



DIALOGUES

Schizophrenia, experience and culture

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The work of Professor Kraus (2010) is more than welcome at a time in which Psychopathology has become increasingly shallow and lacking in density, content with the role of an ideal “observer” whose only ambition is an objective description of signs and symptoms in order to fulfil operational criteria which reliably bestow a place for the case under observation within the grid of diagnostic classification. As a critic of this approach to Psychopathology, which he refers to as *symptomatological-criteriological* (2003), Kraus offers us a living illustration of a Psychopathology which, instead of discarding *Subjectivity*, makes it the primary interest.

The contribution of Professor Kraus is inserted within the context of *Anthropological-Phenomenological Psycho-pathology* (2003), whose object of study is *phenomena*, rather than a compilation of symptoms. The *phenomena* manifest an experiential form of the patient, understood as a particular means of relating with oneself, with alterity and with the world. Here the experiencing subject, taken in his totality, occupies a central position. We deal here with particular ways of *being-in -the-world*. The experiential consistency of the *pathos* and the subjectivity of the lived, are here prioritised as fundamental clinical elements. *Subjectivity* is understood as fundamentally referring to, and open to, alterity and to the world, *embodied*, in the sense of emerging from the relation of a particular type of organism in interaction with the environment in which it lives, being, as such, *embedded* in its world.

The phenomenological approach to the

psycho-pathology of schizophrenia has been renewed over the last twenty years, not only from a return to the classic authors of philosophical phenomenology - Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty - and psychiatric phenomenology - Minkowski, Binswanger, Blankenburg - but also from an effort to form a dialogue between the phenomenological perspective and the contemporary debate of the cognitive and neural sciences (Parnas & Bovet, 1991; Gallagher, 2004; Stanghelinni, 2004; Sass & Parnas, 2006).

These studies have in common the search for the possible structural conditions of the schizophrenic experience taken in their pre-reflexive and ante-predicative aspects, the flow of consciousness which has yet to be reached by the reflexive network (Schutz, 1970). However, these studies seem to have some difficulty in answering what Gallagher (2004) called the “problem of selectivity”: how to understand that the hallucinating voices and delusional ideas present specific and regular content articulated with the subject’s biography and culture. In other words, how to articulate the pre-reflexive experiential subject (first-person perspective), with the narrative subject (which integrates second and third-person perspectives) articulated in language, autobiographical and historicized (Zahavi, 2005). This is a question which has been investigated not only by psychopathology researchers, but also by researchers of anthropological medicine, such as Good (1994) and Corin (2004), interested in understanding the experience of illness, understood as the articulation of body, experience and narrative, thus exploring the ways of relating culture and experience.

We know that the lived experience always exceeds the descriptive and communicative possibilities of the narratives. On the other hand, we also recognise that the narrative resources, more than simply expressing, can modify the immediate “livedness” of the experience,

somehow ordering, stabilising and modifying its affective tonality. But what are the pertinent relationships between the form and structural conditions of the experience and the content expressed? Why is it so common in our culture to express hallucinatory and delusional experiences by way of allusive metaphors from a technical apparatus, updated according to scientific and technological advances, from the “influencing machine” to the implantation of chips?

Professor Kraus’ article (2010) answers the above questions by way of an original phenomenological analysis which shows the analogy between the phenomenological characteristics of the technological processes

of telecommunications and of the structure of psychotic experience. He thus shows the existence of a non-contingent relationship between the form of delusional and hallucinatory experience and the content which it manifests. The content of these experiences therefore ceases to be an article of lesser interest to become the central informative element of the formal structures of pre-reflexive experience of self, alterity and world of schizophrenic patients, thus overcoming the antinomy, so common in Psychopathology, between form and content, thus opening an innovative perspective in the examination of the relationships among lived experience, narrative and culture.

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