

MEETING REPORTS

From the WPA Section for Philosophy and Humanities co-sponsored events

By Prof. Dr Drozdstoj St. Stoyanov

The Joint Balkan and Bulgarian INPP Association has been authorized by the WPA Section on Philosophy and Humanities to organize a Symposium entitled "**Methodology, neuroscience and validity in psychopathology**" at the WPA Thematic Conference in Istanbul June 14 2011. The meeting was chaired by assoc. professor Drozdstoj Stoyanov, MD, PhD and co-sponsored by the WPA Section on History of Psychiatry. Contributions represent different international perspectives and come from UK, Portugal, Greece and Bulgaria.

GE Berrios' talk addressed Validity, Coherence & Prediction in Psychopathology and his basic claim was that Validity can only be accommodated within psychiatry and psychopathology after it has undergone redefinition. The central issue to deal with is whether constructs of any kind can be deemed 'valid' in the Neo-Positivistic sense given to this term. In Berrios' view they cannot and that to make validity meaningful it must be re-translated as 'coherence' and 'prediction'.

D. Stoyanov presented his concept of cross-validation and the impact of neuroscience on validity in psychopathology developed in active collaboration with Peter K. Machamer and Kenneth F. Schaffner from the University of Pittsburgh. Their work asserted that the findings of neuroscience determine strong re-consideration of the psychiatric taxonomy. Novel implications for broader prototypical, cluster and dimensional diagnoses were considered. In their perspective both psychopathology and neuroscience demand revision of their taxonomical apparatuses under convergent cross-validation, where clinical assessment and neurobiological measurement tools are regarded as convergent validity operations.

Luis Madeira and Maria Luisa Figueira's topic was "From psychiatrist-patient reality gap to psychosis diagnose: can we make that step?". Basically their contribution aimed at reinforcement of scientific objectivity in Psychiatry, as the search for causes and reasons, has to deal with cultural, linguistic, transcendental conditioning.

In order to complement and extend its previous contributions the Joint Balkan and Bulgarian INPP group has designed and delivered a Symposium at the 14th conference of INPP in Gothenburg, September 2 d 2011 entitled "**Nosology and Validity in Psychiatry**" chaired by the President of the Balkan Academy for PPP Prof. D. Stoyanov.

This venue was focused on the epistemological issues raised by the definition of mental disorder.

Paul Hoff delivered a historical reconstruction on "*From Kraepelin and Bleuler to ICD and DSM: Conceptual issues in the development of psychiatric nosology and diagnosis 1880 – 2010*". His comparative analysis revealed remarkable similarities, but also clinically important discrepancies. The Kraepelinian position is considered by Hoff to be recently challenged on several fronts and proposals for developing more valid conceptualizations could partly be seen as a re-emergence of Bleuler's model.

Massimiliano Aragona presented a paper entitled “From the first DSM to the DSM-5: an epistemological history. In line with his earlier contributions he argued that the concept of mental disorder in the DSM-III and later editions is based on the neoempirist liberalization of operative definitions and the concrete use of polythetic operative diagnostic criteria and is responsible for the current anomalies that the DSM-5 will be probably unable to solve. The neo-Kraepelinian view on objects and purpose of a psychiatric classification has entered a state of crisis because current anomalies conflict with its basic tenets. In particular, during the last thirty years validity had not followed the improved reliability. In Aragona’s view these difficulties call for a radical rethinking of the psychiatric nosology.

Markus Heinimaa’s talk addressed the limits of conceptualization in psychiatry. He claimed that Psychiatry as a clinical practice grows from a network of concepts and institutions that conceptualize significant deviances from ordinary course of our lives in professionally appropriate ways. Heinimaa claimed that these deviances cannot be distinguished as such but only against the kinds of pre-understandings that are the core of our identities as socially situated human beings. So what is relevant from psychiatric point of view earns its relevance from the specific and contingent forms of life of the respective community.

Somogy Varga delivered a paper on “*Mental Disorder. Natural, Practical or interactive Kind?*”. After defining natural kinds, he claimed that it is inadequate to think of mental disorders as naturally bounded entities. Then, he departed on previous work by Zachar and Hacking and argued that we can conceptualize at least some forms of mental disorder, not as natural, but as practical or interactive kinds.

D. Stoyanov focused on further investigation of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of validity in psychology and psychiatry. He contrasted a successful cross-validation between the biological sciences and clinical cardiology (in the case of myocardial infarction) with disappointing efforts to do the same between neuroscience and psychiatry (using bipolar disorder as an example). The crucial shortcomings were identified as discordance between the functional imaging and clinical assessment (psychological tests). To make progress on this issue, he proposed a novel conceptual model for establishing an integrative dialogue between psychiatry and neuroscience aimed at a multi-disciplinary “meta-language” for psychiatry. His model allows trans-disciplinary cross-validation of categories in psychiatry/clinical psychology and neuroscience via simultaneous application of clinical psychological/psychopathological assessment and functional neuro-imaging tools.

The discussion was moderated by Peter Zachar, Professor of Psychology in the Auburn University Montgomery, USA.