

ETHICS AND AESTHETICS IN PSYCHIATRY: THE PERSONAL, THE SOCIAL AND THE DIALECTICAL

**A Joint Symposium of the WPA Section of Philosophy and Humanities in Psychiatry
and the WPA Section of Clinical Psychopathology**

Chair-persons: Adriano C. T. Rodrigues (Brazil)

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Rationale of the symposium: The framework of Values Based Medical Practice reminds us that much more than facts need to be considered in order that clinical understanding and decision making can take place properly in clinical practice. Psychiatry, for its turn, is one of the medical fields where values are more explicit and constantly at play. Accordingly, ethical and aesthetical issues should be always carefully watched out and critically addressed in psychiatric practice. Although dealing with on *prima facie* different topics, the presentations that comprise the symposium herein proposed work as case studies that jointly cover three non-redundant but still intertwined components of evaluative issues in psychiatry. Namely, they bring about discussions that expose the role of *personal values*, *social values*, but also of *dialectical relationships* in psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. Three presentations with 20 minutes each, plus 30 minutes for questions and debate are planned.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF A TREATMENT: IS AESTHETICS IMPORTANT?

Speaker: Professor Pedro Varandas (Hospital dos Lusíadas, Portugal)

Abstract: Clinical Medical Practice is not an aesthetic activity in the sense of “Beaux Arts”. However, any medical practice from surgery (involving manual techniques) to more medical ones is an artisan activity with some similitude with other artisan arts like jewellery, design or joinery.

Anyway medical practice as an artisan activity has some proper features:

- 1) Is a practice involving a relation with other;
- 2) Is a decisional practice;
- 3) Is a practice informed by science;
- 4) Is in some areas a specific manual activity (surgery, medical techniques).

Considering these 4 features, the artisan nature of medical practice is the right combination of them, which can be evaluated by the degree of success of treatments. In a way, using the logic of the artisan, the best treatment is the most successful, the treatment with better results, which means the most beautiful.

Psychiatry is the medical discipline with more involvement with relational features. In fact the relation with the patient is in itself a treatment tool, whatever the treatment can be psychopharmacologic, psychotherapeutic or psychosocial. This means that the success of psychiatry treatments relies on the good relation management. Relational ability is the “art” of psychiatry.

In this presentation it will be explained all the factors that contribute to the art of psychiatry that gives attractiveness to treatments.

SOCIAL AESTHETICS IN PSYCHIATRY – FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Author: Professor Michael Musalek (University of Vienna, Austria)

Abstract: As we all are very definitely social beings, the question is not *if* we live socially, but *how* we live socially – thus the social question becomes a question of aesthetics. Social aesthetics can also be seen as a mandate to develop a humanistic medicine that is not only concerned with the “whats”, but which instead focuses on the “hows”. The call for the implementation of social aesthetics in practice necessitates a paradigm shift in the treatment of mental disorders. The focus should then no longer only be just upon the effectiveness of treatment, but also, and quite fundamentally, on the attractiveness of treatment, in particular as making treatment objectives and programs more attractive will lead to reduced drop-out rates, in turn improving treatment effectiveness. The challenge in the therapeutic process is not only to recognize the significance of the pathology but to find ways out of the imagined impossibilities by opening up new possibilities and uncovering potential that has often quite literally been buried. This is the central element of the *Orpheus Programme* that has been developed at the Anton Proksch Institute in Vienna. In contrast to the principles of former deficiency oriented treatment programs the *Orpheus Programme* focuses on opening up spaces and creating atmospheres in which it becomes possible for the ill individual.

AFRICAN INSIGHTS THAT AFFORD A PERSON-CENTERED ETHICS NEITHER COMMITTED TO INDIVIDUALISM NOR COMMUNITARIANISM

Speaker: Professor Werdie van Staden (University of Pretoria, South Africa)

Abstract: Person-centred ethics', containing 'person' in the singular, may suggest a commitment to individualism. This paper, however, argues that a person-centred ethic need not be trapped in an a priori commitment to liberal individualism or communitarianism, should one draw on two related core African insights on 1) putting people first and 2) respect for diversity.

"Batho pele" is a Sesotho expression that means "people first". It is closely connected to the rich concept of "ubuntu", translated incompletely as "in existence with and through others". It champions both the person and groups of persons by virtue of an interconnectedness expressed, for example, in the isiZulu maxim "Unmuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu", translated as "I am because you are, and you are because we are".

Putting people first in the ethics of health care has to account for diversity, for diversity is an inevitable characteristic both among individual persons and groups of people. To account for diversity in not merely a general way, the diversity specific to both particular persons and between groups of people in a particular situation and context needs to be taken seriously. Accounting for diversity in this way guided by the ethic "people first" and "ubuntu", requires a process of shared decision making in which all relevant values, including potential individualist and communitarian values, are taken up in a substantive communicative process that creates in partnership person and people specific decisions for that very situation, context, and time – a process captured in the African concept of an "indaba".
