

Philosophy of Psychiatry and Psychopathology

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1 The Topic

The ‘Philosophy of Psychiatry’ is roughly concerned with three interrelated topics: a) Problems from the Philosophy of Science, as they especially occur for Psychiatry; b) Conceptual and moral questions concerning the notion of ‘mental disorder’; and c) whether some psychopathological phenomena might be relevant for questions in the philosophy of mind. (Murphy, 2020)

As topic for the next year of the WFAP, I propose to focus especially on the Philosophy of Psychiatry, as it is concerned with (b): What are mental disorders? Is “mental disorder” a purely descriptive notion, or is it irreducibly normative? Are they “illnesses”, in the same sense as non-mental illnesses, or are there noteworthy differences? Is the common “pathologization” of mental disorders well justified? What role does the social and cultural context play for their diagnosis? And what in turn is “mental health”?

So conceived, the Philosophy of Psychiatry is a wide-ranging and complex topic, fueling debates in and inbetween both analytic and continental philosophy. (Indeed, in the context of this topic, the analytic-continental distinction becomes rather vague. To name just one example, Ratcliffe 2008 approaches the topic with somewhat analytical style from a phenomenological perspective.) In order to get some orientation, here are some of the topic’s core debates (roughly following Radden 2019):

1. How should we best understand and identify a mental disorder? Purely phenomenological, bio-psychical, partly social? Are mental disorders natural kinds? (Bolton, 2008; Murphy, 2020)
2. What is the connection between rational and epistemic short-comings, and (some) mental disorders? Do mental disorders necessarily include irrationality and epistemic mistakes? (Bortolotti, 2009)
3. What role do values play in ascriptions of mental disorder? *Evaluativists* claim that the very concepts of various mental disorders can only be understood before the

backdrop of some evaluative standards. (Fulford and Colombo, 2004) *Objectivists* claim that mental disorders can be accounted for in value-free, naturalistic theories. (Murphy and Stich, 2000; Sadler, 2004)

4. What is a legitimate aim for Psychiatry, as a medical practice? What constitutes mental health? Historically, ‘Anti-Psychiatry’ and some branches of feminist philosophy have extensively criticized psychiatry for aiming at an oppressive notion of normal behavior. (Foucault, 2006/1961; Goffman, 1961) Recent philosophers try to describe legitimate aims that can avoid such criticism.

2 Possible Keynote-Speakers

Possible (Europe-based) Keynote-Speakers include:

Derek Bolton (London University)

Lisa Bortolotti (Birmingham)

Anna Bortolan (Swansea University)

Gerrit Glas (University of Amsterdam)

Marko Jurjako (University of Rijeka)

Lubomira Radoilska (University of Kent)

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