

## Philosophy Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

# Philosophy and Psychiatry

**Newsletter 50**

**July 2022**



Welcome to the latest edition of the Philosophy SIG newsletter. It has been more than a year since the last one. The lack of contributions for publication had an obvious impact on the traditionally biannual schedule. For the time being, the newsletter's primary focus will be to update you on activities organised by the SIG and serve as a hub where our members can find relevant information on upcoming events in a timely manner. There is an increased number of interesting conferences and educational events that take place online. More than often, they plan these events with short notice since they are not as demanding from an organisational point of view. To this end, a three- or 4-month schedule sounds appropriate.

In this edition of the newsletter, I will offer you a brief report on past activities of the Philosophy SIG, about future plans, including updates on educational activities, drop-in sessions, and most importantly the exciting forthcoming conference that will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2022. It is going to be a hybrid event, with in-person attendance at the Royal College of Psychiatry, remote participation, and on-demand access. The title of the conference is "Biopsychosocial model revisited; myth and reality" and will bring together a stellar line of speakers. Here is a direct link for the programme

[https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/events/faculties-and-sigs/philosophy-sig/2022/calc---philsig-programme---july-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=38c7d8fc\\_6](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/events/faculties-and-sigs/philosophy-sig/2022/calc---philsig-programme---july-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=38c7d8fc_6)

and a link with information about the conference, call for poster submission, and how to register:

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/conferences/detail/2022/09/12/default-calendar/philosophy-special-interest-group-conference-biopsychosocial-model-revisited-myth-and-reality>

For any comments and proposals about the newsletter please email at [philosophysig@gmail.com](mailto:philosophysig@gmail.com)

### **Philosophy SIG Website**

For further details concerning the Philosophy SIG, please see our website:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/specialinterestgroups.aspx>

Dr Anastasios Dimopoulos

### **Chair report**

It has been one year since my appointment as chair of the Philosophy SIG. It was, in many respects, a learning curve, encountering realities that allow for a clearer mapping of the territory. The mission statement behind the bid to chair the Philosophy SIG was straightforward; improve engagement with the members of the Philosophy SIG, organise events that will be of interest, and develop sustainable proposals to introduce philosophy to medical education in mental health and psychiatric training.

Recent feedback from the College says that our group has now over 4900 members and still grows. Is this number a manifestation of a concrete interest or a vague one? The answer to this question is not immediately intelligible. Evidently, there is an interest in philosophy that motivates young and older colleagues to want to join our group as soon as they are eligible to. What would be a proportionate level of engagement with our membership is unknown. We want to increase the opportunities to engage with the SIG, learn what matters to you and identify how we can support you in developing your relevant interests. We will start a series of drop-in sessions that will aim to fulfil the above aims, offering opportunities for networking for like-minded colleagues. You will find more information below in the future activities section.

Last year's online conference was on "implicit bias in psychiatric practice; what lessons can philosophy offer to practitioners, learners, and educators?". It was a successful event, with over 100 registrations characterised by high quality contributions and an engaging Q&A in the chatroom. There were several highlights in the day that

pointed out how difficult is to eliminate implicit bias for a variety of reasons. Wittgenstein's picture of knowledge, as outlined in his book "On certainty" often emerged as the philosophical background in understanding implicit biases. There is a similarity in the way we gain clinical skill and the formation of implicit biases, since they both represent epistemological hinges that allow for subsequent reflection and action. The question is how to limit the impact of biases that are harmful, by developing evaluative tests that will assist us in limiting their impact.

Various themes emerged during the conference. We discussed the presence of a normalcy bias hidden within the recovery frameworks in mental health. Proposals were articulated for openness and hermeneutic flexibility to reduce the impact of stereotyping for people who experience delusions. The limitations of Root Cause Analysis with its implicit adherence to linear causation models were analysed, and alternative proposals based on Weberian historiography were made. Conceptual competence as a necessary educational project to integrate in psychiatric education, that will help limit implicit biases emerging from conceptual confusion, was another proposal that merits attention and call for action.

Our next conference is just round the corner. You have probably already spotted in your inbox an email by the College advertising it and I shared the links in the introduction. It will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> of September and the title is "Biopsychosocial model revisited; myth and reality". In recent years, there has been an increased interest in re-examining the philosophical foundations of the biopsychosocial model. This revived interest coincided with the unequivocal rise to prominence of the significant role of social determinants in mental health outcomes. The recent APA further solidified this understanding as common ground. Our keynote speakers do not really need introductions. They all have vast experience and knowledge in their fields. We structured the conference in a way to provide ample space for engagement and reflection through extended Q&A sessions following the presentations from our keynote speakers. Apart from the exposure to stimulating ideas and the expected take-home messages, the conference's goal is to provide an opportunity to meet again in person and share a space for reflection and dialogue.

I am sharing below links with relevant papers, books, and reports that you can access mostly freely ahead of the conference.

- The first one is the book by Derek Bolton and Grant Gillet that gave the idea of organising a conference on this topic

<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-030-11899-0.pdf>

- The book by Derek Bolton was examined in a book conference organised by the European Journal of Analytic Philosophy. You can find the contributions and debate below.

<https://eujap.uniri.hr/book-symposium-the-biopsychosocial-model-of-health-and-disease/>

- Nassir Ghaemi has been a critic of biopsychosocial eclecticism. This is the editorial that was initially published in the BJPsych.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/rise-and-fall-of-the-biopsychosocial-model/A31DAA3BED6569F6080A1DF2C1D15A64>

- The edited volume by Rebecca Roache, Will Davies and Julian Savulescu titled “Psychiatry reborn – biopsychosocial psychiatry in modern medicine” includes a series of papers that examine in depth the biopsychosocial model in psychiatry.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/psychiatry-reborn-biopsychosocial-psychiatry-in-modern-medicine-9780198789697?cc=gb&lang=en&>

- The Institute of Health equity website includes the link for the report produced by Prof Sir Michael Marmot’s team on social determinants and mental health.

<https://www.instituteoftheequity.org/resources-reports/social-determinants-of-mental-health>

I hope to see as many of you as possible at our conference.

Dr Anastasios Dimopoulos

### **Educational resources and future events**

In recent months, an exciting new activity in the educational field started taking form. The International Network of Philosophy and Psychiatry has created a network of educators that are interesting in promoting philosophy in psychiatric training and education in mental health. The Philosophy SIG and the Royal College of Psychiatry are partners in this project. Dr. Awais Aftab is leading the network and invites all members who are involved in teaching philosophy of psychiatry, and are interested in

getting involved, to contact him and become part of the network. Below you can find the link to see the webinar that launched the network and find more information on its goals and how to join. The Philosophy SIG is fully supportive of this initiative.

INPP - Philosophy of Psychiatry Educator Network

[https://inpponline.com/resources-home/networks/inpp-philosophy-of-psychiatry-educator-network/#IPPP\\_Links](https://inpponline.com/resources-home/networks/inpp-philosophy-of-psychiatry-educator-network/#IPPP_Links)

In the link below, you will find access to an exciting series of webinars in the philosophy of psychiatry. Past talks are available as YouTube videos. You will find a broad range of topics discussed by philosophers involved in the field of mental health.

<https://www.philosophyofpsychiatry.com/webinar>

If you are not already aware, in the INPP website you will find full access to The Oxford Textbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry. There is an immense wealth of philosophical topics in it. You can read and download parts of it, or as a complete document.

<https://inpponline.com/resources-home/literature-and-full-text-downloads/the-oxford-textbook-of-philosophy-and-psychiatry/>

In the INPP website, you can also find information about two more conferences that will take place in September 2022. The first one is the conference organized by Prof. Thomas Fuchs at Heidelberg from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 with the title “The emotions: Phenomenology, psychopathology and psychotherapy”. The second event is organized by INPP, the MIND association and the Royal Institute of Philosophy on 28<sup>th</sup> of November. It will take place at the HOME Art Center in central Manchester.

### **Future activities of the Philosophy SIG**

- 1) As Philosophy SIG we aim to increase engagement by offering the opportunity to meet and identify ways to support you in developing your interests. In the following months, there will be a series of drop-in sessions where we can have an initial meeting. The proposed dates are the following
  - 28-09-2022 at 15:30

- 23-11-2022 at 15:30
- 25-01-2023 at 15:30
- 29-03-2023 at 15:30
- 24-05-2023 at 15:30

Please share the dates with psychiatric trainees that may have an interest in philosophy and are not yet recipients of this newsletter. For expressing your interest, please contact Catriona Grant at [sigs@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:sigs@rcpsych.ac.uk). We will circulate again in the following weeks an invitation to join for the first drop-in session. Among the potential outcomes of joining a drop-in session is the formation of reading groups with colleagues who share similar interests. It is also likely that as part of the drop-in session, we will offer a brief introduction on specific topics.

- 2) As Philosophy SIG we plan to organize an interdisciplinary workshop bringing philosophers and clinicians together in examining basic aspects of clinical practice as in the manifestation of psychopathological phenomena in the clinical context. This workshop will take place at the beginning of April 2023, and we will soon advertise it. We will limit the number of participants to 40. A call for the expression of interest will come out in the following weeks.
- 3) Medical students that have an interest in philosophy and psychiatry have recently approached me. We started exploring ways to support them in developing their interest since it is difficult to get a similar exposure at this stage of their career. Many of you are in contact with students during their placements. If you find someone who is interested in the dialogue between philosophy and psychiatry, please invite them to contact [philosophysig@gmail.com](mailto:philosophysig@gmail.com) and establish contact with our group. The engagement with students is vital to grow the interest in our field and promote the value of philosophical disposition and thinking in the development of our profession.

Dr Anastasios Dimopoulos