



# Philosophy of Psychiatry

Newsletter 46 Summer 2019



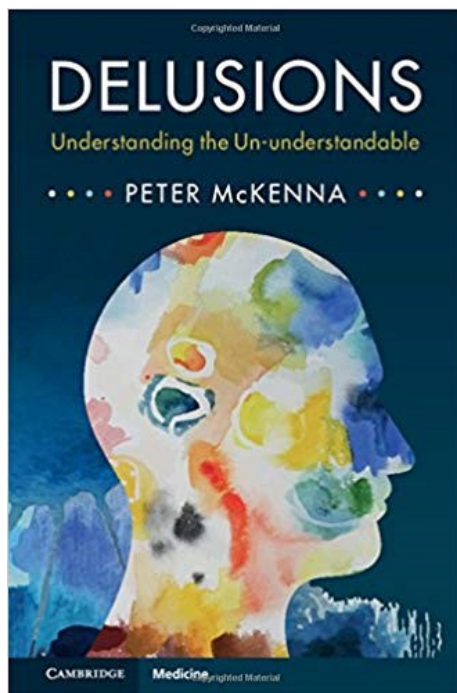
**Editors: Dr Abdi Sanati (Consultant Psychiatrist, East London NHS Foundation Trust) & Dr Steve Ramplin (Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, The Priory Group)**

## Introduction

Those interested in our special interest group may like to attend the 5th biennial Royal College of Psychiatrists Philosophy of Psychiatry Conference in London on 3 September 2019. The theme of the conference is Madness, the Mind and Politics. The conference will explore the relationship between Psychiatry and Politics, covering topics such as Capitalism, Socialism and Mental Health; Psychiatry in the Soviet World under National-Socialism; Politics and Economics of Anti-Psychiatry; Peter Sedgwick and Anti-Psychiatry; Psychiatry in a Post-Truth World; and Identity Politics in Mental Health. For information and registration visit the following link: <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/conferences/detail/2019/09/02/default-calendar/philosophy-special-interest-group-annual-meeting>.

## Book Reviews

**Delusions: Understanding the un-understandable, Peter McKenna, Cambridge University Press, 2017**

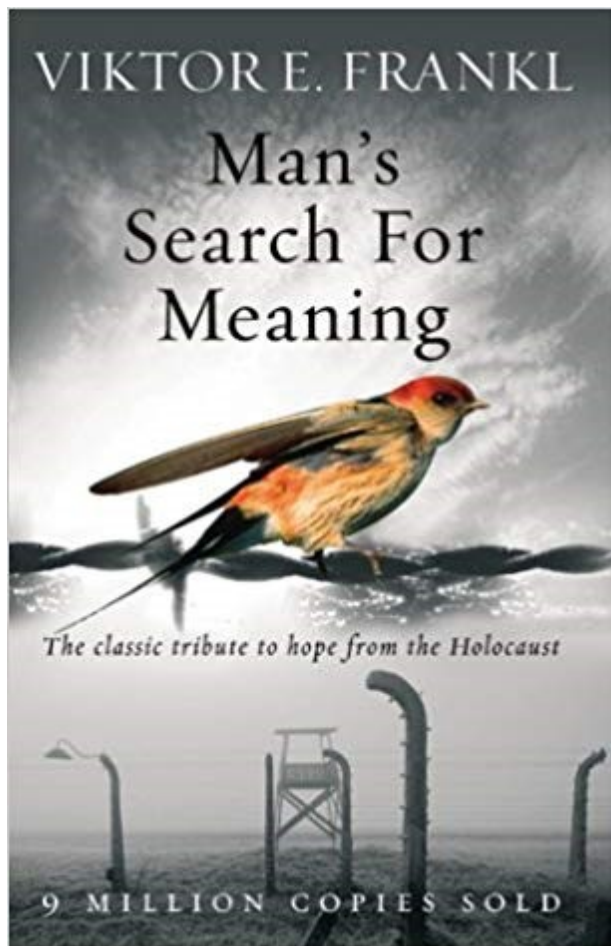


The philosophical literature on delusions is quite rich. Therefore, understandably (no pun intended), when I saw this new title I was initially sceptical. However, my fascination with delusions took the best of me and I started reading. I am glad that I did, as in 139 pages Peter McKenna gives a detailed review of the concept that is useful for both clinicians and philosophers. The book consists of 9 chapters. In the first one it starts with classic definitions made by Kraepelin and Bleuler and moves to Jaspers' account and ends with the recent definition based on Present State Examination. Later in the book he discusses the conditions which could be mistaken for delusions but are not delusions. The account given for overvalued ideas is excellent. I highly recommend it to trainers and trainees alike. There is a detailed account of delusional disorder, a challenge for clinicians and philosophers. In the chapter on pathology of normal beliefs he has a constructive criticism of the psychosis continuum. Given the popularity of this view, I welcomed a critical examination of the concept. There are also chapters on psychological, neurochemical and salience theories of delusions and a discussion

on what a theory of delusions looks like. Given the length of the book it manages to cover a wide range of material. The author's expertise in this field and his excellent wiring skills enables him to turn considerable amount of information into a very readable whole. Unfortunately, this achievement could also be seen as a shortcoming as some of the topics are not covered in as much detail, for example Jaspers' account. I was also surprised not to see a reference to works of Matthew Broome or Lisa Bortolotti. I must emphasise, however, that this criticism does not reduce the value of the book, as it is not written as a philosophy book. It is a valuable resource for anyone who intends to study delusions. It is replete with original cases and arguments. I highly recommend it to both clinicians and philosophers.

**Review by Dr Abdi Sanati (Consultant Psychiatrist, East London NHS Foundation Trust)**

**Man's search for meaning, Viktor Frankl, Published by Rider, 2004**



Viktor Frankl's 'Man's Search for Meaning' is widely acknowledged to be a highly influential work of psychiatric literature, described by my Consultant as 'the book that inspired me to become a psychiatrist'. Published in 1946 following his detention in Auschwitz and other camps, it is impossible not to be gripped by Frankl's experience and made to think deeply about his conclusions. Reviewing such a well-known and highly regarded text is a daunting challenge. However, I thought it would be interesting to offer my perspective, as a medical student, on a great work and its enduring relevance in society today.

Part one of the book focuses on Frankl's accounts of life in concentration camps; offering a unique perspective from a victim of the holocaust who is aware and reflective of his adjustment reactions to inescapable suffering. I was struck by his observations that even in a setting designed to demoralise and depersonalise its victims, morality and free will became increasingly important touchstones for Frankl. The ability of people to choose their attitudes towards unavoidable suffering, for example, is attributed great significance in the book. Frankl's accounts of his time within the camps are powerful as they offer the perspective of both 'patient' and 'psychiatrist' experiencing unavoidable trauma. At the same time, he meticulously documents his coping strategies with a high degree of insight. As reflected in the title of the book, he highlights the importance of finding personal meaning in life which acts as a driving force for survival even in a situation as dire as the holocaust.

It is these experiences which form the basis of Frankl's later theory of Logotherapy based on the principle that finding meaning in life is the most powerful motivating force for living, including in situations of unavoidable suffering. I found this particularly poignant because the theory does not focus on seeking unattainable happiness or creating what Frankl describes as a 'tensionless state', but instead acknowledges that life is full of highs and lows, empowering individuals to find their own meaning and purpose to act as a driving force or a safety net as circumstances require.

I reflected on the relevance of Frankl's framework for survival and coping for the patients I had met and listened to while on placement. While each case was complex and unique, I found that Frankl's theories did help me to better understand how patients might be supported effectively and also to question my own values. Moreover, I have thought since about the links between Frankl and the wider applicability of 'Man's Search for Meaning' to my generation and the current deepening crisis in young people's mental health where huge numbers of young people are experiencing emotional problems and mental ill health.

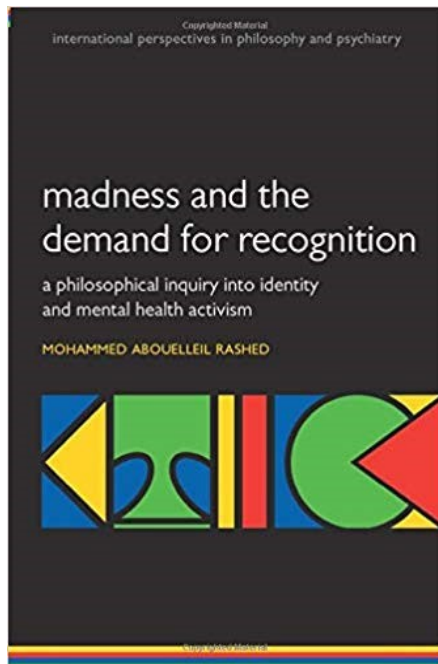
Frankl said that "happiness cannot be pursued it must ensue". We now live in a society where younger people are encouraged to strive for new unattainable standards of happiness promoted by "influencers" posting photoshopped, veneered versions of themselves and their lives online. An individual's position within a social network has been shown to influence risk for mental illness, in the same way that Frankl states people in 1946 society were characterised by achievement-orientation and measured on their 'usefulness to society'. However, in 2019 many adolescents measure their meaningfulness and value in superficial "likes" "retweets" and "follows" on social media platforms which become increasingly pervasive and difficult to disconnect from.

73 years later I believe lessons from Frankl's Logotherapy can still be applied to today's society. Approaches which promote respect for all members of society and support personal resilience, together with support for individuals to find personal meaning, might be something that the state and society could consider promoting as part of strategies for the prevention of mental ill health and promotion of wellbeing, alongside increasing funding for the treatment of mental ill health in the young.

As Frankl said, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we change ourselves."

**Review by Frances Freer 2nd year medical student, Queen Mary University of London**

### **Madness and the Demand for Recognition: A Philosophical Inquiry into Identity and Mental Health Activism, Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed, Oxford University Press, February 2019).**



The current wave of mental health activism stretches back to the 1970s. In the early days, activists pursued a civil rights agenda, inspired by the Black and Gay social and political movements. In time, the mental health movements diversified, and today various discourses and initiatives can be identified: in addition to long-standing concerns with coercive interventions, lack of involvement in recovery, and social stigma, some activists have resisted the medicalisation of madness. Mad Pride and mad-positive activism (Mad activism) reject the language of 'mental illness', 'disease', and 'disorder'. Activists reclaim the term 'mad', reverse its negative connotations, and present madness as grounds for identity. It is this radical and far-reaching activism that is the subject of my book *Madness and the Demand for Recognition*.

When I first encountered Mad activism, I immediately saw the scope of its challenge to social conceptions of madness and to the philosophy of psychiatry. In so far as the field is concerned, for example, Mad activism rejects the terms in which the debate on the concept of mental disorder is conducted. Instead of mental disorders we have a wide range of psychological, emotional, and behavioural phenomena. These phenomena can be associated with suffering and difficulties in functioning, no doubt, but are regarded as aspects of human diversity, or are considered normal - though complex - reactions to the vagaries of life, or are understood as spiritually relevant phenomena, rather than instances of psychological dysfunction.

Related to this is a key difference between Mad activism and earlier civil rights endeavours. Mad activism is grounded in the discourse of identity and recognition and, in this sense, shares affinities with other social movements that have campaigned on the basis of a shared identity. The concern is not only with equal treatment under the law but with cultural change in the way people are viewed by others. Mad activism seeks to change the dominant view of madness as a disorder of the mind, and to replace this view with a range of counter-narratives of madness.

*Madness and the Demand for Recognition* addresses the following questions derived from the claims and demands of Mad activism: Can madness be grounds for identity, and does the demand for recognition possess normative force and, if it does, how should society respond to it?

The book is divided into four parts. In Part one, I present an overview of activism in mental health from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, with a focus on Mad Pride and the claims and demands thereof. I also respond to key objections that have been raised to Mad activism, objections to the effect that madness is inherently disabling and distressing, which allegedly undermines positive constructions such as Mad Pride and Mad identity. Part 2 is concerned with key arguments in the philosophy and politics of identity and recognition, which is the philosophical background and theory that would enable me to address the two questions identified earlier. My account seeks to achieve four aims: an understanding of the concept of recognition; an understanding of the concepts of individual and social identity; an argument for the normative force of demands for recognition (in general); and a view on possible social and political responses to demands for recognition.

In Part 3 I examine the first question: can madness be grounds for identity? Over three chapters I seek to reconcile madness with the requirements for identity formation presupposed by the theoretical account of recognition argued for in Part 2. The problem here is this: how can madness be grounds for identity given that phenomena such as delusions, passivity experiences, hallucinations, and extremes of mood, as commonly assumed, *undermine* the requirements for identity formation? If that is the case, then the notion of Mad identity is incoherent, and a demand for recognition made on its basis cannot be a valid demand. I address this problem as follows: First, I outline three requirements for identity formation that need to be satisfied by any potential demand for recognition: this is for the identity-claim to be of a certain epistemic status; to be an expression of a unified mental life; and to persist over a sufficient period of time. Second, I examine the aforementioned phenomena in light of these requirements. The aim of Part 3 is to establish that these phenomena can be brought within the scope of recognition. In the final part, Part 4, I develop an argument for the normative force of the demand for recognition of Mad identity, and I outline a possible social response to this demand.

In writing this book I have attempted to chart a path for reconciling the central claim of Mad activism with a range of normative concepts that appear to undermine it: the concept of identity itself, but also the concepts of truth, agency, and of unity and continuity of self. At the same time, I was mindful throughout that Mad activism generates in some people a supportive reaction and in others a sceptical one, and in both cases it tends to do so rather unconditionally. While a book cannot solve the intractable disagreements between these two camps, I hope that I've managed to provide a framework for clarifying what the disagreements are about in their philosophical and normative dimensions.

**Book summary the author, Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed, Wellcome Trust ISSF Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Birkbeck College, University of London, Visiting Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, King's College London**





# The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Philosophy of Psychiatry

## Biennial Conference

Tuesday 3 September 2019

### 'Madness, The Mind and Politics'

#### Guest speakers include:

- Prof. Jennifer Radden
- Prof. Drossi Stoyanov
- Prof. Derek Bolton
- Prof. Helen Spandler

#### Book online today!

<https://events.rcpsych.ac.uk/philosophy-sig-annual-conference-2019>

**£130** - Standard Rate (Consultant members and non-members)

**£75** - Reduced Rate (SAS members, trainee members, student affiliate members and retired members)

**Royal College of Psychiatrists  
Philosophy of Psychiatry Special Interest Group  
Biennial Conference  
3 September 2019  
London**



**Programme**

08:45-09:30	Registration and refreshments		
09:30-09:40	<b>Opening remarks</b> Dr Abdi Sanati, Chair, Philosophy of Psychiatry Special Interest Group, Royal College of Psychiatrists		
09:40-10:00	<b>Official opening</b> Professor Wendy Burn, President, RCPsych		
10:00-10:30	<b>Keynote Talk</b> Professor Drozdostoj Stoyanov Co-Director of University Center for Philosophy and Mental Health, Plovdiv, Bulgaria Vice-Chair, Philosophy of Psychiatry Special Interest Group, Royal College of Psychiatrists		
10:30-11:00	Morning refreshments		
11:00-11:30	<b>Keynote Talk</b> Professor Jennifer Radden Professor of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, Boston		
11:30-12:50	<b>TBC</b>  <b>Scapegoats, Kings and Sacrifice; An Exploration of the Ideas of René Girard</b> Dr Vincent Riordan	<b>Workshop:</b> Professor Jennifer Radden  Dr Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed	<b>Diagnosis as a political and social device</b> Dr Francesca Brencio Dr Valeria Bizzari  <b>Are we witnessing the emergence of a new global psychiatric power?</b> Dr Federico Soldani
12:50-13:50	Lunch		
13:50-14:20	<b>Keynote Talk</b> Professor Helen Spandler Professor in Mental Health, University of Central Lancashire		

14:20-15:40	<b>When Politics drives you Mad</b> Dr Sarah Majid  <b>Predictive Coding and Looping Effects as an Explanation of Resignation Syndrome</b> Dr Kris Moody	<b>Workshop: Mental Health Uprising? Tokenistic identity politics or societal maturation.</b> Dr Jonathan Hurlow	<b>From Marx to "Marco the horse": politics, madness and the institution denied by the chaotic Italian psychiatric reform of 1978-2015</b> Dr Micol Ascoli  <b>Materialism, Idealism and The Politics Of Psychiatry</b> Alistair Stewart
15:40-16:10	Afternoon refreshments		
16:10-16:40	<b>Keynote Talk</b> Professor Derek Bolton Professor in Philosophy and Psychopathology, Kings College London		
16:40-17:50	<b>A reflection on the philosophical principles underlying political choices that guided the past and the present of medical education in mental health; is philosophy relevant to its future and how can it contribute to it?</b> Dr Anastasios Dimopoulos  <b>Trauma, Spectacle, Fake news - mental health in a post-truth world.</b> Dr Andrew Shepherd	<b>Personality modification and the politics of psychiatric drugs</b> Dr Joanna Moncrieff  <b>Insights from Szasz and Wittgenstein on the distinction between disease and behaviour, and the political implications of abandoning the medical model.</b> Dr Joanna Moncrieff	<b>Psychiatry as Street Level Bureaucracy</b> Dr David Foreman  <b>Peter Sedgwick and defining disease.</b> Dr Dieneke Hubbeling
17:50-18:00	<b>Closing remarks</b>		
18:00-20:00	Drink reception		

### Collaboration with the Evolutionary Psychiatry Special Interest Group

The Philosophy special interest Group has often joined forces with other special interest groups from the Royal College in the pursuit of shared educational goals. It is in this spirit that we have included a link to the Evolutionary Psychiatry Special Interest Group's page on the college website.

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/members/special-interest-groups/evolutionary-psychiatry/>

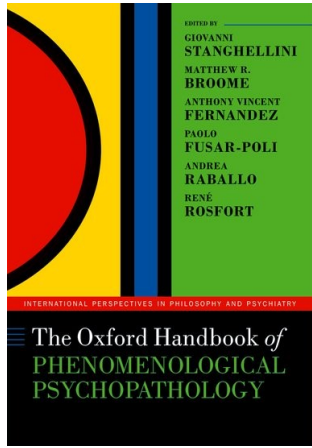
### Upcoming conferences on the INPP website

**The International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry 21<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference: Experts and Representations in Mental Health (Warsaw (PL)| Autumn 2019)** - Date and registration details will be published by September 2019.

The next international conference organised by INPP is due to be held in Bratislava, Slovakia, in 2020.



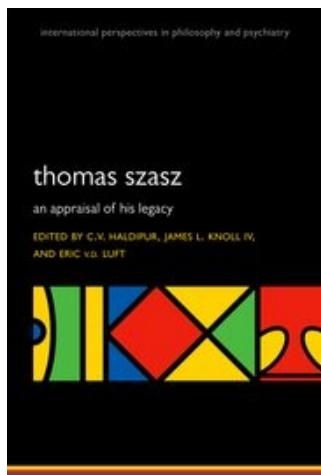
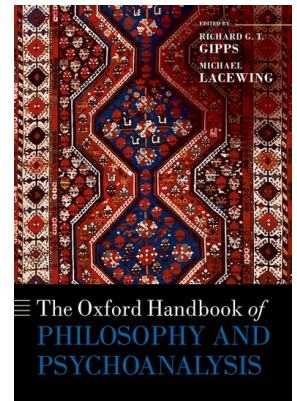
## Upcoming books in the International Perspectives of Philosophy and Psychiatry series:



**The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology, Giovanni Stanghellini, Matthew Broome, Anthony Vincent Fernandez, Paolo Fusar-Poli, Andrea Raballo, René Rosfort, Published 27 June 2019, for £125.** This book includes a thorough yet reader-friendly description of philosophical and clinical key-concepts and of the contributions of leading figures of phenomenological psychopathology, providing clinicians with a strong intellectual, epistemological and ethical background. It establishes clear connections between psychopathological knowledge and clinical practice, thus providing clinicians with useful person-based methods and concepts to approach patients in the diagnostic and therapeutic processes. It ties phenomenological psychopathology to contemporary debates in nosography, assessment, clinical epistemology, research and the neurosciences.

**The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, Editors Richard Gipps & Michael Lacewing, Published 28 February 2019, £105.**

From the International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry Website: This volume is comprehensive and has a far greater range and number of philosophical essays on psychoanalysis than ever previously published. It is critical, with rigorous, reflective treatment of topics. It bridges the gap between those who critically reject psychoanalysis and those who uncritically accept it. It is current, with new work by leading scholars in the field. It defines the state of knowledge in each topic area and pushes forward the debate.



**Thomas Szasz, An Appraisal of his Legacy, C.V. Haldipur, James L. Knoll IV, Eric v.d. Luft, published 4 February 2019, £34.99**

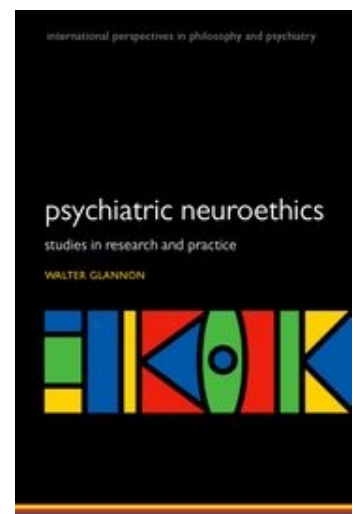
Insanity Defence - the book examines the concept and his criticism both from an historical and philosophical perspective.

Concept of Mental illness - questioning the concept of mental illness is central to much of Szasz's work. This book examines the concept in depth.

Suicide - the matter of suicide has been debated not only by physicians but also by legislators the world over. The book contributes to the debate by examining the issue from various perspectives.

**Psychiatric Neuroethics: Studies in Research and Practice, Walter Glannon, £34.99.**

This comprehensive volume discusses a broad range of issues at the intersection of psychiatry, neuroscience and philosophy. It emphasizes a biopsychosocial model for understanding and treating psychiatric disorders. It discusses novel psychotropic drugs like ketamine and MDMA, as well as novel neuromodulating techniques like focused ultrasound, optogenetics and temporal interference. It critically examines ethically controversial issues like euthanasia and assisted suicide for psychiatric disorders. It provides a theoretical and practical landscape of the evolution of neuroscientific and philosophical issues in psychiatry.



**Please send us your articles, book reviews and conference reviews!**

We are always delighted to receive contributions and particularly welcome book and conference reviews and philosophical articles. Dr Steve Ramplin is relinquishing his editorial role, so please send future material to Dr Abdi Sanati ([abstraxion@hotmail.com](mailto:abstraxion@hotmail.com)). Volunteer co-editors gratefully received!