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The (patho)phenomenology of intuition – An interdisciplinary analysis of narratives of spiritual awakening

Considering the exploration of the role of intuition in spiritual-religious experience, one must address first the fundamental questions: What status do intuitions have in terms of either making one's own or other people's thoughts and actions plausible, and how to prove intuitions to be somehow justifiable? Could it be that intuitive knowledge is a source of motivation not in the absence of "any better knowledge", but perhaps a way of distinguishing the special capacity of adaptive minds: that of predictiveness and doing "the right thing", respectively? And finally, what is the relationship between intuition and factual knowledge?

These central questions were addressed with a preliminary study that focused on the specific role that intuitive knowledge plays in medical understanding. The objective of this analysis has been to present a rationale for the proposition that intuition plays a pivotal role in medical diagnosis and treatment. It has been proposed that predictive sensing is a fundamental structural necessity for different kinds of intuitive processing and the core of empathy, respectively. It has been discussed how diagnostic intuition is coherent with the intersubjectively consensual standards of medical reasoning, i.e., is reappraised in processes of medical (ethical) decision making. The subsequent study on the role of (changes of) intuition in and through spiritual experiences builds up on this: The (patho)phenomenological approach focusses on religiosity and spirituality as catalyst for intra-, inter-, and transpersonal transformation processes in people's lives and institutions. This is examined with a particular view to the risks of a pathologization of intuitive experiences on the one hand, and/or a misrecognition of pathology in spiritual contexts on the other. The focus lies on both the respective (social) embedded conditions as well as on the (patho)phenomenology of spiritual intuition itself. Particular attention is paid to narratives that have (so far) been read primarily as an expression of pathologically altered mental conditions in contrast to narratives that are understood in the respective (subcultural, institutional) spiritual or religious contexts without any critical reflection on psychopathology. The first results of this study have led to a first fine-grained systematization of (changes) of intuitive experiences – particular changes of predictive skills – which raises the awareness to take spirituality more into account in clinical-diagnostic settings. Moreover, this study contributes to the discourse of immanent critique of life-forms: by adopting a philosophical-critical stance on narratives of spiritual awakening, thus prototypical meta-narratives and beliefs (such as "being a chosen one", beliefs in spiritual ascension, self-enhancement and higher consciousness, etc.) specific intra-, inter-, and transpersonal process dynamics (of changes) of meaningful self-and-world-relatedness are currently elaborated, such as its constitutive roles for (group) identities, its (pre)determining the perception of and dealing with factual knowledge, and how this influences (immanent) critical faculties of collectives, thus (basic) social (re)cognition. © KJA 2024

(2) WHAT IS IMPORTANT REGARDING TELLING 'ONES OWN STORY':

A narrative approach is relevant for this study because (1) a series of (clinical) first-person accounts of spiritual experience are systematized that explicitly deal with changes of predictive skills. Additionally, a psychiatric-historical perspective allows the assessment of altered predictive skills and intuitive experience in specific clinical conditions and is useful for the analysis of the intra-, inter- and transpersonal dimensions of spiritual experiences (in personality pathology). (2) This approach offers a culture-reflexive comparison of (sub)cultural narratives/dispositives of spiritual intuition, thus (3) is a point of reference for exploring specific (meta-)narratives as constitutive for religious and spiritual (group) agency and identity.

(3) WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO TELL, ADVISE AND WISH THE CJ FOR THE TELLING OF HER STORY:

This is what one could wish for every practice, institution, life-form or project: that it remains open to precisely those (intuitive) insights that testify to immanent critical capacity.

Related projects/presentations/publications:

- Jacobs (forthcom. 2025). “New Cries of Distress” – An analysis of narratives of ‘spiritual warfare’, ritualized harassment, and spiritual bullying and its relevance for psych-clinical diagnostics and treatment, (Clinic and Policlinic of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Medicine Rostock)
- Jacobs (forthcom. 2024). Philosophy of Psychiatry: Social diagnostics and the role of life-advice in medical practice; invited Lecture in the series: Philosophy in Medicine: Medical Attitude, Ethical Reflection Ability, Phenomenology, and Professional Subjectivity. A cooperation project of the Medical University of Graz, Department of Medical Psychology, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy and the University of Graz, Institute of Philosophy of the University of Graz (Department of Phenomenology).
- Jacobs (2024). Workshop: Re:cognition – Mediated social recognition, datafication, and transpersonal social pathology, Workshop II: Re:cognition and Social Media; International Research Conference: Data Poetry/Data Politics, University of Witten/Herdecke 28.11.2024
- Jacobs (2024). “Holier than thou” – The psychodynamics of narcissistic abuse and induced paranoia in spiritual (online) communities”, Praxis Group: Psychiatry, Psychology and Medical Ethics, 09.10.2024.
- Jacobs, Altobrando, Zaninotto (2024) Guest-Eds. Special Issue for *Frontiers in Psychology*: “Sensing Minds: On the Role of Intuitions, Feelings, and Emotions in Psy-clinical Diagnoses and Judgements”.
- Jacobs (2024). “Primed for concern – Intuition in medical-ethical decision making”, intensive workshop: “Introduction to medical ethics and clinical medical counselling”, Summer Academy for Integrative Medicine, University of Witten/Herdecke, 09.-16.08.2024.
- Jacobs (2023) Symposium “On the Concept of Intuition in Philosophical Practice and Interdisciplinary Application” in collaboration with Stefan Klingner, Hardegseiner Symposium, Burg Hardeg, funded by the Philosophical Seminar, Georg-August-University Göttingen
- Jacobs (2023) “Spiritually Induced Paranoia”, International Congress: Disquietudes of Normality; Annual Conference of the German Society for Phenomenological Research (DGPF), Heidelberg University
- Jacobs (2023). Changes of Intuition in Paranoid Personality Disorder; Special Issue: Personality Disorder; edited by Francesca Strappini (University of Bologna), *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 14:1307629. DOI: 10.3389/fpsy.2023.1307629



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is a practical philosopher and associated researcher at the Institute for First Person Research at the Department of Psychology and Psychotherapy and guest lecturer at the *Studium Fundamentale* at the University of Witten/Herdecke. From September 2021 till February 2024 Specially Appointed Associate Professor of Practical Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies, at the Faculty of Humanities (Graduate School), core member of CHAIN (Center for Human Nature, Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience), and lecture for German Linguistics at the Institute for the Advancement of Higher Education at the University of Hokkaido (Japan), as well as local lecturer for Linguistics for the DAAD in Sapporo. Before that, postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Cognitive Science at the University of Osnabrück, lecturer at the Philosophical Seminar at the University of Göttingen, and lecturer and course coordinator of the applied master's program in Medical Ethics at the Institute for History, Theory and Ethics of Medicine at the University of Mainz. Since 2014 guest-lecturer for practical philosophy in the *Studium Fundamentale* (Witten Lab) at the University of Witten/Herdecke. 2011 PhD at the University of Mannheim in philosophy with a thesis on psychopathy and moral incapacity supervised by Thomas Schramme and Michael Quante. This examination bridges the perspectives of meta-ethics, philosophy of psychiatry, and moral psychology. Psychopathy illustrates *ex negativo* which abilities a person needs to have to be able to adopt a moral point of view and to held accountable in terms of moral and legal responsibility. Member of the DGPPN, DGPF, GDA, AEM, and certificated medical ethics consultant with working experience as a care assistant in local social (psychiatric) care facilities. Habilitation project at the Centre of Psychosocial Medicine at the University of Heidelberg on the phenomenon of changes of meaningful relatedness in loneliness and its clinic-diagnostic relevance.