



The Philosophy of Psychiatry: A Companion (International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry)

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This is a comprehensive resource of original essays by leading thinkers exploring the newly emerging interdisciplinary field of the philosophy of psychiatry. The contributors aim to define this exciting field and to highlight the philosophical assumptions and issues that underlie psychiatric theory and practice, the category of mental disorder, and rationales for its social, clinical and legal treatment.

As a branch of medicine and a healing practice, psychiatry relies on presuppositions that are deeply and unavoidably philosophical. Conceptions of rationality, personhood and autonomy frame our understanding and treatment of mental disorder. Philosophical questions of evidence, reality, truth, science, and values give meaning to each of the social institutions and practices concerned with mental health care. The psyche, the mind and its relation to the body, subjectivity and consciousness, personal identity and character, thought, will, memory, and emotions are equally the stuff of traditional philosophical inquiry and of the psychiatric enterprise. A new research field--the philosophy of psychiatry--began to form during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Prompted by a growing recognition that philosophical ideas underlie many aspects of clinical practice, psychiatric theorizing and research, mental health policy, and the economics and politics of mental health care, academic philosophers, practitioners, and philosophically trained psychiatrists have begun a series of vital, cross-disciplinary exchanges.

This volume provides a sampling of the research yield of those exchanges. Leading thinkers in this area, including clinicians, philosophers, psychologists, and interdisciplinary teams, provide original discussions that are not only expository and critical, but also a reflection of their authors' distinctive and often powerful and imaginative viewpoints and theories. All the discussions break new theoretical ground. As befits such an interdisciplinary effort, they are methodologically eclectic, and varied and divergent in their assumptions and conclusions; together, they comprise a significant new exploration, definition, and mapping of the philosophical aspects of psychiatric theory and practice.

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