at aloneness itself.

**Reappropriating the Typology Moving Forward**

With the selection of Diekema’s typology as the one to be reappropriated for a phenomenology of aloneness, the goal of this chapter has been completed. This chapter presented two primary tasks. First, it addressed the necessity of situating a typology of aloneness before proceeding further into this work. The guiding principles of aloneness demonstrate that it occurs in different ways at different times and that those who write about it rarely use consistent terminology; as such, a typology helps to better understand and communicate the varieties of
aloneness. To assess the efficacy of already hypothesized typologies, this chapter utilized a three-pronged test that required each typology to adhere to foregrounding the role of communication, recognizing the duality of positive and negative aspects, and opening a space for a self-selected but non-mutual form of aloneness. This method was utilized to test four different typological schemes: Weiss’s deficiency model, De Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders’ multidimensional model, Gotesky’s phenomenological model, and Diekema’s symbolic interaction model. Ultimately, only Diekema’s typology consisting of isolation, solitude, and escapism was deemed appropriate for use in the next part of this dissertation.

An astute reader may ponder the role of loneliness in Diekema’s aloneness typology, as well as in this work moving forward. After all, every typology that was reviewed prior to his placed it as at least one type of aloneness, and the previous chapter’s literature review demonstrated a sort of bias in scholarship toward loneliness over other correlates of aloneness. For the purposes of this dissertation, loneliness is not considered a specific form of aloneness like isolation, solitude, or escapism; rather, loneliness is an emotion felt by the isolated individual. The isolated individual may feel lonely, but loneliness fails to describe the overall state of being rejected by the other as well as isolation does.

With Diekema’s typological scheme adopted for my own theory of aloneness, we may proceed to explore each type individually. The next several chapters will shift to a more philosophical methodology, utilizing a representative philosopher to uncover the essence of each type of aloneness while also offering specific implications for the philosophy of communication. The following individual investigations are organized such that they will start with the negative forms of aloneness before proceeding to the positive form of aloneness. This will start by elucidating isolation through the philosophy of Hannah Arendt and her work on totalitarianism.
The secondary form of negative aloneness, escapism, will utilize Emmanuel Levinas’s phenomenology as an interpretive lens. To then explore solitude as a positive form of aloneness, this work will rely on the works of Henry David Thoreau. Not only will each of these forms of aloneness have their own implications for communication, but they will each be placed in relation to dialogue in the final chapter. For now, however, we may turn to the next chapter on Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation.
CHAPTER III:
Arendt and the Phenomenology of Isolation

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main

—John Donne

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we arrived at three types of aloneness based on the work of David A. Diekema (1992). The first of these formations of being alone is imposed by the other, which Diekema refers to as isolation. Whereas solitude is mutually constructed, and escapism is self-imposed, isolation is the result of a separation that the self does not desire but has been initiated by someone else that the self wishes to have a relationship with. Isolation is essentially a feeling a desertion. It can at times be enacted in a punitive manner in both social and institutional settings, such as shunning or imprisonment, respectively, and at other times it can be imposed by nonhuman forces such as death. The most universal aspect that makes isolation unique, however, is simply the negativity that the self feels as he is, or perceive that he is, cut off from meaningful relationships. As Diekema aptly puts it, isolation is “when one finds oneself a stranger” (1992, p. 486). But what is it to be a stranger, to experience isolation?

In seeking a philosophical lens through which we can develop a phenomenology of isolation, this chapter turns to the philosophy of Hannah Arendt. As part of this dissertation’s ongoing goal of returning to the “thing itself” of aloneness, the goal of this chapter is to first
arrive at the “thing itself” of isolation as a form of aloneness’s experience. This chapter will utilize Arendt’s exploration of aloneness, primarily drawn from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in order to establish a phenomenology of isolation for the philosophy of communication. This conception of isolation will conform to the type of aloneness of the same name previously established in Diekema’s (1992) typology.

The thesis of this chapter will be achieved through three primary tasks to be undertaken throughout the following sections. First, this chapter will situate isolation by introducing Arendt through a brief biographical sketch, an overview of her philosophy, and a short summary of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which serves as the primary source for her metaphor of isolation. The following task will be to then locate and explicate Arendt’s metaphor of isolation in order to place it in the context of our overall conception of aloneness. Finally, this chapter will turn its attention to assessing implications specific to the philosophy of communication that such an understanding of isolation can bring, such as in self-talk, propaganda, and stigmatization. A subsequent conclusion will summarize the above while helping to transition to the next form of aloneness to be considered.

**A Primer on Arendt**

Arendt’s preeminence of as a philosopher, thinker, and theorist arguably negates any need of real introduction. Despite having lived and worked throughout the mid-twentieth century, Arendt’s writings are still in vogue today. While her ongoing popularity may make her familiar to a wide scope of readers, utilizing her phenomenology as the starting point for investigating isolation as a phenomenon is nonetheless benefitted by first situating Arendt’s life and work. As a basic primer on Arendt, this section will first outline a brief biographical sketch of Arendt’s life and experiences followed by an overview of her philosophy and highlights of her
sprawling corpus. While treating these as distinct introductions, it is, however, clear that Arendt’s life and philosophy are intrinsically informed by and tied to one another.

**Biographical Sketch**

Johannah “Hannah” Arendt was born in October 1906 in Linden, just outside of Hannover, Germany (Young-Bruehl, 2004). Arendt was born into a family that was ethnically of Jewish descent yet remained primarily secular and assimilated into Germanic culture (Yar, 2018). According to her biographer, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (2004), Arendt rarely discussed her childhood later in her life, a time which nonetheless saw her family moving to Königsberg and later to Berlin. The Arendt family was well-educated and financially successful, offering Hannah the opportunity to deeply pursue higher education herself (Young-Bruehl, 2004). In 1924, at the age of eighteen, Arendt enrolled in the University of Marburg to study Christian theology and classics (Young-Bruehl, 2004). Soon thereafter, however, she became deeply fascinated with philosophy (Young-Bruehl, 2004).

Arendt’s first exposure to philosophy was early at Marburg where she began studying under Martin Heidegger, who would become one of the most important figures in early phenomenology (Yar, 2018). After her first year, Arendt had already relocated to Freiburg University where she attended the lectures of Edmund Husserl, from whom Heidegger’s phenomenology had been derived (d'Entreves, 2018). Under Heidegger’s direction, however, Arendt soon transferred once more to the University of Heidelberg in order to continue her philosophical education with prominent existentialist thinker Karl Jaspers (Yar, 2018). Jaspers would go on to advise Arendt’s dissertation, a philosophical treatise on St. Augustine’s conceptualization of love, which she completed in 1929 (Yar, 2018). Arendt’s own thought
would extend far beyond that of Augustine, taking on continual influence from not only Jaspers but especially Heidegger.

Arendt’s academic pursuits affected her private life as well. In 1930, she married Günther Stern, a fellow philosopher whom she had met during her time as a university student in Marburg (Young-Bruehl, 2004). By 1933, however, Arendt, like many others, had escaped from Germany, going through Geneva and Prague before settling into France, for fear of persecution by the Hitler government due to her Jewish heritage (Young-Bruehl, 2004). During this time, she divorced Stern, and, in 1940, she married another political refugee, Heinrich Blücher (Yar, 2018). A year later, after a stint in a detention camp, she fled Europe altogether to find asylum in the United States (Yar, 2018). Arendt would soon go on to become a prominent figure in academia as well as a public intellectual, serving professorships at Berkley and Chicago, before settling in New York to lecture at the New School for Social Research in New York (Yar, 2018). She published several notable books and articles on philosophy and politics over that time, but also embarked into more journalistic writing on behalf of *The New Yorker* (Young-Bruehl, 2004). On December 4, 1975, five years after the death of Blücher, Arendt passed away (Yar, 2018), leaving behind her an immense intellectual legacy that continues to shape contemporary philosophical and political thought.

**The Philosophy of Arendt**

Arendt’s corpus of work is remarkably vast, and her scholarly pursuits are strikingly diverse. This makes Arendt particularly difficult to label, though the most apropos description may be that of “an existential storyteller” (Arnett, 2013, p. 2). Others, due to her frequent intertwining of philosophy and politics, have characterized her as a “political existentialist” (Yar,
Regardless of classification, Arendt’s importance to philosophy cannot be understated, with the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* going as far as calling Arendt “one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century” (d'Entreves, 2018). Her writing was prolific, and some of Arendt’s best known works include *The Human Condition* (1958), *On Revolution* (1963), and *The Life of the Mind* (1978) (Flatham, 1997). These books, along with her many other volumes and essays, exemplify Arendt’s intellectual range that extends from phenomenology to politics and destinations in between.

Given Arendt’s educational background highlighted in the previous section, it is not surprising that much of her philosophical methodology can be considered phenomenological. Arendt was widely influenced by the works of Husserl and, most notably, Heidegger, both of whom she studied under at various points in her university experience. That said, however, Arendt (2002) would go on to abandon some of the precepts of their school of thought, critiquing both Husserl and Heidegger’s phenomenologies for being too systematized and modern, as she maintained “opposition to the arrogant modesty of Husserl” (p. 347). In many of her works, Arendt utilizes a unique “phenomenological approach to the political” sphere (Yar, 2018). In *The Human Condition*, for example, Arendt (1998) seeks a phenomenology of the active life. Here, Arendt (1998) attempts to return uncover the differences between labour, work, and action in what she refers to as the “vita activa” (p. 7). This volume is only one of many in which phenomenology becomes woven into her political explorations.

Furthermore, Arendt’s phenomenology and ethics serve as significant contributions to the philosophy of communication. Arendt (2002) herself refers to communication as “the extraordinary form of philosophic intelligence” (p. 358). As Moran and Mooney (2002) proclaim, Arendt’s phenomenology is contingent on the notion that “action is inextricably
wedded to speech and words, and hence to the human community” (p. 343). Arendt’s emphasis on the role of speaking and community in her phenomenology brings communication to light, and, as Ronald C. Arnett proclaims, “her insights imply the beginnings of a philosophy of communication that has pragmatic implications for a society addicted to the space Arendt calls the ‘social,’” (2008, p. 156). In particular, those insights have found utility for communication ethics in particular, as Arnett interprets her work as “an existential intellectual journey that points to an existential understanding of communication ethics in dark times” (2013, p. 3). Furthermore, her philosophy of labor, work, and action has also been extended to conceive novel approaches to communication education (Maier, 2016). Similarly, Lance Strate (2017) has resituated Arendt’s concepts of labor, work, and action into media ecology as, respectively, “the biophysical ground” (p. 245), the “technological condition” (p. 248), and the “symbolic world” (p. 252). Like these and many other preceding efforts, this chapter is grounded in Arendt’s corpus of work but reapplies it into the philosophy of communication.

Despite her contributions to phenomenology and communication, Arendt is most widely recognized as a political theorist. Moran and Mooney (2002) support this claim, noting the common classification of Arendt as “a creative and original thinker in the area of politics, particularly regarded for her analyses of the nature of totalitarianism and of the circumstances which give rise to political life” (p. 342). Still, Arendt’s methodological approach to politics is not through the typical political science, but rather is better described as a “phenomenological” account of “the nature of political existence” (Yar, 2018). Even outside of academia, Arendt’s political writings gained prominence with her reporting for the New Yorker on the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. Later collected into the volume Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil in 1963, it is here that Arendt (2006) introduced the well-known titular
phrase “the banality of evil” (p. 252). Arendt (2006) did not find Eichmann to be a sadistic sociopath, but rather that his evil actions arose in the mundane and the common, the result of thoughtlessness. Arendt’s coverage of Eichmann’s trial, however, is just one of several of her works that respond to the horrors and atrocities of World War II.

In summation, Arendt’s experiences in life ultimately influenced her wide-ranging system of thought. Her expansive corpus can be difficult to summarize for not only its richness and depth but for its sheer breadth as well. From the phenomenology of the human condition to the ethics of Nazi collaboration and punishment, Arendt is by no means synonymous with only one theme or metaphor. As we turn now to drawing a phenomenology of isolation from Arendt’s work, the initial difficulty comes simply in locating amongst her many other philosophical contributions.

**Toward a Phenomenology of Isolation**

As the previous section alluded to, Arendt’s philosophy is arguably inseparable from her own experiences. Isolation is not an exception to that relationship, as her closest examination of this type of aloneness is found in her understanding of totalitarian control over minority groups. This section seeks to draw on Arendt’s metaphor of isolation in order to establish a phenomenology of isolation that not only abides by the typology and principles of aloneness that this dissertation has already established, but also presents a communicative richness that opens implications for the philosophy of communication. To achieve this, this section will first summarize Arendt’s primary work which contains her exploration of isolation, then assess Arendtian isolation in more depth, before finally connecting it to aloneness.
Totalitarian Origins

While *Eichmann in Jerusalem* covered the crimes of the Nazi regime in particular, Arendt had previously explored the very nature of totalitarian political structures in the expansive *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Both the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (d'Entreves, 2018) and *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Flatham, 1997) regard it as one of Arendt’s most important and influential works. Given that in 2017 *The Guardian* reported that sales of this book surged following the election of Donald Trump, it would seem that it has perhaps found a popular contemporary relevance as well (Williams, 2017). First published in 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* uses both Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia as case studies to uncover not only the sorts of conditions which allow such political movements to rise but also how such institutions, once installed, dominate and control the populace (Arendt, 1976). Beyond its historical retellings, it is a work of dire warning, as Arendt proclaims that totalitarianism’s “victory may coincide with the destruction of humanity” (1976, p. viii).

Notably, Arendt frequently cites various forms of racism and xenophobia as an intrinsic part of the totalitarian political movement, culminating with propaganda as the primary means of maintaining control once the totalitarian regime is installed. The three primary sections in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* cover the metaphors antisemitism, imperialism, and, lastly, totalitarianism itself.

Before discussing the rise of totalitarianism, Arendt (1976) depicts a backdrop of increasing antisemitic hatred in Europe. She reconstructs the growing discontent in Central Europe as the Jewry was emancipated yet governing bodies sought homogeneity as a cornerstone of nationalism. Arendt (1976) notes that the Jewish community could not be classified in any other way or assimilated into a nationality, because they “were neither workers, middle-class
people, landholders, nor peasants” (p. 13). According to Arendt (1976), there were two coinciding factors that ensured this uniqueness: the government desire that prevent Jews from assimilating and the Jewish community’s insistence on preserving their communal identity. The perception that the Jewry was the recipient of special privileges was shared by the working classes and aristocracies alike (Arendt, 1976). As such, by the turn of the century, political parties based on antisemitic principles began to form across places like Germany and Austria, culminating in major scandals like the Dreyfus Affair (Arendt, 1976). As a result, by the time the stage was set for the Great Wars to turn Europe into battlefields, the Jewish community was more isolated from mainstream European nationalities than ever, offering the first pillar on which totalitarianism would soon come to stand.

A secondary pillar constructing the foundations of totalitarianism, according to Arendt (1976), was the ongoing expansion of imperialism. Arendt (1976) identifies the imperial age as the “three decades from 1884 to 1914” (p. 123) when the great European powers scrambled for influence across the African and Asian continents. Imperialism, for Arendt (1976), is inextricably bound with insatiable accumulation of wealth, leading to economic and governmental expansion for expansion’s own sake. As imperialism swept across the globe, nationalism took root as a dominant ideology, and with it so did what Arendt (1976) refers to as “tribal nationalism” (p. 226) which seeds violence in recognizing those outside the tribe as enemies. Arendt (1976) concludes this section of her work with a cautionary note: “The danger is that a global, universally interrelated civilization may produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages” (p. 302). It is this barbaric potential alongside its inevitable violence that can transform imperialism into totalitarianism.
Finally, understanding how antisemitism and imperialism defined the historical moment, Arendt (1976) arrives at totalitarianism itself. Using Hitler and Stalin as her primary examples throughout this section of the book, Arendt (1976) notes the swiftness with which these leaders were able to dominate the political landscape after imperialism had changed the dynamics of rule and diplomacy. The totalitarian leader, once installed, demands absolute power and obedience, regularly employing propaganda to achieve both (Arendt, 1976). To that end, Arendt (1976) claims that “totalitarian movements aim at and succeed in organizing masses—not classes” nor “citizens with opinions about, and interests in, the handling of public affairs” (p. 308). Beyond such organization, the totalitarian ruler must also seek to totalize the outside world as well, ensuring a “struggle for total domination of the total population of the earth” (Arendt, 1976, p. 392) in order to maintain and solidify power. Lastly, Arendt (1976) reveals the primary method of order in totalitarianism to be terror. When totalitarianism employs terror, it purportedly “eliminates individuals for the sake of the species, sacrifices the ‘parts’ for the sake of the ‘whole’” (Arendt, 1976, p. 465). It is here, according to Arendt’s analysis, that individuals become intentionally isolated, the final concept she explores in this work.

The Isolation of Totalitarianism

Despite the expansiveness of The Origins of Totalitarianism, it is only in the final pages of the work that Arendt turns her attention to the metaphor of isolation. Despite appearing in what is widely regarded as a work of political science, the final passage represents an exploration that has been described instead as “a phenomenology of modern loneliness” (King, 2012, p. 37). Indeed, Arendt’s philosophical roots emerge here, as she tries to bracket the very essence of isolation, to return to the thing itself with regards to being isolated. While Arendt’s concerns here
are of the totalitarian necessity of isolation, she also offers several subtle notes of the human experience of it, offering a textured approach to the loneliness that it can bring.

For Arendt (1976), isolation is an inseparable component of totalitarianism as well as the political sphere. Arendt (1976) arrives at the metaphor of isolation by asking a question about the conditions of totalitarianism: “what kind of basic experience in the living-together of men permeates a form of government whose essence is terror and whose principle action is the logicality of ideological thinking” (p. 474). That common ground, the condition which allows the totalitarian to take and maintain control, is, as Arendt (1976) concludes, isolation. Arendt (1976) describes isolation as a sort of powerlessness, or “the fundamental inability to act at all” (p. 474). Arendt (1976) further describes isolation as an “impasse” that occurs only when “contacts between men have been severed,” as is the case under totalitarian rule (p. 474). To experience isolation is to find myself “in a situation in which I cannot act, because there is nobody who will act with me” (Arendt, 1976, p. 474). The phenomenon of isolation, according to Arendt’s (1976) examination, is difficult for one to bear, as he or she will feel deserted by the world.

While Arendt (1976) so far has only elucidated isolation in a primarily political context, she also extends isolation into a much more interpersonal realm. Arendt (1976) instead refers to interpersonal isolation as “loneliness” (p. 474). While she explains that isolation and loneliness are not the same concepts, the difference is simply a change of environment, as isolation is simply “called loneliness in the sphere of social intercourse” (Arendt, 1976, p. 474). Neither isolation or its social form of loneliness require physical separation; rather, it “shows itself most sharply in company with others” (Arendt, 1976, p. 476). Arendt (1976) defines loneliness as an extension of isolation, the experience of which is “a situation in which I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship” (p. 474). Said differently, Arendt (1976) calls loneliness
“the experience of not belonging to the world at all” (p. 475) or “the experience of being abandoned by everything and everybody” (p. 476). Being isolated into loneliness is a sensation of abandonment, to desire contact but be denied of it. It is possible, Arendt (1976) argues, or perhaps even likely, that the person isolated politically under tyranny will also become lonely socially. Loneliness, then, is a specific response to isolation wherein one suffers from their disconnection.

**Isolation as Aloneness**

Arendt’s (1976) phenomenological reduction of isolation, and its interpersonal experience of loneliness, enlightens some of this dissertation’s original guiding principles. For one, we concluded in the first chapter that aloneness is itself neutral, yet its constituent forms represent a duality of positive and negative experiences. Such an extreme degree of isolation is an unequivocally negative experience for he or she who should experience it, or, as Arendt describes it, “among the most radical and desperate experiences of man” (1976, p. 475). Arendt (1976) explains the basis for this desperation by connecting it back to another one of this work’s primary guiding principles, that aloneness is a part of the human experience. Arendt (1976) makes this connection through an essential paradox: “loneliness is at the same time contrary to the basic requirements of the human condition and one of the fundamental experiences of every human life” (p. 475). The human condition is dependent upon “my being in contact with other men” (Arendt, 1976, p. 475) yet isolation, despite the commonplaceness of loneliness, negates this possibility of contact.

In addition to conforming to our guiding principles of aloneness, Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation also adheres to Diekema’s description of isolation as a type of
aloneness in several key aspects. In the typology that Diekema (1992) crafted, and which has been adopted for this work, isolation’s most distinguishing characteristic is that it is an “other-imposed aloneness” (p. 484) despite the self desiring communication. As a result, isolation is an asymmetrical type of aloneness, a one-sided experience. Arendt’s phenomenology certainly conforms to this. Isolation, for Arendt, is brought about by the severance of contact with others, contact which is still desired. The associated feeling of loneliness is characterized by a sensation of abandonment, that the self has been rejected by the other or others. Severance, abandonment, and rejection, each central to the Arendtian phenomenology of isolation, all confirm the other-imposed nature of this type of aloneness.

Another important correlation between Diekemian isolation and Arendtian isolation is in its classification as a negative experience. This is, of course, a direct result of the asymmetry intrinsic to isolation’s uniqueness. Diekema (1992) writes that “the loss of familiar, desired, and meaningful relationships” is the impetus for experiencing isolation (p. 486). As we learned from Diekema (1992), to desire such relationships yet be invariably thwarted in pursuit demarcates isolation as a specifically negative experience of aloneness. Arendt, too, incorporates negativity into her phenomenology of isolation. In Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology, isolation is counter to the human condition which commands us to seek community. As Arendt (1976) explains, it is “unbearable” because it is “the loss of one’s own self which can be realized in solitude, but confirmed in its identity only by the trusting and trustworthy company of my equals” (p. 477). The isolated and/or lonely person is doomed to live a paradox, or, as Arendt (1976) calls it, one of “the most radical and desperate experiences” in human life (p. 475). In this desperation, man sees the unfailing, omnipresent negativity of isolation.
Furthermore, Arendt (1976) addresses one of Diekema’s (1992) most unique components of isolation in recognizing the punitive powers of enforcing isolation, though in a markedly different manner. Diekema (1992) offers a plethora of examples for the ways in which isolation is imposed by the other as a means of punishment, including, but not limited to, shunning, snubbing, and ignoring. Diekema (1992) also goes above these interpersonal contexts to look at the major institutional form of enforced isolation: imprisonment. The very nature of the incarceration system is to punish the offender by isolating them from society, and, in its most extreme application, from all human contact in solitary confinement.

It is here, however, that we find the ceiling of Diekema’s (1992) descriptions of punitive isolation, whereas Arendt’s is at a much larger scale: totalitarianism. While it may seem odd at first glance that Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation serves as the conclusion of her volume on the political workings of totalitarian systems, it is no mere coincidence. Rather, Arendt notes that isolation and loneliness are intrinsic, even necessary, for totalitarianism. Isolation, Arendt proclaims, is the grounds for totalitarianism to emerge from— isolation is “pretotalitarian” (1976, p. 474). Isolation is a needed ingredient, because, paradoxically, it is both “the beginning of terror” as well as the “result” of terror (Arendt, 1976, p. 474). The totalitarian despot does not merely take advantage of pre-existing conditions of isolation, but rather he imposes it; it is, as Arendt proclaims, “one of the primary concerns of all tyrannical government is to bring this isolation about” (1976, p. 474). Even when isolation moves to the social sphere as loneliness it remains effective in producing the terror needed for totalitarianism. Arendt (1976) explains:

Loneliness, the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, and for ideology or logicality, the preparation of its executioners and victims, is closely connected
with uprootedness and superfluousness which have been the curse of modern masses since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

(p. 475)

Tyranny, then, takes advantage of the phenomenological pain of isolation and uprootedness as community becomes distorted.

In its most simplistic application, isolation can be employed merely to give a distrusted friend the cold shoulder; yet, as we learn from Arendt, the very same concept, to weaponize isolation, can be institutionalized in such a way as to create and maintain a totalitarian dictatorship. Indeed, isolation is an essential condition without which totalitarianism is unable to rise or continue. Phenomenologically, we can surmise that the reason for this is because of isolation’s asymmetry—the inherent agony of being isolated allows it to be a weapon in the hands of the individual or the institution.

Also like Diekema (1992), Arendt (1976) notes that not all aloneness is isolation, as she distinguishes the latter from other experiences of the former. Similarly, this also conforms to another of the guiding principles of aloneness: that being alone is experienced in different forms. In getting to the thing itself that is isolation, Arendt (1976) particularly differentiates isolation (and thereby loneliness) from solitude, maintaining consistency with our three-part typology. To make her case for this separation, Arendt (1976) specifically draws on the dyadic separation of eremos and monos postulated by Epictetus. If I were to find myself in a state of isolation, I “cannot establish contact” with others, whereas if I were to instead find myself in a state of solitude, I would discover that “I am ‘by myself,’ together with my self, and therefore two-in-one” (Arendt, 1976, p. 476). Based on Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology, solitude is not truly deserted, because the self finds company with the self. In isolation, however, Arendt (1976)
demonstrates that there can be no two-in-oneness to the experience; instead, I have been “deserted by all others” (p. 476) including “by my own self” (p. 476). Arendt (1976) finds two-in-oneness to be essential to thought as all thinking occurs through talk with one’s self; as such, it cannot occur in isolation. In isolation, I am one and only one.

**Implications for the Philosophy of Communication**

Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology of isolation, with its emphasis on the relationships between the self and other, not only provides an elucidation of this type of aloneness from the Diekema (1992) typology, but also it raises several implications for the philosophy of communication. Rather than merely rest on a communication-influenced description of isolation as other-imposed aloneness, this final section seeks to extend this conversation by opening a series of avenues for consideration in the philosophy of communication. In particular, I argue that Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology of isolation provides important discourse for intrapersonal communication and self-talk, propaganda used in political rhetoric, and models of stigmatization in communication theory.

**Intrapersonal Communication**

One the most important ways in which Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation presents ramifications for the philosophy of communication is in its relationship with intrapersonal communication. Robert Cathcart and Gary Gumpert (1994) note that intrapersonal communication has “traditionally” been defined as “nonobservable internalized dialogue which occurs in all humans” (p. 159). Their own definition, which does not stray far from the traditional one, refers to intrapersonal communication as “the internal dialogue between the ‘I’
and the ‘me’” (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1994, p. 159). I am adopting this definition for the purposes of this dissertation, but Cathcart and Gumpert’s (1994) treatment of intrapersonal communication is fairly brief.

A more detailed assessment of what constitutes intrapersonal communication can be drawn from Donna R. Vocate’s (2009) work on the subject. Vocate (2009) does not necessarily abandon the traditional definition nor the amended one from Cathcart and Gumpert (1994); however, her unique contribution is in dividing intrapersonal communication into two parts: “inner speech” and “self-talk” (p. 6). For Vocate (2009), inner speech is a mental process in which one develops his or her linguistic ability and coding. On the other hand, based on Vocate’s (2009) interpretation, self-talk refers to “as a dialogue with the self” that is “essentially a speech act” (p. 7). It is this latter form of intrapersonal communication—self-talk—with which Arendt (1976) is frequently concerned, including in her phenomenology of isolation.

In her phenomenology of isolation at the end of The Origins of Totalitarianism, Arendt (1976) contrasts isolation and loneliness with another state of aloneness—namely, with solitude. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Arendt (1976) recognizes that while both solitude and isolation are products of separation between the self and the other, they are not entirely the same sort of phenomenon. The person experiencing solitude, claims Arendt (1976), “can be together with himself” since men have the capacity of ‘talking with themselves’” (p. 476). Arendt (1976) continues that to be in solitude is to be “together with my self, and therefore two-in-one” (p. 476). That quality of being two-in-one is the defining metaphor of solitude for Arendt (1976); it is the crucial capacity of the self to communicate to recognize itself. Arendt (1976) explains: “All thinking, strictly speaking, is done in solitude and is a dialogue between me and myself” (p. 476). Solitude, then, is intrinsic to thought itself, according to Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology.
Arnett (2013) has characterized Arendt’s two-in-oneness as consistent with communication scholarship on “self-talk” (p. 181). If communication requires a multiplicity of interlocutors, then two-in-oneness is essential to the capacity for intrapersonal communication.

Self-talk requires aloneness, however, it is a phenomenon limited specifically to the experience of solitude, according to Arendt’s work (1976). It is clear, however, that when one is in isolation, the benefits of intrapersonal communication, specifically in self-talk become a complete impossibility. Isolation differs from solitude phenomenologically in that in isolation and loneliness I am not merely deserted by the other, but also “I am deserted by my own self” (Arendt, 1976, p. 476). If I find myself isolated or I feel lonely, I am but one; my self cannot find itself as its own interlocutor. While the benefit of solitude is the capacity for self-talk, Arendt (1976) argues that the misery of loneliness is a product of “the loss of one’s own self” (p. 477). The isolated self loses their very identity in the process, because the “confirmation” of it “depend[s] upon other people” (Arendt, 1976, p. 476). Without the self in dialogue with itself, self-talk becomes an impossibility; we lose the capacity for self-talk in isolation as opposed to in solitude.

What sort of impact does isolation’s interruption of self-talk pose? Can the loss of self-talk similarly lead to a loss of ethical communication? Drawing on Arendt’s philosophy of the subject, Arnett (2013) notes that self-talk, as “a form of ‘speech’ with oneself” (p. 175), is central to the process of thinking. Furthermore, Arnett (2013) connects the necessity of self-talk for thinking to the Arendtian metaphor of “thoughtlessness” (p. 182). Indeed, Arendt’s (2006) commentary on the atrocities committed by Eichmann characterizes his actions as being derived from thoughtlessness, a lack of reflective thinking that ultimately calls forth the banality of evil. Arnett (2013) further extends Arendt’s metaphor of thoughtlessness, claiming that when “in dark
times” communication ethics demands self-talk to reflect on “the complexity of guilt and responsibility” (p. 182). Isolation begets loneliness which prevents all of the above demands of communication ethics by preventing the possibility of self-talk, which is especially highlighted in historical moments of bleakness, such as the reign of totalitarian regimes.

Propaganda and Political Rhetoric

If indeed the way in which isolation can breed thoughtlessness by preventing self-talk also leads to the possibility of totalitarianism, an additional way in which Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology creates a ground for exploring the philosophy of communication is within the context of propaganda. In exploring the ability of totalitarian regimes to control mass populations, Arendt (1976) routinely returns to the dictator’s usage of propaganda. Propaganda, of course, has long been of concern to communication scholarship, but it is not a universally agreed upon type of communication. Edward Bernays (2005) sees propaganda to itself be a neutral phenomenon, its ethical implications dictated by its intended outcomes. With that in mind, when Bernays (2005) refers to “[m]odern” propaganda, he intends it to be understood as “a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group” (p. 52). The work of Bernays (2005) is arguably consistent with Arendt’s (1976) conception of propaganda such as those utilized by totalitarian rulers, which she characterizes as being used for negative influence.

Why is propaganda such an effective tool for totalitarianism? In short, it is because propaganda can both exploit and enforce isolation. To elucidate these claims, consider that, according to Jacques Ellul (1973), propaganda “exploits the individual’s need for self-affirmation” (p. 8). Additionally, Ellul’s (1973) treatment of propaganda finds that the individual
is irrelevant to the propagandist—he “is reduced to an average” (p. 7). In keeping with these basic principles of propaganda, Arendt (1976) argued that isolating people is itself necessary to prevent masses from attaining the capacity to act. As such, the ultimate telos of totalitarian propaganda is to create widespread isolation.

Furthermore, the enforcement of isolation through propaganda is important for totalitarianism to prevent self-talk. The previous implication which the philosophy of communication demonstrated was how isolation serves as an interruption to self-talk, and, as a result, becomes the starting point for thoughtlessness. From thoughtlessness, the self is unable to successfully engage in the sort of internal dialogue in which she may affirm her ethical responsibility. Because I am isolated, I am denied self-talk, and thereby I am likely unable to act reflectively against tyranny. As Ellul (1973) claims, “[p]ropaganda ceases where simple dialogue begins” (p. 6), and, I would argue, self-talk—that is, dialogue between me and myself in solitude—is the first dialogue that allows for this cessation.

**Stigma Communication**

The punitive ability of isolation as both Arendt and Diekema attest to also helps to texture an important aspect of communication theory, particularly when applied to the process of stigmatization. Rachel A. Smith (2007) developed the Stigma Communication Model by adapting the work of sociologist Erving Goffman. In his original work on the subject, Goffman (1963) claimed that stigmatization was the process of conversion “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). Smith (2007) characterizes stigma in the same manner, but instead seeks a communication model to explicate that same process. According to the Stigma Communication Model developed by Smith (2007), stigma communication consists of “the messages spread through communities to teach their members to recognize the disgraced (i.e.,
recognizing stigmata) and to react accordingly” (p. 464). To model these communications, Smith (2007) proposes a model that includes message choices, message reactions, and message effects. According to Smith (2007), one of the most important message reactions in stigma communication is to “isolate and remove target” (p. 463). Smith (2007) goes on to explain how those marked by the community with a stigma will be engulfed in isolation and subsequently will feel anxious as well as lonely.

Based on the Stigma Communication Model constructed by Smith (2007), stigma can be understood as a type of communication that creates isolation. Here, we find the utility of Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology of isolation for stigmatization: it offers a more textured, experiential treatment of how one might experience isolation as a message effect of stigma communication. Smith’s (2007) model is predictive and testable, but lacks the type of descriptive affinity that Arendt (1976) offers in her phenomenology, instead presenting isolation as a given. As such, we should acknowledge that stigmatization may play an important role in the communication patterns the create social isolation.

More crucial to the relationship of stigma communication and the phenomenology of isolation, however, is the tenuous connection between stigma and totalitarianism. Indeed, if Arendt (1976) is correct in asserting that isolation is pretotalitarian, then stigma communication may create the message effects necessary for totalitarianism. That being said, Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology does not relegate isolation as solely the grounds of totalitarianism, but rather contends that it is also an ongoing necessity for a despot to create terror and keep such tyranny in place. Does stigma communication play a role in maintaining totalitarianism as a governmental system? In both of Arendt’s (1976) primary examples, this certainly would be the case, particularly with that of Germany’s Nazi regime. Arendt (1976), as summarized earlier,
dedicates roughly one third of her volume on totalitarianism to antisemitism, arguing that the isolation of the Jews was a crucial precondition for the rise of Hitler, but that they need not be the specific class that is targeted in such a way. The isolation that Nazi rule took advantage of and continued to utilize is doubtlessly a wide-sale application of Smith’s (2007) Stigma Communication Model, with propaganda functioning as the primary medium.

Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology of isolation does not simply texture the experience of feeling isolated as an effect of stigma communication, but rather it further elucidates on how the process of stigmatization actually functions. While further elucidating the relationship between stigma communication and totalitarian propaganda would be both a novel and rewarding endeavour, it is unfortunately far outside the scope of this dissertation, with regards to its methodology. Future research for communication theory could conceivably test such a hypothesis with Smith’s (2017) model or one derived from it. Phenomenologically, however, we may minimally surmise the association of stigma and totalitarianism through their immensely similar communication patterns and effects. It can be said, then, that the common ground between Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology of isolation and Smith’s (2007) model of stigma is a space for stigma in the philosophy of communication.

**Conclusion**

Isolation is a paradox; it is complex and yet familiar. Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology, however, offers an all-encompassing description of not just how one experiences isolation but also what the major societal and institutional applications of it might be. Isolation is an other-imposed experience of aloneness. The isolated person desires connection with others but is deserted by them for one reason or another. If I am in isolation, I have lost the capacity to act in
unison with my fellow men and women. If I am isolated in the political realm, I am likely to feel lonely in the social realm as well. The negativity of isolation here bears its most prominent pressure, as I will lose my own sense of self, therefore negating any possibility of engaging in the activity of self-talk that can only be attained by the two-in-oneness afforded by solitude. Isolation brings with it loneliness, terror, and thoughtlessness.

While isolation is a phenomenon of enough philosophical depth to warrant boundless interpretation, this chapter has sought to establish a phenomenological understanding of isolation through a reading of Arendt’s work on the subject. The first section introduced Arendt as a person as well as her philosophy as whole and her volume on totalitarianism in particular. From the conclusion of that work, the second section of this chapter constructed an Arendtian phenomenology of isolation consistent with the asymmetrical, other-imposed formation of aloneness established for this dissertation’s typology. The final section of this chapter extended the phenomenology of isolation into three areas of interest for the philosophy of communication: intrapersonal dialogue, propaganda, and stigmatization. In all, the Arendtian phenomenology of isolation offers a textured understanding of how the self navigates this type of aloneness in a manner that presents significant implications for the philosophy of communication.

Isolation, I argue, is both part of the human condition and yet opposed to the natural inclination to seek togetherness. Isolation is to be made a stranger. It is something nearly everyone is bound to experience, and, as such, its painfulness is an understandable phenomenon even for someone who has never been subjected to its extremes like under totalitarian tyranny. Isolation’s prevention of self-talk already demonstrates the beneficence of solitude where such intrapersonal communication is possible—a topic that will be readdressed in even greater detail in the later chapter focusing on Henry David Thoreau’s phenomenology of solitude. But...
isolation is not the only negative form of aloneness. Just as isolation is asymmetrical due to being only other-imposed, escapism is asymmetrical due to being only self-imposed, and it is their inherent asymmetry that leave each as problematic. In the next chapter, we will in essence invert isolation, imposing isolation by the self in spite of the other in order to arrive at a phenomenology of escapism, exchanging Arendt for Emmanuel Levinas as our primary philosophical lens.
CHAPTER IV:
Levinas and the Phenomenology of Escapism

“I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the ‘burning marl.’ Old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is other people!”

—Jean-Paul Sartre

Introduction

The preceding chapter borrowed from Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology to consider how the asymmetry that defines isolation destined it to be a familiar yet unbearable experience intrinsic to the human condition. Our typology of aloneness, however, does not rest on just one asymmetrical form of aloneness. Rather, there exists the potential to invert the relationship of self and other in isolation, shifting one’s experience of aloneness from other-imposed instead to self-imposed. Diekema (1992) calls this escapism. And while, at face, escapism may not seem to be detrimental like isolation, given that there is herein a sense of autonomy, it is not, Diekema (1992) reminds us, “mutually constructed” (p. 482) like solitude. What makes escapism unique is its asymmetry, but rather than being rejected by the community, Diekema (1992) argues, the “escapist rejects the community and chooses to live in her own world” (p. 495). This conception of aloneness falls outside of the limits of traditional binaries of loneliness and solitude such as in Epictetus’s work, but a communicative understanding of aloneness, based in the relationship of the self and other, demands its consideration. If isolation is to become the stranger, then escapism is to transform the other into the stranger.
As the second form of asymmetrical aloneness, escapism is the central metaphor of this chapter, the thing which I will seek to return to. In order to accomplish this, I propose the introduction of Emmanuel Levinas as the primary lens to assess what sort of phenomenon it is to escape. This chapter adapts the philosophy of Levinas to craft a phenomenology of escapism as an experience of aloneness consistent with this work’s theory of being alone as a communication issue. As such, while Levinas’s *On Escape* (2003) serves as the primary source for the present task, the phenomenology of escapism explored herein will abide by our initial supposition that escapism is self-imposed aloneness that lacks the support of the other. This chapter will furthermore bridge escapism to other aspects of Levinasian phenomenology and ethics to offer an overall more textured understanding of escapism as aloneness.

Similar to the previous chapter, the remainder of this essay will proceed through three primary sections in support of its thesis. In the first section, I will introduce Levinas as the primary philosophical lens through which I will describe escapism. This portion of the essay will provide a brief biographical sketch of Levinas followed by an overview of his general philosophy, particularly with regards to his work in communication and phenomenology. In the second section of this chapter, I will turn to Levinas as the primary source from which the metaphor of escapism can be more closely ascertained as self-imposed aloneness. In exploring it phenomenologically, this essay will also seek to place it in conversation with Levinas’s conception of ethics as well as with other areas of aloneness we have explored thus far. The third section of this chapter will consider specific implications that the phenomenology of escapism has for the philosophy of communication. In particular, this section considers how the notion of escapism developed herein affects intrapersonal communication, communication ethics, and
media ecology. A brief conclusion follows the three primary sections, offering a summary as well as a bridge to the next chapters.

**A Primer on Levinas**

Much like Arendt, Levinas was profoundly influenced both in experience and in thought by the historical moment in which he lived. Having lived through both World Wars, to say nothing of the Holocaust, Levinas’s thought is very much a product of his time. As such, rather than drawing out his metaphor of escape without context, it is instead necessary to understand just what had initially shaped it. With this in mind, this section will consider two areas regarding Levinas equally affected by the historical moment of the twentieth century: first, a biographical sketch reflecting on the major events that defined his life, and then an overview of his major writings to understand his general system of thought.

**Biographical Sketch**

Emmanuel Levinas was born on January 12th, 1906 in the city of Kaunas, the second-largest city in Lithuania (Bergo, 2017). Levinas’s biographer, Salomon Malka (2006), notes that his birthplace is not a trivial fact, as its location near the borders with Latvia and Russia along with its distinct culture would destine it and, by extension, Levinas to face “the great jolts of the twentieth century” (p. 3). Indeed, Levinas’s hometown was doomed to fall to the growing threat of occupation as it became caught in political turmoil (Malka, 2006).

Not all of Kauna’s influence on Levinas, however, is nearly so chaotic; rather, he experienced a peaceful and fulfilling homelife here throughout and beyond his youth. As Malka (2006) attests, the Levinas family’s roots ran deep in Kaunas—Emmanuel and his two brothers
represented the fourth generation to live there—where they primarily spoke Russian and adhered to the practice of the Jewish religion. His father, Yekhiel, owned a local bookstore, perhaps prompting his son’s early interest in literature and reading, which would include Russian authors like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (Malka, 2006). It was also in Kaunas that Levinas met Raïssa Levi, a childhood acquaintance and neighbor who he would go on to marry in 1932 (Bergo, 2017). By 1914, however, facing the German incursion into Kaunas, the Levinas family fled to the Ukraine until Lithuania gained independence six years later (Bergo, 2017).

Levinas finally departed from Kaunas for good in 1923 when he relocated to the French city of Strasbourg to continue his education (Bergo, 2017). Malka (2006) describes this destination as an “exile, his first exile, and, although he did not yet know it, his definitive exile” (p. 20). While in Strasbourg, Levinas’s studies were diverse; according to Bergo (2017), he divided his intellectual pursuits between philosophy, sociology, and psychology, while also, Malka (2006) notes, mastering the French language. Philosophy, however, was of special interest to Levinas, and in 1928, he headed to Freiburg in southwest Germany where he studied under Edmund Husserl and attended Martin Heidegger’s seminars (Bergo, 2017). While in Freiburg, Levinas became a student and proponent of phenomenology, and, in 1930, he published his thesis on the subject (Bergo, 2017). For the next several years, Levinas generated a prolific output of philosophical works, as well as translations, based primarily in the phenomenological method, including De l’évasion in a French philosophy journal (which would later be published in English as On Escape) in 1935 (Bergo, 2017).

World War II became, to put it mildly, a significant interruption to Levinas’s life, both intellectually and personally. By 1939, Levinas had been officially granted French citizenship, and he then enlisted in the officer corps of the French military (Bergo, 2017). A year later,
following defeat on the frontlines at the Battle of the Somme, Levinas was captured by Nazi military forces and imprisoned in a labor camp designated for officers (Malka, 2006). While Levinas was spared the fate of most Jewish citizens captured by the Nazis, his family back in Kaunas, save his wife and daughter, had been murdered (Bergo, 2017). Levinas was released five years later, and though, as Malka (2006) recounts, he rarely spoke about it, it doubtlessly had a profound impact on his philosophy and eventual ethical thought.

Following the events of the Holocaust and his release from captivity, Levinas resumed his education and career in academia. By 1947, Levinas began to publish philosophical works again, starting with *Existence and Existent*, which, according to Bergo (2017), he had started to write while still imprisoned. His expansive corpus continued to accumulate over the next several decades while he took several notable positions at different institutions, including at Université de Paris, Nanterre, where he worked alongside Paul Ricœur (Bergo, 2017). His final position would be teaching at the Sorbonne starting in 1973 (Bergo, 2017). Through both his lectures and his writings, Levinas’s lasting contributions were in introducing German philosophers like Husserl and Heidegger into French thought and in conceptualizing a theory of ethics as first philosophy (Malka, 2006). In 1995, Levinas passed away at home in France just a few days shy of turning 90 years old, leaving a legacy of thought still being explored today (Malka, 2006).

**The Philosophy of Levinas**

With Levinas’s biographical sketch adequately drawn, this section will layer on top of it with an overview of the philosophical thought of Levinas. Indeed, the events of his life and his historical moment profoundly impacted Levinas’s writings, arguably making the two inseparable. Levinas’s work, however, for some time remained fairly obscure. Jacques Derrida
(1978) is largely credited with popularizing Levinas, praising the latter’s interpretations of Husserl and Heidegger and whose thought, Derrida claims, “can make us tremble” (p.82). The source of that trembling arises in Levinas’s penchant for description of the lifeworld underpinned by religious influences and moral issues. Overall, Levinas’s most significant contributions to philosophy include phenomenology, ethics, and the philosophy of communication, each of which I will briefly summarize in the remainder of this overview.

Given Levinas’s educational background, including having gone as far as to study directly under Husserl, it should be of no surprise that Levinas frequently employed phenomenology as a methodology in his works. Moran and Mooney (2002) note that one of Levinas’s legacies is that he is generally credited with introducing phenomenology from German thinkers to French philosophers. This reputation began in 1930 when Levinas published his thesis, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, and continued well into his academic career with interpretive essays. But Levinas’s corpus offers a plethora of phenomenological explorations all his own. Levinas’s most significant turn from the foundations laid by Husserl and Heidegger, Moran and Mooney (2002) argue, is in reinterpreting Otherness, in which “I encounter the Other as absolute” (p. 511), as well as in stepping away from the the totalisation and rationalism of his predecessors. In “Beyond Intentionality,” for example, Levinas (2002) starts from a Husserlian understanding of sense and thought, before ultimately moving to his own meditations on the infinite. Here, Levinas (2002) grounds the infinite within the “responsibility for the Other” (p. 538), a metaphor common throughout his work. Similarly, in *Totality and Infinity*, originally written as his habilitation, Levinas (2013) proposes descriptions of Being, which lead to stages of transcendence. It is in the third section of this work that Levinas (2013) introduces the metaphor of the face, writing that “[t]o manifest oneself as a face
is to \textit{impose oneself} above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form” (p. 55). The face’s primacy in communicating the responsibility to the Other addressed here is a key aspect of not only Levinas’s phenomenology, but his ethical thought as well.

In addition to his vast phenomenological contributions, perhaps Levinas’s most lasting impact in philosophy is in his unique interpretation of ethics, which, arguably, is inseparable from his phenomenology. Certainly, the Levinasian corpus is widely a compilation of meditations on ethical responsibility. François Raffoul (2010) accurately demonstrates the immense scope of Levinasian ethics, claiming that “Levinas’s corpus, comprising one of the greatest ethical thoughts of the twentieth century, presents an extraordinary revolution in the thinking of responsibility” (p. 163). Undoubtedly, the events of Levinas’s life, covered briefly in the preceding biographical sketch, shaped the way in which he conceived his ethical thought, especially following his own imprisonment and losses at the hands of Nazi regime. Michael Kigel (2006), who translated Levinas’s biography to English, posits the notion that “[i]f ethics attained a high degree of transparency and sharpness in the camps, it was because the camps were the absolute suspension of ethics, not in spite of this” (p. xxiv). Levinas, we might surmise, represents the conclusion that Alasdair MacIntyre (1996) reaches in \textit{A Short History of Ethics}—that ethical philosophies are typically responsive to the unique moral challenges of the historical moment in which they are embedded.

Aside from its responsiveness to personal tragedy in the Holocaust, just what makes Levinas’s ethical philosophy so prominent as well as unique? Levinas draws his ethical thought from the way in which he relates the self with otherness, departing from Husserlian phenomenology which in some ways subordinates the Other (Moran & Mooney, 2002). Levinas (2002) himself summarizes the absoluteness of the imperative of the face:
“I am responsible for others whether or not we share a common present. I am responsible for others above and beyond anything I may or may not have done in their regard, beyond anything that may or may not concern my own acts.” (p. 536)

In a later essay, Levinas (2000) himself continued his contention that ethics, drawn from the self’s responsibility to the Other, “is first philosophy” (p. 78), preceding all other metaphysical and axiological inquiries. “My being-in-the-world,” Levinas (2000) reminds the reader, comes from “the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other” (p. 82). Levinas’s ethical philosophy routinely grounds ethics in face-to-face relations, precisely because Levinas (2000) conceives “the face of the Other as being the original site of the sensible” (p. 82). The revelation of the face, as a first philosophy, is what Levinas (2013) refers to in Totality and Infinity as a “primordial” genesis for being (p. 150). Lastly, it must be noted that Levinas (2002) draws on religious tradition to reach this ethical perspective. Regardless, ethics and the metaphor of the face is inseparable from the whole of Levinas’s thought, shaping his phenomenology as well as offering an invitation for scholars outside of philosophy proper, such as those in communication.

Given that so much of Levinasian thought, both in phenomenology and in ethics, is based in the relationship of the self and of the Other, much of it has been found utile in the philosophy of communication as well. For example, when Catherine Malabou (2012) ponders the question, “What is it to see a thought?” (p. 310), she turns to Levinas’s distinction of the “strange presence of absence” (p. 310) to offer an understanding of thought for the philosophy of communication. For Arnett and Holba (2012), Levinas’s work is valuable for the philosophy of communication for the way in which he situates the way in which the self is responsible to the other (p. 4).
Indeed, Levinas, despite not being a communication scholar in the traditional sense, offers a multitude of entrances into the philosophy of communication.

Most communication scholarship, however, is more particularly interested in Levinas’s ethical contributions. To wit: in *By Way of Interruption: Levinas and the Ethics of Communication*, Amit Pinchevski (2005) draws on the Levinasian understanding of ethics in making the claim that “[i]nterruption is an intrinsic and positive condition of communication, indeed of ethical communication, and thus marks the beginning rather than the end of generosity and compassion” (p. 7). Additionally, in *Levinas’s Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics*, Arnett (2017) focuses on Levinas’s distinction that “our responsibility to the Other has no demarcation or conclusion” (p. 1) as an essential basis for communication ethics. Arnett (2017) goes on to argue that Levinas “is essential for those interested in communication ethics absent a code or metaphysical assertion. His ethical project is a unity of contraries that debunks two contrasting and equally problematic perspectives on human responsibility” (p. 3). Similarly, Pat J. Gehrke (2009) incorporates Levinas’s call of the other into “a communication ethic grounded in mutual and reciprocal relations” despite its inherent and historic difficulties (p. 157). These are just a few examples of how Levinasian philosophy informs communication ethics and the philosophy of communication; but with this in mind, our task now must be to invite Levinas into our phenomenology of aloneness through its typological correlate of escapism.

**Toward a Phenomenology of Escapism**

Having broadly introduced Levinas’s life and philosophy is an important first step in utilizing his work as a philosophical lens to more closely examine escapism. While the previous
cursory summary of Levinasian ethics might imply a simple connection to escapism, this phenomenon is actually a bit unexpectedly tangential to his phenomenology. In contrast to Arendt, who directly considered isolation as a phenomenon, Levinas’s offerings on escapism are much more indirect. As a result, the path to a Levinasian phenomenology of escapism must by necessity take something of a roundabout course. With this in mind, this section has a series of tasks ahead, including first making an important distinction on the way in which escapism is defined in the vernacular, then summarizing On Escape as a primary text to draw from, identifying escape as a metaphor and subsequently reconfiguring it as escapism (a distinction that will be made clearer in the ensuing pages), and then considering mediums of escapism and its relationship with loneliness.

Beyond Entertainment

Before proceeding, however, I would like to note some practical limits of the scope of our phenomenology of escapism. This is especially necessary given the myriad ways in which escapism is loosely understood in popular parlance. Lay definitions often relegate escapism to a method of leisure; the Merriam-Webster dictionary, for example, defines escapism as a “habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine.” This would arguably seem to be consistent with the way in which the term escapism is generally employed in day-to-day conversation.

Similar understandings of escapism as a sort of submersive entertainment persist into scholarship as well, many of which take it as a given while framing it as an issue of media usage (e.g. Tuan, 1998; Evans, 2001). Harald Warmelink, Casper Harteveld, and Igor Mayer (2009) note this sort of scholarly dearth and disagree with the negative connotations escapism is
typically imbued with. Furthermore, Warmelink, Hartevelt, and Mayer (2009) employ Derridean
deconstruction to offer a more neutral definition of escapism: “relieving stress or breaking the
mundaneness of daily life” (p. 1). In general, however, literature on the topic is surprisingly
imprecise.

Of course, regardless of any imprecision, neither the lay definitions nor the scholarly
definitions discussed hitherto fit with the way escape is described by Levinas (2003) nor the way
it is conceptualized by Diekema (1992)—and of course, by extension, this dissertation. Levinas
(2003) does admit that he has “borrow[ed]” the term “from the language of contemporary literary
criticism” (p. 52); however, he does not use it in a way that is reducible to merely a diversion of
reality through entertainment media. As such, we may regard the lay media-based understanding
of escapism, such as those of video games and movies, as methods by which one may seek
aloneness; however, this is woefully insufficient at describing the phenomenological constitution
of escapism itself as an experience of aloneness, thus requiring us to yet seek a deeper layer of
escapism. I will not belabor this distinction any further at present, but this is a notion that will be
returned to later in this chapter once we establish an understanding of escapism as it occurs with
one’s being-in-the-world. For this task, I now turn directly to the phenomenology of Levinas,
and first to his metaphor of évasion.

De L’Évasion Overview

With Levinas’s general philosophy understood and our caveat noted, we may now utilize
his phenomenology as a primary philosophical lens by which we may better describe escapism as
a form of aloneness. As previously mentioned in this chapter, Levinas (2003) explores évasion,
or, escape, in an essay titled simply On Escape, which will serve as the section’s primary source.
Notably, this is a significantly early work for Levinas. Indeed, in the timeline of Levinas’s publications, *On Escape* is one of the first entries, originally published in 1935. For comparison, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, widely regarded as one of the most important selections in Levinasian philosophy, was not published until 1961, and *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* was not published until 1993. Nevertheless, *On Escape* takes on the form of “an original essay in hermeneutic ontology” according to Bergo (2017). More specifically, Levinas (2003) uses this essay to offer a phenomenological exploration on escape that is based in a conception of evading the self in pursuit of transcendence.

Levinas (2003) divides *On Escape* into eight sections, each exploring a different component of the metaphor of escape. In the opening section of this essay, Levinas (2003) attempts to ground the metaphor of escape within the scope of contemporary (or contemporary at his time) philosophy. Escape, for Levinas (2003), emerges from the “insufficiency of the human condition” (p. 51) but has not been adequately uncovered. Levinas (2003) argues that this is “the discovery of not a new characteristic of our existence, but of its very fact” (p. 52). This becomes the basic thesis that Levinas (2003) explores in the remaining seven sections.

The next two sections of Levinas’s (2003) essay transitions to the notion of need, which contains “something other than a lack” (p. 56), and instead it “is intimately tied to being” (p. 57). Continuing into the next section of the essay, Levinas (2003) claims that need “turns us toward something other than ourselves” (p. 58) as the resulting “insufficiency” (p. 58) and “suffering” (p. 58) prompts us to seek “satisfaction” (p. 58). Moreover, Levinas (2003) argues that satisfaction of a need always remains insufficient on its own.

The satisfaction of need is the central focus of the fourth section, which results in a “primordial phenomenon” (Levinas, 2003, p. 60) that Levinas (2003) refers to as “pleasure” (p.
Levinas (2003) describes this sort of pleasure as only a momentary gratification, as it is “an abandonment, a loss of oneself, a getting out of oneself, an ecstasy” (p. 61). The abandonment wrought by pleasure does not, however, truly constitute escape. Rather, despite Levinas (2003) describing pleasure as “the process of departing from being” (p. 62), he ultimately relegates pleasure to a “deceptive escape” (p. 62) because it is “an escape that fails” (p. 62).

In the essay’s fifth section, Levinas (2003) posits that “shame” (p. 63) is the result of a failed escape through pleasure. Here, Levinas (2003) contends—in an early example of Levinas’s long-held focus on responsibility—that shame “is founded upon the solidarity of our being, which obliges us to claim responsibility for ourselves” (p. 63). Shame, for Levinas (2003), is a metaphorical “nakedness” (p. 64) which brings about “the need to excuse one’s existence” (p. 65). We desire to flee from our own nakedness; however, we ultimately discover that we cannot ever flee from ourselves.

As Levinas (2003) opens the sixth section of *On Escape*, he shifts his attention to the metaphor of “malaise” (p. 66). In considering malaise, Levinas (2003) uses the extended example of “nausea” (p. 66), an experience during which one feels “revolted from the inside” (p. 66). Levinas (2003) argues that the unique experience of nausea “amounts to an impossibility of being what one is” (p. 66) which leads to the “experience of pure being” (p. 67) and the subsequent desire to escape from it. It is here, Levinas (2003) argues, that we discover our inherent “powerlessness” (p. 68) to escape our own presence.

In the final two sections of *On Escape*, Levinas (2003) begins to return to many of the prior concepts to reconsider the nature of being. In the seventh section, Levinas (2003) reconsiders the essence of need, which he now argues is the result of “a plenitude of being” (p. 69), rather than from a lack or a privation thereof. Levinas (2003) is now able to conclude that
“[n]eed is not oriented toward the complete fulfillment of a limited being, toward satisfaction, but toward release and escape” (p. 69). This leads into an assessment of being and idealism in the eighth and final section of Levinas’s (2003) essay. Levinas (2003) concludes that philosophers often situate idealism as a path “to surpass being” (p. 73), but that we should recognize “the originality of escape” as “a matter of getting out being by a new path” (p. 73). It is on this notion that Levinas ends his elucidation of escape.

**Escape as a Phenomenon**

What, then, is escape, according to Levinas? Levinas (2003) makes it clear that escape is phenomenologically an essential part of Being, as it is Being from which man seeks to escape. It is, as Levinas (2003) describes it, “the quest for the marvelous” (p. 53). There is a significant emphasis on embodiment throughout this treatise as well which should not be overlooked (Levinas, 2003). Through the bodily experiences of phenomena such as shame, nausea, and pleasure, Levinas (2003) reaffirms his description of escape: “the need to get out of oneself, that is, to break the most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself [soi-même]” (p. 55; emphasis his). As Levinas (2003) contends, the need for escape is exactly result of the need to separate the I from the self, disintegrating the “alleged peace-with-self” (p. 55). As such, Levinas (2003) routinely characterizes escape as a “revolt” (e.g. p. 49) and the desire to “flee” (e.g. p. 55). One revolts against the nature of being, and in so doing desires to flee from oneself—such is the essence of a Levinasian understanding of escape.

**From Escape to Escapism**

As the astute reader may have observed, the lacuna of Levinas’s description of escape is the role or the relation of the Other. Such an omission is a significant (though not
insurmountable) obstacle for our present endeavour, as the understanding of aloneness we have derived from Diekema (1992) demands each form of aloneness to be found in the relation between the self and the other. In *On Escape*, however, Levinas (2003) describes an escape in which the self seeks to evade the self, saying comparatively little about the Other. To be sure, there are moments in this essay when Levinas (2003) does consider the Other’s influence—for example, shame is the result of an inability to “make others forget our basic nudity” (p. 64). However, these few, brief references of the Other are not central to Levinas’s (2003) conception of escape; rather, they are merely ancillary to it.

This is indeed surprising, considering the frequency with which this is the primary metaphor of Levinasian phenomenology throughout his other works—perhaps this is the result of how early into his career this work is published. Indeed, in a letter to Jacques Rolland, Levinas (2003) himself confesses that it was challenging for him to address this essay in retrospect because he found it “difficult to interpret [his] own youth” (p. 1). Nevertheless, because of the content of his later work, it is not a particularly difficult task to extend Levinasian escapism to understand the Other’s role, as we have the opportunity to amalgamate the framework developed thus far with Levinas’s phenomenology that arises from the face of the Other. We may consider this transitioning from *escape* to *escapism*.

To better reappropriate Levinas’s (2003) conception of escape for the present task of developing escapism as a form of aloneness, let us return to Levinas’s work on ethics as first philosophy, which was overviewed earlier in this chapter. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas (2013) examines the face of the Other phenomenologically, in which the face is understood as the presentation of the Other to the self. Furthermore, Levinas (2013) attests that only in relation to the Other, in speech and in language with the face of the Other, can I conceive of my own self.
But herein too does one encounter responsibility. It is here, in this face-to-face relation, that I discover a primordial call of responsibility; for Levinas (2013), this ethical calling of the face of the Other has primacy of all else.

In his essay “Beyond Intentionality,” Levinas (2002) further explains such absolute responsibility as “for others above and beyond anything I may or may not have done in their regard, beyond anything that may or may not concern my own acts.” (p. 536). It is in this essay that Levinas (2002) continues his departure from Husserlian phenomenology, arguing that meaning does not manifest in the acquisition of knowledge but rather in the face of the Other. Husserlian phenomenology, Levinas (2002) argues, reduces the other to an acquirable knowledge, and yet such knowledge is “[t]runcated” as it “lacks the means to pierce the secret of his inner life and his personal identity” (p. 534). The face of the Other, however, “summons me” (Levinas, 2002, p. 537), and in the responsibility that is summoned we return to “primordial” (Levinas, 2002, p. 537) meaning that is beyond the ontological.

Levinas (2002) concludes “Beyond Intentionality” by drawing the summoning of the stranger from the Old Testament. In his reading of chapter 18 of Genesis, Levinas (2002) surmises that the “singular significiation of God is tied to responsibility for the other man” (p. 538). Similarly, in “Ethics as First Philosophy,” Levinas (2000) describes how the “face of the Other” serves as “the original site of the sensible” (p. 82). The for-the-other, according to Levinasian phenomenology, need not be religious, but rather, it must always maintain its primacy above all else.

By combining Levinas’s description of escape along with his unique conception of the face of the other, or placing the two within conversation with one another, we can finally get to the thing itself of escapism. Consider, first, each of these individually. Escape is constituted by
the self attempting to flee from oneself, to attempt to transcend “the fact that the I [moi] is oneself [soi-même]” (Levinas, 2003, p. 55). Additionally, the face of the Other “signifies in the fact of summon, of summoning me” (Levinas, 2002, p. 537). What if the self attempts to transcend both—to escape from both the self’s own being-in-world as well as the for-the-other one is called to? Rather than just an escape, this is the very phenomena of escapism.

Recall that Diekema (1992) constructs escapism as the self denying the other of relations in spite of the other’s desire; it is a non-mutual aloneness that develops in an asymmetry of the self and other. Phenomenological escapism, as drawn from the work of Levinas, denies (or, at least, attempts to deny) the responsibility to the Other; I, in seeking escapism, reject the summoning of the stranger. In escapism I not only attempt to flee from my own self, but I attempt to flee from all selves, from the selves that summon me and grasp as an Other—from the for-the-other that primordially generates meaning. Escapism turns away from ethics as first philosophy, as my turning away from the face of the Other consequently turns away from the possibility of the infinite. Escapism, as a phenomenon, is when I pursue an aloneness that the Other does not fully make available to me. I am put into question by the Other, and yet, within my pursuit of escapism, I do not answer back.

Means of Escapism

It should be noted at this juncture that our phenomenology of escapism does not necessarily preclude the lay definitions of escapism addressed earlier in this section of the chapter. In that subsection, we observed that escapism is colloquially understood as a simple, individual diversion from reality, often through means of personal entertainment ranging from books to video games. Many scholarly approaches to escapism maintain a similar consideration
(e.g. Furthermore et al., 2009). While I argued that such definitions are not the same as escapism as a phenomenon of human experience—especially when understood as a manifestation of aloneness—it can indeed be a means or a method by which an individual seeks escapism. The self who desires to turn from their being-in-the-world and responsibility to the Other may employ any of these tactics to create their aloneness. If the Other calls to me but I wish to avoid her, electronic media may offer me a medium for aloneness, for my own escapism. While these dueling usages may seem conflicting, there is some clarity in the relation between the two.

**Loneliness and Escapism**

If, then, escapism occurs when the one attempts flee from both one’s own self as well as the Other, can the self experience loneliness in the context of escapism? If indeed I choose to ignore the for-the-other, can I possibly feel lonely? In the previous chapter, I concluded through Arendt’s (1976) work on isolation, that loneliness results from the feeling of being rejected by the other, despite the self’s desire for connection. The opening of this chapter characterized escapism as an inversion of isolation, when the self is rejecting the other, despite the other’s desire for connection. By reading this through a lens of Levinas’s phenomenology, we accepted this depiction, while adding that in so doing, escapism attempts the impossibility of transcending one’s own self as well. Importantly, escapism implies that, unlike isolation, I have chosen this isolation while the Other has not; as Diekema (1992) describes it, in this way escapism is asymmetrical aloneness. Despite this, I argue that the phenomenon of escapism ultimately can also result in one’s feeling lonely.

To further elucidate this assertion, I will return to Ben Lazare Mijuskovic’s (2012) phenomenology of loneliness addressed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Although at that time I
ultimately found Mijuskovic’s (2012) absolutist argument—that the human condition is entirely defined by loneliness and no other means of being alone exist—to be flawed, his work can prove helpful through a constructive hermeneutic consideration. Mijuskovic (2012) contends that loneliness is “the most primary, universal, and necessary condition of being human” (p. 88). Loneliness, for Mijuskovic (2012), is the driver of all activity, as all human action is an attempt to mask our inherent, inescapable aloneness, but he also specifically argues that all terms for being alone, including isolation and solitude, are “synonymous” (p. 137). While his universalist approach to loneliness must be rejected on the grounds that it precludes our sporadic yet intrinsic desire to be alone (which we have established as solitude when it is mutually attained or as escapism when asymmetrically pursued), Mijuskovic’s (2012) philosophical argument does offer insight for the phenomenology of escapism.

In the introduction to Mijuskovic’s (2012) work, he identifies that loneliness is a paradox, the result of humanity’s innate need for community. “Without the desire for companionship,” Mijuskovic (2012, p. liii) writes, a person “becomes progressively less human” (2012, p. liii). Such is the case for loneliness according to Mijuskovic’s (2012) phenomenology; it is a never-ending quest to avert the progression to the inhuman. As Mijuskovic (2012) describes:

Each of us must be connected to something beyond ourselves; we must transcend our monadic limits of consciousness by relation to another, preferably conscious, being; we must escape our self-centered dots of awareness and create a temporal ‘space’ between two immaterial points of awareness, if we are to ‘escape’ isolation and achieve communication. (p. lv).
Yet escapism, as we have derived it from Levinas, denies communication; it embraces what Mijuskovic (2012) calls loneliness in favor of connecting beyond ourselves. To answer the original inquiry of this passage, escapism can certainly then contribute to the experience of loneliness for the escapist, precisely because the escapist has attempted to transcend that space of connection beyond ourselves.

Furthermore, as we have conceived the phenomenon of escapism herein, it presents itself when I attempt to transcend not only the other that calls to me but also my own self; I attempt to create a space with no one at all, not even myself. In this space I can be lonely because I cannot find even my own self while I simultaneously deny my connection beyond myself; I reject my being-in-the-world. In this way, escapism represents the purest representation of the sort of loneliness that Mijuskovic (2012) posited, a loneliness that is a driving force of action. This premise also offers an entrance to escapism’s consequences for philosophy of communication, which this chapter will next consider.

**Implications for the Philosophy of Communication**

Despite escapism being a phenomenon of being alone, separated from the other, the manner in which that separation manifests suggests failures in communication. As the self’s attempted nonmutual withdrawal from the Other, the ways in which escapism affects, or perhaps interrupts, communication are certainly plentiful. In this final section, I will invite the phenomenology of escapism as a type of aloneness into the philosophy of communication. To narrow these offerings, the remainder of this section examines three particular areas of research in communication that I contend are most closely implicated by escapism: intrapersonal
communication, communication ethics, and media ecology. I offer connections to each in the following subsections.

**Intrapersonal Communication**

It seems apropos to begin with a corresponding implication that was presented in the previous chapter with regards to Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation, that of intrapersonal communication. In the preceding chapter, we concluded through Arendt (1976) that intrapersonal communication, or what she conceived of elsewhere as self-talk, was a phenomenological impossibility in isolation. Arendt (1976) rightly argued that self-talk requires being a two-in-one, such that I might engage in “a dialogue between me and myself: (p. 476); however, isolation is the result of a full desertion of the self from the other as well as the self, and, as such, if I am isolated I cannot communicate with myself because my self has been lost. Arendt (1976) ultimately concludes that the two-in-oneness necessary for self-talk is intrinsically unavailable in isolation and can only be found in solitude; and while Arendt (1976) does not explore escapism in the way the Diekema (1992), Levinas (2003), or myself have, Arendt’s argument remains cogent.

Simply put, intrapersonal communication cannot occur within the phenomenon of escapism either. My conclusion here is based in the same reason that Arendt (1976) rules out its possibility in isolation: escapism subverts the two-in-oneness of the self. This contention becomes especially evident when we reconsider the understanding of intrapersonal communication that this dissertation has previously adopted—that is, Robert Cathcart and Gary Gumpert’s (1994) definition of “the internal dialogue between the ‘I’ and the ‘me’” (p. 159). Can the I and the me, the two-in-one, enter into a dialogue within the space we have established as
escapism? This question poses a similar problem as our preceding question of loneliness, partly complicated by escapism being self-induced.

That said, however, we can negate the possibility of intrapersonal communication in escapism on the same grounds by which we affirmed the possibility of loneliness. The obvious implication of escapism is that we outwardly deny interpersonal dialogue with the other, but this same process inwardly denies intrapersonal dialogue as well. Levinas (2003) argues that one attempts to escape when one senses the “insufficiency of the human condition” (p. 51) and so we endeavor to abandon that condition. Because, then, the phenomenon of escapism results in an attempt to transcend not only the other but also the self, it abandons a communicative space altogether. Escapism separates the I from the me and the me from the I. As I encounter the world in escapism, I quash my two-in-oneness, and, as a result, obfuscate my internal dialogue. Intrapersonal communication is once more an impossibility, again proving it to be a communication medium unique to solitude and prompting us to return once more to this subject in the following chapter when the phenomenology of solitude is explored in greater detail from the perspective of Thoreau.

**Communication Ethics**

The next implication for the philosophy of communication that I wish to consider in this section is how the phenomenon of escapism should be interpreted or considered in communication ethics. At face, it is indeed difficult to avoid asking questions of ethics when working from Levinasian phenomenology, as Levinas himself, after all, routinely regarded ethics as first philosophy. Furthermore, this is true to form in secondary work on Levinas as well; for example, the closing part of the first section of this chapter provided a brief overview of the ways in which Levinasian thought has influenced more recent scholarship in communication ethics,
including that of Pinchevski (2005), Gehrke (2009), and Arnett (2017). As such, it should not be unexpected that any phenomena drawn from Levinas’s philosophy should inevitably offer some elucidations of morality, but escapism serves as a particularly unique entrance to questions of communication ethics.

The central focus of this chapter has established escapism as itself a violation of Levinasian ethics—to escape in this way is to turn away from the face of the other. For Levinas, my duty is always to the Other, as I am my brother’s keeper. When I seek escapism, however, I am in effect declining my responsibility to the Other, closing my eyes to a primordial phenomenon that binds me to an ethical duty. If indeed one of the characteristics—or perhaps the primary characteristic—of escapism as a phenomenon of aloneness is that it is asymmetrical, in the sense that it occurs only when the Other has not consented to it, then it is always already rejecting one’s responsibility to the Other. In the end, escapism is the very negation, or perhaps even the antithesis, of Levinas’s phenomenological ethics.

To extend this inquiry: if escapism is the negation of Levinasian ethics, what might this mean for communication ethics specifically? Arnett (2017) grounds Levinas’s for-the-other as central to communication ethics, with the face of the Other presenting a “rhetorical demand” (p. 1-2). Arnett (2017) argues that communication ethics derived from “a Levinasian perspective” is understood as “an existential burden enacted each day, by each person, and responsive to each moment through one’s own uniqueness of responsibility to and for the Other” (p. 3). We may surmise, then, that escapism finds that existential burden to be too burdensome. The escapist attempts in a moment to transcend their responsiveness by not responding at all, and, in so doing, abandons the praxis of communication ethics. To seek escapism is to favor the “originative I” (Arnett, 2017, p. 198), as derived from Heidegger, rather than the “derivative I” (Arnett, 2017, p.
the I that is called into responsibility to the Other. The escapist may perceive what Arnett (2017) calls “Levinas’s rhetoric of ambiguity” (p. 9), but refuses to be attentive to “an immemorial ethical echo” (p. 10). In short, escapism is not just a violation of Levinasian ethics, but emblematic of the praxis of unethical communication as well.

**Media Ecology**

Finally, let us consider the intersection of a phenomenology of escapism with media ecology, or the rhetoric of technology. Here, I return to the work of technology theorist and psychologist Sherry Turkle, originally discussed in this dissertation’s literature review. My argument is that the type of aloneness that Turkle (2011) is describing when she refers to people being alone together is what I have established herein as escapism. In *Alone Together*, Turkle (2011) is concerned with the manner in which various technologies, from social media to robotics, create a communicative distance between people at the interpersonal scale, providing a plethora of studies and interviews to make her case. Interestingly, Turkle (2011) directly draws on Levinas’s ethics to understand the emotional attachment that people often develop with humanoid robots. Turkle (2011) proposes that people “are bound by the face even before we might learn that it is the face of a machine” (p. 137). Even when mechanized, Turkle (2011) contends, the face of the Other has an indisputable primacy.

More directly related to escapism, however, is the manner in which Turkle (2011) characterizes the interpersonal issues arising from what she refers to as “[c]onnectivity technologies” (p. 13). Turkle (2011) observes how “the world of connectivity” (p. 13) has moved from supplementing face-to-face communication to usurping it as the preferred medium, ironically with the hope that networked interactions may “defend us against loneliness” (p. 13). Turkle (2015) explores the loneliness aspect even further in *Reclaiming Conversation: The
Power of Talk in a Digital Age. Turkle (2015) again notes, vis-à-vis Levinas, how mechanical communicators like robots are increasingly communicating to us as a face, calling us into an “ethical compact” (p. 342) with a nonhuman Other, even as we lose sight of the face of the human Other behind a myriad of screens and text.

The overall notion that Turkle (2015) addresses in her latter work is that the ever-present, always-on world of the social network and digital media has instilled an endemic level of loneliness that can only be mitigated through an increased devotion to face-to-face communication. While these communication mediums doubtlessly have significant utility, Turkle’s (2015) concerns are with the way in which “we speak through machines” has swiftly become our speaking “to machines” (p. 17). As mentioned, Turkle (2015) regards that negative reactions of the machine-as-other historical moment manifest as loneliness, and I argue that it is consistent with the sort of loneliness that this chapter recovered from Mijuskovic’s (2012) phenomenology. In other words, the loneliness felt by those overly connected through digital media and networks is the result of escapism.

At this juncture, we might return to a point established earlier in this chapter—that is, that loneliness, counterintuitively, is still a feeling experienced by one who seeks escapism as a type of aloneness. Furthermore, we established previously that various forms of individualized entertainment, such as video games and the Internet, offer a prevalent method by which one can endeavour to escape reality. This is all consistent with Turkle’s argument. Because we mistakenly, unknowingly communicate to machines rather than through machines, we attempt to escape at once both the self and the Other. As I escape into an ecosystem of only non-human others, the specter of loneliness emerges again and again. In short, this historical moment is unique in its widespread ability to seek escapism, as our endless supplies of communicative
technologies serve as tools to escape the self and the Other that have been hitherto unprecedented.

**Conclusion**

At this point, aloneness experienced as escapism has been elucidated in significant detail, offering a phenomenological reduction to the thing itself while also suggesting its impacts for communication scholarship. Escapism is a nonmutual, asymmetrical aloneness that results from the self withdrawing from the Other without the Other’s full consent, extrapolated first from Diekema’s (1992) theory but explored phenomenologically from Levinas. The first section of this chapter introduced Levinas as a philosopher, touching on both his life and his works. Following this, the second section located escape as a metaphor in Levinas’s early work, and expanded it to our own metaphor of escapism by connecting it into Levinas’s later ethical philosophy based on the primacy of the Other. Escapism was established as the pursuit of leaving behind the face of the Other, denying my responsibility to him or her. The final section then considered how our understanding of escapism affects the philosophy of communication in three ways. Here, I argued that like isolation, escapism makes intrapersonal communication impossible, while also addressing a subversion of communication ethics praxis, and, lastly, exploring the way in which digital media and networks are able to impose escapism by offering communication-to-machine as a means of reaching escapism.

Like isolation, the asymmetry of escapism leaves it as always already disruptive. Both isolation and escapism lead to feelings of loneliness because they both create a disconnection between self and other, different mainly in the perspective of who initiated it. In isolation, the self is reduced to a stranger, whereas in escapism, the self reduces the Other to a stranger. Not all
alonesness, of course, is a communicative disruption. When aloneness is symmetrical, loneliness can be converted to a certain productivity by finally allowing for, among other things, a true pursuit of intrapersonal communication. Diekema (1992) calls this solitude, a mutually constructed state of aloneness that has long been regarded as an opposite of loneliness. The next chapter will finally seek a constructive form of aloneness by establishing a phenomenology of solitude, utilizing Henry David Thoreau as our third philosophical lens.
CHAPTER V:

Thoreau and the Phenomenology of Solitude

“Society and solitude are deceptive names. It is not the circumstance of seeing more or fewer people, but the readiness of sympathy, that imports; and a sound mind will derive its principles from insight, with ever a purer ascent to the sufficient and absolute right, and will accept society as the natural element in which they are to be applied.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction

As the previous two chapters explored a phenomenology of isolation and escapism through the lenses of Arendt and Levinas respectively, a commonality between these two phenomena of aloneness remained consistent: their negativity for the experiencer. The opening of this dissertation, however, acknowledged that an occasional desire for aloneness rather than always avoiding it is one of aloneness’s distinct characteristics. But this positive side of aloneness has yet to be explored within the scope of this project. As such, our task must now turn to reclaiming some aspects of aloneness to ascertain why one may enjoy it and why it may be beneficial. While on the whole isolation and escapism are detrimental, the positive encounter of aloneness is one that manifests as solitude.

It is perhaps beneficial before proceeding any further to first summarize once more how Diekema (1992) characterized solitude in the typology on which this dissertation is based.
Diekema (1992) describes solitude as “a symmetrical, willful, cooperative social form, but it requires a commitment on the part of the individual and the community that is longer term and more demanding than that required for privacy” (p. 489). This is, of course, a stark contrast from the ways in which both isolation and escapism were characterized, jettisoning their nonmutual basis between the self of the other in favor of an aloneness that has unanimous permission. As a result, while solitude is inherently about the self becoming alone, it paradoxically “rests upon a foundation of a strong, committed relationship” (Diekema, 1992, p. 489). Herein lies the uniqueness of solitude: it is a universally desired aloneness that preserves relationships rather than severing them. It is this understanding of solitude which I now wish to explore phenomenologically.

In order to offer a phenomenological account of mutually-constructed aloneness—that is, to return to the thing itself of solitude—this chapter introduces the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau as the most appropriate lens. The intent of this chapter is to establish a phenomenology of solitude, by way of Thoreau’s elucidations on the subject, as a positive type of aloneness based on a mutual withdrawal from communication. This represents a stark shift from the darker overtones with which the previous chapters characterized isolation and escapism. Instead, solitude is offered as a necessary, albeit perhaps elusive, experience of the human condition. Furthermore, I argue that rather than a detraction or interruption to communication like its predecessors, solitude has particularly unique and beneficial influences upon human communication.

To accomplish the task of pursuing a phenomenology of solitude, this chapter is divided into the following three sections. In the first section, this chapter introduces Thoreau as a philosophical lens, offering a brief biographical sketch of his life and unique experiences
followed by a basic overview of his works and philosophy, including some important metaphors central to his thought. The second section of this section will focus on solitude as one of these metaphors, exploring solitude as a beneficial experience of aloneness that is formed by an agreement between the self and the other to temporarily suspend their relationship. Finally, the third section of this chapter will consider solitude’s implications for the philosophy of communication, suggesting solitude as a sort of communicative space for intrapersonal communication, communication with nonhuman others, and communication with the divine. Through these three sections, it is hoped that solitude can be reclaimed as a necessary part of the human condition as well as important to the philosophy of communication.

**Introducing Thoreau**

Before utilizing Thoreau as a primary source for a phenomenology of solitude, it is prudent to understand who Thoreau was as well as what he professed in his overall philosophy. This task, however, is problematized by common misconceptions of both Thoreau the person and Thoreau the philosopher. One of Thoreau’s biographers, Robert Sullivan (2009), goes as far to claim that the Thoreau that most people think of is “not here” (p. 1)—that is, that he exists now as more of a popular culture icon, a colorful hermit that is not a faithful representation of the complex thinker that he really was. Furthermore, Thoreau’s philosophy is convoluted and can be difficult to ascertain, because, as Robert Michael Ruehl (2018) notes, he was himself an “eclectic thinker” who has only recently been received “more seriously as a philosopher” in academic literature. To untangle these complications, the goals of this section are to, firstly, offer a biographical sketch of the Thoreau that, to respond to Sullivan’s (2009) accusations, actually is here, so to speak, and, secondly, to take Thoreau seriously as a philosopher with a brief summation of the important aspects of his thought and highlights of his writings.
Biographical Sketch

In the ninth volume of his expansive journals, Thoreau (2018) remarked: “I have never gotten over my own surprise that I should have been born into the most estimable place in all the world, and in the very nick of time, too” (p. 160). Certainly, Thoreau is right to praise both the time and place in which he was born, as he was doubtlessly a product of both. On July 12th, 1817, Thoreau, whose birth name was David Henry Thoreau, was born in the Massachusetts town of Concord (Sullivan, 2009). Concord was soon to be the heart of the transcendentalist philosophical and literary movement that peaked over the course of Thoreau’s life (Gura, 2007). The primary figure of transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson, later became Thoreau’s mentor and friend (Lysaker & Rossi, 2010). Like Emerson, Thoreau left Concord to attend Harvard University (then known as Harvard College), where he studied Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and German (Higgins, 2017) in addition to philosophy and rhetoric (Woodlief, 1975). As Higgins (2017) recounts, however, Thoreau believed the greatest asset of Harvard was not the courses or faculty but rather its expansive libraries. It was there that Thoreau first encountered transcendentalist philosophy by reading Emerson’s 1836 manifesto, Nature (Ruehl, 2018), and Thoreau would experience Emerson’s philosophy first hand when the latter delivered the commencement address at the former’s graduation (Sullivan, 2009). Thoreau returned to Concord following graduation with newfound knowledge and a respect for Emerson’s work.

After his return to Concord, Thoreau began to create a legacy as a thinker as well as a reformer. Soon after moving back into his family’s home, Thoreau became directly involved in the transcendentalist circle the town was known for, a movement Philip Gura (2007) describes as “one of the nation’s first coherent intellectual groups: movers and shakers in the forefront of educational reform; proselytizers for the rights of women, laborers, prisoners, and the indigent
and inform; and agitators for the abolition of slavery” (p. xi). Thoreau frequently conversed and collaborated with the likes of Emerson, Amos Bronson Alcott, and others to which his thought has become indebted (Gura, 2007). As a result, Thoreau is most frequently identified in retrospect with the historical moment of American transcendentalism.

Certainly, Thoreau’s life and writings engage with transcendentalist touchstones like those Gura (2007) has outlined above, but he also blazed his own unique trail. His love for nature took Thoreau on extended excursions to several wildernesses, including but not limited to those of Cape Cod, Quebec, Maine, and Minnesota (Sullivan, 2009). Perhaps the most well-known example of Thoreau’s desire to commune with nature is found in his move to a one-room cabin on the shores of Walden Pond about a one mile walk from Concord (Thoreau, 2008). Thoreau (2008) ultimately spent two years at Walden in order to “front only the essential facts of life” (p. 85), though frequently returned to Concord and made excursions to other nearby locales (Sullivan, 2009). The essential facts Thoreau fronted at his solitary cabin became the basis of his best-known book, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, though his love of the natural world would stay with him throughout his life.

It was during Thoreau’s two year experiment at Walden Pond that he faced another of his infamous life events when he was arrested for failure to pay his poll tax (Sullivan, 2009). Though Thoreau (2008) only briefly mentions this moment in his recounting of his time at Walden, it is the central impetus for his essay “On Resistance to Civil Government” (2001a) in which he reveals this to be a means of peaceful civil disobedience against the practice of slavery and the invasion of Mexico. Thoreau’s political activism continued throughout his life through frequent public lectures regarding political reform (Cramer, 2011), going as far publically offering his support for the violent radical John Brown (Turner, 2009) and even serving as a conductor on the
underground railroad to aid escaping slaves (Schneider, 2015). The degree of Thoreau’s activism made for a unique distinction amongst his so-called circle.

In May of 1862, Thoreau succumbed to his long battle with tuberculosis, passing away at his family home in Concord (Sullivan, 2009). Eulogizing his long-time friend, Emerson remarked at Thoreau’s funeral that “[t]he country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost” (Schneider, 2015). In retrospect, Emerson’s remarks seem quite prophetic when considering the long and diverse list of those Thoreau has influenced since his death. Thoreau’s appreciation for nature has long influenced notable environmentalists like John Muir (Fleck, 1985) and Rachel Carson (Lear, 2009). The unique style of prose and description employed in Thoreau’s books and poetry had an effect on later literary figures like Leo Tolstoy (Manning, 1943) and Kurt Vonnegut (1991). His emphasis on solitude and introspection inspired religious figures like Thomas Merton (Albert, 1988; Henken, 1997) and Martin Buber (Avnon, 1998). Thoreau’s political action of civil disobedience inspired future civil rights activists like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi (Furtak, 2017). Lastly, Thoreauvian philosophical explorations helped shape later thinkers like Stanley Cavell (1997) and Timothy Morton (2009).

In his essay “Civil Disobedience,” Thoreau himself remarked, “I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad” (2001a, p. 74). The deliberate way in which he lived, however, was doubtlessly impactful, and those varied intellectual threads must be unpacked themselves in order to understand the breadth of Thoreau’s thought and create yet another thread.

**Thoreau’s Philosophy and Works**

Arguably, Thoreau’s life cannot be disentangled from his philosophy, and, as a result, perhaps the only word that accurately describes Thoreau’s wide-ranging thought is *eclectic.*
While Thoreau’s mentor, Emerson, has been described as a “biographer’s nightmare” (Roehler, 1995, p. 3), Thoreau has been conversely referred to as “an annotator’s dream, especially when he’s quite literally all over the map” (Gionfriddo, 2017, p. 49). Pinpointing Thoreau into a single school of philosophy is nigh impossible, though Thoreau is most frequently categorized with his local contemporaries like Emerson as a transcendentalist (Gura, 2007). Indeed, Thoreau’s primary two themes—nature and reform—align neatly with the thought of transcendentalism. However, as Furtak (2017) argues, Thoreauvian emphases such as nondualism, embodiment, and epistemology place his thought more closely in the company of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Charles Sanders Peirce than with true transcendentalists like Margaret Fuller and Bronson Alcott. In this sense, Thoreau is perhaps more accurately described as a sort of philosophical nomad, probing the theretofore unexplored terrain of existentialism and phenomenology, without necessarily abandoning his transcendentalist roots. Thoreau’s expeditions into proto-phenomenology, vital to the overall argument of the present chapter, will be returned to in greater detail in the next section.

That being said, Thoreau’s transcendentalist roots are substantial, and, in particular, Emerson’s influences on Thoreauvian philosophy are too ubiquitous to overlook. Born in Boston in 1803, Emerson began studying at Harvard by age 14 and eventually settled in Concord where he became a well-known public scholar (Buell, 2003). Additionally, Emerson is frequently credited as being the most central figure of the American transcendentalist movement (Gura, 2007). His essay “The American Scholar” (1983b) is a sort of manifesto for his school of thought, outlining the path for a unique path of philosophy for the relatively new nation based on his metaphor of the “Man Thinking” (1983b, p. 54), a state of wholeness for the individual ascertained through freedom and contemplation. The Man Thinking became prominent in the
underpinnings of Thoreau’s thought (Bickman, 1992); however, Emerson’s two most impactful works to shape Thoreau’s philosophy were “Self-Reliance” (2011) and *Nature* (1983a). In the former, Emerson (2011) modifies the classic Socratic idiom to “Trust thyself” (p. 5) by seeking our own self in “the voices which we hear in solitude” (p. 7). In the latter, Emerson (1983a) responds to the question “to what end is nature?” (p. 7), offering the four ways in which the natural world presents itself to humanity: commodity, beauty, language, and discipline. It is readily clear that the Emersonian interpretations of self-reliance and nature would become dominant metaphors not just in transcendentalist philosophy but throughout his pupil’s works as well.

Although Emerson’s influences on Thoreau are palpable, Thoreau’s own philosophy is unmistakably unique. One of the ways in which Thoreau really distinguishes himself is in an area which Emerson largely avoided: political philosophy. Although the basis for political freedom is related to Emersonian self-reliance and rugged individualism, Taylor (2009) argues that when reading Thoreau’s corpus as a whole, it becomes more obvious that Thoreau “accepts the necessity of locating our choices and freedoms within social contexts and historical time” (p. 101) while Emerson eschewed such social connectivity. This is clear as well in Thoreau’s (2001a) most notable political treatise, today known as “Civil Disobedience,” in which he delineates individual responsibility while still acknowledging the necessity of governance and the cooperation of others. Due to this duality, Thoreau (2001a) contends that the individual must have a moral obligation to be disobedient to an immoral government, writing: “All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable” (p. 206). Thoreau’s purported duty to civil disobedience had even caught the eye of political theorist Hannah Arendt
(1972), who observed that “Thoreau did not pretend that a man’s washing his hands of [injustice] would make the world better” (p. 60). Such themes of the responsibility between the individual and society carry through Thoreau’s other political works, including “Life Without Principle” and “Slavery in Massachusetts” among others. However, as Cavell (1997) contends, Thoreau’s political philosophy cannot be bracketed off entirely from the remainder of his corpus, including Walden, because it is integral to his overall system of philosophy.

The second, and perhaps more dominant, major theme of Thoreau’s philosophy is man’s relationship with nature. Here again one may find a catalyst in Emersonian philosophy; however, Thoreau’s conception of nature differs significantly than that of his predecessor. Furtak (2017) argues that the most obvious point of departure is that Thoreau does not regard nature as directly emblematic of a higher order nor as anthropocentrically instrumental as Emerson would. Conversely, Thoreau aims at reporting observations of fact as he encounters it, valuing “the significance of phenomena” (qtd. in Furtak, 2017). While Furtak (2017) notes that Thoreau’s emphasis on observing natural phenomena grounds Thoreauvian epistemology, Philip J. Cafaro (2012) alternatively frames Thoreau’s natural philosophy as “a philosophically deep and inspiring environmental virtue ethics, linking environmental awareness and protection to human flourishing and the pursuit of excellence” (p. 69). The final clause of Cafaro’s claim is derived from perhaps the most often overlooked yet commonly invoked arguments Thoreau makes with regards to nature: that it is not separate from humanity. Indeed, books like Walden, Cape Cod, and The Maine Woods as well as essays like “Huckleberries” and “Wild Apples” do not necessarily focus on wilderness, but rather construe mankind as intrinsically enveloped by the natural world. It is this sort of richness that affords Thoreau’s philosophy of nature to be broadly
reappropriated in secondary literature—to epistemology, to environmental ethics, and, as the next section contends, to phenomenology.

**Toward a Phenomenology of Solitude**

With Thoreau and his work covered in a general sense, this chapter may now concentrate on Thoreau’s phenomenological account of solitude specifically. Thoreau’s use of thick description in *Walden* which he often focuses on his own aloneness channels phenomenological methodology to uncover solitude’s experience in the life-world. Thoreau’s conclusions are both in keeping with Diekema’s (1992) typology of aloneness as well as presenting considerable implications for the philosophy of communication. To reach the latter, this section will first justify Thoreau as a proto-phenomenologist, introduce *Walden* as a primary source, interpret Thoreau’s philosophy as a depiction of solitude’s characteristics, and, lastly, argue that *Walden* is itself a praxis phenomenology of solitude.

**Thoreau as Proto-phenomenologist**

One of the difficulties in selecting *Walden* as a primary source is that rarely can it be classified as a work. Even early reviews of *Walden* acknowledged the lack of an appropriate genre, potentially leading to disinterest from readers (Bickman, 1992). Charles Anderson (1968) reads *Walden* as an extended poem which directs Thoreau’s audience to “discover the true poetic subjects (like the meaning of solitude)” (p. 17), but Anderson’s (1968) interpretation is merely an extended metaphor rather than a viable classification of genre. To that end Martin Bickman (1992) describes *Walden* as “more the kind of book that creates successors than follows precedents” (p. 24), but even this does not offer a concrete notion of what the work truly is. Rather, Bickman (1992) primarily outlines what Thoreau’s book is not:
“Although Walden is not as strange to us as it was to its first readers, few as they were, it is not a novel, a narrative poem, a play. There is no clear story line or plot development, and those looking for such will inevitably be frustrated.” (p. 39-40)

Eliminations such as those Bickman (1992) had made often left *Walden* to be classified simply as nature writing; however, Furtak (2017) notes that Thoreau’s writings, including his treatise on his experience at Walden Pond, have increasingly been taken seriously as philosophical works. Furtak’s (2017) assessment surely has merit, as despite the frequent observations of the natural world throughout the text, Thoreau invariably uses these as entrances to philosophical inquiry.

What sort of work, then, is *Walden*? I argue instead that Thoreau’s *Walden* is, at least primarily, an proto-phenomenology of solitude.

In order to utilize Thoreau in establishing a phenomenology of solitude, we first must justify Thoreau as a serviceable phenomenologist. Though considering Thoreau’s philosophy as phenomenological is perhaps somewhat unconventional, it is hardly without merit nor precedent. While he is certainly most often associated with transcendentalism, it has often been noted that Thoreau’s approach to understanding nature and the senses most closely follows a phenomenological methodology, despite predating its formal development in continental philosophy (Furtak, 2017). According to Furtak (2017), Thoreau “anticipates” the development of phenomenology as a philosophical methodology and deploys his unique proto-phenomenology frequently throughout his books, essays, and journals. Furtak (2017) further notes that more contemporary scholarship in philosophy, literature, and political science has better recognized Thoreau’s “affinities with the pragmatic and phenomenological traditions.” Such recognition has lead to efforts to reappropriate the anticipatory proto-phenomenological aspects of Thoreau’s philosophy for a variety of applications.
One of the most obvious phenomenological investigations for Thoreau would doubtlessly be into natural phenomena. In a 2005 article in *Janus Head*, Christina Root makes this argument, but also seeks to understand the way in which Thoreau expands these phenomena into a phenomenology of language. In doing so, Root (2005) finds much of Thoreau’s writings, especially his journals, to be a praxis of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s phenomenology. Root (2005) argues that Thoreau bridges Goethe’s phenomenology of language to encountering phenomena in the natural world by “showing how to apply Goethe’s morphological thinking in his own studies of nature” (p. 232). According to Root (2005), Goethe’s phenomenology is based on “the power of metaphor and analogy to enrich as well as distort our vision and understanding” (p. 233) thus centralizing language as the primary medium of knowing. For Goethe, it is the poet that has the strongest grasp on this linguistic power. As such, Root (2005) claims that “language, properly schooled by sensitive users, could become the vehicle by which the true meaning of phenomena might emerge into being” (p. 235). Root (2005), however, sees Thoreau’s work as exceeding the theoretical into the praxical, using writing as a space for “thinking and perception to merge” (p. 247). Root’s (2005) reading of Thoreau, then, is particularly valuable in establishing the way in which Thoreau did not necessarily write about phenomenology, but rather lived it in his actions.

Thoreau’s explorations of thought and knowledge have also garnered retroactive phenomenological considerations. In his book *Henry David Thoreau and the Moral Agency of Knowing*, Alfred I. Tauber (2001) argues that removing “Thoreau’s epistemological project” (p. 225) from the Transcendentalist literature reveals him to be “both a proto-pragmatist and proto-phenomenologist” (p. 225). According to Tauber (2001), Thoreau was exploring answers to many of the same questions that foundational phenomenologists like Brentano and Husserl
would ultimately arrive at decades later, such as “How could subject and object be seamlessly connected?” (p. 226). Thoreau’s answer was in what Tauber (2001) calls “their common metaphysical foundation” (p. 226) from which knowledge and experience are derived. For Thoreau, experience was “filtered” (Tauber, 2001, p. 177) by different levels of consciousness, and, as a result, the entirety of things like nature are always left to some degree unknowable. Tauber’s (2001) reading of Thoreau demonstrates the advanced sort of observation that Thoreau employed, far exceeding mere nature writing in the traditional sense.

Additionally, Jonathan McKenzie (2016) argues that phenomenology is central to Thoreau’s political thought. More specifically McKenzie (2016) draws on Thoreau’s frequent usage of the metaphor of “wildness” (p. 107) as a key aspect in a phenomenology of freedom. McKenzie (2016) goes as far as to claim that “Thoreau’s sense of wildness provides the phenomenological foundation of his philosophy” (p. 107). According to McKenzie’s (2016) interpretation of Thoreau, wildness is more than freedom in the political sense of civil rights. Rather, Thoreauvian wildness represents “the philosophical disposition of one who is prepared for the visceral description of phenomena within the sphere of consciousness” (McKenzie, 2016, p. 107). Indeed, McKenzie’s (2016) take on Thoreauvian wildness centralizes it as an encounter with consciousness that is frequently juxtaposed with awareness of issues in the political sphere throughout Thoreau’s writings, particularly in his journal (Thoreau, 2018) and *The Maine Woods* (Thoreau, 1950). For example, McKenzie (2016) turns to Thoreau’s reflections on the challenges of his ascent to the summit of Ktaadin as a probing of the limits of freedom, locating the “ground upon which the self apprehends existential freedom” (p. 127). This, McKenzie (2016) contends, is similar to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “move of establishing freedom through apprehending boundaries” (p. 127). To this end, McKenzie (2016) sees the difficulty in returning to the thing
itself of wildness, arguing that, as a “foil for political liberty” (p. 133), wildness ultimately “transcends political boundaries” (p. 133). Such an interpretation of Thoreauvian wildness offers phenomenology as a common ground that helpfully links the complexities of Thoreau’s philosophy of nature and politics more closely together.

Retroactive recognition of Thoreau’s work as phenomenological such as that of Furtak (2017), Root (2005), Tauber (2001), and McKenzie (2016), however, must be endeavoured with significant care. This is especially true given that not everyone would agree with characterizing Thoreau’s philosophy as phenomenology in the first case. Tom Sparrow (2014), for example, has pushed back against such a classification of Thoreau, arguing that Thoreau only meets the criteria of a phenomenologist when a broad “post hoc definition” (p. 5) of the phenomenological method is applied to his work. Sparrow (2014) critiques broad definitions of phenomenology such as that of Moran because they imply that someone like Thoreau is merely “a phenomenologist of walking” (p. 5) in the same way that Melville is a “phenomenologist of whaling” (p. 5). It should be noted, however, that Sparrow’s (2014) resistance is not against Thoreau’s philosophy itself, but rather against an oversimplification of phenomenology that allows anyone to be a phenomenologist of any subject. Sparrow (2014), for his part, goes on to utilize Thoreau in constructive applications beyond phenomenology, bringing his work into the domain of speculative realism (see: p. 77, p. 175). As such, any effort to enter Thoreau into the phenomenological vernacular must be done with careful articulation and meaningfulness—that is to say that Thoreauvian proto-phenomenology must be more than just a description of walking.

In the end, despite never explicitly writing about phenomenology, it is doubtlessly something that Thoreau practiced. Throughout his essays, books, and journal entries, Thoreau was frequently determined to focus his attention to returning to the things themselves, whether
those things be nature, writing, or wildness, and he is increasingly recognized “in the areas of knowledge and perception” (Furtak, 2017). But this is to say nothing of the most common metaphor that is at the heart of much of Thoreau’s corpus: solitude. With Thoreau’s value as a proto-phenomenologist established, the foundation has been securely laid to utilize Thoreau’s frequent philosophical explorations on solitary experiences in order to ascertain a Thoreauvian phenomenology of solitude.

The Experiment at Walden

The case for Thoreau’s status as a proto-phenomenologist is strong, but it is arguably surprising that applying this to his work on solitude does not appear to have been undertaken. Solitude is one of the most common themes of Thoreau’s work, appearing frequently throughout most of his books and essays, including but not limited to Walden. The crux of this chapter hinges on the argument that Thoreau worked to establish a phenomenology of solitude. That is to say that one of Thoreau’s primary philosophical directives, if not his central inquiry altogether, was to return to the thing itself that is solitude by providing a thick description of it as a phenomenon in the life-world. To make this case, let us turn to Thoreau’s studies of solitude and unpack his use of it as a metaphor.

While Thoreau reflects on solitude throughout the majority of his corpus, it is most closely analyzed in the book for which he is most well-known, Walden. Originally published in 1854 (Furtak, 2017), Walden recounts what Thoreau (2008) refers to as an “experiment” (p.79) of simple living at Walden Pond, a modest, nondescript body of water in a moderately wooded area (notably owned by Emerson) within walking distance to his family’s home in Concord. Upon moving into a one room cabin he built for himself, Thoreau (2008) explains his purported objective:
“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” (p. 85)

The remaining description of Thoreau’s (2008) experiment with deliberate living leads to a menagerie of contemplations regarding existence, knowledge, perception, and nature. Although he spent two years at Walden Pond, Thoreau (2008) acknowledges that the volume he wrote about it is condensed into a single year, ostensibly “for convenience” (p. 79). As a result, the 17 chapters of *Walden* are loosely organized thematically by season (rather than through an accurate chronology), starting with summer, passing through autumn and winter, before ultimately concluding with spring.

The opening chapters of *Walden* depict Thoreau’s (2008) experiment at the pond during the summer months. In the first chapter, “Economy,” Thoreau (2008) describes the process of finding the location for and constructing his small cabin, which he moves into on July 4th, 1845—a date he maintains was “by accident” (p. 79). It is only after describing at length the set up of his solitary social experiment that Thoreau (2008) offers a chapter outlining his rationale for his two years in the woods: to look at life and society with a direct perspective and then “know it by experience” (p. 85). Thoreau (2008) goes on to acquaint his readers with what his more direct perspective could ascertain, describing how much more intimately he could read books and connect with their authors as well as offering a thorough description of the summertime sounds he commonly heard around the pond.

*Walden* makes a rough transition from summer to autumn as Thoreau (2008) presents an extended analysis of solitude. Thoreau (2008) is careful here to note that although he is able to find solitude at Walden Pond especially in the tranquility of the early fall months, it is not the
only sort of setting in which this is possible, a distinction that will be returned to at length in the subsequent portions of this chapter. Ironically, Thoreau (2008) immediately follows his musings on solitude with accounts of the sorts of visitors he frequently entertained there and later of his near-daily visits back to the village of Concord. The reader also finds in this portion of Walden more depictions of Thoreau’s (2008) natural setting, as he discusses his farming and harvesting of his small crops like beans in addition to his appreciation for the pond itself and those that surround it across the nearby landscape.

The third section of Walden, with chapters evoking images of the pond and woods during the winter, become more introspective. While Thoreau (2008) uses a practical juncture for this transition—recounting how he kept his cabin warm as the late autumn nights brought in wintery chills—he primarily utilizes the relative silence that the snowy days bring to consider quiet, forgotten histories and the passage of time. While Thoreau (2008) “seldom had a visitor” (p. 250) when the snow was deep, he used the opportunity to observe the freezing of the pond and the winter animals outside his windows. Thoreau (2008) remarks through these passages how “Ice is an interesting subject for contemplation” (p. 280), though it is surely not the only subject of his contemplation in winter.

The final portion of Walden reaches spring in a rather abrupt manner, opening with the ice in the pond that Thoreau (2008) had been previously contemplating breaking up and melting back to its liquid form. Thoreau (2008) provides his audience with a plethora of observations of how nature shifts from the stillness of winter to the vibrance of spring. Thoreau (2008) here utilizes rebirth as a motif for the way in which he depicts springtime in the Walden woods. This is further meaningful as a juncture for Thoreau (2008) to conclude his work and end his experiment at Walden Pond. Thoreau (2008) embraces his own rebirth as he leaves Walden Pond
behind, proclaiming “I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one” (p. 304). As such, Thoreau abandons his cabin for society once more.

**Characteristics of Solitude**

Thoreau’s (2008) meandering observations and contemplations, sometimes philosophical, sometimes poetic, sometimes scientific, can obfuscate efforts to draw out a single metaphor from *Walden*. Where, then, does one find his phenomenology of solitude this chapter has purported? The obvious source is in the chapter dedicated to it and titled simply “Solitude” (p. 122-131) found at the crux between summer and autumn. Closer readings will further reveal the importance of the surrounding chapters to this as well, as Thoreau (2008) engages with the sounds of his setting and the visitors he received. I argue, however, that the *entirety* of Thoreau’s (2008) *Walden* is an exploration of the phenomenology of aloneness—specifically, of solitude. Indeed, the word “alone” appears in the very first sentence of Thoreau’s (2008, p. 1) *Walden*, and he continues to discuss aloneness throughout the work, returning to the metaphor of “solitude” (p. 305) once more in the conclusion. The following reading of *Walden* aims to elucidate the centrality of solitude to Thoreau’s thought.

First, however, let us begin by situating Thoreau’s (2008) conception of solitude in its namesake chapter of *Walden*. In what is arguably the central provocation of the “Solitude” chapter, Thoreau (2008) proclaims:

“I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will.
Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows.” (p. 128)

This brief passage contains a lot to unpack with regards to solitude. In keeping with this dissertation’s guiding principles as well as Diekema’s (1992) typology of aloneness, Thoreau (2018) is returning to the thing itself by recognizing here the characteristics that are central to solitude. These characteristics include: (1) aloneness can be experienced in positive or negative forms, with solitude being positive; (2) aloneness or solitude are not dependent upon proximity to the other or others; (3) solitude is necessarily temporary and finite; (4) solitude is necessarily mutually-constructed; and (5) solitude creates intrapersonal doubleness. While each of these characteristics are at minimum hinted at in the key passage presented above, Thoreau (2008) continues to further develop each one of them throughout the text of Walden.

Firstly, Thoreau (2008) acknowledges in the above passage as well as throughout Walden that aloneness can be experienced as either positive or negative. In our key passage, Thoreau (2008) reflects on times in which one may feel lonely, offering the example of when one might travel abroad, despite being amongst others when so doing. This is not, however, Thoreau’s (2008) only concession with regards to the dynamic nature of experiencing aloneness. Thoreau (2008) acknowledges a single instance during which he “felt lonesome” (p. 124) when his aloneness “oppressed” (p. 124) him. Loneliness is a negative experience of aloneness and as such is not desirable to Thoreau.

Conversely, the upshot of Thoreau’s (2008) recognition of aloneness’s duality is that solitude is a positive, enjoyable experience of aloneness. Thoreau (2008) is careful to remind his readers multiple times that he did not typically feel lonely for the duration of his Walden Pond experiment (see: p. 1, p. 124, p. 129). Thoreau succinctly exclaims, “I love to be alone” (2008, p.
He desires solitude. Thus, while Thoreau (2008) is acknowledging the possibility for one to feel lonely when alone, his primary concern is with solitude as a beneficial and even necessary experience. Thoreau (2008) boasts of his aloneness at Walden Pond, because, by his own account, he has a sense of mastery of it, being able to most frequently channel the experience as solitude. In solitude, Thoreau is content and is able engage in deeper contemplation and meaningful labor; solitude is an unmistakingly enjoyable experience.

Regardless of whether or not one experiences aloneness as desirable like Thoreau’s solitude, Thoreau’s (2008) exploration of solitude also asserts that aloneness is not dependent upon physical proximity to the other. “Solitude,” Thoreau (2008) contends, “is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows” (p. 128). Thoreau (2008) utilizes Walden Pond as an example of proximity’s general irrelevance to aloneness, acknowledging that his cabin is only a mile from a village, yet “it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England” (p. 123). Walden Pond is “a little world all to myself,” Thoreau claims (2008, p. 123). It is not the physical distance separating Thoreau from other people that dictates his solitude; rather it is the way in which he experiences the momentary relationship with the other. Thoreau (2008) is in solitude because and only because he has endeavored to place himself in a mutually-constructed separation from others wherein his only form of dialogue is intrapersonal as deep contemplation is available to him.

Of this distinction, Thoreau (2008) asks “What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary?” (p. 126). Thoreau’s (2008) immediate answer is that he has “found that no exertion of legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another” (p. 126). The more distinct answer drawn from Thoreau’s (2008) overall elucidation of solitude is that solitude, as with all aloneness, is relational, not proximal. That is to say that the
phenomenological answer is that the sort of space which separates one from others and makes one solitary—aloneness, as this dissertation defines it—is communicative space. The connection of communicative space will be developed more thoroughly in the next section of this chapter when exploring solitude’s implications for the philosophy of communication, but for now I will continue to outline the essential characteristics of Thoreau’s phenomenology of solitude.

To continue, in addition to solitude’s desirability and relational basis, Thoreau (2008) also frames solitude as being temporary and finite. Indeed, when discussing the manner in which solitude is mutually constructed, the implication was that Thoreau (2008) is frequently oscillating between solitude and the company of others, yet these experiences never overlap. For example, the key passage from Thoreau (2008) opens with the contention it is “wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time” (emphasis added) (p. 128). But while Thoreau’s preference may be for solitude, it is not an absolute. Thoreau (2008) finds solitude only when removed from “all important and hearty communications” (p. 129); however, he does not wish for such communication to be permanently abolished, instead arguing that “less frequency would suffice” (p. 129). The conclusion therein is that Thoreau presumes such communication is to be resumed afterwards.

This becomes clearer when assessing *Walden* as a whole, as the chapter on solitude is preceded by a chapter describing the sounds around his cabin, and then immediately followed by a chapter recounting his frequent visitors. *Walden* is overall bookended, so to speak, by Thoreau’s (2008) reimmersion into the company of others—the work opens with Thoreau’s (2008) perspective as a “sojourner in civilized life again” (p. 1) and concludes with Thoreau’s retelling of his exit from his Walden experiment. The Walden experiment is not permanent because it cannot be permanent. Thoreau’s (2008) assessment of solitude’s finitude supports
Diekema’s (1992) argument that one of solitude’s defining aspects is that it is temporary. Thoreau (2008) and Diekema (1992) both recognize that when one enters into solitude, there is an expectation to return. Thoreau arguably even sees this as a duty to return so one may re-engage with others and share the revelations found in solitude. Taken together with the previously discussed relational genesis to solitude, we may conclude that solitude begins and ceases, respectively, with the cessation or beginning of dialogue with the other.

Much of the first three characteristics of solitude Thoreau has addressed, particularly its finitude, has hinted at the next characteristic: mutual construction. This is, of course, in keeping with Diekema’s (1992) typology of aloneness upon which this dissertation is based. Diekema (1992) considers solitude’s mutual construction between the self and other as solitude’s most definitive quality. Indeed, mutual construction is what makes solitude distinct from escapism and isolation, its niche being the only form of aloneness that is based on the self and other’s agreement with one another. It is also this central agreement that affords solitude the positive nature that both Thoreau (2008) and Diekema (1992) append to it.

In our key passage on solitude, Thoreau (2008) alludes to solitude’s mutuality when he claims that being “in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating” (p. 128). Here, Thoreau (2008) acknowledges that he does join the company of others, and as such his solitude is not hermitude (even specifically claiming later that he is “naturally no hermit” [p. 132]). But Thoreau (2008) articulates that his solitude arises when he and his company agree to part ways. The aforementioned placement of the “Solitude” chapter between chapters on sounds and, especially, visitors situates Thoreau’s (2008) acknowledgement that not only is his solitude at the pond finite, but also only occurs when removed from “all important and hearty communications” (p. 129). He does not oppose visitors; however, his visitors pose interruptions
to his solitude. Thoreau (2008), then, is reinforcing the quintessential principle that even when
the self desires solitude, it can only be achieved when the other agrees to it.

Lastly, Thoreau’s (2008) most frequently elucidated aspect of solitude creates
intrapersonal doubleness. While Diekema (1992) does not necessarily address the intrapersonal
aspects of solitude, it is clear that this is Thoreau’s (2008) primary interest when getting to the
thing itself. In the passage presented above, Thoreau declares that he has “never found the
companion that was so companionable as solitude” (2008, p. 128). This seems as if it is a
paradoxical claim, that solitude, as the suspension of relations with others, would be antithetical
to companionship. However, this must also be coupled with Thoreau’s claim that someone who
is “thinking or working is always alone” (2008, p. 128). Thoreau (2008) directly connects
solitude to thinking throughout the solitude chapter as well as the rest of Walden.

As Thoreau (2008) develops his argument that solitude is a space for thinking and
contemplation, he develops a metaphor of intrapersonal “doubleness” (p. 128). Such doubleness
is created when solitude leaves only one’s self as interlocutor, or, as Thoreau (2008) says, “we
may be beside ourselves in a sane sense” (p. 127) and thus can truly think. Thoreau (2008)
continues:

I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and
affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote
from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of
the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me,
but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it, and that is no more I
than it is you. (p. 128)
For Thoreau (2008), this is the very basis of thought, an epistemological argument that each of the four preceding aspects of solitude has alluded to. It is only in solitude that true, sustained contemplation can be reached. Solitude is the necessary grounds for thought.

To briefly reiterate, then, Thoreau’s (2008) phenomenology of solitude offers five distinct characteristics that describe its experience from the perspective of the self in the lifeworld. First, solitude is an agreeable, sought-after experience. Additionally, solitude is based on relation with the other rather than proximity to him or her. Furthermore, solitude lacks a sense of permanence, with the self and other acknowledging it as only a temporary withdrawal. This agreement also dictates that solitude is always a mutual construction between the self and other or others. Lastly, it is in solitude that one finds a doubleness of the self, able to transcend through intrapersonal contemplation. Together, Thoreau’s (2008) five characteristics present a rich and textured theory of solitude as a phenomenon.

**The Praxis of Solitude**

Once understanding Thoreau’s (2008) philosophical interpretation of solitude and its characteristics, his practice of it becomes clearer as well. While the “Solitude” chapter of *Walden* serves primarily as a theoretical account of solitude, the book in its entirety represents Thoreau’s own praxis of solitude. Indeed, the length of the volume is dedicated to capturing the lived experience of solitude, depicting its fleeting nature alongside its opportunity for the senses. Thoreau (2008) does not come by his solitude by happenstance; rather, he seeks it and engages in it actively through praxis. As such, *Walden* as a whole should be considered to be employing “praxis phenomenology” (Garrett, 2014, p. 1) as its methodology.

Praxis as a philosophical concept is, of course, generally understood as a sort of practice informed by theory. More specifically, communication philosopher Calvin O. Schrag considers
praxis as “perhaps somehow between the theoretical and the practical as they are generally understood” (Schrag, Ramsey, & Miller, 2003, p. 21). In an interview with Ramsey Eric Ramsey and David James Miller, Schrag further argues: “Praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding” (2003, p. 21). The prior emphasis of engagement with the world and others is a unique but important contribution of Schrag’s to the concept of praxis, as it grounds praxis as inherently communicative. For Schrag, then, praxis “is always entwined with communication” (Schrag, Ramsey, & Miller, 2003, p. 21). Schrag’s understanding of communicative praxis is particularly helpful in interpreting Thoreau’s *Walden* as a praxis of solitude because of its viability for phenomenology.

In his book *Why Do We Go to the Zoo?*, Erik A. Garrett (2014) connects praxis into the phenomenological method. According to Garrett (2014), works utilizing praxis phenomenology “do phenomenology rather than merely explicate meanings” (p. 1). Garrett (2014) draws praxis phenomenology from Husserlian phenomenology, but asserts that it “begins with a lived experience in context” before utilizing “the phenomenological method to address our theoretical and practical understandings of the world” (p. 79). For Garrett (2014), this is especially advantageous as it emphasizes “a communicative focus” (p. 80) in a phenomenological project. Praxis phenomenology is differentiated from “applied” phenomenology which Garrett (2014) argues is, first, true of all phenomenology, and, second, implying a separation from theory. Praxis phenomenology instead keeps theory attached to the phenomenon, but remains attentive to “doing phenomenology” (Garrett, 2014, p. 79) rather than describing phenomena alone.

Certainly, then, Thoreau (2008) is engaged in praxis phenomenology; *Walden* is attentive to a theory of solitude, as I outlined in the preceding section, while starting from the lived
experience of it in context. After all, *Walden* does not begin with a theory of solitude, but rather with Thoreau’s account of his experiment at Walden Pond. That said, while Thoreau (2008) clearly has a distinct theoretical understanding of solitude, the remainder or *Walden* extrapolates this into practice. The experiment at Walden Pond is itself a praxis of solitude which demonstrates the five key characteristics of Thoreau’s phenomenological reduction in action. In noting the positive experience of solitude, Thoreau praises his aloneness throughout the work, often placing it as a target of his desire. Secondly, Thoreau, in contrast to common misinterpretations of *Walden*, does not seek out remote wilderness for solitude, but rather is able to find it in close proximity to his hometown, noting multiple times that he is just a mile hike from Concord. Thoreau’s (2008) solitude is also finite and temporary: *Walden* opens with the narrator having already become “a sojourner in civilized life again” (p. 1) and concludes with his decision to leave the pond behind. Furthermore, Thoreau’s practice of solitude is mutually-constructed, ceasing to be joined by visitors and return to the village, overlooked pauses in the Walden experiment that briefly halt his solitude. Lastly, nearly all of *Walden* demonstrates Thoreau’s (2008) acquired intrapersonal doubleness, using the solitary confines of the forest as a means to transcend into deeper thought, the results of which are the various meditations included in this work.

As such, the theoretical is continuously demonstrated as practical while Thoreau utilizes the entirety of *Walden* as a praxis phenomenology of solitude. Thoreau portrays solitude as always fleeting—difficult to attain and even more difficult to maintain, available only when sought by the self and offered by the other. It can be found in many ways, including but not limited to: attuning one’s senses to the sights and sounds of nature around them; or, by engaging seriously in reading challenging books; or, by toiling away in meaningful labor, be it physical
like harvesting or mental like writing. Each of the preceding solitary tasks affords a doubleness of intrapersonal being, an opportunity to be alone with one’s self without descending into the painful distractions of loneliness from the other. Arguably, then, Thoreau’s central task in *Walden*, often made elusive through his frequently meandering and poetic language, is to situate solitude as a phenomenon in both theory and practice. The benefit of Thoreau’s use of praxis phenomenology, as Garrett (2014) indicates of this method, is that it allows for a communicative focus, which will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

**Implications for the Philosophy of Communication: Solitude as Communicative Space**

From Thoreau’s praxis phenomenology of solitude, we may identify particular implications for the philosophy of communication. When performing this task with isolation and escapism to close the previous two chapters, most of the implications took the form of types of disruptions or interruptions to communication that those two types of aloneness could cause; that is to say that both isolation and escapism could uniquely disrupt intrapersonal communication. Conversely, this is squarely not the case with solitude. Because solitude is mutually constructed by the self and the other, its implications for the philosophy of communication are constructive rather than disruptive in nature. As a result, in this section I offer solitude not as antagonistic to communication, but rather I argue that solitude is complementary to communication, even representing a unique communicative space for intrapersonal communication, communication with nonhuman others, and communication with the divine.

**Intrapersonal Communication**

One of the areas of the philosophy of communication that is impacted most directly by the phenomenology of solitude is intrapersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication
was similarly implicated in the final sections of the previous two chapters with regards to the
effects of isolation and escapism respectively; however, the relationship of isolation and
escapism on intrapersonal communication was found to be only in deleterious interruptions of it.
In those chapters, I also adopted Robert Cathcart and Gary Gumbert’s (2003) definition of
intrapersonal communication: “the inner dialogue between the ‘I’ and the ‘me’” (p. 159). I will
continue to utilize this definition moving forward, which is rather fitting given Thoreau’s
phenomenological descriptions of solitude.

For Thoreau, as was discussed in the previous section of this chapter, one of the most
distinguishing traits of solitude is that it enables a sense of internal doubleness. Recall that
Thoreau (2008) recognizes how in solitude he experiences a “certain doubleness by which I can
stand as remote from myself as from another” (p. 128). The doubleness Thoreau (2008) describes
is an internal comingling of the I and the me in the same manner that Cathcart and Gumbert
(2003) used to define intrapersonal communication. The doubleness of solitude is precisely what
Thoreau seeks in his praxis phenomenology as it attends to the sort of intrapersonal
communication that enables contemplation. It is also why Thoreau (2008) paradoxically
describes solitude as “companionable” (p. 128), as solitude is a communicative space in which
the me can become the companion of the I. According to Thoreau (2008), the doubleness of
solitude is a requisite for thought, claiming that the person who is “thinking or working is always
alone” (p. 128). This reiterates the purpose of Thoreau’s (2008) Walden experiment, as he found
that his “residence was more favorable to, not only to thought, but to serious reading than a
university” (p. 94). Here, Thoreau (2008) encapsulates how both thinking and working become a
possibility in solitude’s engagement between the I and me.
Thoreau’s (2008) argument that solitude is the only space for intrapersonal doubleness is also supported by Arendt’s phenomenology of isolation. In a prior chapter of this dissertation, I acknowledged that Arendt (1976) believed isolation to be an obstacle to intrapersonal communication. In the concluding section of The Origins of Totalitarianism, Arendt declares that one who is in solitude “‘can be together with himself” since men have the capacity of ‘talking with themselves’” (p. 476). Similar to Cathcart and Gumbert’s (2003) metaphor of the I and the me and Thoreau’s (2008) metaphor of doubleness, Arendt (1976) offers the metaphor of “two-in-one” (p. 476) to characterize the sort of thinking that is made possible by solitude. Arendt (1976), like Thoreau, argues that the two-in-oneness of thinking requires solitude; however, the importance of returning to Arendt at this later juncture is to reiterate the uniqueness of solitude. That is to say that while Thoreau (2008) makes it clear that solitude is the communicative space for intrapersonal dialogue, Arendt (1976) reminds us that it is the only form of aloneness that attends to it in this manner.

Arguably, the pursuit of intrapersonal communication through solitude is problematized in the current historical moment by the availability and pervasiveness of near-limitless communication technologies. Technology theorist Sherry Turkle (2015) not only recognizes this issue, but also specifically draws on Thoreau’s work on solitude in order to address it. Turkle (2015) identifies a notable passage of Walden to make her case, in which Thoreau (2008) says: “I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society” (p. 132). Thoreau’s (2008) chairs are metaphorical, representing his understanding that solitude is only occasional when not conversing with others, all of which are of importance for the self to be fulfilled.
Turkle (2015) utilizes Thoreau’s three chairs metaphor as the very framework of her book attesting to the necessity of both solitude and interpersonal conversation in an era defined by digital media. Reintroducing the three chairs into the digital age, Turkle (2015) refers to the Thoreauvian chairs as the “Virtuous Circle” (p. 9). Turkle (2015) explains:

These three chairs plot the points on a virtuous circle that links conversation with something to say that is authentic, ours. When we are secure in ourselves we are able to listen to other people and really hear what we have to say. And then in conversation with other people we become better at inner dialogue. (p. 10)

For Turkle (2015), as for Thoreau, solitude, conversation, and society are inextricably linked together; too much time in just one chair soon becomes burdensome. We must instead become adept at occupying each part of the circle. Solitude, Turkle (2015) argues, is “the capacity to be contentedly and constructively alone” (p. 65), and that it is the way in which the self may develop authenticity. In this way, solitude is not a remission of conversation with others, but rather a preparation for it.

Contemporary culture has, however, interrupted and broken the virtuous circle for many people. Technology, Turkle (2015) argues is the primary problem, because of how it “disrupts the virtuous circle” (p. 10). This technological disruption is two-fold. First, the omnipresence of communication technologies has in many ways begun to permanently occupy the second and third chairs of the virtuous circle—the chairs ordinarily reserved, according to Thoreau, for friendship and society. As Turkle (2015) states, “we crave a feeling of being ‘always on’” (p. 17) through various communication technologies, and as a result we “speak not just through machines but to machines” (p. 17). But if we are always on, so to speak, we are never alone,
never in solitude. And if we embrace communication to machines rather than through them, the machines will occupy the second and third chairs of one’s virtuous circle.

Second, because of how commonplace technology’s permanent occupation of the second and third chairs has become, the first chair of the virtuous circle now seems foreign and even frightening. To this point, Turkle (2015) writes: “Afraid of being alone, we struggle to pay attention to ourselves. And what suffers is is our ability to pay attention to each other” (p. 10). Contemporary fears of aloneness have been critiqued in a similar way by existential psychologist Rollo May (2009), who wrote: “Loneliness is such an omnipotent and painful threat to many persons that they have little conception of the positive values of solitude and even, at times, are frightened at the prospect of being alone” (p. 13). Turkle (2015) and May (2009) both recognize the obstacle to solitude that these fears create, but only Turkle argues that it is the constant availability of the technological other that makes aloneness a fearsome notion. As a result, rather than trying to avert feelings of loneliness when alone, we too often attempt to escape aloneness altogether, thus eliminating the possibility of solitude. Allowing technology and media to occupy two thirds of the three chairs forces us to be always on out of a fear of being “off,” thereby preventing what Thoreau calls doubleness. Such apprehension is an obstacle to the sort of intrapersonal communication that allows us to think, to contemplate, and, as Turkle argues, develop the empathy that will later allow us to engage in meaningful conversation.

**Communication with Nonhuman Others**

One way in which Thoreau’s solitude functions as a space for communication with nature is through relationships with animals. Throughout *Walden*, Thoreau (2008) frequently reflects on his interactions with the fauna of the Walden Woods. While Thoreau’s emphasis is on wild animals in natural habitats, this is comparable to Garrett’s (2014) phenomenology of zoo
visitation. In his work, Garrett (2014) identifies nine motivations that the average zoo visitors have. One of these motivations is socialization, which Garrett (2014) further divides into two types: socializing with people and socializing with animals. The latter type of socializing opens a sort of communication between the self and animals, as Garrett (2014) characterizes this as a desire “to feel a connection with the animals in the zoo” (p. 64). Garrett (2014) notes that many zoo patrons, both child and adult, utilize metaphors of friendship with animals, and, as such, “animals offer us a supplement and different type of bonding” (p. 64). The bond between person and animal in this sense can be thought of as a unique communication with a nonhuman other.

Just as Garrett (2014) describes zoos as “a place for creating and maintaining bonds with the nonhuman world” (p. 64), Thoreau indicates a similar function for a forest like that at Walden Pond. It is there in the woods that Thoreau uses solitude as a space for communicating with animals. To be sure, solitude is not entirely an experiential requisite to engage in such nonhuman communication; however, Thoreau’s work would argue that it certainly aides in the formation of an interspecies dialogue. Thoreau (2008) reflects on his careful attention to the singing of birds which he became “acquainted with” (p.117) by day and the “expressive” (p. 118) hooting of owls at night, the latter of which Thoreau remarks “express the meaning of Nature” (p. 119). In observing the playful gliding of loons upon the pond, Thoreau (2008) contemplates if “they love the its water for the same reason that” he does (p. 224). Thoreau (2008) claims that the nearby hares are “very familiar” (p. 265) with him. In recalling the calls of foxes on winter nights, Thoreau (2008) even goes as far as to ask “may there not be a civilization going on among brutes as well as men?” (p. 258). The preceding are but a brief summary of moments when Thoreau’s descriptions of animals exemplify the sort of bond Garrett (2014)
alludes to with zoo visitors. Whether in a zoo or in wilderness, the experience of solitude can more readily establish a communicative bond or relationship between a human and animals.

Arguably, however, Thoreau’s (2008) exemplification of communicating with the natural world around him does not end with animals, but rather transcends to nature itself. *Walden* largely articulates Thoreau’s continual communion with the natural world, not only with the creatures about him but with nature itself as a nonhuman other. In this way, Thoreau (2008) is engaging in a sort of apotheosis of nature in order to establish it as a potential interlocutor. For Thoreau (2008), to engage with nature is to understand phenomena. This connection can only be approached from solitude, to be disconnected from human others, because, as Thoreau (2008) argues: “In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude” (p. 305). Conversely, the extent to which nature is willing to communicate with the human has limitations. While these limits are not particularly addressed in *Walden*, Thoreau does assess this at length elsewhere, most notably in his characterization of the summit Mt. Ktaadin in *Maine Woods* (Thoreau, 1950) and in describing the aftermath of a shipwreck in the opening of *Cape Cod* (Thoreau, 2002). Despite these limits, however, Thoreau (2008) makes it clear in *Walden* that the separation from the other which solitude requires can be replaced by a connection to and communication with nature as a nonhuman interlocutor.

A similar move of communicating with animals to communicating with nature itself is addressed by Amy D. Propen (2018) in her book *Visualizing Posthuman Conservation in the Age of the Anthropocene*. In the preface, Propen (2018) begins by discussing the way in which she is able to develop “embodied communication” with wild animals such as scrub jays, creating a “relationship” with them in which they “share communication—communication about relationship” (p. xii). Propen (2018), however, extends such shared communication to the
relationship between the human and the natural world in general, which she recognizes as especially challenged by technological and environmental issues of the anthropocene. For Propen (2018), communication with nature extracts a multitude of “rhetorical artifacts” which have the potential to “make multidimensional our relationalities with our nonhuman kin” (p. 150). Thoreau’s conception of solitude would offer a potential grounds for identifying and interacting with such multidimensional rhetorical artifacts. Conclusively, communication with nature is a solitary task which attends to a sort of posthuman interlocutor.

**Communication with the Divine**

Lastly, Thoreau’s (2008) communication with nonhuman others that is possible in solitude can transcend above the abstractness of nature itself to communication with a deity or higher power. Said differently, solitude enables prayer. Problematizing the elucidation of prayer in Thoreauvian solitude, however, is the fact that Thoreau’s own theological thought is both diverse and ambiguous. Thoreau is typically classified as a transcendentalist, which, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, is grounded in a “religious-philosophical viewpoint” (Madden, 1995, p. 809). Throughout his writing, however, Thoreau’s own viewpoint oscillates from pantheistic to deistic, considering principles of nearly every major religion of his time while never seemingly subscribing to one firm set of doctrines or system of belief. For example, in *Walden* alone, Thoreau draws directly from the religious texts of Christianity (e.g. p. 8, p. 73, p. 312), Judaism (e.g. p. 8), Hinduism (e.g. p. 12, p. 53, p. 80, p. 308), and Confucianism (e.g. p. 9). According to Robert M. Ruehl (2018), Thoreau also maintained interest in Buddhism, which he referenced elsewhere in his work such as *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (Thoreau, 1996); and, Thoreau has also demonstrated an interest in Islam as well, such as in his “Huckleberries” essay (e.g. 2001b, p. 487). His frequent assessments of eastern religions is
especially novel for American thought at the time in which Thoreau was working (Ruehl, 2018). In *The Gita within Walden*, Paul Friedrich (2008) argues that Thoreau’s understanding of nature as itself a higher power, alongside influences from texts like the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Vedas* places *Walden* as a de facto metaphysical Hindu text.

Indeed, while Thoreau was certainly spiritual, he seemed wholly unconcerned with organized religion. One could perhaps surmise that Thoreau would be best classified as a deist, ascribing a nature-as-god understanding of the divine (Ruehl, 2018). If this is indeed the case, then the notion of communicating with the divine in solitude, for Thoreau, simply follows one’s communication with nature and the natural world. Throughout *Walden*, Thoreau (2008) does frequently characterize nature in a definitively spiritual manner. It is perhaps this respect that requires Thoreau (2008) to capitalize Nature without fail throughout his writing. As Thoreau (2008) reaches the conclusion of *Walden*, he connects the way he observes an insect to the way nature observes him as “the greater Benefactor and Intelligence” (p. 312). For Thoreau, then, solitary interactions with nature are by extension also interactions with the divine.

While a spiritual connection with nature is a common theme for Thoreau, prayer goes almost entirely unmentioned across his works. Regardless of a particular faith, however, Thoreau’s conception of solitude still serves as a space for communication with the divine. For example, Christian philosopher Thomas Merton greatly extrapolated from a Thoreauvian understanding of solitude in his own writing (Albert, 1988; Henken, 1997). In his work *Thoughts in Solitude*, Merton (2011) explores the complications of attaining solitude and its necessity for his relationship with God. Merton (2011) claims that solitude is an experience in which “everything I touch is turned into prayer: where the sky is my prayer, the birds are my prayer, the wind in the trees is my prayer” (p. 92). Christian existentialist Paul Tillich (1963) similarly
recognizes the special communication with God that solitude affords, arguing that solitude is the experience in which one discovers the eternal. Other religious thinkers have also acknowledged the special divine communication that solitude affords, including examples in Buddhist thought (Batchelor, 1983) and New Age spirituality (Osho, 2001). We may conclude, then, that solitude, as Thoreau conceived it, enables a means of prayer and transcendence that any religious individual may find rewarding.

**Conclusion**

Our final form of aloneness, solitude, is an expansive notion. From a phenomenological perspective, solitude is frustratingly elusive and continually fleeting. Solitude is an experience of aloneness that is difficult to attain and perhaps even more difficult to maintain, a lesson that Thoreau makes clear in his praxis phenomenology. To better understand the phenomenology of solitude, this chapter first introduced Thoreau as a representative philosopher of solitude through his life and works. Using *Walden* as a primary source for Thoreau’s praxis phenomenology, we determined that solitude is a positive experience of aloneness that is relational rather than proximal, occurs for only temporary intervals, requires mutual construction between the self and the other, and creates a sense of intrapersonal doubleness. From these characteristics, this chapter outlined potential implications for the philosophy of communication, including its potential for intrapersonal dialogue, communication with non-human others such as animals and nature, and, lastly, communication with the divine. Most importantly, solitude is distinctly different from isolation and escapism in that it is a necessity yet is too often avoided.

Thoreau is nearly synonymous with solitude, and he certainly makes a strong case for solitude’s desirability and uniquness. Doubtlessly, it is a more productive and rewarding experience of aloneness than the previously explored counterparts of isolation and escapism. At
this juncture, this dissertation has explored each of these types of aloneness exhaustively, getting to the thing itself that each phenomenon represents. What has not entirely been explored, however, is the manner in which they relate directly to one another. More importantly, although the final section of this chapter and the two prior have offered a series of specific implications for the philosophy of communication, none have established a thoroughly distinct connection between aloneness and communication itself. Such will be the target of the next chapter; a conclusion which attempts to understand aloneness as a function of dialogue—or, more specifically, a lack thereof.
CHAPTER 6:
A Return to Dialogue

“What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.”

—Kurt Vonnegut

Introduction

The intent of this brief, final chapter is not just to summarize the findings of the preceding chapters, but rather it is to reconnect what we have learned about aloneness directly to human communication. Here, I hope to establish an intrinsic relationship between human communication and each form of aloneness— isolation, escapism, and solitude—as well as aloneness as a whole. Ultimately, a reconnection of aloneness to human communication will solidify the overall implications that this topic raises for the philosophy of communication. As such, I intend to use this conclusion’s summary of previous chapters regarding types of aloneness in order to articulate a few final arguments with regards to aloneness as a whole and its importance for the communication discipline.

This conclusionary chapter is organized into four primary sections. In the first section, I offer a brief summation of aloneness and its forms as this dissertation has explored it in the preceding chapters. The subsequent three sections serve as this dissertation’s final three arguments with regards to aloneness: first, that the typology I have utilized herein leaves a space
for a connection to interpersonal dialogue; second, that this connection ultimately redefines aloneness as a privation of interpersonal dialogue; and finally, that the relationship between aloneness and interpersonal dialogue is based in a Buberian understanding of phenomenological dialogue. In a conclusion that follows these arguments as well as the dissertation as a whole, I offer a few directions for future research as well as reiterate this dissertation’s contributions to the discipline of communication.

Summary of Aloneness and its Forms

At this juncture, it may be prudent to first review what this dissertation has concluded about aloneness thus far. The first chapter of this dissertation presented a broad interdisciplinary literature review in order to gather a textured understanding of aloneness and its correlates. From this, I drew five important principles that define aloneness as a whole as well as the extant literature covering it. These principles included: (1) aloneness is an innate experience of the human condition; (2) aloneness is not simply the result of physical separation from others; (3) aloneness is instead a relational, and therefore communicative, phenomenon; (4) aloneness manifests in distinctly different experiences; and (5) aloneness is discussed with inconsistent terminology. As a result of these conclusions, aloneness is a uniquely familiar yet misunderstood experience.

With the preceding five principles in mind, the second chapter of this dissertation examined various typologies of aloneness that have been proposed using several methodologies. Ultimately, however, it was Diekema’s (1992) symbolic interactionist approach that best met the demands of our original conception of aloneness and its correlates. Diekema (1992) based his typology specifically on the relationship of the self and other, with each one’s desire for
engagement as the primary factor in distinguishing what sort of aloneness would be experienced. As a result, Diekema (1992) presented three distinct correlates of aloneness: (1) isolation, (2) escapism, and (3) solitude. From this structure, the subsequent chapters explored each correlate of aloneness as an individual experience, utilizing a representative philosopher to function as a phenomenological lens for each one.

In Chapter 3, I introduced Arendt as the phenomenologist who has best explored the experience of isolation. In keeping with Diekema’s (1992) typology, Arendt’s (1976) phenomenological reduction of isolation describes an experience in which the self seeks engagement with the other or others, but the other or others reject such engagement. Isolation is what Arendt (1976) calls “a situation in which I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship” (p. 474). As such, the relation is asymmetrical, causing pain and grief for the isolated self, typically described as the emotion of loneliness. Isolation, as both Diekema (1992) and Arendt (1976) conceive it, is experienced only when aloneness has been entirely other-imposed. Those who find themselves in isolation ultimately experience being made a stranger, prompting feelings of powerlessness and loneliness.

Escapism, which was covered by Chapter 4, is a sort of inversion of isolation, as it is definitively self-imposed, yet still asymmetrical. Here, Levinas (2003) offered a phenomenological reduction appropriate to understand the experience of self-imposed aloneness when the other still desires the relation with the self. First, Levinas (2003) explores escape as the self’s impossible attempt to escape the self in a revolt of Being. From here, I connected Levinas’s (2003) bracketing of escape to escapism through his sprawling phenomenological ethics. By self-imposing our escape while the other still summons us, we deny the face of the
other and our primordial call to ethics. In escapism, I refuse to make myself available to the other, forcing the other into isolation.

Solitude, in stark contrast to isolation and escapism, is a symmetrical relationship, because it has been mutually constructed by both the self and other. In Chapter 5, Thoreau (2008) served as an proto-phenomenological lens through *Walden* wherein he presented a specific reduction of solitude as well as a broader praxis phenomenology of its experience. Thoreau (2008) describes solitude as an entirely beneficial experience, available in a fleetingly rare state at which the other has granted us a temporary respite that we accept and desire. In this delicate balance, the self is able to discover itself as its own interlocutor, enabling self-talk or intrapersonal dialogue and the subsequent contemplation it affords. Thoreau’s (2008) meditations on solitude are in keeping with the typology Diekema (1992) developed, both agreeing that solitude is temporary yet desirable, but somewhat rare as it exists only when mutually-constructed between the self and the other.

Together, Arendtian isolation, Levinasian escapism, and Thoreauvian solitude represent the three distinct experiences of being alone, supporting the typology that this dissertation has adopted from Diekema’s (1992) original symbolic interactionist model. Each of the preceding experiences of aloneness provide a phenomenological reduction of being alone, bracketing the ways that isolation, escapism, and solitude are both similar to and distinct from one another. The descriptions that Arendt, Levinas, and Thoreau provide contribute to a textured detailing of aloneness, yet this only brings us once more to the central research question of this dissertation. With the conclusions reached from the preceding literature review, typology, and phenomenological reductions, I now try offer an answer to the question of aloneness and communication’s relationship.
The Missing Component of the Typology

Reviewing Diekema’s (1992) typology of aloneness and the subsequent individual phenomenological reductions I drew from it reveal what I argue is the missing component of Diekema’s model. For Diekema (1992), as well as for the purposes of this dissertation, the defining characteristic for a typology of aloneness is interaction, with each type of aloneness being defined by its placement along relational dimensions. Isolation presents a self that seeks interaction and an other that prevents it. Escapism reverses it, with a self that closes interaction while the other desires it. Solitude, on the other hand, requires both the self and the other to mutually but temporarily cease interaction with one another. This yields two forms of asymmetrical aloneness and one form of symmetrical aloneness.

I argue, however, that this interactional approach to a typology of aloneness leaves open a fourth possibility that Diekema (1992) does not acknowledge. If we presume, as Diekema does, that the relational dimension allows for two options each for both the self and the other, to interact or to not interact, then there should be four possible combinations. If we represent this with a simple “Yes” or “No” from the self and the other (in that order), then we may have combinations of interactional desire that include Yes-No, No-Yes, and No-No—which Diekema (1992) calls isolation, escapism, and solitude respectively. A crude metaphor may be of On/Off switches: if there were a switch for the self along with a switch for the other, we would have those same three combinations, yet we also could have both turned on, which has not been addressed. With that in mind, what about a Yes-Yes option in the Diekema model? What if both the self and other desire interaction simultaneously?
The remaining possibility from the interactional model of aloneness is to not be alone at all, to find interaction between the self and the other. This “Yes-Yes” or “On-On” combination is the communicative grounds for dialogue. Perhaps this is best visualized by adapting a Punnett square to the typology of aloneness. Punnett squares are diagrams that are used by biologists and geneticists to predict the genotypes of potential offspring between two specimens, a method first proposed by Reginald C. Punnett and William Bateson (Davis, 1993). For the purpose of visualizing aloneness along the interactional dimension proposed by Diekema (1992), a pseudo-Punnett square can effectively serve as a visual heuristic of the relationships between each sort of aloneness as well as dialogue. Figure 1 below provides an example, in which “A” represents “Aloneness” and “I” represents “Interaction” with regards to the desire or intent of the self (represented horizontally) and the other (represented vertically). I have also used only dotted lines within the square in Figure 1, in an effort to portray the malleability and overlaps of the experiences of aloneness.

![Figure 1. Punnett square for adapted displaying aloneness and dialogue along an interactional dimension.](image-url)
Our visual heuristic device makes it clear that aloneness is inseparable from dialogue. Interpersonal dialogue, as displayed in Figure 1, has a special and distinct relationship with isolation, escapism, and solitude. By further elucidating how interpersonal dialogue defines aloneness, as well as identifying interpersonal dialogue’s relationships with each of aloneness’s experiential types, we may now more accurately conclude what aloneness truly is: a partial or full removal or withdrawal from interpersonal dialogue between the self and the other. Such is the task embarked on in greater detail in the next section of this chapter, wherein I argue that aloneness must always be fundamentally a full or partial privation of interpersonal dialogue between the self and other.

**Aloneness as Privation**

What, then, is aloneness? When we elucidate the ways one experiences being alone, when we explore isolation, escapism, and solitude phenomenologically, we come to discover its inherent connection with and juxtaposition to interpersonal dialogue. As a result, I now propose that the question—what is aloneness?—is itself erroneous. The question cannot be answered because the question derives from a flawed premise: that aloneness *is*. To the contrary, aloneness is nothing—it is not a substance nor an entity, it retains no qualities nor presence. Rather, aloneness is a lack. To be alone, or rather to experience aloneness, is to encounter a degree of the privation of a level of communication. Just as darkness is merely the absence of light, aloneness can only be encountered as well as understood as the absence of interpersonal dialogue.

The existence of aloneness can be thought of similarly to the existence of evil, which has also often been conceptualized as a privation in theological thought. For example, St. Augustine of Hippo (1903) argues in his treatise the *Enchiridion* that evil is not truly the counterpoint of
good, but rather it is the absence of good. Augustine (2014) develops this metaphor further in *The City of God*, in which he claims that “evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name ‘evil’” (p. 447). Augustine’s understanding of evil is that it is not a substance in and of itself, and can only be understood as a lack—specifically, a lack of good. Augustine’s metaphor is still often referred to in its original Latin as “*privatio boni,*” the privation of good. It is from here that I derive the metaphor of the privation of dialogue—*privatio dialogus*—which I argue, as the central metaphor of this project, best articulates a phenomenology of aloneness, especially from a philosophy of communication perspective.

Of course, even when one is alone, be it physically, mentally, or spiritually, whether they experience that aloneness as isolation, escape, or solitude, there is never a complete absence of communication. In most of these circumstances, as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters, communication is often still occurring alongside the experience of being alone, albeit typically in fractured, incomplete ways—the communication one sends or receives when dwelling in aloneness is communication that is mismanaged through an imbalance between the sender and receiver. Furthermore, even when no messages in the most literal sense are transacted to or from the one who is alone, a form of communication is still occurring. Indeed, when one is the victim of isolation, the other has in effect told the victim they are not wanted; when one engages in escapism, they have told the other that they lack importance; when one finds solitude, they have mutually communicated with the other or others that a temporary separation should occur. The ways of being alone send specific messages of their own accord, of both rejection and connection. When aloneness is enacted punitively, we are communicating that a wrong has been committed. When aloneness is enacted arbitrarily, we communicate mixed messages that confound the receiver. When aloneness is enacted mutually, what is gained is the potential for
intrapersonal dialogue in addition to possible communication with nonhuman others. These are but a few examples that show that aloneness is not a complete and total privation of all communication.

Aloneness finds its simultaneous connection to and disconnect from human communication in that its essence is found in a lack of meaningful communication—that is, a privation of interpersonal dialogue. This is not by any means an arbitrary specification. While aloneness itself has been shown to create its own message and that communication may not entirely cease for one who feels alone, these forms of communication are shallow at best, refraining from depth and significance. Aloneness, in all of its forms, is only to be found where interpersonal dialogue is not; while communication rarely, if ever, ceases, aloneness is the experience of the absence of interpersonal dialogue. As Augustine finds that evil is merely the privation of good, privatio boni, it must follow that aloneness is similarly a mere lack: aloneness is the privation of dialogue, privatio dialogus.

This is not to say, however, that aloneness is defined by a lack of communication altogether. Nor should it be construed that aloneness prevents or nullifies communication outright. Aloneness may certainly problematize or interfere with communication, as was discussed in many of the implications for the philosophy of communication in the preceding chapters, but, nevertheless, communication can and does occur when one is alone. In fact, some forms of communication are somewhat unique to the experience of aloneness, leading to, for example, my classification of solitude as a sort of communicative space. Rather, aloneness exists as the privation of a specific type of communication—aloneness is the lack of interpersonal dialogue. More importantly, the way in which such dialogue is interrupted or extinguished ultimately defines which sort of aloneness one will experience: isolation, escapism, or solitude.
Assessing these interruptions will require a framework of interpersonal dialogue to draw from, which will present the final argument of this chapter.

The Privation of Interpersonal Dialogue

Phenomenology of Dialogue

Lastly, if we wish to conclude that aloneness is the privation of interpersonal dialogue, it is necessary to establish what precisely such dialogue entails. After all, there are numerous, sometimes conflicting definitions of this term used in both colloquial and scholarly literature. For the purpose of this argument, however, I turn to the existential philosophy of Martin Buber. A prominent Jewish thinker, Buber was born 1878 in Germany and became known for his philosophy, theology, and politics before his death in 1965 (Seeskin, 1995). According to The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, Buber’s most well-known contributions to philosophy involve his conceptualization of reality as being always between human agents (Seeskin, 1995). It is in this theory of existence that aloneness begins to enter into a Buberian understanding of dialogic interactions.

Certainly, Buber’s most complete presentation of a dialogic reality is found in his seminal work, I and Thou, first published in 1923. In this extended meditation, Buber (2010) addresses the “two-fold” (p. 3) nature of reality which is comprised of a world of relations and a world of sensations. Buber’s (2010) hypothesis is that the self encounters existence as an I coming into relation with the other, and that relationship will ultimately develop a meaningful reality. Not all of these relationships, however, occur uniformly, and instead rely on how the I perceives the other in a given relationship. For Buber (2010), we speak these realities into existence,
representing them with what he refers to as two “primary words” (p. 3): “I-Thou” and “I-It” (p. 3). These two compound words reflect the complexity of a relationship, and ultimately it is the difference between the I-It and the I-Thou are central to Buber’s (2010) phenomenology of dialogue.

The first of these compound words that Buber (2010) explores is the I-It, which is likely the more common phenomenon. According to Buber (2010), when the self enters into the word pair of the I-It, the self is effectively encountering the other as an object. As such, the communication of the I-It is monological in form (Buber, 2010). The Buberian I-It represents an experiential encounter with the other as object or an actual object—said differently, the I-It word pair represents the world as we experience it. It must be noted that Buber (2010) is not necessarily critiquing I-It experiences; rather, for Buber they are a necessary part of human life in a world with others. Buber (2010) does, however, contend that the I-It encounter is insufficient on its own for one to truly live, and instead the I must also encounter a Thou or allow the It to transcend to the status of a Thou.

In contrast, Buber (2010) distinguishes that when one is able to form word pair of the I-Thou, the self participates with the whole other, not as object, but as an irreducible human being. Importantly, the relation of the I-Thou is dialogic in nature unlike its I-It counterpart which, as previously established, Buber (2010) found to be monologic in its form. While the I-It experience is a common one, the I-Thou is overall a rare and even “uncanny” (p. 34) sort of encounter that is often brief and momentary, limited by the length of the relation between self and other. In Buber’s (2010) own words: “the moments of the Thou appear as strange lyric and dramatic episodes, seductive and magical” (p. 34). Lastly, just as Buber (2010) recognizes the
potential of an It to become a Thou, the Thou “is bound to become an It” (p. 33) when a relation naturally ceases.

Buber (2010) concludes that both the I-It and I-Thou word pairs are necessary for existence: “without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man” (p. 34). According to Buber (2010), we ultimately attend to the “eternal Thou” (p. 112), which only ever represents God and can never be reduced to an It. On the whole, Buber’s (2010) metaphors of the I-Thou and I-It are an effective means of conveying how some relations between two people can transcend, with the appropriate mutual approach, into interpersonal dialogue.

Buber’s attention to relation has become the basis of many subsequent works in the philosophy of communication. For example, in his book Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue, Maurice S. Friedman (1976) argues that from Buber’s perspective, evil and unethical behavior are ultimately the result of a reduction or a loss of relatedness. Friedman’s work is also drawn on as a stepping stone to developing a fuller model of phenomenological dialogue, as task embarked on by Ronald C. Arnett (1981). In his assessment of Buberian dialogue, Arnett (1981) compares what he argues is two competing perspectives on “the same generic term” (p. 201) of dialogue. First, Arnett (1981) presents what he refers to as “‘humanistic’ psychological dialogue” (p. 201) which emphasizes and isolates the psyche and posits self-actualization and realization as the inherent end or telos of interpersonal dialogue. According to Arnett (1981), psychological dialogue is derived primarily from influential psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, placing the locus of communication as an internal process rather than between multiple interlocutors.

The psychological perspective of dialogue, Arnett (1982) argues, is incongruent with true interaction between persons, yet the two are often conflated. Instead, Arnett (1982) suggests a
turn away from psychologism and toward phenomenological dialogue in order to maintain a focus on the between of communication and avoid the “possessive” (p. 204) implications of the Rogers or Maslow approach. Here, Arnett (1982) advocates specifically for the phenomenology of Buber as well as Friedman in understanding interpersonal dialogue as the coming together of the self and other as the Buberian I-Thou. Buber’s phenomenology of the I-Thou, according to Arnett (1982), resituates “emphasis from self to the ontological reality of the ‘between’ in the rhetorical situation that is given life in dialogue” (p. 211). In a subsequent article, “Beyond dialogue: Levinas and otherwise than the I-Thou,” Arnett (2012) further connects Buber’s phenomenological dialogue to Levinas’s ethical demand of the other. As a conception of human communication attentive to the between of the self and other, Buberian phenomenological dialogue attends to the phenomenology of aloneness and its connection to dialogue as conceived of in this chapter, and, as such, can now be used to more clearly place aloneness into the extant literature on dialogue.

**Dialogue and Aloneness**

Because of the way in which the I-It is in part defined by the privation of relation, Buber (2010) ultimately presents an apropos framework by which we may distinguish how each type of aloneness manifests as a privation of interpersonal dialogue. Rob Anderson (1982) notes that, from Buber and Friedman’s perspective, “a communicator cannot be understood or considered in isolation as an individuated being” (p. 344). The same is true of one who is alone; the alone individual is situated in a dissolved relation and cannot be understood or considered without that dissolved relation. For example, our phenomenology of escapism vis-à-vis Levinas (2003) bracketed its experience as the self turning the other into the stranger, rejecting the latter’s desire
for interpersonal dialogue and interaction with one another. As a result, escapism creates an I-It primary word pair in that relationship, as the I considers the other or others only as an object and turns away from him or her or them. While not all I-It relations are necessarily a product of escapism, all experiences of this type of aloneness must necessarily result in it.

Similarly, isolation, which we have established from Arendt’s (1976) phenomenology herein as the asymmetrical aloneness in which the self perceives abandonment by the other, also takes the form of an I-It. This experience of aloneness inverts the impetus of escapism, instead presenting an I that seeks dialogue prevented from its engagement by an other who eschews it. Due to the inversion, the self in this case is the It of the I-It—that is, the one who is experiencing being reduced to an object. We might also reconceptualize this beyond Buber’s (2010) original framework, granting isolation instead the word pair “It-Thou” to better reflect the perspective in the case of isolation. The It-Thou reflects the painful experience of isolation as the self still sees the other as one a human and wishes to encounter her through dialogue but perceive that she has been rejected from any potential dialogue. The I-Thou appears to be an impossibility to one who finds himself in isolation.

The I-Thou is, however, possible in aloneness, yet only in one of its phenomenological types: solitude. In solitude, especially as both Diekema (1992) and Thoreau (2008) conceive of it, the experience is mutually constructed, which contrasts with the inherent asymmetry of isolation and escapism. Because of solitude’s mutual construction, it is a symmetrical experience of aloneness, the only type with this qualification. While one might presume this eliminates the other from the equation altogether and leaves the I with no It nor Thou to combine with, this is certainly not the case. Rather, the I in solitude discovers its Thou in itself through intrapersonal dialogue. This, of course, was a recurrent implication for the philosophy of communication in the
preceding chapters, as asymmetrical aloneness disrupted it, yet solitude demands it. Arendt (1976) described this experience as being two-in-one, as the I communicates with the me. Thoreau (2008) referred to this at length as a sort of doubleness by which one becomes their own companion. The result is solitude’s ability to offer a rich and unique sort of dialogue that is the basis for contemplation and, as Thoreau (2008) argued, intellectual labor. It is also possible in solitude, as discussed in the preceding chapter, that I identify nonhuman others or divine others as a Thou and thus enter an I-Thou in this way. In Buber’s (2010) own work, he even acknowledged the possibility of the latter when he discussed God as the eternal Thou that can never be found as an It.

Escapism, isolation, and solitude all are defined by a different privation of the sort of interpersonal dialogue present in the I-Thou combination as conceived by Buber (2010). In escapism, the other is seeking interpersonal dialogue, but I deny him or her of that dialogue. In isolation, I myself seek dialogue with the other, but I am prevented by doing so either by the other’s actual reduction of me to an object or by my belief that this is so. In solitude, the other and I agree to disengage temporarily from interpersonal dialogue but leave the possibility for it in the future. Though in solitude I may find myself in a dialogue with my inner self, or with nonhuman others, or with the divine, these are not by definition examples of engagement in interpersonal dialogue.

We may conclude, then, that aloneness is not only a privation of interpersonal dialogue as a whole, but, furthermore, what type of aloneness the self and the other will experience is ultimately defined by who enacts the privation. If it is only the self that enacts the privation, it results in escapism. If it is only the other who does so or is perceived to do so, the experience becomes isolation. If the self and other agree to the privation of their interpersonal dialogue,
solitude becomes possible. Both the self and the other play a crucial role in shaping aloneness, either symmetrically or asymmetrically.

Finally, because of our conclusions reached hitherto, we may find that solitude and interpersonal dialogue have a rather unique and perhaps ontologically necessary relationship with one another. I argue that the experience of solitude, as the source of intrapersonal dialogue, is in a careful dialectic with interpersonal dialogue. Solitude is essentially the contradiction of interpersonal dialogue; they are both a communicative ground, yet the former is built from the privation of the latter. Both are an I-Thou relation, yet interpersonal dialogue requires an other as a subject whereas solitude is impossible with the ongoing presence of the other. Solitude and dialogue are both exceedingly rare experiences; Thoreau (2008) laments the rarity of true solitude, and Buber (2010) acknowledges that most interactions with others are an I-It in form. These two types of I-Thous are uncommon ideals which we may intrinsically seek but find difficult to attain.

Just as one cannot force dialogue, one also cannot force solitude. Both are mutually-constructed and therefore symmetrical. Just as Buber (2010) claims that “relation is mutual” (p. 15), so too by extension must solitude be mutual. In between this unity of contraries are the asymmetrical types of aloneness, isolation and escapism, which are interruptions to our pursuit of the I-Thou. Isolation and escapism are always nonmutual—that is to say always I-It relations—which are experienced when one fails in reaching the I-Thou of either dialogue with the other or with one’s own self as in solitude. The dialectic of dialogue and solitude as well as the disruptions incurred by isolation and escapism reaffirm that aloneness should be understood as a privation: *privation dialogus*. 
Possibilities for Future Research

As a human communication topic, aloneness announces a plethora of avenues for future research. I believe that throughout this dissertation, I have covered an extensive amount of implications that aloneness brings to philosophy of communication as well as the communication discipline as a whole, especially when it is reconstituted as an inherent lack of interpersonal dialogue between the self and the other. Many of the issues for communication scholarship were outlined at the end of each chapter on the specific types of aloneness in sections highlighting the implications for the philosophy of communication. Of course, those sections, and indeed this dissertation, are by no means exhaustive. I am confident that aloneness opens a litany of possibilities for future communication research, and in this section I will provide just a few suggestions.

First, outside of the literature review, this dissertation did not address the phenomenon of alienation as a correlate of aloneness. This omission was partly due to its initial exclusion by any previously established typology, but more importantly in order to keep my inquiry focused on interpersonal aloneness, whereas alienation, if it is indeed aloneness as conceived herein, is scaled to a political magnitude. It is conceivable that the philosophy of Marx holds a rich area of ideas for understanding aloneness in economic, political, or organizational frameworks rather than the interpersonal. The current globalized historical moment (Friedman, 2007) of increasing economic disparities and the “dismpowerment” (p. 546) of the lower middle classes around the world. Of particular note might be to investigate the relationship of alienation as aloneness and the rise of the precariat class, as conceived by Guy Standing (2011). Standing (2011) notes that an important feature of the precariat is a loss of vocational or occupational narrative; could such
a narrative collapse result in a type of alienation on a political scale that could be defined as a type of aloneness?

Additionally, although I believe phenomenology to be an apropos methodology for this dissertation, especially as an initial investigation to bracket it as a phenomenon, it has its own limitations which are further limited by my choices of representative philosophers. Other methodologies, including quantitative ones, can doubtlessly offer much needed additional perspectives on the unique challenges of aloneness and its relationship with communication. Of particular merit would be inquiry from a media ecology mindset, which this dissertation at times touched on, because of the way in which new technological mediums such as social media seem to be affecting the experience of aloneness by preventing solitude. Quantitative methods of inquiry could also present helpful insights in measuring the extent of aloneness and its multiple correlates and develop a testable framework.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, future research on the subject of aloneness should pursue a more thorough examination of loneliness and communication. Though I frequently acknowledged the presence of loneliness throughout my research, I largely placed it aside as an emotional reaction to aloneness rather than an experience of aloneness which was my primary focus. While this was neccessary to sufficiently narrow the scope of this dissertation as well as maintain a focus on aloneness as an experience rather than an emotion, loneliness is still an important topic and arguably worthy of its own investigation outright. As indicated in the literature review of this dissertation, psychology literature has recently made significant progress in addressing loneliness, but, unfortunately, at the time of writing, communication scholarship on this subject is still relatively sparse by comparison. I believe that loneliness should be a prioritized issue for communication research.
Conclusion

It is at this juncture that I bring this dissertation to a close. After presenting phenomenological reductions of each type of aloneness at length in the previous three chapters, this final chapter brought about a unification of isolation, escapism, and solitude by establishing their connection with interpersonal dialogue. This connection was made possible by first uncovering the undeveloped potential for dialogue that Diekema’s (1992) original typology implied. The relationship of aloneness and interpersonal dialogue brings clarity to the former existing as a privation of the latter, with the impetus of that privation—initiated by the self, the other, or both—ultimately determining which type of aloneness will manifest. Redefining aloneness through the metaphor of privatio dialogus not only completes the central research question of this dissertation, but it also definitively establishes aloneness as a phenomenon intrinsic to human communication as well as topic of importance for the philosophy of communication. Finally, our conclusions with regards to aloneness reconsidered as a lack of interpersonal dialogue brought about a few key areas for potential future research in order to further expand this topic. I then suggested a few avenues for future research on aloneness in the communication discipline, including considerations of alienation, its potential with other methodologies, and the undeveloped connections with loneliness.

As a final thought, I wish to briefly argue that culture in our current historical moment appears to be at a sort of crossroads with regards to aloneness. Aloneness is by no means a new experience; indeed, if the literature review in Chapter I of this dissertation revealed anything it is that aloneness has long been a part of the human condition, but as an enigma that has challenged philosophy, literature, and religion from antiquity to this very moment. What seems to have shifted and continues to shift is not our understanding of aloneness but rather our reaction to it.
Many scholars and social critics such as Sherry Turkle (2011; 2015) and Kurt Vonnegut (2011) have lamented that our increasingly connect, always-on globalized world often prevents meaningful communication. But it also makes solitude nigh impossible. At present, many people seem doomed to a purgatory of only isolation and escapism, continually caught between the experience of solitude and dialogue but rarely achieving either. The difficulty that many have today in staying attentive to the other, constantly resisting or conceding to the impulsion to check one’s phone or email or social media at every conceivable instant (see e.g. Carr, 2010), I believe, is an indication that aloneness is more fearsome than ever. Of course, it should not be; solitude is a necessity for all the reasons Thoreau (2008) so astutely considered. In avoiding solitude, however, people all too frequently remain entrapped in asymmetrical forms aloneness. Put more simply, we are perhaps worse than ever at being alone.

In closing, my hope is that my efforts to offer a phenomenology of aloneness has contributed to the philosophy of communication. I believe that this dissertation has at minimum made a sold case for the inclusion of aloneness as a topic for interpersonal communication as it is inherently tied to the interactions of the self and other. Furthermore, I hope that the typology that this dissertation reappropriated from Diekema (1992) expands the common understanding of being alone beyond the insufficient binary of just solitude and loneliness. Instead, by foregrounding communication, we can now see the complexity of aloneness in isolation, escapism, and solitude. Finally, this dissertation can also be used by future scholars of human communication or other disciplines to establish a consistent nomenclature for subsequent research on aloneness in an effort to eliminate some of the contrasting usages of terminology that obfuscates the literature at present. Regardless of what future research in aloneness might bring, this dissertation has shown that, as a privation of interpersonal dialogue, aloneness is an intrinsic
experience within the human condition that, despite its familiarity, hides some of the secrets of what it means to be the social animal.
References


