Introducing a new format: Why Psychiatry Needs Philosophical Literacy

This presentation introduces a new format in *Psychiatric Services* designed to bring the philosophy of psychiatry into everyday clinical work. The aim is not to present abstract theory, but to use philosophy as a practical tool for improving psychiatric care.

This format will publish manuscripts that show how philosophical reflection can directly inform and strengthen clinical practice. Contributions will be written in a language that is accessible and relevant to those who work in psychiatric services, as well as to those who receive care, including people with lived experience.

Psychiatry is, and has always been, a conflicted field. It operates at the intersection of biology, psychology, and society, and is shaped by ongoing tensions between competing perspectives. These tensions are not signs of failure, but reflections of deeper questions about what mental disorders are, how they can be known, and what ought to be done.

Philosophy of psychiatry helps make visible the assumptions we already rely on in practice. It draws attention to how our understanding of mental disorder is shaped by implicit views about what exists (ontology), what counts as knowledge (epistemology), and what matters in care (normativity). Developing conceptual competence means becoming able to recognize and work with these underlying assumptions.

Conceptual competence allows us to identify where disagreements are actually situated. Are we disagreeing about facts, about how knowledge is established, or about values? When these levels are not distinguished, disagreement is easily misinterpreted as lack of insight. When they are clarified, dialogue becomes possible across perspectives.

It can prevent premature diagnostic closure, make room for multiple perspectives, and strengthen dialogue with patients who understand their experiences differently. It can reduce conflict in teams, clarify disagreements, and support more transparent decision-making in ethically difficult situations.