

PHENOMENOLOGY IN PSYCHIATRY: HISTORY, CONTRIBUTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

A Symposium of the WPA Section of Philosophy and Humanities in Psychiatry

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Rationale of the symposium: Phenomenology has for long been one of the most prominent psychopathological approaches within psychiatry, providing it with fruitful elements of theoretical, methodological and conceptual nature. Although an over-simplified understanding of phenomenology as an epitome for descriptive psychopathology is widespread, its philosophical roots and the many contributions it has received from various fields and authors make it a much more complex and fertile framework, both for psychiatric practice and research.

In this symposium we aim at providing a view of the complexity, usefulness and fruitfulness of phenomenology in what regards psychiatry and psychopathology. The three presentations that we propose as an agenda for this symposium attempt to reach that objective not only by looking to the origins of phenomenology, to its inception psychiatry, and to its already well established legacy to this latter field, but also by bringing attention to recent developments that signalize its renewal as a source of progress in psychiatry.

Three presentations with 20 minutes each, plus 30 minutes for questions and debates are planed.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PSYCHIATRY

Speaker: Professor Otto Doerr (University of Chile)

Abstract: Phenomenology and the phenomenological movement were founded by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the 20th century. Husserl's command "to the things themselves" does not simply mean withdrawing from prejudices and from all traditional dogmas; rather, it is an invitation to become fully immersed in things. The phenomenological attitude tries to be as open as possible to the different ways of being of the object and insofar, adequate to complex realities, as the psychopathological phenomena. This method was introduced in psychiatry by Karl Jaspers in his *General Psychopathology*. Jaspers combined an appeal to empathy with immediate understanding of the other person without exploiting, nevertheless, the most important phenomenological techniques, such as reduction, free variation and intuition. The second author who applied this method was Ludwig Binswanger. After a strong phenomenological beginning in Husserl's sense, he let himself be influenced by Heidegger philosophy and wrote significant analyses about the life history of schizophrenic patients. Among his contemporaries, von Gebsattel, Straus, Zutt and Minkowski have to be mentioned. The work of Zutt has a great significance in clinical practice and some of his contributions are here outlined. Tellenbach and Blankenburg were the most outstanding authors in the second half of 20th century. An overview of their essential contributions to psychiatry is given. The French phenomenologists are also mentioned, as well as current representatives of this orientation, such as Giovanni Stanghellini and Michael Schwartz. Finally, future developments of phenomenology in psychiatry are discussed, among others, the phenomenological-dialectic perspective, to which this author has made some contributions.

FACTS AND VALUES, HISTORIES AND NARRATIVES: HERMENEUTICA PERSPECTIVE IN THE 'PSY' FIELD.

Speaker: Professor Maria Lucrecia Rovaletti (University of Buenos Aires)

Abstract: From the introduction of “linguistic turn”, elements of language have persistently been the subject of theoretical and methodological reflection. Ever since, the textual organization known as *story* has motivated analyses from different perspectives.

Philosophy, especially phenomenological hermeneutics, looked for establishing ties between the *structure of subjectivity* and the *form of story*. Ricoeur’s central idea is that only the story can bring to light and make us understand that dimension. Identity is a product of story dynamics and it is devised in the plot.

From psychology, Bruner examines the uses of narrative in different cultural contexts and shows how they can be useful for control like in law or psychiatry. Along similar lines, Foucault raises the question of individual and subjectivation practices.

Freud, with his files, will take distance from medical stories of that time. He creates a new form of medical history that presents two faces: on the one hand, scientific ideal, and on the other, the history of a particular person. He shows us that right chosen reconstruction of history can fill the emptiness between two story facts apparently unrelated and can get sense from senseless. Later, this will allow a narrative reading of Psychoanalysis (Spence, Schafer).

Finally, while Psychiatry Based on Evidences (PBE) presses forward, claims for a Psychiatry Based on Values (PBV) as its counterpart also gain prominence. Within this framework, fairly claimed to be based on *Narratives*, clinical practice comes close to the historian, biographer, and ethnographer’s one.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Speaker: Professor Octavio Domont de Serpa Jr (Institute of Psychiatry, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Abstract: The word "phenomenology" has been more frequently found in the contemporary psychiatric literature, mainly anglophonic, as a synonym for "descriptive". This is a semantic impoverishment regarding the meaning the word "phenomenology" has in the continental philosophical tradition that started with Husserl in the beginning of the 20th century and was followed among others by Heidegger, Merleau-ponty, Sartre. In this tradition Phenomenology stands for a method that seeks to study the lived experience and how things are given through experience. In the Phenomenological Psychopathology tradition (Jaspers, Minkowski, Binswanger, Straus) this method seeks to study the embodied and embedded subjective dimension of mental illness, in their temporal and relational unfolding.

In the last 20 years we have seen a growing dialogue between phenomenology and cognitive sciences and neurosciences, trying to integrate the first-person perspective with the third-person perspective from the experimental methods, as in the neurophenomenological protocols and the "front-loaded phenomenology", experimental paradigms that integrates concepts from phenomenology, as sense of agency and sense of ownership.

Meanwhile the field of qualitative health research has grown, with an increasing interest in the inquiry about illness/health experiences and about the construction of meaning and sense attribution to these experiences.

In the field of Mental Health the phenomenological method (descriptive/structural or interpretative/hermeneutic) is a strong heuristic tool to the research about the lived experience and the narrative construction of illness and treatment experience.

In this paper the features of the phenomenological method of qualitative research will be put in details, illustrated with data from a research about the lived experience of people diagnosed with schizophrenia.
