

CS02-03

THE MEANINGS OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

G. Stanghellini

Biomedical Sciences, University 'G. d'Annunzio' Chieti, Chieti Scalo, Italy

The term 'psychopathology' is used with different meanings. In the most trivial sense it refers to the object of psychiatry, i.e. pathologies of the psyche. In continental Europe Psychopathology is the formal taxonomy of the modalities of abnormal experience. We have three levels or profiles of Psychopathology. First, General Psychopathology, rooted in Jaspers' work:

- i. sorts out, defines and differentiates abnormal psychic phenomena, actualized and systematically described in specific terms; and
- ii. classifies groups of phenomena according to their phenomenological affinities, i.e. in terms of the patients' self-descriptions, and the modes in which the experience comes to expression.

Second, Clinical Psychopathology, rooted in Kurt Schneider's work, aims at becoming the psychopathological doctrine linking symptoms and diagnosis. Clinical Psychopathology is essentially aimed at the identification of symptoms which are significant in view of nosographical distinctions. Third, we have Phenomenological Psychopathology, whose task is organizing different kinds of a person's abnormal experiences in theoretical constructs whose guide-line is the meaning-structures of such experiences. These meaning-organizers - i.e. psychopathological organizers - are synthesizing schemes of comprehension, conferring a unitary meaningfulness to different declinations of pathological phenomena. These constructs are descriptions of the mode of being-in-the-world of a given patient, i.e. his embeddedness in mundane, everyday activities. They are based on a holistic approach, advocating the importance of the global grasping of a phenomenon as an organising and meaningful *Gestalt* over a particularistic focus of attention.