

Keller, K. D. (2008). Phenomenological Understanding of Psychosis. *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, 19.1. pp. 17-32.

Denne publikation stammer fra www.livsverden.dk - hjemstedet for:

Forum for eksistentiel fænomenologi

Et tværdisciplinært netværk af praktikere og forskere, som anvender eksistentiel-fænomenologiske grundlagstanker og perspektiver i deres arbejde.

Husk at angive korrekt kildehenvisning ved referering til denne artikel. Den korrekte reference fremgår øverst på denne side.

Læs mere om Forum for eksistentiel fænomenologi
og download flere artikler på
www.livsverden.dk

English version:

This publication is downloaded from www.livsverden.dk – the home page of

The Society for existential phenomenology

A Danish cross disciplinary society of practitioners and researchers who make use of existential phenomenological theory and perspectives in their work.

For more information and downloadable articles visit
www.livsverden.dk

Phenomenological Understanding of Psychosis¹

Kurt Dauer Keller

Abstract

What characterizes any phenomenological approach is the attempt to conceptualize in as close connection with the actual experience of the phenomena as possible. Thus, we have to look for the intentionality in the psychosis, the wild and chaotic structuring of meaning as angst. For psychosis basically has to do with angst in a sense that has been explicated by existentialism, psychoanalysis and phenomenology. The seemingly meaningless expressions of intentionality in psychosis are not so very surprising on the background of Merleau-Ponty's explications of corporeal intentionality. In his close investigations of intentionality in perception, the body, and language Merleau-Ponty laid open a structuring of meaning which, however incoherent it may be, is sociocultural structuring and which we never escape in our own experience and practice. It is possible to apply different kinds of phenomenological understanding and conceptualization in accord with Merleau-Ponty's philosophical position. We may distinguish between a structural, a generative and a dialectic understanding of human experience and practices. The application of these approaches implies a constructive criticism of traditional phenomenological views of psychosis and points towards a new understanding of intentionality in psychosis.

Keywords

psychosis, intentionality, phenomenology, understanding, *angst*, Merleau-Ponty.

1. Introduction: Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology may to a large extent be regarded as a reconstruction and further development of the philosophy, which was introduced by Husserl. Thus, it can be claimed that it is first and foremost Merleau-Ponty who represents phenomenology in its 'mature' version². He has a critical understanding of intentionality, which marks his recurrent discussion themes and indicates a continuous philosophical position evolving throughout his theoretical works³. As to the particular field of psychosis (not to speak of the general field of psychopathology), Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has influenced a number of important

contributions (Castoriadis 1997, Ey 1978, Maldiney 1997, Parnas 2000, Sass 2000). But it has not, to my knowledge, been applied as the basic approach.

The characteristics of Merleau-Ponty's position may be indicated by first pointing out how he (more clearly than Husserl) departs from standpoints of idealistic philosophy which still marks the western culture, not only as philosophical and scientific tradition but also as everyday language and common sense concerning consciousness, thinking and individuality. These standpoints are prominently represented by Descartes and Kant. In short, Merleau-Ponty defies the basic views in Descartes that body and soul are different substances and that there is an identity of subject and object in the '*cogito*'. Opposed to Kant, he maintains, first, that there is no transcendental I and, second, that experience cannot always be associated with self-consciousness.

Merleau-Ponty's recurrent investigations of various forms of immediate intentionality⁴ make up a refinement and renewal of phenomenological thinking. He is very aware that the intentionality of acts, which is associated with rational subject-object relations and to which Husserl mainly paid attention, is preceded by a more immediate and bodily kind of intentionality. This immediate intentionality is a generative structuring of meaning which always-already marks our existence.

In its most elementary unfolding this bodily intentionality is only a wild and ambiguous structuring of meaning. Still, this structuring is sociocultural as well as bodily through and through. It happens spontaneously in human perception and expression. Furthermore, it plays a part in any experience, practice and discourse. That is as an implicit background of more *and* less coherent fragments of meaning. And it is also in the foreground of our attention, as fields of more or less significant contingencies, 'interrogations', uncertainties and obscurities. Only through the implication of such backgrounds and foregrounds to contextualize and situate it can any figure at all take form and appear and an expression or perception.

One objective in the following discussion is to point out that this wild and 'raw' structuring of meaning is common to the psychotic and the normal person. Another objective is to indicate how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology - which in my interpretation implies a broad as well as deep conception of intentionality - offers a rich and varied potential for the explication and understanding of psychosis.

Of course, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is not equally compatible with any point of departure that may be identified within the phenomenological tradition. However, it is possible to apply different kinds of phenomenological understanding and conceptualization (cf. Waldenfels 1991) in accord with his philosophical position. Thus, we may distinguish between a structural, a generative and a dialectic understanding

of human experience and practices. Structural understanding is about definitive phenomena: matters that we may call 'objective' because they seem to be fixed or reproducible. Generative understanding emphasizes the *a priori* phenomena, which are always-already given in our experience and practices: ('intangible', subjective) matters of movement, spontaneity and selection in ambiguity. Dialectic understanding explicates the *Spiel* of responsiveness, which constitutes subject-subject relations and subject-object relations as a complementary and mutual determination or a reciprocal sensibility.

The suggested interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's position is a very open and inclusive phenomenology that employs his unveiling of three dimensions of elementary structuring of meaning (i.e. three different dimensions of corporeal intentionality) as a frame for systematizing the contributions that phenomenology has offered to the theoretical understanding of psychosis. Of course, theoretical understanding is always a subject-object relation. Thus, structural theories of psychosis tend to be a natural science that focuses on symptoms or characteristic data, whereas generative approaches are more of a social science kind that emphasizes the personal existence and the social lifeworld of the psychotic. Finally, dialectic approaches accord more with human science, since they are suited for the analysis of expressive and perceptual meaning in psychotic experience. A combination of approaches to elucidate these three different dimensions might give us a better phenomenological basis for the understanding of psychosis. But before looking upon these specific approaches, it should be pointed out what the phenomenon of psychosis is all about, namely *angst* and intentionality.

2. Intentionality through *angst* in psychosis

In a phenomenological understanding it would be impossible to simply identify insanity or acute psychosis with abnormal experiences and practices, as it is quite usually done in psychiatry. Phenomenology is characterized by the attempt to understand and conceptualize any phenomenon in the closest possible accordance with the actual experience of that phenomenon. This also goes for the phenomenon of psychosis. Consequently, we have to look for the intentionality in the psychosis, i.e. the ways in which the structuring of meaning may be uncovered, even as entirely rudimentary tensions and strivings. This inevitably leads to focusing on the *dilution and scarcity* of meaning, which is ultimately associated with *angst*. I will try to point out that *angst* is not a more basic aspect of the psyche than intentionality. On the contrary, *angst* expresses and is conditioned by intentionality.

Psychosis has to do with *angst* in a sense that has been explicated by Kierkegaard, Freud, and several phenomenologists. *Angst* is an experience

that differs from fear by being much more general and diffused. It captures our bodily being in which we are thoroughly intertwined with the world. Therefore it challenges our self-feeling as well as our confidence in reality. While Kierkegaard regards *angst* as an opportunity to develop oneself, and Freud sees it as an intimidating condition, which endangers established psychic structures and from which one will try to escape, they do agree that *angst* indicates the fragile integrity and fallible constitution of an experienced project, namely the project of developing as a self. Thus, it should be clear at least that the very intentionality of *angst* is associated with tensions and strivings in being a self.⁵ However incoherent and problematic the project of being a self may be, and however chaotic and irrational the *angst* may appear, both remain experiential, and therefore: structuring of meaning through and through.

Phenomenologically, the intertwined intentionality of *angst* and of the self is marked by sociocultural corporeity. The project of becoming and being a culture-historically and psychosocially defined self demands a complex and risky integration of social and bodily identity. But bodily-social intentionality stems from existential levels that are not associated with specific identities, but with anonymous being! Actually, any simple perception or expression already implies a structuring of meaning, which by reflection turns out to be bodily and social. So, these aspects of our existence (perception, expression, body and sociality) - which are implied in the very structuring of the self and of *angst* - have to be understood in coherence with an intentionality which is also present in psychosis. Though the framework of the present discussion does not allow to explicate how Merleau-Ponty conceptualizes these dimensions of our being in the perspective of intentionality, a few notable implications must be indicated very briefly.

In short, perception is not simply a sensorial category of experience. For a close phenomenological reflection, perception turns out to be the immediate sensing (feeling) of meaning. This is something common to motile, affective, sensory and other aspects of our lived experience. The immediate experience of time is also perceptual. Intentionality associates perception with time as the transcendence of 'facticity', i.e. the imaginative aspect of the structuring of meaning, which always brings us beyond what is strictly current.

Language is *the event* of expressing and understanding meaning, rather than any kind of a system. What we experience immediately by the use of language is not representations or signs, but meaning. Communicating with each other we experience intentions, not the relationship of grammatical concepts. Like perception, language is basically a bodily and sociocultural structuring of meaning. This is evident in bodily gestures and in pre-conceptual communication of style. The language is a 'pseudo-body', i.e. a

lived engagement with the world and a 'ubiquitous' background for spontaneous as well as reflected experience.

The body is first and foremost *le corps propre*. This concept encompasses three different notions, which are all involved in Merleau-Ponty's understanding: One's own body, the actual body, and the body itself. I would claim that the second notion, which emphasizes the lived body over and above physical, biological and other conceptions of the body, most accurately represents Merleau-Ponty's view because it may include the two other notions. Accordingly, the lived body implies Freudian contrasts - as well as quite trivial contrasts - between my conscious experience of the body and the body as an experiencing subject.

Finally, sociality is first and foremost anonymous existence. We experience and practice as the general and indefinite varieties of the French *on* (or *das Man* in German), much more than as the specific varieties of an 'I' or 'we'. Literally, we have to forget ourselves quite radically and extensively in the micro-dynamics of everyday life for the communications and practices to go on as a situated and competent structuring of meaning that relates dynamically to our entire lifeworld. Our intentionality takes us across culturally specific breaks and contrasts between *anonymous* fields and levels of bodily-social existence. We are, therefore, familiar with varieties of strangeness, distances and clashes within our experienced (sociocultural and psychosocial) identity, which are more basic than the distinctions between 'you', 'I', 'they' and 'we'.

3. Structural approach to the understanding of psychosis

Within a phenomenological psychopathology of psychosis, a structural approach may evolve from a critique and re-construction of Jaspers' and the early Husserl's positions. Occupied with prejudiced questions concerning the empathising access to the mind of another person, the version of phenomenology which Jaspers and his followers represent (Huber & Gross 1977, Jaspers 1968) is marked by all the Cartesian and Kantian problems of common sense psychology. The early Husserl, on the other hand, suggests a scientific phenomenology concerning the conditions for 'unbiased' identification of eidetic invariance. Focusing on the experiences of the researchers, this position has been defended in psychiatry by Lanteri-Laura (1982) and it has had a large influence on the so-called 'descriptive psychopathology'. Both of these positions are objectifying approaches to psychopathology. They may hold important insights of systematization and intersubjective determination in scientific discourse, but in order to do unequivocal service to phenomenological psychopathology they have to be subsumed into an existential kind of structuralism, i.e. to acknowledge the situated and ontological intentionality of the self⁶. A recent example of a structural approach is

found in Gallagher (2004). In his discussion of a normal sense of agency as opposed to delusions of alien control in schizophrenia he focuses on symptoms of schizophrenia and how they might be causally related to cognitive and neuropsychological structures. Though he seeks to offer a phenomenological understanding, it is difficult to distinguish it from an explanation based on speculative models of cognition and self-reflection. The large current interest in early detection of a mental vulnerability that might increase the probability of schizophrenic initiation has also lead phenomenological researchers (and others) to hypothesize pre-morbid and prodromal symptoms that would make it possible to predict schizophrenia (cf. Johannessen, Martindale & Cullberg 2006). Of course, this kind of determinism again starts from a speculative model that does not leave much room for phenomenological understanding. The situation is different if the focus is on uncovering self-disturbances that might lead into schizophrenia due to their inclusive structuring of experience or their social orientation and functioning (cf. Møller & Husby 2000, Parnas 2000, Sass 2001, Stranghellini 2000).

In Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization, structural understanding elicits intentionality as more or less ordered figure-background perspectives. While structure, form and order necessarily imply some kind of 'freezing' of reality, the mark of intentionality in this structuring of reality is a perspective orientation (direction). Basically, the metaphysical perspective of a present on the background of a lifeworld makes up a general framework for this understanding of intentionality. It also applies to analysing the experience of immediate suffering and *angst* as the theme in a context of life projects and life experiences marked by stigmatization, a precarious sense of self, and helplessness. An understanding of psychosis in figure-background perspectives should make it possible to study not just the regression and lack of reason, but also the structured meaning in the experience and lived 'practice' of the psychoses.

4. Generative approach to the understanding of psychosis

A generative approach to the understanding of psychosis might lean, in a critical way, on the well-known positions in phenomenological psychopathology, which are based on the late Husserl or the existentialists. Kraus (2001, 2003) has made it particularly clear how these positions differ from the preoccupation with isolated symptoms in mainstream psychiatry, since they attempt to understand the psychiatric patient as a person who exists in a certain sociocultural and psychosocial context. In generative phenomenology, we find a common emphasis of the tight basic correspondence between subject and object, between self-experience and experience of the world. But - contrary to many conceptions within the phenomenological tradition - the subject does not actively produce this

correspondence. Even a very complex subject-object correspondence can only emerge as an actual experience and become a situated reality through a bodily, *spontaneous* structuring of meaning.

The late Husserl's concept of the lifeworld, our always-already given background of orientation and action (which probably characterizes the general understanding of phenomenology just as much as the very concept of intentionality) was assimilated in phenomenological psychopathology more or less as a principle of 'immediate sanity' or constitutive presence, i.e. a pre-given common sense and accountability (cf. Blankenburg 1971, 1975; Bovet & Parnas 1993; Tatossian 1997).

In the approaches to psychopathology which are based on the existential phenomenology of Heidegger (Binswanger 1975, Boss 1979, Condrau 1987) and Sartre (Laing 1965, 1969; van den Berg 1972) it is stressed that fantasy and reality are always basically corresponding for the subject. Experience always starts from an intentionality that surpasses what we (on reflection) can identify as facticity; the world, with people and things, is never 'merely there'. Immediately and concretely, it calls on us or engages us. However, the widespread version of existentialism associates this understanding tightly with an individualism, which has led to cynicism and exaggerated belief in the healing powers of 'being oneself' and 'living through' one's own traumas and breakdowns.

Certainly, common sense, accountability and individuality are crucial aspects of the sociocultural and psychosocial contexts, which we 'take for granted all the time'. But the matter is of orderly structures, which belong to a high level of historically formed experience and sedimentary practices, not to the most elementary structuring of self and world. So, these phenomenological positions - the late Husserl and existentialism in its predominant, individualistic version - have not helped to adequately distinguish the micro-level structuring of meaning in our immediate perception and expression from the macro-level of practical experience and accountable interaction. This problem implies that conditions for the possibility of accountable experience and action are neglected; figures of the 'rational' (realistic) orientation in everyday life are hypostatized without their background of less orderly bodily-social being. That is also seen in a large number of phenomenological writings on psychosis (e.g. Davidson 2004, Parnas, Bovet & Zahavi 2002, Rulf 2003, Schwartz, Wiggins, Naudin & Spitzer 2005). It is neglected that ontologically the self is 'always-already' an anonymous sociocultural existence, an open bodily field, in which we share, anticipate and express varieties of meaning that are contingent, unstructured, ambiguous and 'wild' (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1960, 1964, 1969).

Generative understanding reflects intentionality as an *a priori* structuring of meaning and sociocultural identity. In post-Husserlian phenomenology - notably in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty - this does not involve any

presumption of a transcendental subject (given to itself independently of experience and constituting the objects of experience). The point is that any kind of coherent experience is structured out of less coherent fragments of meaning, and this process or event of structuring necessarily begins before any particular subject starts to experience any particular object.

A 'conceptual strategy' of generative understanding should make it possible to discuss how 'sanity' is structurally embedded in - and dynamically emerges from - more immediate, bodily being (like consciousness stands out from perception, speech acts from gestures, and cognition from emotion). Such an understanding would unveil correspondences between levels of reality differentiation and levels of differentiation of a self. The specificity of object and subject (the 'what' and the 'who' of an experience or practice) is a relational, situated and highly variable matter.

5. Dialectic approach to the understanding of psychosis

Dialectic understanding of intentionality⁷ is neither deterministic nor delimited to the understanding of conceptual development. It explicates intentionality as the *Spiel (jeu)* of bodily-social responsiveness. This conceptualization of intentionality affords an opportunity to surpass ideological notions of everyday life together with individualistic metaphysics, and to analyse the various expressions of anonymous sociocultural identity.

Elementary forms of social interplay (recognition, appreciation, seduction, challenge, alienation, reification etc.) may be studied as the unfolding of different kinds of a *Spiel*. We may, for instance, focus on control and abandonment, rules and resources, demands and motives, strains and latitude, or pleasure and pain. In any case, it is essential to our discourse of the *Spiel* to highlight the de-centring (object-status) as well as the centring (subject-status) of selves in the unfolding of the *Spiel*. We cannot take specific kinds of social identity, social communities or social relations for granted; just as little as definite forms of narratives, styles, codes or metaphors should be presumed. Explicating the *Spiel* of a particular person's situation, we should rather look for such balances between social order and anomie as expressed in the contexts of the androgynous trait of the hippies and the self-mutilation of the punks.

In general, this is a task of attentive participation, critical reflection and interpretation, which - I believe - is in line with the best of psychoanalytic as well as phenomenological understanding. The dialectic approach, however, transcends the opposition between regarding psychosis either as the regression to a normal, early level of development or as the distinctive elaboration of a unique universe of perception and expression. The

psychosis should be regarded as a version of the *Spiel* of projecting a life, i.e. as an attempt - within the figure-background structuring of sociocultural experience, practices and discourses - to be confirmed through the constructive culture-historical and psychosocial forms of individuality (individuation) and to avoid its destructive forms (individualization). Let us take a somewhat closer look at this topic.

6. Intentionality in psychosis

The figure-background perspective (where most of the background can not - without loss - be turned into a figure) is basic to the structural understanding of intentionality. In principle, it opens the possibility of regarding the well-known characteristics of schizophrenic or manic psychosis as organized in foregrounds of experience, communication and comportment which stand out of less noticeable backgrounds of normal perception and expression. We can pay full attention to the 'positive' characteristics of schizophrenia as a break down of common sense: assaults on rational language use, on perceptions and thoughts, and on responsible action. 'Negative' characteristics like social withdrawal and self-protection can be considered carefully as disturbances of emotion and defeat of motivation, which influence the experience of time and bodily subjectivity together with the experienced selfhood and relations with other people. As a continuous foundation and sedimentary background for the appearance of these psychotic characteristics stands, however, the very structuring of situated perception and expression in figure-background perspectives, being embedded in a sociocultural and anthropological context and sensitive to most of its bodily-social forms and aspects of communication. In our daily life we do not pay much attention to this elementary community and reciprocity. Nevertheless, this background of responsiveness and co-ordination, which is common to psychotic and normal existence, opens the possibility of care and therapy. That may be further explicated by also employing the generative and the dialectic approach.

Individuality standing out of anonymity is an exemplary topic for the generative understanding of intentionality. Regardless of whether I am psychotic or normal, I am first and foremost an anonymous *anybody*, not the unique *myself*. Still, because I belong to the modern European culture, I pay much attention to what's special (if not unique) about my personal identity as well as the personal identities of other people. That individuality is so deeply integrated into our identity signifies the common cultural and historical complexity of the self: a bodily-social self that predominantly remains anonymous. This does not explicate psychotic individuality, however. Psychosis means to differ and stand out from the ordinary in ways that - objectively as well as subjectively regarded - are very

precarious and frightful. Individuality does not necessarily imply *angst*, psychosis does.

Angst is a highly dialectic experience that jeopardizes the self. As a *Spiel* centred in the fragility of the self, it opens possibilities of strengthening as well as possibilities of weakening the self. *Angst* attaches to the simplest, primordial structures of self-experience: a self that exists as emotional and motivational confidence in its being-in-the-world (rather than positive knowledge of it), a tight coherence between a general sociocultural field and an anonymous corporeal identity. Being one of the strongest human feelings, *angst* is also one of the most contaminating. As the apocalyptic threat it is, *angst* can shake any atmosphere of confidence and safe involvement. Therefore, we react against it spontaneously. Reactions imply anonymous reflections together with entirely wild distinctions and associations (Freudian 'primary processes'), but also differentiation and demarcation of individuality. So, *angst* adheres to the very experience of existing as a self, in the anonymous forms of *das Man* as well as in distinctly individual forms.

There are, thus, two ways (which are not only different, but in principle directly opposite) in which individuality may be structured out of anonymity, i.e. ways in which something special about us may be distinguished (and the subject may distinguish itself) from the characteristics and qualities of one or more other individuals and of groups. One way is the *individuation* in which you unfold in accord with the sedimentary sociocultural appreciation of individuality, and basically grow in prolongation of established norms and values. The other way is the *individualization* in which you fall out of the social networks, get stigmatized by the ordinary fear of being confronted with a situation like yours, and individually have to carry the burden of cultural myths, prejudices and repulsion. The way our personal identity is addressed by *angst* is through individualization. At first, this always raises the challenge that Kierkegaard emphasized: taking up the new potential of individuality by turning individualization into individuation, rather than trying to escape back into anonymity. The Freudian view that *angst* 'eats up souls' seems compelling, however, when the individualization becomes a permanent drama of progressing disintegration, decomposition and annihilation.

Now, if we are basically strange (rather than transparent) to our selves, if the anonymous being of the normal person is just as open to others as it is to that person herself or himself, then the 'vertical being' (the various levels of relatively de-centred and centred existence) along which our intentionality crystallizes must encompass rationality and accountability as well as emotion and motives. Therefore, it is not so enigmatic that an extreme dialectic of individualization - manifested in the excessive self-awareness and anxious hyper-reflection of the pre-psychotic person (who probably searches out every conceivable help on the basis of rational

communication and action) - leads into de-centred experience of being anybody, nobody or somebody else and being wide open for others to influence or direct.

This is the 'raw' human existence, which is already sociocultural as well as bodily and of which Klein seems to have had a clear impression when she talked about the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position (cf. Mitchell 1987). Phenomenological understanding of the interplay between feeling to be different and feeling helpless may perhaps advance the clarification of how manic and schizophrenic psychoses may relate to the apparent disturbance of elementary responsiveness in autism and to the more high-level withdrawal into depression and the so-called 'negative symptoms' of schizophrenia.

If the psychotic is caught in a common sociocultural field of wild existence, though experiencing degrees and forms of individualization, which are difficult to even imagine for others, this is also a point of departure for care and therapy. The explication of psychosis would have to focus on uncovering the dynamic *Spiel* of helplessness through the very concrete exchanges with the sociocultural environment. Care and therapy would have to establish alliances, first and foremost, through which the psychotic experience can be expressed, shared, endured and responded to. That would also be the background on which the individualization could gradually be turned into individuation.

7. Conclusion

Merleau-Ponty laid open a bodily and immediate kind of intentionality, which is only about to be taken into serious consideration in the attempt to explicate, understand and treat psychosis. Yet, it seems to offer a valuable contribution to the conceptual comprehension of the experience and dynamics of psychosis.

It is possible to apply different kinds of phenomenological understanding and conceptualization in accord with Merleau-Ponty's position. We may distinguish between a structural, a generative and a dialectic understanding of the intentionality in human existence, on 'micro levels' of perception and expression as well as on 'macro levels' of practice, discourse, and conceptual comprehension. Based upon an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as they are, and being applied to the specific problem of psychosis, which he only addressed casually (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1945), the three presented approaches should not be regarded as mutually related in a hierarchy or any other fixed configuration. Rather, they are complementary and overlapping discourses that imply different concepts and foci on intentionality. Still, it is clear that structural and generative approaches to the understanding of psychosis

have been elaborated much more than dialectic approaches, and that is a pity!

Structural phenomenology largely shares the mainstream occupation with cognitive and behavioural phenomena, and generative phenomenology is a deviating but fairly established orientation towards the personal being-in-the-world and practical matters of intersubjectivity. Dialectic phenomenology, however, is a more probing and heuristic approach that attempts in particular to uncover the expressive-perceptual structuring of emotional existence. Though the generative position emphasizes the continuity between psychosis and normality, it is - like the structural position - largely able to describe only the ways in which psychosis differs from normality. To the contrary, the dialectic position can first and foremost make it clear what is and remains the same or very similar in all varieties of human existence. In other words, dialectic phenomenology is particularly able to point out the anthropological foundation for any actual interplay between psychosis and normality, and notably the basis for civilized care and therapy of psychosis.

kurtdkeller@gmail.com and at his home address: Kaervangs alle 10, DK-9000 Aalborg, Denmark.

Notes

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented at the 4th International Conference on Philosophy and Psychiatry, 26-29 August 2000 in Firenze

² This is not to say, however, that his position is quite clear and consistent. More to the contrary, it is obvious that Merleau-Ponty is struggling hard to identify and explicate new phenomenological insights and principles.

³ The continuity in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is pointed out in a number of works such as Barbaras 1992, Hall 1977, Keller 2001b, Kono 1992, Taminiaux 1977 and Waldenfels 1987.

⁴ I am talking, of course, about intentionality in the phenomenological, not the ordinary English, sense of the word. Merleau-Ponty's concept of intentionality is presented more closely in Keller 2001a, 2001b, 2005, 2006.

- ⁵ Also, for instance, in Foucault's de-centred conceptualization of the human subject do we find an emphasis on how the experience of being a self coheres tightly with the bodily practices of expression and exposition, which a sociocultural epoch prescribes (Foucault 1988). The extensive literature on the importance of narratives for the development and maintenance of the self is equally significant. Thus, Riemann (1987) has pointed out the particular importance of narratives in relation to psychiatric phenomena.
- ⁶ Notions of 'structure' are essential to Merleau-Ponty's idea of science. Thus *Gestalt* psychology and French structuralism, for instance, are to some extent consistent with his phenomenology. But on this phenomenological foundation, the scientific concepts of form, structural relation, institution, etc. would reflect that intentional structuring is to be found behind any structure that we can notice. (In post-structuralism, post-modernism and constructionism it has been attempted to take up this renewed focus on structuring, but without recognizing the importance of Merleau-Ponty's concept of intentionality.)
- ⁷ In addition to Merleau-Ponty's works I have in particular found Waldenfels' discussions (1990, 1994) of responsiveness and the alien (*das Fremde*) enlightening as to the dialectic dimension of intentionality.

References

- Barbaras, R. (1992). Motricité et phénoménalité chez le dernier Merleau-Ponty. In Richir, M. & E. Tassin (1992). *Merleau-Ponty, phénoménologie et expériences*. Grenoble: Millon.
- Binswanger, L. (1975). Heidegger's Analytic of Existence and its Meaning for Psychiatry. In Needleman, J. (ed.). *Being-in-the-World. Selected papers of Ludwig Binswanger*. pp. 206-221. London: Souvenir Press.
- Blankenburg, W. (1971). Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur Psychopathologie symptomarmer Schizophrenien. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag.
- Blankenburg, W. (1991). Phänomenologische Orientierung in der Psychopathologie. In Herzog, M. & Graumann, C.F. (Hrsg.) *Sinn und Erfahrung: Phänomenologische Methoden in den Humanwissenschaften*, pp. 263-287. Heidelberg: Roland Asanger Verlag.
- Boss, M. (1979). *Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Bovet, P. & Parnas, J. (1993). Schizophrenic Delusions: A Phenomenological Approach. *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 19 (3), pp. 579-597.
- Castoriadis, C. (1997). The construction of the world in psychosis. In Castoriadis, C: *World in fragments*. Stanford University Press.

- Condrau, G. (1987). Daseinsanalytic Psychotherapy. In Condrau, G., Kraus, A., van den Berg, J.H. & Wyss, D.: *Psychiatry and Phenomenology* pp. 63-77. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Davidson, L. (2004). Phenomenology and Contemporary Clinical Practice: Introduction to Special Issue. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*. 35: 149-62.
- Ey, H. (1978). *Consciousness*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In Martin, L.H., Gutman, H. & Hutton, P.H. (eds). *Technologies of the self*. Amherst: Univeresity of Massachusetts Press.
- Gallagher, S. (2004). Agency, ownership, and alien control in schizophrenia. In Zahavi, D., Grünbaum, T. & Parnas, J. (eds.) *The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness*, pp. 89-104. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Hall, H. (1977). The continuity of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception. *Man and World* 10: 435-447.
- Huber, G. & Gross, G. (1977). *Wahn. Eine deskriptiv-phänomenologische Untersuchung schizophrener Wahn*. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag.
- Jaspers, K. (1968/1912). The Phenomenological Approach in Psychopathology. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 114, pp. 1313-1323.
- Johannesen, J.O., Martindale, B.V. & Cullberg, J. (eds.) (2006). *Evolving psychosis: different stages, different treatments*. London: Routledge.
- Keller, K.D. (2001a). *Self and Community*. Paper presented at the 26th meeting of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle, September 2001 at the University of North Carolina, Asheville.
- Keller, K.D. (2001b). Intentionality in perspectival structure. *Chiasmi International. Trilingual studies concerning Merleau-Ponty's Thoughts* 3: 375-397.
- Keller, K.D. (2005). The corporeal order of things: The *Spiel* of usability. *Human Studies* 28 (2): 173-204.
- Keller, K.D. (2006). *Institutional Intentionality: The structuring of public and private experience*. Paper presented at the Merleau-Ponty Circle Conference on 'Body and Institution', October 2006 at George Mason University, Virginia.
- Kono, T. (1992). Le langage et le schéma corporel chez Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Études Phenomenologiques* 16, pp. 103-122.
- Kraus, A. (2001). Phenomenological-Anthropological Psychiatry. In: F. Henn, N. Sartorius, H. Helmshen & H. Lauter (eds.): *Contemporary Psychiatry. Volume 1: Foundations of Psychiatry*, pp. 340-355. Berlin: Springer Verlag.
- Kraus, A. (2003). How can the phenomenological-anthropological approach contribute to diagnosis and classification in psychiatry? In. Fulford, B., Morris, K., Sadler, J.Z. & Stranghellini, G. (eds.) *Nature and*

- narrative. An introduction to the new philosophy of psychiatry*, pp. 199-216. Oxford University Press.
- Laing, R.D. (1965). *The Divided Self*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Laing, R.D. (1969). *Oplevelsens politik og paradisfuglen*. [The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise]. Copenhagen: Rhodos
- Lanteri-Laura, G. (1982). Phenomenology and a critique of the foundations of psychiatry, in: De Koning, A.J.J. & Jenner, F.A. *Phenomenology and Psychiatry*. London: Academic Press.
- Maldiney, H. (1997). *Penser l'homme et la folie*. Grenoble: Millon.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Gallimard. [English translation: *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1962.]
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1960). *Signes*. Gallimard. [English translation: *Signes*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 1964.]
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Le visible et l'invisible* Gallimard. [English translation: *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 1968.]
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1969). *La prose du monde*. Gallimard. [English translation: *The prose of the world*. London: Heinemann 1974.]
- Mitchell, J. (1987) *The selected Melanie Klein*. New York: The Free Press.
- Møller, P. & R. Husby (2000). The initial prodrome in schizophrenia – searching for naturalistic core dimensions of experience and behaviour. *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 26: 217-32.
- Parnas, J. (2000). The self and intentionality in the pre-psychotic stages of schizophrenia: A phenomenological study. In D. Zahavi (Ed.): *Exploring the Self. Philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience*, pp. 115-147. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Parnas, J., P. Bovet & D. Zahavi (2002). Schizophrenic autism: Clinical phenomenology and pathogenetic implications. *World Psychiatry* 1 (3): 131-6.
- Riemann, G. (1987). *Das Fremdwerden der eigenen Biographie*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
- Rulf, S. (2003). Phenomenological Contributions on Schizophrenia: A Critical Review and Commentary on the Literature between 1980-2000. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 34: 1-46.
- Sass, L. (2000). Schizophrenia, self-experience, and the so-called 'negative symptoms'. In Zahavi, D. (ed.). *Exploring the Self. Philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience*, pp. 149-182. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Sass, L.A. (2001). Self and World in Schizophrenia: Three Classic Approaches. *Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology* 8 (4): 251-70.
- Schwartz, M.A., O.P. Wiggins, J. Naudin & M. Spitzer (2005). Rebuilding

- reality: A phenomenology of aspects of chronic schizophrenia. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 4: 91-115.
- Stranghellini, G. (2000). The phenomenology of the social self: The schizotypic and the melancholic type. In D. Zahavi (Ed.): *Exploring the Self. Philosophical and psychopathological perspectives on self-experience*, pp. 279-94. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Taminiaux, J. (1977). *Le regard et l'excédent*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Tatossian, A. (1997). La phénoménologie des psychoses. *L'art du comprendre* Juillet 1997, Numéro double hors série.
- van den Berg, J.H. (1972). *A different existence. Principles of phenomenological psychopathology*. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.
- Waldenfels, B. (1987). *Phänomenologie in Frankreich*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Waldenfels, B. (1990). *Der Stachel des Fremden*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Waldenfels, B. (1991). Phänomenologie unter eidetischen, transzendentalen und strukturalen Gesichtspunkten. In Herzog, M. & Graumann, C.F. (Hrsg.) *Sinn und Erfahrung: Phänomenologische Methoden in den Humanwissenschaften*, pp. 65-85. Heidelberg: Roland Asanger Verlag.
- Waldenfels, B. (1994). *Antwortregister*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.