



# Philosophy of Psychiatry



Newsletter 32 June 2011

It is a pleasure to write our first introduction to the newsletter of the Philosophy Special Interest Group, a task harder than it sounds because we succeed such a respected scholar as Dr Julian Hughes (pictured above). Dr Hughes edited this newsletter for several years, alongside his clinical and academic duties—somehow also finding time to write several books on philosophy of psychiatry. On behalf of all members we thank him for his sterling effort. As there are now two of us at the editor's helm, we have decided to produce the newsletter twice yearly. We therefore hope to provide more up to date information, more book reviews and more updates on recent developments in the field. For this we need your help—we call on all our members to send us material. We would also like to have one short feature article per issue, giving budding philosopher-psychiatrists a new voice.

Editors: Dr Abdi Sanati (Consultant Psychiatrist) and Dr Steve Ramplin (ST6 Forensic Psychiatry)

## Ludwig Wittgenstein: the Influence of his Asperger's Syndrome on his Philosophy

by Professor Michael Fitzgerald

Ludwig Wittgenstein was possibly the greatest philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He met the criteria for Asperger's syndrome DSM-IV. He always had huge difficulties in social relationships and was mostly at odds with people. He did not begin to speak until he was 4 years old. He showed peculiar voice characteristics including a high pitch. Due to his Asperger problem he had inner speech problems which later influenced his views on private language. In his social relationships he was naïve and immature. He was bullied at school. He tended to speak in a monologue. He loved isolated places like the West of Ireland and a similar place in Norway. He was extremely controlling and dominating. He could be violent as persons with Asperger's syndrome can be and got into serious trouble when he was a school teacher because of brutality. He was brought to trial for this. He had preservation of sameness. He had narrow interests.

His first theory of philosophy as expressed in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* focused on language as a mirror of reality – the picture theory of philosophy. He believed that only objective facts could be spoken of. Over many years he discovered that other people did exist and he became aware of the idea of the social context. This led him to develop his second great work, *The Philosophical Investigations*, which now emphasised social context and language as a tool and what he called the language game. In philosophy the greatest myth in my view is the genetic fallacy. Philosophy is not independent of the person developing it as philosophers would wish us to believe but is for the most part dependent on the personality developing it.

**References:** Fitzgerald M. (2004). *Autism and Creativity: Is there a link between autism in men and exceptional ability?* Brunner Routledge: New York; Fitzgerald M. (2010). *Young, Violent & Dangerous to Know*. Nova Science Publishers, New York.

## Forthcoming Conferences

### **Meaning and Mindedness: Encounters Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis (Seminar Series)**

There is just time to catch the final seminars in a series convened by Dr Edward Harcourt (Oxford) & Sarah Majid (Tavistock). The series has united prominent philosophers, clinicians and others to deepen our understanding of fundamental questions regarding the having of a mind and the source and character of meaning and value. It has also explored the common ground between psychoanalysis and philosophy, both by exposing clinicians to the way philosophers think about issues relevant for them, and by enabling philosophers to see how their theories might be put to use in actual work with patients. Go to [www.inpponline.org/tavistock.pdf](http://www.inpponline.org/tavistock.pdf) to download the brochure. The remaining seminars will be held at the Tavistock Centre, London, UK, from 7-9pm on 24 June (**Depression: Matthew Ratcliffe & David Taylor**) and 8 July 2011 (**Psychoanalysis and Philosophy: Michael Brearley & Michael Rustin**)

### **International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry—a Date for your diary in 2012**

The 2012 15th INPP Conference will be held at the University of Otago, Dunedin, South Island, New Zealand 5-7th (Thursday-Saturday) July 2012. The theme of this conference is Culture and Mental Health and its local organisers include Professor Grant Gillett, Dr Neil Pickering, Dr Judy Trevena, and Dr Richard Mullen. For more details please see the website of the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry: [www.inpponline.org](http://www.inpponline.org).

## Forthcoming Conferences (Continued)

**Philosophy of Psychotherapy:** [www.uea.ac.uk/edu/counselling/philosophyconference](http://www.uea.ac.uk/edu/counselling/philosophyconference)

**8-11 July 2011 at the University of East Anglia (UEA), UK**

The nature of psychotherapy is problematic in many ways. Some issues are empirical, but others are conceptual and philosophical. Research has tended to concentrate on empirical aspects, but psychotherapy inevitably works with contested notions such as those of consciousness, mental illness and delusion. Furthermore, concepts such as 'the unconscious', 'archetype' and 'self-concept' have evolved, whose relationships to the concepts of everyday language and clinical practice are not always clear. This conference aims to unite philosophers interested in psychotherapy with psychotherapists and psychotherapy researchers who are interested in the philosophical foundations of their field. The Centre for Counselling Studies at UEA is especially involved with the traditions of Focusing-Oriented and Person-Centred therapies, and the School of Philosophy has a strong interest in the philosophy of Wittgenstein. The Keynote speakers include Peter Hacker (University of Oxford) - 'Could a child have a theory of mind?', Hans Julius Schneider (University of Potsdam) - 'Can Philosophy be Therapeutic? Ludwig Wittgenstein and Eugene Gendlin' and John Heaton (Philadelphia Association, London) - 'The human being is the best picture of the human soul: The temptations of theory and the unconscious'.

### **International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry**

**2-4 September, 2011. The 14th International INPP conference will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden**

**Theme: Ethics, Experience and Evidence: Integration of Perspectives in Psychiatry**

Psychiatry seems in a permanent state of tension. There is the methodological tension; the natural-scientific view that underlies most of medical science competes with a number of broadly phenomenological perspectives. Then there is the dialectic between empirical facts and values (moral and others) accepted by the psychiatrist and/or the society. This conference aims to scrutinize some fundamental tenets of natural-scientific and phenomenological psychiatry, to investigate if, how and to what extent these seemingly opposed viewpoints can coexist peacefully and to discuss how ethical and other values can be integrated with the different methodological perspectives. It will focus on evidence-based practice in psychiatry, the nature of phenomenology and phenomenological psychiatry and the interaction between facts and values in diagnostic considerations. Please see the conference website (<http://sffp.se/eee>) or email [Helge Malmgren](mailto:Helge.Malmgren) for full details.

### **The First UK Conference on Philosophy and Psychiatry: Mental Health and the Human Good**

**A Conference in Honour of Professor Eric Matthews, 6-7 October 2011.**

**Venue: Matthew Hay Conference Centre, Suttie Centre, Foresterhill, Aberdeen**

We are very pleased to announce a forthcoming UK philosophy and psychiatry conference. This has been organised to mark the contribution made over many years to philosophy and psychiatry by Professor Eric Matthews. The conference will be held on Thursday and Friday 6-7 October in Eric's home city of Aberdeen. The speakers are psychiatrists and philosophers, whose books and papers have made significant contributions to this field of study. The programme is interesting, varied and of direct relevance to clinical practice. Organisation of the conference is being undertaken by The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland and information on booking will be available shortly. The local organiser is Dr John Callender. If you would like to know more about the meeting please e-mail him on [john.callender@nhs.net](mailto:john.callender@nhs.net).

#### **Thursday 6 October 2011:**

11.30 Registration  
12.00-13.00 1st Session  
Welcome and Introduction—John Callender  
'Eric Matthews' Contribution to Philosophy and Psychiatry'—Bill Fulford  
'Mental Health and the Human Good'—Eric Matthews  
13.15-14.00 Lunch  
14.00-15.30 2nd Session, chair Matthew Broome  
'Conceptualizing the Concept of Embodiment in Psychiatry'—Gerrit Glas  
'Understanding the body in dementia: the influence of Merleau-Ponty via Eric Matthews'—Julian Hughes  
15.30-16.00 Coffee break  
16.00-17.30 3rd Session, chair Allan Beveridge  
'Where's the Freude in Freud?'—Gordon Barclay  
'Basket Case'—Martin Wyllie  
Conference Dinner

#### **Friday 7 October 2011:**

9.15-11.00 4th Session, chair Julian Hughes  
'The psychiatrist, the person, and neuroscience'—Matthew Broome  
'Personality Disorder and Moral Responsibility'—John Callender  
11.00-11.30 Coffee  
11.30-13.00 5th Session, chair Abdi Sanati  
'RD Laing and Existential Psychiatry'—Allan Beveridge  
TBC—Dr Nigel Dower  
'Eric Matthews and the Scottish Philosophy and Psychiatry Special Interest Group'—David Findlay  
13.00-14.00 Lunch and close

**Delusions and Other Irrational Beliefs, by Lisa Bortolotti. 300 pages. Oxford University Press, 2010.**

**(Reviewed by Dr Abdi Sanati)**

Delusions are one of the most elusive concepts in psychiatry and they have long been considered the hallmark of madness. To quote Karl Jaspers, “to be mad was to be deluded”. Yet delusions still provoke dispute among philosophers, psychiatrists and psychologists. They have been defined as beliefs, empty speech acts, disorders of imagination and abnormal value judgements. Lisa Bortolotti’s book certainly invigorates this debate. Drawing from a wide range of philosophical, psychiatric and psychological literature, she explores the nature of delusions and their status as beliefs. The main focus is the rationality constraint of belief ascription and whether this can be applied to delusions. There is detailed analysis of delusions from procedural, epistemic and agential rationality. It is debated whether the irrationality of delusions denies them belief status. With reference to the rationality constraint, the author then compares delusions to other forms of irrationality (like obsessional thoughts, self deception, irrational beliefs, confabulations and hypnotic induced beliefs), arguing delusions are in a continuum with ordinary beliefs. Finally, she discusses some of the consequences of the way delusions are defined, for example on clinical practice.

The book benefits from in depth philosophical debates, which perhaps makes it less easy for those without a philosophical background. Prior knowledge of the theories of delusions and some of the philosophical concepts underpinning those theories would be helpful. Nevertheless, the book is not inaccessible, and the first chapter is an excellent summary of theories of delusions that is highly recommended for experienced psychiatrists and psychiatric trainees alike.

**Free Will and Responsibility: a Guide for Practitioners, by John S. Callender. 394 pages. International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry, 2010. (Reviewed by Dr Steve Ramplin)**

John Callender’s ‘Free Will and Responsibility’ caught my attention because, as a higher trainee in Forensic Psychiatry, I hoped it would enlighten some of the often unstated conceptual assumptions underpinning my subspecialty – that it exceeded my expectations is testimony to the clarity of his writing. Part I (Thinking about Morality) is a comprehensive introduction to moral and ethical theory, encompassing everything from the evolution of morality to the justification of punishment. Seminal works – such as P.F. Strawson’s article ‘Freedom and Resentment’, which examines our emotional and unreflective responses to good or bad deeds, and Libet’s renowned experiments, which appear to demonstrate that brain activity precedes conscious intention – are discussed. The broader context (which is drawn out in Part II: Thinking about Free Will) is an analysis of how free will, and thus responsibility, can be reconciled with a determined world. Callender’s measured explanations of contrasting positions in this debate – incompatibilist hard determinism and libertarianism versus compatibilism – are as clear as any I have read. Ultimately, he proposes a theory linking aesthetics with morality. In Part III (Clinical Applications) he applies these ideas to several clinically relevant arenas. Although his analysis of recent research into moral responsibility in those considered mentally disordered but legally sane was particularly thought-provoking to me as a forensic psychiatrist, generalists would find much worthwhile. All in all, a highly recommended read.

**Thinking About Suicide: Contemplating and Comprehending the Urge to Die, by David Webb. 184 pages. PCCS Books, 2010. (Reviewed by Dr Abdi Sanati)**

Suicide, or “the urge to die”, is an integral part of the theory and practice of psychiatry. Thousand of pages have been written about it and thousands more undoubtedly will be. The value of this very interesting book is that it is written by one who has survived several suicide attempts. It is the distillate of the author’s 2006 PhD on suicide, the first such thesis by one who has been there.

The book has two parallel narratives. In one, Webb narrates how he struggled for several years with tormenting suicidal urges. His journey began age 24, with his first suicide attempt in England, and continued in Australia, where he had to find his way in a complicated web of suicidality, drug misuse and mental health services. The latter, especially psychiatrists, receive Webb’s harshest criticism. This introduces the other narrative, which is Webb’s opinion on suicide and suicide studies. He reviews some popular and professional myths surrounding suicide, raising serious doubts about some of the fundamental assumptions about suicide. For example, he challenges the idea that depression is the major cause of suicide. Webb then takes the reader through the subjective experience of the suicidal person, describing his own feelings in detail. In the second half of the book, Webb narrates his recovery. Unlike many suicide stories, this one has a positive ending. Webb’s spiritual journey, and the positive role it played in saving him, is a joy to read.

The strength of this book is the author’s rich experience with suicidality, substance misuse and mental health services. Unfortunately, Webb’s experience of the latter is far from satisfactory and psychiatry receives his harshest criticism. However, his point that there are other frameworks from which to study and understand suicide is significant. It is crucial that survivors such as Webb are challenging the idea that suicide is an irrational act, especially when suicide and assisted suicide are so publicly debated.

### Book Series

#### **Oxford University Press: International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry**

International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry is an international book series focusing on the emerging interdisciplinary field at the interface of philosophy and psychiatry. Volumes in the series will continue the broad theme of 'nature' (for causes/explanations) and 'narrative' (for meanings/understandings), building links between the sciences and humanities in psychiatry, but focusing on more narrowly defined topics. For details of the series please see <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/academic/series/medicine/ippp.do>.

Here are the 2011 publications, including one from our erstwhile editor:

#### **Portrait of the Psychiatrist as a Young Man**

The Early Writing and Work of R.D. Laing 1927-1960

Allan Beveridge

978-0-19-958357-7

Paperback

August 2011 (estimated)

**£39.95**

#### **Maladapting Minds**

Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Evolutionary Theory

Pieter R. Adriaens, Andreas De Block

978-0-19-955866-7

Paperback

10 March 2011

**£34.95**

#### **The Sublime Object of Psychiatry**

Schizophrenia in Clinical and Cultural Theory

Angela Woods

978-0-19-958395-9

Paperback

August 2011 (estimated)

**£34.95**

#### **Thinking Through Dementia**

Julian C. Hughes

978-0-19-957066-9

Paperback

17 February 2011

**£34.95**

### News on Regional Groups

Matthew Broome continues to be involved in groups in Warwick and at the Maudsley, both of which meet regularly. With three others he is also currently preparing a book to be published by Cambridge University Press entitled '*Reader in Phenomenological Psychiatry*'.

#### **Reading the Mind. The Maudsley Book Group.**

*Reading the Mind* is a new book group dedicated to reading seminal works in, and related to, the field of psychiatry. The premise is simple really; psychiatry is a complex discipline, firmly a branch of medicine, but interwoven with psychology, neuroscience, psychoanalysis, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and more. Reading widely around these subjects is appealing but it can be difficult for trainees to gain an entry point. With so many areas to cover, where do you start? Well that's exactly the sort of itch this book group aims to scratch! The group is aimed at trainees (CT1-ST6) within SLAM (although other trainees are welcome). It meets every 6 to 8 weeks on a Tuesday evening from 6-7.30pm, and covers a wide range of topics from texts that are seminal in psychiatry to books that give an interesting introduction to another area. Food and wine is provided and, at the end of each meeting, the group selects the next book.

Our first group on 29 March 2011 read '*The Divided Self*' by R D Laing, debating its legacy and relevance for psychiatry today. With the help of Professor Tony David, we grappled with his theory of ontological insecurity and false self/real self dichotomy—and the debate continued into the pub afterwards! You can read the full review at [www.artofpsychiatry.co.uk](http://www.artofpsychiatry.co.uk). Our second group discussed '*The Rat Man, A Case of Obsessional Neurosis*' by Sigmund Freud, with the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Dr Duncan McLean.

Why not come and join us on Tuesday 26 July 2011, at 6pm, to discuss 'Consciousness Explained' by Daniel Dennett? Hope to see you there! Dr Lisa Conlan, ST5 trainee. Contact: [lisa.conlan@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:lisa.conlan@slam.nhs.uk), [simon.harrison@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:simon.harrison@slam.nhs.uk), or [carol.kan@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:carol.kan@slam.nhs.uk).

### Philosophy of Psychiatry SIG Website

It is our pleasure to announce that Dr Dieneke Huebelling is now managing the Philosophy Special Interest Group Website, located at: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/specialinterestgroups.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/specialinterestgroups.aspx). Well worth a visit!

### Contributions Invited for the next Philosophy SIG Newsletter

We would be delighted to receive contributions to the next Philosophy of Psychiatry newsletter, planned for autumn 2011. This will be a joint venture with the faculty of Old Age Psychiatry, something we hope will be the first of many collaborations. Please send your conference reports, book reviews, press releases about local developments and short articles to either Dr Abdi Sanati ([abstraxion@hotmail.com](mailto:abstraxion@hotmail.com)) or Dr Steve Ramplin ([steveramplin@hotmail.com](mailto:steveramplin@hotmail.com)).