Re-evaluating Evaluativism in Nosology. Prospects of Axiology for Psychopathology

The debate between descriptivism and evaluativism has troubled the psychopathological discourse since its inception (Zachar & Kendler, 2017). Descriptivists hold that psychiatric categories can be freed of value judgments; evaluativists insist on their irreducible normative commitments. Since this framing rests on the positivistic fact/value dichotomy, philosophical re-evaluation contextualizes it within the long-standing tradition of axiology[1]—especially concerning the controversies on value-judgment (Weber) and positivism (Adorno vs. Popper).

In this vein, Sadler's (2005) problematizes the dichotomous framing by demonstrating that nosology cuts across qualitatively distinct dimensions of value—aesthetic, epistemic, ethical, ontological, and pragmatic. In this reading, the dichotomous picture is replaced by a pluralized picture of multiple fact/*values* oppositions. Recent enactive approaches have attempted to dissolve the opposition altogether (de Haan vs. Nielsen). By conceiving of biological functions as functions of meaning-making, enactivists collapse the fact/value dichotomy.

I propose axiological psychopathology as a meta-discursive framework. Systematizing these competing approaches, I advance several points: First, the debate is value-biased. Disvalues are neglected. Second, the debate is one-sidedly developed, focusing on ontology and epistemology (axiotics). Ergetics (conditions for value/disvalue realization) and systematics (relations between the rows of values/disvalues) are underexplored. Third, the debate struggles to distinguish between evaluation, value, value attitude, and other related notions.

[1] From ancient Greek ἄξιος (*axios*) for “value” or “worth”.