

Philosophy and

Psychiatry

Newsletter 51

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Welcome to the latest edition of the Philosophy SIG newsletter. As suggested in the previous edition, will provide a shorter but more frequent edition of the newsletter to provide timely updates on events and other activities of interest to our members. Some of you already know the Philosophy SIG conference initially scheduled for 12th of September 2022 was postponed as a sign of respect to the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The new date is **13th of December 2022** with almost the same speaker line-up, and we hope that as many of you will join us. Everything happened fast, and we had to make a last-minute decision. I know it was uncomfortable for attendees that made travel plans, but the College promptly offered reimbursement. We also received several messages of appreciation about the decision made to postpone the conference. The death of the Queen deeply touched many people and, taking part in a conference, felt to be an untimely experience.

Apart from the Philosophy SIG conference on the biopsychosocial model, we also have other activities going on. On **4th of November**, we co-host a meeting with the "**Coffee with clinicians**" initiative of the department of the History and Philosophy of Science of Cambridge University. **Prof. Giovanni Stanghellini and Prof. George Ikkos will give a talk titled "Varieties and power of images in psychiatry and mental health care"**. The talk will explore the potential offered by using Walter Benjamin's concept of dialectical images in providing mental health care. You will find more details in the event section of the newsletter.

Last month, we launched a series of drop-in sessions aiming to bring like-minded colleagues in contact, explore your interests and organise online reading groups with relevant thematic content. The **next drop-in session is on 23-11-2022 at 15:30**. Please register your interest with Catriona Grant at sigs@rcpsych.ac.uk. Upon registration of interest, I will send you a brief poll ahead with topics of interest and ways of organizing our connection.

We have already launched an online reading group with the participation of medical students and psychiatric trainees interested in philosophy and psychiatry. So far, we met twice, and we explored topics around the concept of mental illness and stigma related to cultural variations. It is exciting seeing young clinicians engaging in a debate about similar topics and we hope to continue providing a similar reflective space. We are going to have another meeting towards the end of November, so if you have any trainees or students interested in similar topics and are not aware of this opportunity, please ask them to contact Catriona Grant at sigs@rcpsych.ac.uk to register their interest.

On 6th of April 2023, we are organising an interdisciplinary workshop at the Royal College of Psychiatry titled "**Philosophical psychopathology: bridging descriptive accounts with first-person perspectives. An interdisciplinary workshop**". We will limit the workshop to 50 participants. It will bring clinicians and philosophers together in delivering a state-of-the art educational experience. I will share more info on topics and structure in the following weeks.

For any comments and proposals about the newsletter please email at 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

Events section

Coffee with Clinicians – HPS Cambridge University

Prof. Giovanni Stanghellini (Full Professor of Dynamic Psychology, Department of Health Sciences, University of Florence; Profesor Adjuncto, Universidad 'Diego Portales', Santiago, Chile)

Prof. George Ikkos (Consultant Liaison Psychiatrist, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust)

Varieties and power of images in psychiatry and mental health care

<https://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/news-events/seminars-reading-groups/scientists>

To register your interest and get the zoom link for the meeting please email to chair.philosophysig@rcpsych.ac.uk

I will start this section with the impending online meeting organised in collaboration with the History and Philosophy of Science Department of Cambridge University. We would like to strengthen our collaboration with the HPS in the near future, and the talk given by Prof. Stanghellini and Prof. Ikkos is a first step towards this direction. Prof. Stanghellini is one of the most prominent phenomenological psychopathologists of our era and will give a talk on the concept of dialectic images by Walter Benjamin and its relevance to psychiatric care. Here is the abstract of the talk:

"We distinguish between causation, explanation, meaning and understanding in mental health care. Greater understanding, and thus healing, is achieved when conditions of transparency make it possible for patients"

experiences of their world, that is "the things themselves", to present in their true luminescence. We argue that, as concepts and theories stifle their presence, good mental health care requires images. We introduce Walter Benjamin's concept of "dialectical Images". These are the products of "ideas" not "pictures", "reproductions" or "symbols". "Ideas are to objects like constellations to the stars". They require a rich descriptive vocabulary and the engagement of the beholder with what he sees. "Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions - there the dialectical image appears". The aim is to reduce to the point of elimination the perceptual habit in which the patient's everyday experiences and history may remain enveloped, and to allow their previously unimagined and even unheard-of profiles to emerge. This practice in clinical care requires courage, a sense of vocation, and materialist devotion to the patient. The result may be secular revelation".

He will be introduced with by Prof. Ikkos with whom he has developed a close collaboration and a series of article aiming to bring Walter Benjamin's philosophy to our work as clinicians. They have published already a series of articles on Benjamin and more work is in progress or under review for publication.

Philosophy Special Interest Group Conference 2022: biopsychosocial model revisited; myth and reality

13th of December 2022

Hybrid event at Royal College of Psychiatry and online

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/conferences/detail/2022/12/13/default-calendar/philosophy-special-interest-group-conference-biopsychosocial-model-revisited-myth-and-reality>

Link with the final programme

https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/events/faculties-and-sigs/philosophy-sig/2022/calc---philisig-programme---july-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=38c7d8fc_16

As psychiatrists, we are used in dealing with complexity and uncertainty. We live in unpredictable times as the increased frequency of major events of the last year shows. We hope this time our conference will go ahead as planned. The title, as you know, is "Biopsychosocial model revisited; myth and reality". 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 a common ground for theory, practice, and policy making. We could maintain almost entirely the initial line-up of keynote speakers. Dr Rebecca Roache, has kindly agreed to take the place of Prof. Stringaris who could not confirm his attendance for the new date. She will join Prof. Derek Bolton, Prof. Nassir Ghaemi, Prof. Subodh Dave and Prof. Sir Michael Marmot for the day. There is no need for introductions on the wealth of knowledge and experience they all bring. We structured the conference in a way to provide ample space for engagement and reflection through extended Q&A sessions. 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 again below the links with relevant papers, books, and reports that you can access, mostly freely, ahead of the conference.

- The first one is the open access 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 courses

The PhenoLab - A Theoretical Laboratory in Phenomenology and Mental Health

Online via Zoom

Beyond the educational activities reported in the welcome notes section, I would like to bring to your attention the activities of the Phenolab, an exciting project conceived and actualized by Prof. Francesca Brencio 3 years ago that has grown exponentially since. It provides a platform for teaching phenomenology and explore the practical applications of it in the clinical encounter. Participation is free, and you can find below an introduction by Prof Brencio:

The *PhenoLab - A Theoretical Laboratory in Phenomenology and Mental Health* is an online network for education and training mainly designed for physicians, medical students, mental health workers and scientists who work in the field of mind-brain theories. The chair of the lab is Prof. Dr. Francesca Brencio (University of Seville, Spain) who set up and run this initiative since November 5 2019. Originally born with the support of the Systemic Research and Psychotherapy Section at the Department of Psychosomatic Medicine at the Freiburg Medical Centre (Germany), from October 2021 the PhenoLab activities proceed autonomously, as an online free series of activities devoted to clarifying and implementing the phenomenological method in the field of mental health.

Educational and training activities are divided in four types:

I. Thematic group: aimed at discussing cardinal themes related to mental health and phenomenology

II. Academic Lectures: scheduled once a month, a keynote speaker will be invited to present his/her work followed by a discussion

III. Encountering mental health professionals: aimed at sharing first person experiences of mental health professionals in exercising phenomenology in their practice, in order to show how the pragmatical relevance of this method.

IV. Applying Phenomenology: scheduled once a month the aim of this activity is to provide some pedagogical orientations in exercising phenomenology

The main goals of the PhenoLab are:

- to bridge the gap between clinicians and philosophers who work in health care;
- to overcome the reductionistic and dualistic approach to mental health;
- to shed new light on clinical practices;
- to improve social and clinical practices in the meaning-making process;
- to put in dialogue the phenomenological tradition with the neuroscience;
- to facilitate the interdisciplinary dialogue at an educational level.

The PhenoLab activities will start on October 25th 2022. Every meeting will last from 16.45 to 18.15 CET. Lectures and discussions will be held in English.

For any query or information, and to receive the link for joining the seminars please contact phenolab2019@gmail.com

More info about the program for the AY 2022-2023 available at <https://phenolab.blogspot.com/2022/10/full-program-y-2022-2023.html>

Philosophy and Psychiatry webinars

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. These are frequent meetings and the 22-23 season has started with a series of exciting talks by Somogy Varga, Mona Gupta and Sanneke De Haan. The next talk is by Dianne O Leary on 3rd of November 2022 titled "**Can Philosophy of Mind Improve Psychiatry?**" Please find more information on how to join in the link below, as long as YouTube links for past talks..

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

Oxford Textbook of Philosophy of Psychiatry

This is a goodie that will be a perennial item in the newsletter. In the link below, as found 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/>

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