

CHAPTER 8

- Reading 8.1 **Jaspers, K. ([1913b] 1974) Causal and 'meaningful' connections between life history and psychosis.** Translated with an introduction and postscript by J. Hoenig. In Hirsch, S.R. and Shepherd, M. (Eds) *Themes and Variations in European Psychiatry*. Bristol: Wright. (Extract page 80–93.)
- Reading 8.2 **Jaspers, K. (1968). The phenomenological approach in psychopathology.** *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 114: 1313–1323.
- Reading 8.3 **Jaspers, K. ([1913b] 1942) *General Psychopathology*.** Baltimore: John Hopkins, University Press. (Extract, pages 58–59, of 1997, The John Hopkins University press edition.)

Reading 8.1

EXERCISE 3

Long Extract from: Jaspers, K. ([1913b]1974) Causal and 'meaningful' connections between life history and psychosis. Translated with an introduction and postscript by J. Hoenig. In Hirsch, S.R. and Shepherd, M. (Eds) *Themes and Variations in European Psychiatry*. Bristol: Wright. (Extract page 80–93.)

In a footnote Jaspers said: 'My article of 1913 ("Kausale und verständliche Zusammenhänge zwischen Schicksal u. Psychose bei der Dementia praecox (Schizophrenie)", *Z. Neurol.*, vol. 14, pp. 158–263), and this present book (*General psychopathology*, 1913) were greeted as something radically new, although all I had done was to link psychiatric reality with the traditional humanities. Looking back now, it seems astonishing that these had been so forgotten and grown so alien to psychiatry. In this way within the confines of psychopathology there grew a methodical comprehension of something which had always been present, but which had been fading out of existence and which appeared in striking reverse, "through the looking-glass" as it were, in Freud's psychoanalysis; a misunderstanding of itself. The way was clear for scientific consciousness to lay hold on human reality and on man's mental estate, his psychoses included, but there was an immediate need to differentiate the *various modes of understanding*, clarify them and embody them in all the *factual content* available to us.'

What Jaspers had done and what he characterizes in these modest words was indeed a fundamental contribution to psychiatry, rescuing it from the dilemma of a medical discipline which has to rely on the biological sciences as well as on the behavioural sciences and the humanities, and which had not been able to emancipate itself from the nineteenth-century approach and had not yet developed the methodological clarity which its position required. In his *General psychopathology* Jaspers has given psychiatry this foundation and his work can be seen as the basis on which modern psychiatry stands.

In the first part of this paper on 'Causal and "meaningful" connexions between life history and psychosis', which has so far never been available in English, Jaspers outlines the differences between the two methods of approach used in clinical psychiatry and psychiatric research, and applies them to the investigation of the syndrome of schizophrenia. The clarity with which the methodological aspects are analysed has not been surpassed by anything written since then.

J. HOENIG

Causal and 'Meaningful' Connections between Life History and Psychosis, Karl Jaspers.

Meaningful connexions are something entirely different from causal connexions. For example, we *understand* meaningfully a particular act in terms of motivations but we *explain* a movement causally in terms of nerve stimuli. We *understand* how moods arise out of affective states, the states of mind arise out of certain

hopes, fantasies, and fears; we *explain* how changes in memory arise from fatigue or recovery from it, and so on. Understanding of psychic material as it arises from other psychic material one also calls 'psychological explanation', and the natural scientist, who is concerned only with what can be perceived by the senses and with causal explanations, expresses an understandable and justified disinclination towards the psychological explanation where it is used to take the place of his own work. The meaningful connexions of psychical events have also been called 'causality from the inside', and this term has characterized the unbridgeable gulf which exists between this which can be called 'causal' only as an analogy and the *real* causal connexions, the 'causality from outside'.

Any analysis of the meaningful and of the causal explanations which emerge from research into man will reveal complex interactions between the two, but meticulous methodological reflection can nevertheless enable a clear-cut differentiation to be made between them. In this essay we shall not try to deal with this in detail. We shall rather attempt to isolate causal and meaningful connexions in certain concrete cases. Only the evidence of concrete material can show whether, and to what extent, understanding what is the so-called 'psychological explaining' can advance our insight. Here we want to add some concrete material. We cannot do this, however, without first defining quite briefly, in the form of a thesis, the methodology involved in this type of research and, in doing so, give definite concepts to the words we use.¹

Methodological survey

We have no intention here to convert scientists who use different approaches. We only want to clarify tentatively certain methodological principles underlying our work and that of those who are working on similar lines. The apodictic form used in this essay is to be understood in this sense only, as without it we could not have achieved the required brevity.

1. Outer and inner sense

We wish to compare, and this is indeed a comparison only, the existence of the outer world perceived by our sense organs with the existence of the inner world which is not perceived by the senses. Plants, animals, and all other objects we can concretely perceive and individually describe, and can link these sensory data and show how they hang together by explanations, by causal thinking. We can similarly present vividly to ourselves separately and describe in detail psychic states, various psychic data, experiences, modes of awareness (e.g., images, thoughts, feelings, pseudo-hallucinations, delusion-like ideas, instinctual feelings, etc.). Further, we can *understand* psychic connexions: understand how psychic events can emerge out of other psychic material, e.g., how behaviour arises out of motives, how moods and effects emerge out of

¹ From the literature Simmel's (1903–6), 'Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie', Chap. 1, and Max Weber, Roscher, Knies and others in Schmoller's *Yearbooks*, vols. 27, 29, 30, are particularly noteworthy.

situations and experiences. In this comparison the sensory perception is analogous to the vivid representation of psychic data. Causal explanation is analogous to psychological understanding. As both these means of describing psychic life are called 'understanding', we have to distinguish between them by calling the understanding of states 'static' understanding and that of connexions 'genetic' understanding. The representation, definition, description, and ordering of psychic states is the task of phenomenology;² on the other hand, the comprehension with conviction of psychic connexions is the concern of the psychology of meaning.

2. Genetic understanding

There are many ways of understanding how psychic events arise out of other psychic events. The first important differentiation was made by Simmel, who showed the difference between the understanding of *what has been said* from understanding the *speaker*. When the contents of thoughts emerge one from the other in accordance with the rules of logic, we understand the connexions *rationally*. But if we understand the content of the thoughts as they have arisen out of the moods, wishes, and fears of the person who thought them, we understand the connexions psychologically or empathically. Only the latter can be called 'psychological understanding'. Rational understanding always only enables us to say that a certain rational complex, something which can be understood without any psychology whatever, was the content of a mind; empathic understanding, on the other hand, leads us into the psychic connexions themselves. Whereas the rational understanding is only an *aid* to psychology, empathic understanding *is* psychology itself.

3. Psychology of meaning and performance psychology

The psychology of meaning has entirely different tasks from those of performance psychology which has mainly emerged from physiology. Neither really interferes with the other, and neither has the right to criticize the other, as they pursue entirely different aims. Performance psychology, which can only yield results by experiments, proceeds in such a way that it presents tasks to the experimental persons and then assesses the responses by a variety of measurements. The influence of various factors on performance is systematically investigated by changing the conditions of the experiments and in this way complex performances are slowly analysed into their elementary components; the various causes of how they come about are determined and theories are formulated about causal connexions—of memory, of perception, of the extent of awareness, of working ability, and so on; all proceed in principle in the same way and have created in the course of

decades a valuable body of physiological psychology underrated in its value only by workers in the humanities who, quite wrongly, took the psychology of meaning for the only valid method.³ This performance psychology does not even *want* to understand anything. It does not *try* to feel itself in any way into the psyche, but treats in essence the entire psychophysical mechanism as if it were an organism without a psyche, the functions of which are simply to be investigated. As *objective psychology* (in contrast to subjective psychology), i.e., the *psychology* of meaning and phenomenology, it is capable of reaching extraordinarily exact results but by the same token, by its very nature, it never can give an answer to the questions of phenomenology and of the psychology of meaning. Just as it is wrong when some humanists look deprecatingly on performance psychology as such, thus it is also wrong for natural scientists, who recognize only sensory data, experiments, and statistics, to do the same about the psychology of meaning. The two research methods have entirely different aims. Mistakes only arise when they try to replace each other and try, mistakenly, to translate matters belonging to the one field into the other.

4. The evidence of genetic understanding

The basis from which this evidence is derived is demonstrated, for example, when Nietzsche convincingly makes us understand how, out of the awareness of weakness, wretchedness, and suffering, moral principles, moral demands, and a religion of deliverance can arise because the psyche, via this roundabout way, wants to satisfy its will to power in spite of its weakness; we experience immediate evidence which we cannot reduce further nor base on any kind of other evidence. All psychology of meaning is based on such evidential experiences which we have in relation to quite impersonal, detached, meaningful connexions. Such evidence is gained *while* we gather experience in our contact with human personalities but is not gained *through* such experiences and is *never* inductively proved by repetitions of such experiences. Its power of conviction rests entirely in itself. To accept this type of evidence is a precondition of the psychology of meaning, in exactly the same way as acceptance of perceptual reality and causality are preconditions of the natural sciences.

The question of the psychological genesis of such evidence is outside the methodology of our subject in exactly the same way as the genesis of perception, or of the evidence which underlies a conviction arising out of a causal connexion, is entirely outside its concern, but is in fact the precondition of the natural sciences. The question of how the genesis of evident understanding comes about is being tackled in the 'psychology of empathy'. Here, in the context of methodology, this question is not of interest to us. We should like to emphasize, however, that the view that evident

² Phenomenology was developed by Husserl (*Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. 2). For our purpose here compare my essay 'The phenomenological approach in psychopathology', 1968, *Br. J. Psychiat.*, 114, 1313–1323 (in translation).

³ Experimental psychology has with Külpe's school developed in an entirely new direction beyond performance psychology, by systematic self-observations during the experiments which advance phenomenology. Performance psychology demands experiments. But by no means all experiments serve exclusively the aims of performance psychology, although most of them do.

understanding is not something ultimate but can be based on repetitive experience is just as wrong and just as much to be opposed as the opinion that the evidence based on the principle of causality can be derived from empathic experience. Such an opinion would be wrong even if in a particular case the psychological genesis of evidence should point to repeated experience.

5. The evidence of understanding and its relationship to reality: understanding and interpreting

When Nietzsche tries to apply the connexion (which in itself is meaningful and convincing) between awareness of weakness and morality to the actual particular historical events of the origin of Christianity, it is possible that such an application to a particular case can be wrong in spite of the correctness of the general (ideal, typical) understanding of that connexion. The judgement whether a meaningful connexion really has application to a particular case does not rest only on how self-evident this connexion is but most of all on the objective material of perceptible, tangible clues (verbal contents, creative works of all kinds, behaviour, conduct of life, movements of expression) each of which is understood individually but which altogether always remain to a certain extent incomplete. All understanding of individual actual events therefore remains more or less an interpretation which can reach a high level of completeness only in rare cases. These matters become clearest in a comparison between the relationship of the laws of causality and that of the evidently meaningful connexions to reality. The laws of causality are simply laws which have been gained by inductive methods and culminate in theories which surmise something which underlies the immediately given reality. A particular case will be subsumed under these laws under these theories. Meaningful connexions are ideally typical connexions.⁴ They are self-evident (not arrived at by induction) and do not lead to theories; they remain only a kind of model by which particular real events can be assessed and recognized as being more or less understandable. Meaningful connexions are sometimes presented wrongly as laws or rules by stating the frequency with which such a meaningful connexion occurs and how often it can be counted. Its evidence, however, is in no way increased by such frequency. Not the meaningful connexion itself but its frequency is inductively established. As an example the frequency of the meaningful connexion between the price of bread and theft has been established. The meaningful connexion between autumn weather and suicide is in no way confirmed by the suicide curve which is highest in spring but that does not mean that this meaningful connexion is wrong. A particular real event can be the occasion which helps us to fully grasp a meaningful connexion, but the frequency of that event does not add anything to the evidence which we have thus gained. To find such frequencies serves entirely different

purposes. In principle it is quite thinkable that, for instance, a poet may convincingly represent meaningful connexions which in reality have never occurred. They are unreal but nevertheless possess their general evidence in the ideal typical sense.

6. The limits of understanding and the universal application of explaining

The suggestive assumption that the psychic is the area of meaningful understanding and the physical that of causal explanation is wrong. There is no real event, be it of physical or of psychic nature, which is not in principle accessible to causal explanation: the psychic events too can be submitted to causal explanation. Such causal explanation has already shown successful beginnings for instance in the psycho-physiological investigations about the origin of sense perceptions, or in the discoveries about the relationship between the speech function and certain centres in the central nervous system, etc. The effect a psychic state may have could in principle lend itself to a causal explanation, while the psychic state itself of course must be phenomenologically (statistically) understood. It is not absurd to think that it might one day be possible to have some rules which could causally explain the sequence of meaningfully connected thought processes without paying heed to the meaningful connexions between them. In such cases the meaning of the connexion of these psychic events would be just as irrelevant and accidental for the causal explanation as, in another case, is the lack of meaning. It is therefore in principle not at all absurd to try to understand as well as to explain one and the same real psychic event. These two established connexions, however, are of entirely different origin and have entirely different kinds of validity. They do not help each other in any way at all. The explanation does not make the connexion more meaningful, the understanding does not add to its explanation. The understanding as well as the explanation are each totally separable.⁵ In fact there is no single event known to us which, in this sense, cannot be understood as well as explained. To find such an event is an infinitely remote problem. It is an entirely different matter that in almost all psychological investigations understanding and explaining go hand in hand. This combination of methods is indispensable for psychology, but in no case do the understanding and the explanation, coming as they do from different sides, converge on one and the same real aspect of the complex psychic event under study.

Whereas with the method of causal explanation in principle we nowhere encounter barriers but can gain new ground in all directions and without limitation, with understanding we encounter limitations everywhere. The existence of psychic dispositions, the rules of acquiring or losing memory traces, the succession of psychic constitutions which correspond to the different stages of growth and age, and all the rest which we can summarize as the substrate of the psychic, all these are limitations to our understanding. In a mythological age man thought they could understand

⁴ Concerning the concept of the ideal type see Max Weber (1904), 'Die Objektivität sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozial politischer Erkenntnis', *Arch. Sozialw.*, 19.

⁵ These matters are convincingly presented by Max Weber.

Donar in thunder and lightning. There were authors who still believed that everything psychic is understandable. Now we know that only certain aspects of the psyche are accessible to understanding. The question to what extent these limitations are already defined we shall discuss under the heading of 'Understanding and the unconscious' which will follow the brief description of the various types of causal explanation in psychology.

7. The varieties of causal explanation in psychology

Causal research using inductive methods looks for laws which govern the connexions. In a primitive form one finds simple rules by regarding one event as cause and the other as effect, as for instance a certain affective state resulting from the presence of alcohol in the body. In its perfected form causal *equations* are formulated on the basis of established theories (for instance the atomic theory in chemistry). In psychology only the former level need be considered. Here we do not possess any far-reaching established theories but use quite diverse material as elements of causal thinking, whether we consider them as cause or as effect. These elements are established according to the prevailing research possibilities and according to the *ad hoc* research purpose. The types of causal thinking employed in psychology vary with the type of elements used. In order to provide such elements for the purpose of causal research, phenomenology and meaningful psychology with their entire conceptualization move into the realm of causal thinking. Phenomenological elements, for instance an hallucination or a particular mode of perception, are explained by bodily processes. Meaningful connexions of a quite complex kind are regarded as single elements; for instance, a manic syndrome with all its contents is explained as the effect of a cerebral process or as a meaningless effect of an emotional upset such as the death of a close person. Even the infinite whole of all meaningful connexions in a particular individual which we call personality can under certain circumstances in the course of causal investigations be regarded as a single element, the causation of which might be investigated on lines of heredity. In all such *causal* investigations of phenomenological elements or meaningful connexions, we have to surmise something *extra-conscious* underlying them, and have to operate with such concepts as 'extra-conscious dispositions', 'Anlagen', 'psychic constitutions', and 'extra-conscious mechanisms'. These concepts, however, cannot be developed into all-embracing theories in psychology but only be used for the investigation in hand as far as they are useful for that particular purpose.

8. Understanding and the unconscious

In essence all *causal* investigations try to penetrate into the *extra-conscious* basis of the psyche. Initially it may appear that all phenomenology and all psychology of meaning are exclusively concerned with *what is conscious*. This dichotomy is in fact valid. For phenomenology and the psychology of meaning, however, it

is never absolutely clear where exactly the *borders of awareness* lie. They both seem to gain new ground the farther they try to penetrate. Phenomenology may describe modes of psychic existence which have previously been *unnoticed*, and the psychology of meaning may grasp psychic connexions which have until then been hidden such as when it understands certain moral views as reactions to an awareness of weakness, powerlessness, and wretchedness. Thus every psychologist notices in himself that his psychic life becomes clearer and clearer to him, that he becomes aware of previously unnoticed things, and that he never knows for certain whether he has reached the ultimate limits of his self-understanding.

It is absolutely wrong when *this* kind of unawareness, which is turned into knowledge by phenomenology and psychology of meaning, is confused with the really unconscious, the essentially *extra-conscious*, which can never enter awareness. The unconscious in the sense of 'unnoticed' is in fact experience. The unconscious in the sense of the extra-conscious is *never* actually experienced. We would do well to call the unconscious in the first sense ordinarily *unawareness* and the unconscious in the second sense *extra-conscious*.⁶

It has always been the task of psychology to bring what has been unnoticed into clear awareness. The evidence of such insights has always been maintained by the fact that everyone could also observe the same thing in himself and would be able under favourable circumstances to really experience it. There are, however, a number of things which, on reflection, we *cannot* understand in terms of real experiences but which we nevertheless feel we can understand. For instance, Charcot and Möbius point out how the extent of hysterical disturbances of sensation or movement coincide with crude physiological and anatomical notions held by the patient and how they could be understood in this way. One could never prove that such ideas were actually the starting point of the disorder, except in cases of suggestion; nevertheless, one could understand the disorder 'as if' it were determined by such a conscious event. It must, however, remain open whether such cases really do have their origin in such unnoticed but real psychic events which could never be demonstrated, or whether one is dealing here only with an apt characterization of certain symptoms by a fiction. Freud, who described such 'as if understood' phenomena in large numbers, compares his activity with that of an archaeologist who interprets human cultural activities of past eras with the help of a number of unearthed fragments.

The big difference, however, is that the archaeologist interprets what has really been there at one time, whereas in the 'as if understanding' the reality of what has been understood is an entirely open question.

The psychology of meaning therefore has possibilities of extensive growth by bringing material of which one has been unaware into clear consciousness. Whether by an 'as if understanding' it can also penetrate into the extra-conscious must always remain

⁶ See Hellpach, 'Unbewusstes oder Wechselwirkung', *Z. Psychol.*

dubious. Whether the fiction of 'as if understanding' can be useful to characterize certain phenomena is a question which can never be answered in general but only for each particular case.

9. The tasks of psychology of meaning

The formulation of meaningful connexions which have everyday familiarity for everyone and are reflected in everyday language would only produce trivialities. The real task of psychology of meaning is the extension of our understanding beyond this already well-known material into the hitherto unobserved, and further into quite unusual connexions (as, e.g., sexual perversions and their links with other instinctual drives), and finally into the demonstration of meaningful connexions emerging in psychotic states, which may at first glance appear to be quite senseless.

10. Understanding and value judgement

It is a fact that when dealing with meaningful connexions as such we inevitably tend to value positively or negatively, while everything meaningless we merely value, if we do so at all, only in relation to something else. Thus the emergence of moral demands from resentment we may value as something despicable, whereas we value memory merely as a tool. In the *science* of psychology, however, we must strictly refrain from any such value judgement. Our task is merely to grasp the meaningful connexions as such and to recognize them. Quite naturally sometimes it may appear 'as if' we were making a value judgement when in a particular case we point out a meaningful connexion. This appearance comes about because meaningful connexions as such are always immediately valued negatively or positively. We cannot get away entirely from this misleading appearance. Besides, correct value judgement rests on correct understanding, and since correct understanding is rare and so difficult to come by, it can really only be relied on to any extent in people with a special gift and after a deliberate and reflective study of the methodology. Value judgements by most people are usually wrong; they depend on accident and are arrived at by methods which are far from pure.

Since everyone likes to be judged favourably they usually only feel themselves properly 'understood' if the result is such a favourable valuation. Hence common usage takes the word 'understand' frequently to be identical with 'favourably judged' and negatively valued persons, particularly in situations where their negative value becomes obvious, say they cannot find 'understanding' and always feel themselves 'not understood'.

11. The present achievements of the psychology of meaning

With every analysis of an individual personality or of a definite piece of behaviour something can be achieved for the psychology of meaning. What has not been derived from such individual analyses, but was achieved by the uncovering of meaningful connexions of a general nature, has never been brought about by

planned methodical research but in the form of essays, reflections, or aphorisms, and here the acquisition of psychology of meaning is almost always diluted with value judgement and 'worldly wisdom'. Nevertheless, the unique value of such contributions remains. Meaningful connexions, as far as they are new and convincing, have always been discovered through the intuition of exceptional persons. From them flows directly or indirectly, handed down through secondary sources, most of our conscious knowledge of meaningful human psychic life. After a few ancient antecedents (Theophrastus's characters) outstanding contributions came particularly from the French: Montaigne, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Vauvenargues, and Chamfort. Entirely unique and the greatest of all subjective psychologists is Nietzsche (in particular his books *Human all too human; Dawn; Happy science; About the genealogy of morality*).

Within psychiatry, the psychology of meaning has always been active. On the one hand it was applied far too widely in the earlier teachings of 'The psychic causes' of mental illnesses. On the other hand, particularly recently when there has been a decrease in the general level of acquaintance with the humanities, it has become crude, oversimplified, and latterly there has even been the wish to eliminate it completely. It has always had a particular importance in France. At this time Janet is its most eminent representative. In German psychiatry the psychology of meaning has in our time taken a new step forward with the writings on the reactive psychosis (Bonhoeffer, Wilmanns, Birnbaum, and others) which was investigated particularly in the abnormal states found in prisoners in remand or penal institutions. It has also been developed in the study of the psychopathic personalities, hysterical personality, etc.; on the whole, however, the quality has remained rather poor.

Simultaneously with these endeavours in psychiatry, Freud's psychological teachings were developed in a certain sense as a reaction to the earlier extreme somatic orientation in research. In the number of its collaborators and the mass of publications this school has achieved an unrivalled success. Not only because of this success, however, but much more because of the extraordinarily interesting contents of these teachings, no psychopathologist can ignore it. Unfortunately at present the situation is that the majority are either Freudians or anti-Freudians instead of engaging in a critical evaluation of the particular achievements, and selecting what is sound and convincing. The one group takes over the teachings unconditionally lock, stock, and barrel and the other rejects it all out of hand. Amongst the outstanding researchers who have accepted essential parts of Freud's teaching is Bleuler. Bleuler is one of the few who maintains a critical attitude.⁷ We too have tried to contribute to those parts which make sense to us, and have endeavoured to arrive at a critical position which

⁷ Bleuler's *Schizophrenia* (transl. 1952), to which we shall come back in more detail later, is a psychiatric book about psychoses in the narrow sense, which at long last shows again how to use psychology of meaning in the analysis of these psychoses. It is full of excellent observations. While rich in detail, however, it contains as a whole errors due to a lack of methodological clarity, due to too many repetitions and due to wrong, or at least very debatable, general psychological and philosophical opinions, presented rather dogmatically.

we should like to present here briefly, and which is based on earlier methodological comments:

- a. In Freud's work we are dealing in fact with *psychology of meaning*, not *causal explanation* as Freud himself thinks. Causal explanations are involved when the physical basis is regarded as the cause of an entire meaningful connexion, as for instance in the paralysis of an arm, the clouding of consciousness, etc.
- b. Freud teaches us many new individual meaningful connexions and does it in a convincing way. We understand how complexes repressed into unawareness re-emerge in symbolic form. We understand the reaction-formation to repressed instinctual drives, the differentiation between the primary real psychic events from the secondary ones which are merely symbols or sublimations. Freud takes up Nietzsche's teachings and develops them in detail. He penetrates deeply into the unnoticed parts of psychic life which through him is brought into clear consciousness.
- c. The confusion of meaningful connexions with causal connexions is the basis of the incorrect Freudian postulate that every aspect and event in psychic life can be understood (is meaningfully determined). However, it is only the postulate of unlimited causality, not the postulate of unlimited meaningfulness, which is justifiable. Associated with this error there is another one. Freud proceeds from meaningful connexions to theories about the causes of the entire psychic process. While understanding, by its very nature, can never lead to general theory, causal research must always do so. (The tentative interpretation of an individual psychic event—and only such individual interpretations are justifiable—is, of course, not a general theory.)
- d. In many cases in Freud's work we are not dealing with 'understanding' and the raising into full consciousness of unnoticed connexions, but with an 'as if understanding' of extra-conscious connexions. If one considers that psychiatrists, when faced with an acute psychosis, may see nothing but confusion, performance defects or meaningless delusions while orientation is intact, it must appear as a step forward if one succeeds initially by 'as if understandable' connexions to characterize and order something out of such chaos (for instance the delusional contents in dementia praecox). It was equally a step forward earlier when the type of distribution of hysterical sensory and motor disturbances could be characterized in terms of the meaningful connexion with the crude anatomical ideas entertained by patients. In particular, the investigations of Janet show that the splitting off of psychic connexions can, in fact, exist in hysteria. In extreme cases one is dealing with two minds or two psyches in one and the same individual, one not knowing anything of the other. In such factual dissociations the 'as if understanding' assumes real significance. It is impossible to prove how far and how often such dissociations occur (Janet's cases are very rare), or whether in dementia praecox such dissociations really exist (as for instance Jung and Bleuler teach). One might do well to reserve a final judgement. The Freudian workers with their rash

assumptions of dissociations are in any case rather lacking in caution and the 'as-if-understandable' connexions, which for instance Jung thought he had shown in dementia praecox, are to a large extent not very convincing.

- e. An error in the Freudian teaching consists in the increasing simplification of his understanding which is connected with the transformation of meaningful connexions into general theories. Theories tend to simplification. Understanding finds infinite variety and complexity. Now Freud believes that nearly everything in the psychic life can be traced back meaningfully to sexuality, viewed in the broad sense as the only primary force. The writings of many of his pupils become unbearably boring because of this over-simplification. One always knows in advance that every paper will contain the same conclusion. Here the psychology of meaning no longer advances or no longer makes any progress.

It is not the object of our methodological comments to prove anything but simply to explain our position and the terminology which we shall use from now on. In the following essay we shall endeavour to investigate the meaningful connexions between the life history and certain acute psychoses, the particular characteristics of which, among the other active psychoses, we would like to determine here. In order to clarify this, we need yet a second condition, namely a conceptual clarification of the teaching of the reactive psychoses.

Postscript

There follows the second part of the paper called 'The precept of the reactive psychoses', which applies the foregoing general principles to the clinical study of psychotic illnesses and gives the extensive case histories of four patients illustrating the newly evolved methods.

The concept of the 'reactive psychoses' has recently become of topical interest during the discussions sponsored by the World Health Organization to evolve an international classification of psychiatric disorders when the Scandinavian participants argued for the inclusion of 'reactive psychosis' as a diagnostic entity. (See p. 97ff.)

Careful reading of Jaspers' paper, which is the reference for the Scandinavian diagnostic usage, shows that he did not consider the 'reactive psychosis' to be a diagnostic entity, but that he was concerned with methodological problems of clinical studies. Whereas psychoanalysis, newly introduced at the time, was using the method of meaningful understanding and mistakenly considering this to encompass the entire psychosis, thereby over-extending the method, much orthodox psychiatry with its biological approach was concerned with the 'process' and neglected the study of the meaningful aspects of these illnesses. Jaspers' striving for methodological clarification tried to define the scope and the limitation of each of these methods, thus creating the space in which each of them could legitimately be exercised.

J. HOENIG

Reading 8.2**EXERCISE 5**

Full article: Jaspers, K. (1968). The phenomenological approach in psychopathology. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 114: 1313–1323.

Editorial Note: This article was originally published in the *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie* in 1912 (Vol. 9, pp. 391–408). We give it here in translation (on the initiative of Dr. J. N. Curran), in view of the present interest in Professor Jaspers's work and in phenomenology in general.

The subjectivity of psychic events

In the examination of a psychiatric patient it is usual to distinguish between objective and subjective symptoms. Objective symptoms include all concrete events that can be perceived by the senses, e.g. reflexes, registrable movements, an individual's physiognomy, his motor activity, verbal expression, written productions, actions and general conduct, etc.; all measurable performances, such as the patient's capacity to work, his ability to learn, the extent of his memory, and so forth, also belong here. It is also usual to include under objective symptoms such features as delusional ideas, falsifications of memory, etc., in other words the rational contents of what the patient tells us. These, it is true, are not perceived by the senses, but only understood; nevertheless, this "understanding" is achieved through rational thought, without the help of any empathy into the patient's psyche.

Objective symptoms can all be directly and convincingly demonstrated to anyone capable of sense-perception and logical thought; but subjective symptoms, if they are to be understood, must be referred to some process which, in contrast to sense-perception and logical thought, is usually described by the same term, "subjective". Subjective symptoms cannot be perceived by the sense-organs, but have to be grasped by transferring oneself, so to say, into the other individual's psyche; that is, by empathy. They can only become an inner reality for the observer by his participating in the other person's experiences, not by any intellectual effort. Subjective symptoms include all those emotions and inner processes, such as fear, sorrow, joy, which we feel we can grasp immediately from their physical concomitants; these we thus take to "express" the underlying emotion. Then there are all those psychic experiences and phenomena which patients describe to us and which only become accessible to us at secondhand through the patient's own judgment and presentation. Lastly, subjective symptoms also include those mental processes which we have to infer from fragments of the two previous kinds of data, manifested by the patient's actions and the way he conducts his life.

It is usual to connect with this classification into objective and subjective symptoms a very definite contrast of values. According to this, only the objective symptoms offer certainty; they alone form a basis for scientific study, whereas subjective symptoms,

though we cannot easily do without them for our preliminary assessments, are considered to be quite unreliable for making final judgments and unfruitful for the purpose of any further scientific investigation. There is a widespread desire to base our study of mental disorder on objective symptoms alone and ideally to disregard subjective symptoms altogether. This is a viewpoint which has its adherents—not all equally consistent—in psychology, just as it has in psychiatry. An "objective psychology" is set up in opposition to "subjective psychology". The former claims to concern itself with objective data only; its natural consequence is *psychology without a psyche*. The supporters of the latter (who, it should be said, have never failed to recognize the real but different values of the former) take into account self-observation, subjective analysis, the determination of the different modes of psychic life and of the specific nature of its phenomena, and ascribe value to such investigations even if they are made in the absence of any objective criteria. As examples of objective psychology we may cite the whole field of sense-perception, mnemometrics, performance curves and their components. The last will serve here to illustrate the fact that such investigations do lead quite systematically to the elimination of everything that can be called mental or psychic. It is not the feeling of fatigue but "objective fatigue" which is being investigated. All such concepts as fatiguability, the power of recovery, learning ability, practice, the effects of rest periods, etc., refer to performances that can be measured objectively, and it does not matter whether one is dealing here with a machine, a live but mindless organism, or a human being endowed with a mind. Nevertheless, those who claim to be purely objective investigators do quite frequently make a secondary use of subjective psychic phenomena to further their interpretations of objective performances, and make comparisons possible—and, of course, they have every right to do so. But when this happens, they are making use of "subjective psychology", with which this paper is to deal. Now, there is no doubt that objective psychology produces results which are more obvious, more convincing, and easier for everyone to grasp than does subjective psychology. But whereas the difference in *degree* of certainty is simply quantitative, when it comes to the *kind* of certainty, the difference is qualitative and fundamental. This is so because subjective psychology always aims at the final realization of the concepts and ideas which form the inner representation of psychic processes, whereas objective psychology finds its ultimate aim in observation in undisputed fields such as sense-perception and the rational contents of thought and by such means as graphs and statistics.

The systematic study of subjective experience

What then are the precise aims of this much-abused subjective psychology? While objective psychology, by eliminating everything psychic, transforms itself into physiology, subjective psychology wishes to preserve this same psychic life as its object of study. It asks itself—speaking quite generally—what does mental experience depend on, what are its consequences, and what relationships can

be discerned in it? The answers to such questions are its special aims. But in approaching each problem subjective psychologists have to face the need to make clear both to themselves and to others what particular psychic experience is meant, for they are confronted with a manifold diversity of psychic phenomena which cannot be surveyed or investigated as a whole but from which particular elements must be selected for investigation. So before real inquiry can begin it is necessary to identify the specific psychic phenomena which are to be its subject, and form a clear picture of the resemblances and differences between them and other phenomena with which they must not be confused. This preliminary work of representing, defining, and classifying psychic phenomena, pursued as an independent activity, constitutes phenomenology. The difficult and comprehensive nature of this preliminary work makes it inevitable that it should become for the time being an end in itself.

So long as such independent, systematic investigations had not been undertaken, this phenomenological approach remained limited to a number of unconnected opinions based on chance incidents or implications and *ad hoc* constructions; among these some useful pointers can certainly be found, but it is essential that they should be followed up by further research.

Within the sphere of psychological research E. Husserl has taken the first decisive step towards a systematic phenomenology, his predecessors in this having been Brentano and his school and Th. Lipps. In psychopathology, there have been a number of attempts to create a phenomenology,* though there has not yet been constituted a generally recognized field of research intended to prepare the ground systematically for the tasks of psychopathology proper. Since phenomenology does in fact offer a productive field of work in which everyone can take part, some programmatic exposition of its aims and methods seems indicated.

The limitations of empathy

In everyday life no one ever thinks in terms of isolated mental phenomena, whether his own or someone else's. Our inward concern is always with that which is the object of our experience, not with the mental processes which accompany our experiencing. We understand other people, not through considering and analysing their mental life, but by living with them in the context of events, actions and personal destinies. Even when we do on occasion give consideration to mental experience as such, we do this only in a context of causes and effects as understood by us, or else we make a practice of classifying personalities into categories, etc. We never feel prompted to consider a mental phenomenon in isolation, e.g. a perception or a feeling *per se*, and to describe it in terms of its

* Kandinsky's *Kritische und klinische Betrachtungen im Gebiete der Sinnestäuschungen*. Berlin, 1885, is almost entirely phenomenological in character. Oesterreich's *Die Phänomenologie des Ich in ihren Grundproblemen*, Leipzig, 1910, and Hacker's "Systematische Traumbeobachtungen", *Archiv. f. Psych. w. l.* 21.1, 1911, both conduct systematic phenomenological investigations into phenomena particularly vital for psychopathology. I have myself made efforts in this direction in two papers: "Zur Analyse der Trugwahrnehmungen" and "Die Trugwahrnehmungen". (Reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften zur Psychopathologie*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 1963.)

appearance and essence. So with the attitude of a psychiatrist to his patient. He can share the patient's experiences—always provided this happens spontaneously without his having to take thought over it. In this way he can gain an essentially personal, indefinable and direct understanding, which, however, remains for him a matter of pure experience, not of explicit knowledge; he acquires practice in understanding, but does not build up a store of case material—"experience" in the professional sense—which would be more useful to him than mere vague feelings and impressions, and which he could compare, set in order, or subject to tests.

This attitude of mere sympathetic understanding, which can be enormously satisfying to individual personalities—so much so that to one so predisposed this may well become his final professional goal—is, one must admit, "subjective" in a very special sense; and when specific assertions or formulations are made on this basis without any reference to more far-reaching study or to any regular system of concepts this well-grounded conceptualization does indeed deserve to be dismissed as "merely subjective" in a derogatory sense. Assertions of this sort cannot be discussed or verified. We may appreciate this type of understanding; we may admire it for the valuable human qualities which it reveals; but we can never give it recognition as a "science", whether we meet it in the everyday form practised by civilized and cultivated people over the centuries, or in its clinical guise as the instinctive concern of psychiatrists for their patients.

If, however, we still wish to develop a science of psychology, we must realize from the start, on the one hand, that its ideal is a fully conscious understanding of mental processes, one that can be presented in definite terms and forms, in contrast to the vague or unconscious understanding which is reached only in a personal and subjective way through the special attitudes and aptitudes of particular individuals; but we must realize also that psychology cannot hope to approach this scientific ideal; instead it must engage in many promising approaches. These, indeed, open up perspectives, but their ideal solution remains infinitely remote. This is why so many people exercise their personal understanding purely for their own satisfaction, and from the heights of their vague yet penetrating comprehension they look down condescendingly on all attempts to define concepts at a conscious psychological level, dismissing these as innocuous platitudes or trivialities. Yet the fact that only such deliberately made psychological determinations constitute contributions to knowledge gives them from a scientific point of view a unique value—but only from that point of view.

Isolating the phenomena

Now this attitude, which is not satisfied with understanding as mere experience but wishes to promote it to the level of knowledge that can be communicated, investigated and argued about, finds itself faced with an infinity of many-sided psychic phenomena, which are governed by correlations which are still far from clear and whose relations of dependence and consequence have yet to be

elucidated. Without doubt, the first step towards a scientific comprehension must be the sorting out, defining, differentiating and describing of specific psychic phenomena, which are thereby actualized and are regularly described in specific terms.

We must begin with a clear representation of what is actually going on in the patient, what he is really experiencing, how things arise in his consciousness, what are his own feelings, and so forth; and at this stage we must put aside altogether such considerations as the relationships between experiences, or their summation as a whole, and more especially must we avoid trying to supply any basic constructs or frames of reference. We should picture only what is really present in the patient's consciousness; anything that has not really presented itself to his consciousness is outside our consideration. We must set aside all outmoded theories, psychological constructs or materialist mythologies of cerebral processes; we must turn our attention only to that which we can understand as having real existence, and which we can differentiate and describe. This, as experience has shown, is in itself a very difficult task. This particular freedom from preconception which phenomenology demands is not something one possesses from the beginning, but something that is laboriously acquired after prolonged critical work and much effort—often fruitless—in framing constructs and mythologies. When we were children, we first drew things as we imagined them, not as we saw them; so as psychologists and psychopathologists we go through a stage where we form our own ideas, in one way or another, of psychic events, and only later acquire an unprejudiced direct grasp of these events as they really are. And so this phenomenological attitude is to be acquired only by ever-repeated effort and by the ever-renewed overcoming of prejudice.

How then do we proceed when we isolate, characterize and give conceptual form to these psychic phenomena? We cannot portray them, or bring them before our eyes in any way that can be perceived by the senses. We can only guide ourselves and others by a multiple approach. We have to be led, starting *from the outside*, to a real appreciation of a particular psychic phenomenon by looking at its genesis, the conditions for its appearance, its configurations, its context and possible concrete contents; also by making use of intuitive comparison and symbolization, by directing our observations in whatever ways may suggest themselves (as artists do so penetratingly) and by demonstrating already known phenomena which appear to play some part in the formation of the phenomenon studied. All this constitutes an incentive, reinforced by these indirect hints, for others to actualize these phenomena for themselves, while we too are encouraged to make use of our findings in later studies. The more numerous and specific these indirect hints become, the more well-defined and characteristic do the phenomena studied appear. Indeed, this personal effort to represent psychic phenomena to oneself under the guidance of these purely external hints is the condition under which alone we can speak of any kind of psychological work at all.

A histologist will provide an exhaustive description of particular morphological elements, but he will do it in such a way as to make it easier for others to see these elements for themselves, and

he has to presume, or else induce, this “seeing for oneself” in those who really want to understand him. In the same way the phenomenologist can indicate features and characteristics, and show how they can be distinguished and confusion avoided, all with a view to describing the qualitatively separate psychic data. But he must make sure that those to whom he addresses himself do not simply *think* along with him, but that they *see* along with him in contact and conversation with patients and through their own observations. This “seeing” is not done through the senses, but through the understanding. This is something quite special, irreducible and ultimate; and if we are to take even one single step forward in phenomenology we have to train ourselves in it and master it—including such things as “representing data to oneself”, “understanding”, “grasping” or “actualizing”. Only so do we acquire a fruitful critical faculty which will set itself against the framing of theoretical constructions as much as against the barren deadly denial of any possibility of progress. Whoever has no eyes to see cannot practise histology; whoever is unwilling or incapable of actualizing psychic events and representing them vividly cannot acquire an understanding of phenomenology.

The search for irreducible phenomena

This ultimate irreducible quality of psychic phenomena, which can only acquire identical meaning for numbers of people through the incentive and the multiple clues and leads mentioned previously, may already be found in the case of the simplest sensory qualities, such as red, blue, colour, tone; it comes into play also with spatial awareness, object awareness, perception, imagery, thought, etc. In psychopathology we have examples in pseudo-hallucination, the *déjà vu* phenomenon, derealization, heautoscopy, experience of the “double” and so on; though all these terms merely describe groups of psychic phenomena which are in themselves still more subtly differentiated from each other.

For the actualization to ourselves of all these phenomenologically ultimate characteristics, we have such expressions as “seeing”, “viewing”, (“feeling oneself into”, “empathy”, “understanding” and so on. These expressions always denote the kind of ultimate concept-fitting experience which plays the same role in psychology as sensory perception plays in the natural sciences. Just as sense-perceptions are evoked by the demonstration of an object, so this meaningful empathic actualization will be evoked in us by the above-mentioned hints and indications, by our immediate grasp of expressive phenomena and our self-immersion in other people's self-description. From this terminology it follows that empathy and understanding are by no means simple ultimate phenomena in themselves, but probably contain a whole series of elements yet to be defined. In the same way as perception, empathy has its tasks to set: first for phenomenology itself, of which it is the very foundation, and next for the investigation of psychogenesis. At this point we are not concerned with either of these; we need only to note the contribution made to our knowledge by this empathic,

understanding experience, and to raise the question of the reliability of this way of gaining access to the facts. If, on the analogy of perceptual experience, we recognize empathic experience as ultimate, the question can be answered on these lines: in the field of empathic experience the technical means of retaining what has been seen but once, for later comparison and other purposes, are so inadequate that far more difficulties are encountered than in the case of sensory perception. But in principle reliability is established in the same way, i.e. by comparison, repetition and verification of such empathic experiences as reach actualization. In both fields there is much uncertainty; one cannot deny that in the psychological field it is greater than in the natural sciences, but this is only a difference of degree.

Whether we are representing our own past psychic experiences or those of other people is immaterial. The only important difference seems to be between observations which are *systematic, experimental self-observations* of persisting experiences, and those which are ordinary empathic representations. In the investigation of psychopathological phenomena, only the latter can really be considered, since patients can rarely be induced to carry out self-observation in the former sense, and then only in very favourable conditions, in regard to simple disturbances such as agnosias or hallucinations in clear consciousness. However, such empathic representations of phenomena among the mentally ill may well be furthered by concepts that have been won from the more elaborate phenomenological investigations of the former kind.

Methods of phenomenological analysis

The methods by which we carry out a phenomenological analysis and determine what patients really experience are of three kinds: (1) one immerses oneself, so to speak, in their gestures, behaviour, expressive movements; (2) exploration, by direct questioning of the patients and by means of accounts which they themselves, under our guidance, give of their own experiences; (3) written self-descriptions—seldom really good, but then all the more valuable; they can, in fact, be made use of even if one has not known the writer personally. In all these instances we are pursuing phenomenology in so far as we are orientated towards subjective psychic experience and not towards objective manifestations, which in this context are only stages in our journey—the means, not the object, of our investigation. Of all these sources of information, good self-descriptions have the highest value.*

* For those interested, I list a few of the best self-descriptions so far published:

Schreber—*Memoirs of a Neurotic*. Leipzig, 1903.
 Thomas de Quincey—*Confessions of an Opium Eater*. Gérard de Nerval—*Aurélien*.
 J. J. David—"Hallucinations." *Neue Rundschau*, No. 17, 874.
 Kandinsky—"On the study of hallucination." *Archiv. f. Psych.*, 11, 453.
 Klinker—*Fahr. f. Psych.*, 9.
 Kieser—*Allgemeine Zeitschr. f. Psych.*, 10, 423.
 Engelken—*Ibid.*, 6, 586.
 Meinert—*An Alcoholic Madman*. Dresden, 1907.

When, using these methods, we try to come closer to the patient's psychic life, our first impression is of an unsurveyable *chaos* of constantly changing phenomena. Our first aim must be to capture and delimit some particular item and by depicting it to form a conception of it, of which we and others can make permanent use; and we must supply it with a name by which we can always identify it. Psychopathological phenomena seem to call for just such an approach, one which will isolate, will make abstractions from related observations, will present as realities only the data themselves without attempting to understand how they have arisen; an approach which only wants to see, not to explain. Under pathological conditions, numerous psychic phenomena make their appearance without meaningful antecedents; psychologically speaking they emerge from nothing; seen causally they are occasioned by a disease process. Vivid memories of things never experienced; ideas held with a conviction of their truth without any *intelligible* basis for such conviction; moods and emotions appearing spontaneously and not based on any relevant experiences or ideas; all these, and many others, are common examples. These are the objects of phenomenological investigation, which determines and represents them as they actually are.

Three groups of phenomena can be ascertained in this manner. The first consists of phenomena known to us all from our own experience. They come into existence in the same way as the corresponding psychic processes which in normal conditions arise out of others in an intelligible way; they differ only in their mode of origin from phenomena, otherwise quite similar, occurring in the mentally ill, e.g. many falsifications of memory. Next, there are phenomena which are to be understood as exaggerations, diminutions or combinations of phenomena which we ourselves experience, e.g. the ecstasies of some acute psychoses, pseudo-hallucinations, perverted impulses. How far our "understanding" can go in such cases, when we cannot base it on any conscious experiences of a similar kind, is a question that cannot be conclusively answered. Sometimes it seems as if our understanding can go far beyond the possibilities afforded by experiences, even if similar ones, of our own.

The third group of pathological phenomena are distinguished from the two previous groups by their complete inaccessibility to any empathic understanding. We can only get closer to them by means of analogies and metaphors. We perceive them individually, not through any positive understanding of them, but through the shock which the course of our comprehension receives in the face of the incomprehensible. In this group we may perhaps include those "fabricated" thoughts and moods which many patients report as undoubted experiences (passivity experience), but which we can never identify except by using such terms as these, and by a series of observations designed to ascertain what these phenomena are not. Some patients who, notwithstanding their psychosis, have retained the awareness of their normal mental life readily admit

the impossibility of describing their experiences in ordinary language. One patient explained: "Partly one has to do with things which simply cannot be expressed in human language. If I am to be understood, even to some extent, I shall have to use figures of speech and analogies which can do no more than get somewhere near the truth; the only way is to make some comparison with well-known facts of human experience. . . ." In another context: "One has also to consider that it is mostly a matter of visions; I have the images in my head, but it is uncommonly difficult to describe them in words, in part frankly impossible." Some—though not many—of the neologisms coined by patients are based on similar efforts to give a name to their own experiences; one patient sought to describe a sensation he felt in his hip more precisely in this way: When asked whether what he felt was a "twitching", he said: "No, it isn't a twitching, it's a 'plotching'."

From its beginnings, psychiatry has had to concern itself with delimiting and naming these different forms of experience; there could, of course, have been no advance at all without such phenomenological definitions. Delusions, sense-deceptions, depressive and expansive mood changes and much else have thus been described. All of this will remain the foundation for further phenomenological research. Often, however, we have first to clear away a ballast of theories concerning the supposed physical basis or psychological framework of these phenomena. Numerous phenomenological approaches have been smothered almost at once by such theoretical endeavours. We cannot now be satisfied with just a few meagre categories, but will devote ourselves without any preconceptions to the phenomena themselves, and whenever we can identify one we will seek to realize and describe it as completely as possible, without claiming to know in advance what the phenomenon is by virtue of our knowledge of psychology. The current classification of symptoms of insanity into sense-deceptions and delusions may be useful in a rough and ready way, but these terms conceal a hitherto unexplored multitude of diverse phenomena.

A few examples will illustrate the sort of phenomena that can be delimited. Kandinsky gave a description of pseudo-hallucinations, a particular kind of pathological imagery. They differ from normal images in their greater sensory concreteness, clarity and detail, their appearance independently of, and even against, the subject's will, and by the accompanying experience of passivity and receptiveness. On the other hand, they differ both from true hallucination and from normal perception in that they do not appear in external space as perceptions do, but in the internal space in which images also are experienced. This conception of pseudo-hallucinations has been attacked on the grounds of theoretical considerations. However, the problem is purely a phenomenological and descriptive one. It might be possible to represent the reported cases in some other more convincing way; one could adduce other cases (self-descriptions, the results of other investigations); but it is only through clearly realized representations of this kind that Kandinsky's views could be refuted, never by mere

theoretical considerations. The task of phenomenology is an independent one, and awareness of this will guard against criticism based on misunderstanding and hence unproductive.

Again, it is not uncommon for patients to report an experience, of which they are acutely aware, of there being somebody just behind or above them. When they look around, this somebody turns round, too; they "feel" it, there really is somebody there. But they have no sensation of actual contact, or indeed any sensation, nor can they ever come face to face with the supposed person. Some of these patients come to the conclusion that there is nobody there, others remain convinced of the existence of this someone whose presence they feel so vividly. Here it is obviously not a matter of sense-deception, since the sense-element is lacking; nor of a delusional idea, since there is an actual experience which is subjected to an act of judgment, and this judgment may be either correct or delusional. A third example, taken from the emotional sphere, will show how, simply by "sinking" oneself in the individual phenomena without the aid of any theory or system, one can arrive at a representation and delimitation of such phenomena. For instance, one hears of "feelings of ecstasy": among these one can readily distinguish if not different phenomena at least different shades of feeling. We are not here concerned with whether we are right or wrong in any particular instance. One can distinguish in the first place a general enthusiasm, emotion or rapture, embracing everything conceivable; secondly, a deep inner happiness out of which some joy-bringing image will occasionally arise; thirdly, a feeling of exaltation and grace, of holiness and high significance. In order to be of lasting value, such rapidly made differentiations should then be subjected to further phenomenological elaboration.

The methods of psychopathological phenomenology have now been discussed (grasp of expressive movements, exploration of patients' experience, and self-descriptions); also the indirect leads by which we are guided towards our own representation of the phenomena (noting their genesis, the conditions and circumstances under which they appear, their content, any already well-known elements they may contain, the symbolic indications, etc.); and the only question that remains is how we can provide an incentive for others to form their own representations of the phenomena in the light of all that has been brought forward. In a work on phenomenology, therefore, individual cases will be presented, general descriptions will be derived from them, and a terminology will be established. That phenomenology deals only with immediately presented data is no reproach to it, merely the statement of a fact. But it will always be difficult to find how one can lead from the individual case to a more general understanding and a more complete delimitation. It must be borne in mind that the experiences of individual patients are infinitely manifold; that phenomenology only extracts from them some general feature which can be found equally in some other case and therefore can be called the same feature, whereas the infinity of individual experience continues to change. We therefore have the position that on the one

hand phenomenology abstracts from an infinity of constantly changing constituents, and on the other hand is definitely oriented towards the perceptible and the concrete, not the abstract. Only where something can be reduced to “reality” and becomes an immediate datum, i.e. becomes concrete, can it form the subject for phenomenology.

Classifying groups of phenomena

Let us assume that, in the ways described above, a number of phenomena can be delineated and clarified. We now seem to find ourselves once more in the presence of a fresh chaos of innumerable phenomena which have been described and defined, but still cannot satisfy our scientific needs. Delimitation must be followed by the bringing of phenomena into some kind of order, so that we can become aware of the diversity of psychic life in a systematic way, and make it possible to survey them up to the limits we have progressively reached. Phenomena can be arranged in quite different ways according to the purpose one has in view. For example, they can be arranged according to their origin, their physical determinants, their contents, their significance from some particular point of view, such as the logical, ethical or aesthetic. All these principles of classification should be made use of in their rightful place; but for phenomenology itself they are not very satisfactory. We seek a classification which will arrange psychic phenomena according to their phenomenological affinities with each other, somewhat in the way that infinite numbers of colours are arranged in the spectrum in a manner which is phenomenologically satisfying. Now in the present state of phenomenology, it would seem that there exist numerous groups of phenomena between which no relationship can be perceived. Sense-perceptions and ideas, hallucinations and delusions, seem to be phenomena separated by a gulf rather than united by transitions. Such totally unrelated phenomena can only be placed under separate headings and cannot be organized into any particular pattern within the psychic life.

But there are other groups of phenomena which can be related and arranged systematically. Between these, transitions can usually be made out (as between colours). An example of such a systematic arrangement of related phenomena can be given in the case of pseudo-hallucinations. On close consideration of individual cases, it appears that transitions exist between normal imagery and the completely developed pseudo-hallucination (which never becomes substantial but always remains in the internal psychic space, that occupied by imagery). Surveying these phenomena, it is possible to find four main points of contrast, between which they can oscillate through a whole series of transitions. If, then, we can describe each phenomenon in terms of where it can be approximately located in the series, we shall have satisfactorily characterized in phenomenological terms that particular phenomenon, lying as it does somewhere between an

image and a pseudo-hallucination. These four points of contrast are as follows:

<i>Fully-formed pseudo-hallucination</i>	<i>Normal imagery</i>
1. Clear-cut, complete in detail.	1. Vague, incomplete in detail.
2. The sensory elements are each adequately perceived, as in normal perception.	2. A few sensory elements are adequately perceived, or none. e.g. an imagined face is neutral in tone.
3. There is consistency and easy retention.	3. The images dissolve, disperse, have constantly to be recreated.
4. It is involuntary; nothing can be called forth or changed by choice. Associated with feelings of passivity and receptivity.	4. It is volitional; it can be invoked or changed by choice. Feelings are those of activity.

This example, which will not be discussed further here, shows how we set about grouping related phenomena on a purely phenomenological basis, using only those aspects of the phenomena which are really experienced as the points of difference, and excluding any added notions or theories. Further, it shows how vital it is to distinguish between phenomenological *transitions* and phenomenological *gaps*. Transitions will allow us to place phenomena in their order, but where there are gaps we can only enumerate or contrast opposites. It is at the same time evident that to recognize a group of phenomena as a phenomenologically new one, separated by a gap from those already recognized, is something only to be decided after careful consideration of clear evidence. At present, however, when so many people seek to reduce psychic data to the narrowest and simplest terms possible, it is preferable to accept rather too many phenomena—they can be organized later—than to lapse into some shallow psychological system made up of just a few elements.

For while the ideal of phenomenology is an infinity of irreducible psychic qualities, classified and ordered to permit of their survey, there exists another, opposite ideal, that of the fewest possible ultimate elements, as in chemistry. According to this school, all complex psychic phenomena could be derived from such elements, and all psychic phenomena could be satisfactorily presented by breaking them down into those elements. To be consistent, such an attitude must envisage the possibility of making do with a single ultimate psychic atom, everything psychic being built up from varying configurations of this particle. This ideal takes its cue from the natural sciences, and certainly has a meaning in relation to the origins of psychic qualities. Just as the infinite variety of colours can be traced to purely quantitative differences in wave-length, so one could wish to explain the origins of psychic qualities and perhaps establish different classifications on this basis. For phenomenology itself, however, such requirements seem quite pointless. The aim of phenomenological analysis is to increase its awareness of psychic phenomena by clearly delimiting them. As one procedure among others, phenomenology brings to light psychic qualities that appear as constituents of

what is being studied. This breaking down of complex structures into constituents is only one way of proceeding; but those who adopt the point of view already described, which is valid only in relation to the origination of psychic phenomena, speak as if it were the only way. They would, for example, explain perception by analysing it into the elements of sensation, spatial perception and intentional act, whereas true phenomenology would first compare perception with imagery, which is composed of the same elements, and come to the conclusion that perception must be characterized as an irreducible psychic quality. Even when occasionally the conception of “analysis into ultimate elements” does, like that of “analysis as a delimitation of ultimate qualities”, appear to present itself as purely phenomenological and uninfluenced by the genetic point of view, it still tends to relapse at every opportunity into confusion with genetic considerations: once again complex psychic structures are said to arise from combinations of elements. Phenomenology, on the other hand, rejects the ideal of the fewest possible elements; on the contrary it has no wish to restrict the infinite variety of psychic phenomena, only, as far as possible (for the task is, of course, boundless), to try to make them more lucid, precise and individually recognizable at any time.

The boundaries of phenomenology

In the foregoing we have presented, if only in broad outline, the aims and methods of phenomenology, which has, of course, been practised since psychiatry began, but has never yet been given its opportunity for unfettered development. Since it has suffered most harm from being confused with other lines of research, we will briefly restate what it is that phenomenology does *not* intend to pursue, and with what phenomenology should *not* be confused.

Phenomenology concerns itself only with actual experiences, only with the perceptible and concrete, not with any factors that may be thought to underlie psychic events and are the subject of theoretical constructs. For every one of its findings phenomenology must ask: has this actually been experienced? Does this really present itself to the subject’s consciousness? Phenomenological findings derive their validity from the fact that the various elements of the psychic reality can be evoked repeatedly. Its findings can thus only be refuted if the facts of a case have previously been wrongly represented or are not represented correctly; they can never be refuted by demonstrating their impossibility or error on the basis of some theoretical proposition. Phenomenology can gain nothing from theory: it can only lose. The accuracy of a particular representation cannot be checked by its conformity to general criteria; phenomenology must always find its standards within itself.

Phenomenology, then, deals with what is actually experienced. It views psychic events “as from within”, and brings them into immediate realization. It therefore does not concern itself with external manifestations, with motor phenomena, expressive

movements as such, nor with any kind of objective performance. We have already explained to what extent expressive movements and self-descriptions can be used as the means, but not as the subject, of phenomenology.

Further, phenomenology has nothing to do with the genesis of psychic phenomena. Though its practice is a prerequisite for any causal investigation it leaves genetic issues aside, and they can neither refute nor further its findings. Causal studies relating to colour, perception, etc. are alien to it; yet such factual investigations have been less of a danger than those “cerebral mythologies” which have sought to interpret phenomenology and replace it by theoretical constructions of physiological and pathological cerebral processes. Thus Wernicke, who in fact did make important phenomenological discoveries, distorted them by interpretations in terms of “connective fibres”, “sejunctions” and the like. These sort of constructs constantly prevent phenomenological investigations from reaching their proper goal. At first the originators of such constructs must necessarily practise phenomenology, but having reached this theory they feel on safer ground, and with a remarkable failure to recognize their own sources they declare all phenomenological conclusions to be “highly subjective”.

Lastly, phenomenology must be kept separate from what we call the “genetic understanding” of psychic events, i.e. the comprehension of their meaningful relationships. This is a unique form of understanding which only applies to psychic events; it grasps as self-evident how one psychic event emerges from another; how a man attacked should be angry, a betrayed lover jealous. We have made use of the word “understanding” both for the “representations” of phenomenology and for this “grasp” of the psychic connections. To avoid confusion the former is termed “static understanding”; it is the basis on which their definition must rest, and comprehends only data, experiences, modes of consciousness and delimitation. The latter we call “genetic understanding”—the understanding of the meaningful connections between one psychic experience and another, the “emergence of the psychic from the psychic”. Now phenomenology itself has nothing to do with this “genetic understanding” and must be treated as something entirely separate; yet, where required, it may legitimately study regular sequences of psychic events, if these are actually experienced and as such together form a phenomenological unit *sui generis*. An example, perhaps, is the experience of the Will. But such a phenomenological sequence is quite a different thing from a meaningful flow of psychic events emerging one from the other. We restrict phenomenology to whatever can be understood “statically”.

If we look at psychopathology as a whole, obviously our most essential interest lies in what is “genetically understandable”, in extra-conscious causal connections, and in the ascertainment of the physical basis of psychic processes—in other words, in the way things are *related*. Phenomenology only makes known to us the different forms in which all our experiences, all psychic reality, take place; it does not teach us anything about the contents of the personal experience of the individual, nor anything about the

extra-conscious basis on which psychic events seem to float like a thin layer of foam on the surface of the sea. Penetrating these extra-conscious depths will always be more attractive than merely demonstrating phenomenological findings, yet the completion of this latter task is an essential prerequisite for all further investigation. It is only in the setting of these phenomenologically established forms that actual life, accessible to our immediate understanding, unfolds itself; and it is, after all, in order to arrive at a better comprehension of this psychic life that we are prompted to investigate its extra-conscious relationships.

Future tasks for phenomenology

In conclusion we will indicate a few specific tasks for phenomenology. Not one field of psychopathological phenomenology can as yet be regarded as fully worked over. Even where the nature of a phenomenon is apparently clear-cut, as with some kinds of hallucinations, really good case-material that can serve to enlarge and verify one's experience is so scanty that careful and detailed case-descriptions are still of great value. Much work still needs to be done on the different types of hallucination, especially those of the higher senses, which ought to be thoroughly investigated. An obvious instance is the problem of visual hallucinations occurring simultaneously with real perceptions in objective space. The phenomenology of delusional experiences has hardly been treated at all; all that exists so far on this subject is to be found in publications on emotional changes as the first symptom in paranoia. The phenomenology of pathological emotions is unbelievably scanty. The best is contained in the excellent work of Janet,

in which, however, little value is placed on careful delimitation or classification. The subjective experience of one's own personality has been treated systematically by Oesterreich. For all these problems phenomenological descriptions by psychiatrists with material to hand, as well as self-descriptions more penetrating than those so far available, would be of the greatest value.

In histology, when examining the cerebral cortex, one is required to account for every fibre, every nucleus. In the same way phenomenology demands that we should account for every psychic phenomenon and every experience that comes to light in the investigation of our patients or in their own self-descriptions. We should in no circumstances be content with a general impression extracted from the total picture, but should get to know, as regards each detail, how it is to be viewed and assessed. Then, if we practise this method for some time, much will appear less startling to us because it has been frequently observed; whereas those who only go on "general impressions" will not have made themselves aware of the phenomena in question, and so, every time these do come to their notice through the momentary direction of their "impressionability", they will appear as novel and surprising. But the practised phenomenologist will pay attention to what is really new and unknown, and may then be justifiably surprised; one need not be afraid that surprises will ever cease! Needless to say, many psychiatrists already make it their practice to act on these lines and would rightly think it an impertinence if we claimed to be telling them something new. But the phenomenological approach is not yet so widespread as not to require repeated efforts to promote it. One may hope that its application will further enrich our knowledge of what the psychiatric patient really experiences.

Reading 8.3**EXERCISE 6**

Extract from: Jaspers, K. ([1913b]1942) *General Psychopathology*. Baltimore: John Hopkins, University Press. (Extract, pages 58–59, of 1997, The John Hopkins University press edition.)

(b) Form and content of phenomena

The following points are of general application for all the phenomena to be described: Form must be kept distinct from content which may change from time to time, e.g. the fact of a hallucination is to be distinguished from its content, whether this is a man or a tree, threatening figures or peaceful landscapes. Perceptions, ideas, judgments, feelings, drives, self-awareness, are all forms of psychic phenomena; they denote the particular mode of existence in which content is presented to us. It is true in describing concrete psychic events we take into account the particular contents of the individual psyche, but from the phenomenological point of view it is only the form that interests us. According to whether we have the content or the form of the phenomenon in mind, we can disregard for the time being the one or the other—the phenomenological investigation or the examination of content. For patients content is usually the one important thing. Often they are quite unaware of the manner in which they experience it and they muddle up hallucinations, pseudohallucinations, delusional awarenences, etc., because they have never had to differentiate what seems to them so unimportant a matter.

Content, however, modifies the mode in which the phenomena are experienced; it gives them their weight in relation to the total

psychic life and points to the way in which they are conceived and interpreted.

Excursus into form and content. All knowledge involves a distinction between form and content, and throughout psychopathology from the simplest of psychic events right up to the most complex wholes this distinction is in constant use. For example:

1. In all psychic experience there is a *subject* and *object*. This objective element conceived in its widest sense we call psychic content and the mode in which the subject is presented with the object (be it as a perception, a mental image or thought) we call the form. Thus, hypochondriacal contents, whether provided by voices, compulsive ideas, overvalued ideas or delusional ideas, remain identifiable as content. In the same way we can talk of the content of anxiety and other such emotional states.
2. *The form of the psychoses* is contrasted with their *particular content*: e.g. periodic phases of dysphoria are to be contrasted as a form of illness with the particular type of behaviour that furnishes the content (e.g. dipsomania, wandering, suicide).
3. Certain very *general psychic changes*, which can only carry a psychological interpretation, may also be formally conceived, e.g. the schizophrenic or hysteric experience. Every variety of human drive and desire, every variety of thought and phantasy, can appear as content in such forms and find a mode of realisation (schizophrenic, for instance, or hysteric) in them.

Phenomenology finds its major interest in form; content seems to have a more accidental character, but the psychologist who looks for meaning will find content essential and the form at times unimportant.