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Dysphoria in Mania and in Depression

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Differential phenomenology of dysphoria in affective, epileptic and borderline personality disorders

Dysphoria is a very vague and unspecific term in psychopathology. Neither in classical authors, such as Kraepelin or Wernicke, nor in modern handbooks or manuals, is it possible to find any precise definition of this symptom or state. In German texts sometimes appears as synonym of "Verstimmung", which simply means 'alteration of the mood'. In Jaspers General Psychopathology the term is found in two occasions: one in relation to the fugue states of epilepsy and the other as mood-change appearing in form of attacks in 'constitutional disorders'. 'The change is a sudden fall into an abnormal state and as such is very often experienced subjectively with a great deal of anxiety'. A long experience in a general psychiatric hospital allows this author to suggest the use of this term for a specific form of mood disturbance, characterized by suddenly onset, irritability, dissatisfaction with oneself and a negative (depressive like) mood. This author has seen such mood changes in three different pathologies: affective disorders, epilepsy and borderline personality disorders. In this essay he tries to carry out a differential phenomenology of dysphoria, that is, to determine which the characteristics of this phenomenon in each one of the mentioned pathologies are.