Submission for the INPP Conference in 2026

Recognising a necessary constitutive condition of epistemology that matters practically in mental health

This presentation applies relational theory in explicating a necessary constitutive condition of epistemology that averts conceptual blind-spots in mental health practice and coherently connects the plurality of epistemic matters relevant to the mental health field. At issue in the presentation is exemplified in the question: what is a necessary constituent of epistemology that both connects and spans the epistemology of mental health in terms of, for example, (mental health) science, (an individual's and shared) knowing, beliefs, doubts, perceptions, expertise-by-profession, expertise-by-experience, epistemic justice, and philosophy of mind at large.

The paper clarifies that epistemology necessarily invokes the relation expressed by the sentence *"x knows y".* By relational theory, this relation should not be confused with its contingent expression in language nor the grammatical terms of subject and object. It concerns the very relation 'knowing' and potential occupants in the distinct relational positions of this relation—whom or whatever knows, the knower(s) (*x*); that which is known (*y*); and the conditions that pertain to or are entailed in the knowing itself.

Recognising this necessary relation and its scope averts conceptual blind-spots in clinical practice, mental health theory and research, for it foregrounds the far-reaching range of possible knowers as extending to individuals and groups, comprising patients, clinicians, family members, professions, research communities, and societies. Similarly, that which is known is not limited to propositional and/or scientific knowledge but encompasses acquaintance, know-how, experiential knowledge of illness, professional expertise, and other forms of knowing acquired through training, research, and lived experience. The epistemic conditions entailed in the relation of knowing extend to a plurality of sources and derivations, subject to conceptual, social, mental, bodily, and neurobiological prerequisites as well as contingent relations on the veracity, certainty, scope, and limits of knowing.