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Title: Philosophy of the synaps

Abstract

Over the past six decades, psychiatry has undergone profound theoretical and practical transformation, driven largely by the introduction and evolution of psychopharmacological interventions.

The early development of psychopharmacology was characterized by false starts, conceptual dead ends, and methodological uncertainty—much of which persists today, particularly regarding the precise mechanisms by which psychotropic agents exert their effects.

In clinical practice, the selection and prescription of a psychopharmacological agent is shaped by a complex interplay of factors influencing drug choice, for example prescriber effects, patient variables and non-clinical characteristics, setting of administration, characteristics of the medication, the therapeutic alliance, and a range of psychosocial and political factors.

Yet this routine act often obscures the deeper philosophical questions that emerge when one looks beyond a narrowly mechanistic or psycho-molecular gaze,

Despite the potential contributions of the philosophy of science to medicine, and psychiatry in particular, philosophical engagement with psychopharmacology remains relatively limited.

Drawing on both historical and contemporary thinkers, this presentation proposes a non-exhaustive “philosophical toolkit” for critically navigating the multilayered principles , epistemic commitments, and assumptions that underly the science—and the art—of psychopharmacological prescribing. By emphasizing these often-overlooked dimensions, the session aims to enrich crosspollination between philosophy and psychiatry.