

Reading about . . .

Philosophy of psychiatry

There has been a rapid growth of publications in the philosophy of psychiatry over the past 10 years, not least due to the highly successful *International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry* series from Oxford University Press. In this article, I will focus on monographs, textbooks and edited collections, as well as a few helpful internet resources, but unfortunately I will not be able to cover the papers published in journals in this area. Even given this exclusion, there are a large number of publications, and I have listed those I have found personally most useful. They are divided by either area of philosophy or branch of psychiatry. With the increasing complexities of our work as clinicians, conceptual approaches are needed more than ever, and I hope that this brief survey will serve as a starting point for any psychiatrist who wishes to explore the philosophical complexities of our practice.

Classics

Philosophical consideration of mental illness occurs throughout history and in many of the works of the greatest philosophers, from Plato and Augustine to Wittgenstein and Heidegger. Yet, it is with Jaspers and his *General Psychopathology*,¹ first published 100 years ago, that a systematic attempt was made to think about studying the mind in illness and its relationship with neuroscience. Arguably, this book launched phenomenological psychiatry, a movement that is still very much active. In the latter half of the 20th century it was psychiatry and medicine themselves, their relation to mental illness and stance towards those with putative psychiatric diagnoses, that came into focus. Szasz's *The Myth of Mental Illness*,² Foucault's *A History of Madness*³ and *The Birth of the Clinic*,⁴ together with Laing's *The Divided Self*⁵ all attacked the perceived default medical model, albeit from different perspectives and with different goals. Clare's *Psychiatry in Dissent*⁶ remains a well-reasoned and clear counterpoint.

Textbooks

Many of the themes introduced by Jaspers, Szasz, Foucault and Laing regarding medicalisation, styles of treatment, understanding and explanation, responsibility and politicisation are core topics for contemporary philosophy of psychiatry. At present, there are several very good textbook overviews of the subject, all of which discuss these topics, among others. Thornton's *Essential Philosophy of Psychiatry*⁷ and Graham's *The Disordered Mind*⁸ are excellent single-author textbooks and these authors, joined by Fulford, offer the larger *Oxford Textbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*.⁹ Finally, Radden offers an edited collection surveying the field in *The Philosophy of Psychiatry: A Companion*.¹⁰

Philosophy of science and classification

One of the main drivers for my interest in philosophy was in thinking about the validity and meaning of my own scientific empirical work in early psychosis and schizophrenia. How should we study these disorders? Is there a single method

for a science of psychiatry? What does neuroscience offer us? Many of these questions are present in the work of Jaspers, but with the advent of increasing sophistication in research, the influence of international classification systems, the breach between subjective reports of illness and scientific accounts, a laudable goal seemed to be to reconcile, if possible, different explanatory frameworks and perspectives on distress and disorder. These concerns prompted my own *Psychiatry as Cognitive Neuroscience: Philosophical Perspectives*,¹¹ co-edited with Bortolotti. Bolton & Hill's *Mind, Meaning, and Mental Disorder*¹² is an influential book that offers a reconciliation between meaning-based interventions, such as psychotherapy, with biological processes. Cooper's excellent *Psychiatry and Philosophy of Science*¹³ allows us to see psychiatry as a complex discipline, reliant on a collection of sciences, and Murphy's *Psychiatry in the Scientific Image*¹⁴ offers a detailed and powerful discussion of the notion of mental illnesses in terms of what they are and how they should be studied and classified. Bolton examines contemporary discussions of disorder, with reference to prominent interlocutors and the DSM-5 development, in *What is Mental Disorder?*¹⁵ Ghaemi's *The Rise and Fall of the Biopsychosocial Model*¹⁶ critiques a contemporary approach to reconciling explanatory models and argues for a psychiatric eclecticism. Useful and important papers on the scientific study of psychiatry can be found in two volumes of papers edited by Kendler & Parnas, *Philosophical Issues in Psychiatry*.^{17,18}

Phenomenology and psychopathology

Since Jaspers' work, the phenomenological approach has been a major thread in the philosophy of psychiatry. Spiegelberg's *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry*¹⁹ is a good historical overview with many of the key texts being found in *The Maudsley Reader in Phenomenological Psychiatry*.²⁰ Important recent books utilising phenomenology in psychiatry include Ratcliffe's *Feelings of Being*,²¹ Stanghellini's *Disembodied Spirits and Deanimated Bodies*,²² and Matthews' *Body-Subjects and Disordered Minds*.²³ Cutting's excellent *Principles of Psychopathology*²⁴ and his more recent *A Critique of Psychopathology*²⁵ examine psychopathology informed by cognitive neuropsychology and by philosophy, utilising insights from Bergson and Scheler among others. I would also highly recommend the philosophically rich intellectual biography of the young R.D. Laing, Beveridge's *Portrait of the Psychiatrist as a Young Man*,²⁶ as an intriguing account of Laing's development as an existential-phenomenological psychiatrist and psycho-therapist. Carel's moving and important *Illness*, although exploring health problems in general, focuses on the experience of illness, and of life, of the person with health problems.²⁷

Delusions and schizophrenia

As with phenomenology, the problem of delusions and the experience of psychosis has been a key feature of philosophy of psychiatry and perhaps served as one of the main ways through which academic philosophy has come to psychiatry. Important texts include Sass' *Madness and Modernism*²⁸ and his

The Paradoxes of Delusion.²⁹ Graham's *When Self-Consciousness Breaks*³⁰ and Coltheart & Davies' *Pathologies of Belief*³¹ both examine key psychotic experiences philosophically but with a detailed grasp of neuropsychological accounts of psychopathology. *Reconceiving Schizophrenia*, edited by Chung and colleagues,³² is an excellent collection of essays and Woods' brilliant *The Sublime Object of Psychiatry*³³ broadens the debate by examining conceptions of schizophrenia not only in psychiatry and philosophy, but in wider cultural theory, too. One of the most important works on delusions is Bortolotti's *Delusions and Other Irrational Beliefs*, a book that examines the core features of delusions in relation to other mental states, demonstrating that many non-delusional beliefs are not so rational and delusions often differ in degree, rather than kind, from other, non-pathological, beliefs.³⁴ Radden's *On Delusion* is another excellent monograph exploring delusions in philosophy, psychiatry and psychology, and offering a cultural context.³⁵

Depression, dissociation and dementia

Although psychosis, and delusions in particular, features highly in the philosophy of psychiatry literature, other disorders have stimulated philosophical reflection. Radden's *The Nature of Melancholy*³⁶ is an anthology of readings about depression, and her *Moody Minds Distempered*³⁷ is a contemporary examination of depression and sadness. The eminent philosopher Ian Hacking has written *Rewriting the Soul*³⁸ and *Mad Travellers*,³⁹ which examine multiple personalities and fugue states respectively, as well as memory and historically located disorders. Hughes' *Thinking Through Dementia*⁴⁰ and his co-edited *Dementia: Mind, Meaning, and the Person*⁴¹ are both rigorous philosophical explorations of issues arising through considering dementia as patients, carers, clinicians, policy makers and researchers. Failures of memory and autobiographical narration are explored by Hirstein in *Confabulation: Views from Neuroscience, Psychiatry, Psychology and Philosophy*.⁴²

Psychopharmacology and psychotherapy

The interventions we offer are also an area of philosophical reflection. Stein's marvellous *Philosophy of Psychopharmacology*⁴³ draws on cognitive neuroscience and evidence-based medicine to examine the role of psychotropics in how we view ourselves as people and psychiatric disorders, as well as the idea of enhancement. Moncrieff's *The Myth of the Chemical Cure*⁴⁴ critiques some conceptualisations of psychiatric disorders as discrete neurochemical states that can be ameliorated by putatively precise and specific drug agents. Wollheim's *Freud*⁴⁵ is a masterpiece by a sympathetic professional philosopher and Lear's *Freud*⁴⁶ is a more recent philosophical account of Freud's work, as Tauber's *Freud: The Reluctant Philosopher*.⁴⁷ Gardner's *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*⁴⁸ argues that Freudian and Kleinian accounts of the mind are powerful ways to understand failures of rationality. Brakel's *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and the A-rational Mind*⁴⁹ and *Unconscious Knowing and Other Essays in Psycho-Philosophical Analysis*⁵⁰ both examine psychoanalytic practice and concepts philosophically. A key text examining the psychotherapeutic role of the physician in psychiatry remains the *Zollikon Seminars* of Heidegger & Boss.⁵¹

Ethics and responsibility

Two important strands of philosophy of psychiatry are how clinicians and wider society should treat those with mental illness, and whether those with mental illness are accountable for their actions, either morally or legally. Green & Bloch offer *An Anthology of Psychiatric Ethics*⁵² as well as an edited volume of more contemporary essays, *Psychiatric Ethics*.⁵³ Dickenson & Fulford's *In Two Minds: A Casebook of Psychiatric Ethics* is a collection of practical problems, with different commentators and perspectives.⁵⁴ Callender's superb monograph, *Free Will and Responsibility: A Guide for Practitioners*,⁵⁵ charts both the science and philosophy of morality and free will and how these in turn relate to illness, blame and treatment. *Responsibility and Psychopathy*,⁵⁶ edited by Malatesti & McMillan, examines these issues more specifically in psychopathy. Radoilka's edited *Autonomy and Mental Disorder*⁵⁷ looks at the role of choice and decision-making in mental illness.

Websites

Important online resources can be found on the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Philosophy Special Interest Group website (www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/specialinterestgroups/philosophy.aspx), and a very useful resource, collecting conferences and publications in philosophy and psychiatry, is the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry website (<http://inpponline.org>). The Maudsley Philosophy Group contains details on current projects as well as links to audio recordings from speakers (www.maudsleyphilosophygroup.org). The Critical Psychiatry Network can be found at www.criticalpsychiatry.co.uk. The journal *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* can be browsed online and is a great source of papers published in the area (<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ppp/>). For those new to philosophy, and who may enjoy podcasts, 'The History of Philosophy without any gaps' (www.historyofphilosophy.net), 'Philosophy Bites' (www.philosophybites.com) and the philosophy episodes of 'In Our Time' (www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/philosophy/all) all offer great introductions to key philosophers and topics.

Concluding remarks

With 2013 comes the centenary of the publication of Jaspers' *General Psychopathology* and, as well as conferences being organised internationally, several high-impact publications have been published. These include Stanghellini & Fuchs' *One Century of Karl Jaspers' General Psychopathology*,⁵⁸ Fulford and colleagues' *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*⁵⁹ and *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Mental Disorder*,⁶⁰ edited by Gerrans & Hohwy. As these books evidence, the cross-disciplinary field of philosophy and psychiatry continues to grow and develop. Thinking and reading in this area can have the potential to help us all become more reflective, aware of the limitations and strengths of our discipline, and ultimately, better doctors and psychiatrists.

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