Abstract

Levinovitz and Aftab's formulation of the *Rumpelstiltskin effect* captures a familiar clinical phenomenon: receiving a psychiatric diagnosis can be therapeutic in itself by rendering previously ungraspable experiences intelligible and nameable. We propose that this effect may be partly mediated by a category error in which descriptive diagnostic categories are mistaken for underlying neurobiological essences. This misinterpretation increases the perceived explanatory power of diagnosis and may thereby contribute to its therapeutic effect.

If so, the relief afforded by diagnosis may depend partly on what Henrik Ibsen described as a "life-lie": a stabilising but potentially misleading understanding of one's condition. We term this the *Wild Duck dilemma*. Clinicians may face situations in which fully correcting a misleading explanatory belief could undermine a beneficial understanding, while leaving it unchallenged may risk fixing the person within a limiting framework.

Drawing on Heidegger's existential analysis, we examine how diagnosis can both open and close a person's world by making suffering intelligible while potentially narrowing the individual's horizon of possibilities. We argue that diagnostic communication, practiced as *vorspringend-befreiende Fürsorge*, provides a way to navigate this dilemma by offering understanding without reducing the person to a definitive explanation.

Keywords: Philosophy of Psychiatry; Psychiatric Diagnosis; Psychological Essentialism; Bioethics; Existential Philosophy