

The Nature of Mental Disorder

Kelly Roe, RSSS, ANU

Kelly@coombs.anu.edu.au

The Concept of Mental Disorder

- Mental (Psychiatric) vs Non-Mental (Neurological)
 - Disorders of cognitive processes?
 - But cortical blindness isn't psychiatric and
 - Tourette's is

The Concept of Mental Disorder

- Wakefield's 'Harmful Dysfunction' (HD) analysis of the concept of disorder:
 - Due to an inner malfunction
 - Result of the inner malfunction is harmful

The Concept of Mental Disorder

- *How do we recognize an individual is mentally disordered?*
- Statistical infrequency, violation of norms, personal distress, disability or dysfunction, unexpectedness. (This is also supposed to be definitional)
- Prototypes and Stereotypes in the casebook to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* and also in common sense.

Different Kinds of Reference

- *Nominal Reference*
 - SUPER-LUNARY OBJECT->arbitrary collection
- *Split Reference*
 - GREENSTONE->jadite, nephrite
 - TUATARA->two different species of
- *Partial Reference*
 - MAMMALS->dogs, whales
- *Full Reference*
 - WATER->water

Different Kinds of Categories

- ***Essential Kinds***
 - Water, Gold - intrinsic
- ***Biological Kinds***
 - Lion, Tiger - relational historical
- ***Behavioral Kinds***
 - Property clusters of behaviours / symptoms / properties
- ***Neurological Kinds***
 - Biological kinds (current functions maybe)
- ***Mental Kinds***
 - Biological kinds (current functions maybe)

Different Kinds of Categories

- ***Socially Constructed Kinds***
 - Pens, chairs, that they are made by agents with certain intentions is necessary for category membership
- ***Explicit Looping Kinds***
 - Members of Parliament, Licensed dog owner, agents social practices are necessary for category membership and the social practices need to be sustained for category membership
- ***Implicit Looping Kinds***
 - Demonic possession, Multiple Personality Disorder, agents intentions and social practices necessary and sustaining cause BUT
- *cannot survive our realization of their status as a looping kind*

The Stabilizing Effect of Looping Kinds

- Clinician's belief that the concept applies to the individual lead to implicit or explicit expectations of behavioral symptoms
- This changes the way the clinician relates to the individual
- Individual applies concept to self
- This results is the individual coming to exhibit stereotypical symptoms of the category

The Destabilizing Effect of Looping Kinds

- Our conception changes over time due to a variety of pressures including political ideology, theory development etc.
- Examples Hacking offers include how many personalities (two or several or over one hundred), one or two way amnesia, reports of childhood abuse etc.

If we Come to Believe a Category is a Looping Kind

- Our social practices may not change because they might serve other useful functions (would this then be regarded as implicit or explicit?)
- Change in social practice may not lead to change in properties. They would be like artifacts where social practices may have been causally necessary but social practices aren't a sustaining cause (aren't constitutive)
- The behavioral symptoms are no longer found (Hacking's prediction)

- *If we found that looping kinds are the kinds that mental disorders often are then what are the consequences for the science of psychiatry?*