

EUROPEAN PSYCHOPATHOLOGY SUMMER SCHOOL IN PULA

THE IMPACT OF PHENOMENOLOGY FOR PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS

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Abstract:

Phenomenological-descriptive psychopathology is characterized as sorting out, defining, differentiating and describing specific psychic phenomena, which are thereby actualized and regularly described in specific terms. Phenomenology groups related phenomena which can be clearly differentiated by the patient's self-descriptions, excluding any notion or theory, focusing on the modes in which the experience comes to expression. This description is based on Karl Jaspers, the founder of psychopathology as a methodologically reflected science. Jaspers defined objective and subjective symptoms and was the first to explicitly realize the psychiatric significance and implications of the di-

chotomy between (causal) explanation and understanding. He stated that there can be no choice between explanation and understanding, since patients are both: agents and organisms; they have both mind and brain. Because of the junction between mind and brain, the phenomenal world must be viewed from several different perspectives if it is to be fully appreciated. The phenomenological-anthropological approach in psychopathology has a special tradition in Germany and stays a fundamental element. It must be emphasized that understanding of the inner perspective of the patient with a mental disorder is essential for diagnostic and therapeutic decisions even in the era of biological psychiatry and major progress in neuroscience.