

BOOK REVIEW

Jean-Claude Grulier; Eugène Minkowski ***Philosophe de la psychiatrie. Introduction: Jean-Yves Cozic***

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Eugeniusz Minkowski (1885–1972), a psychiatrist and philosopher (also studied mathematics, psychology and esthetics), spent his youth and began studies in Warsaw, continued in Munich, Kazan, Zurich (persuaded by his wife, Bleuler's assistant, decided to choose psychiatry and also worked for some time in Burghölzli). Finally he settled in Paris, where he lived and worked for many years (he was the president of the French Psychiatric Association, founder and a long-time editor of *L'Evolution Psychiatrique*). He never broke up ties with Poland, where he lectured and published. Since 1956, he was an honorary member of the Polish Psychiatric Association, and also a doctor honoris causa of the Medical Academy in Warsaw. He is one of the main creators of the phenomenological and anthropological approach in psychiatry.

Jean-Claude Grulier, like Minkowski, a psychiatrist and philosopher, in the book devoted to him discusses not only the observations and views contained in E. Minkowski's publications, but also their social and intellectual context, mainly through references to knowledge and traditions of philosophical thought.

Perhaps the most-known object of interest and analysis of Minkowski is experiencing schizophrenic psychoses, but in the chapters entitled: *L'affectivite* and *L'expression* the reader will find considerations regarding various psychopathological phenomena as well as mental processes in the area in which disturbances occur. Grulier confronts these descriptions with philosophical views formulated in various epochs (as for centuries inquiries regarding the psyche and its disturbances remained in the area of philosophy), and discussing the relations of expression – not only verbal one – with cognitive processes and thinking, refers to extensively presented theories of language.

In the next chapter, J.-C. Grulier considers Minkowski's anthropological views, among others, referring to the analysis of the hallucination phenomenon and to the context of neurophysiological knowledge. The description of this anthropology, assuming threefold human individuality – biological, social and subjective one (seeking sense and inner freedom) – includes, inter alia, the dilemmas of freedom and determinism, questions about the priority of thinking versus the priority of action (“*cogito ergo sum*” or “*ago ergo sum*”?) and the participation of inheritance (genetic and social) in iden-

tification processes. He also discusses analyses of experiences of pain and suffering, relationships with other people, descriptions of various types of anxiety experiences, etc. One of the next chapters is devoted to the analysis of experiencing time, which belongs to the leading themes of the problems explored by Minkowski.

Among the many threads of E. Minkowski's concept discussed in this book, it seems particularly important to indicate the separation of "natural weaknesses" and human problems from phenomena that have psychopathological quality. In this case, he protests, among others, against excessive extension of the concept of "neurosis", characteristic to psychoanalytic approach. Developing these concepts, Grulier discusses the contemporary phenomenon of "medicalization" expressed in subsequent editions of classification systems (on the example of DSM) and analyzes its sources. He indicates, by the way, the low adequacy of the definition of health (WHO).

The next chapter discusses sources of Minkowski's concept – the assumption of the phenomenological method (Husserl), the concepts of direct data of consciousness and *élan vital* (Bergson) as well as Scheler's considerations regarding the relationship with the "other". They were an inspiration for Minkowski's own exploration – valuable but only inspiration. He considered all theoretical assumptions as preventing freedom of thought. He used to say: "There is nothing more frightening than orthodox students and their teachers who demand that orthodoxy from their students" (p. 147).

One of the more important consequences of using the phenomenological method – "suspension of judgments; doubts in what seems obvious; "reduction", i.e., opening to the world as it appears to the observer, allowing to know the essence of what is being observed; and finally creating a new image of reality – is a change of views regarding the nature of the schizophrenic disorder. Minkowski first of all sees in it the loss of contact with reality and not – as Bleuler – association disorders. Similarly, he used this method in the analysis of autism (which led him to emphasize the role of disturbances in affective contact and disruptions in the understanding of the other person), in the analysis of the experience of time and so on .

J.-C. Grulier devoted a separate chapter to the problems of painful relationships between people of different nationalities, different origins ("races") or sexual orientation and pseudo-scientific premises that lead to persecution of various social groups. At the same time, he refers to Husserl's distinction between natural sciences (such as medicine) and humanities (science d'esprit), the subject of which is a person and its functioning in society.

The experience of Husserl and Minkowski, who were victims of Nazi racism, became an occasion for these considerations. In 1928 Husserl was forced to retire early and to stop public scientific activity, as a consequence of the Nuremberg Laws he had to take refuge in the provinces. Minkowski survived the French occupation outside of Paris, thanks to the help of a friend. Both published texts that warned against the effects of "naturalism" and the spread of various pseudoscientific theories. They included racist concepts and their justifications in interpretations of heredity and genetic research, the hypotheses of "social Darwinism" as well as the ideas of "mental hygiene" fashionable at the time – preventing the spread of mental illnesses. Husserl, for example, claimed that the race is a notion from the field of zoology, inadequate

in the considerations of the essence of humanity: “There is nothing in the world like the zoology of humanity”. Its use in this context, as well as the concept of nation and nationalism, Husserl regarded as contradictory to European culture.

J.-C. Grulier describes the various circumstances that were the source of these beliefs (economic and religious ones) as well as misinterpretations of scientific observations. It presents a lot of information about history of eugenic approaches, such as the already present in the culture of Sparta, especially those blossomed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the resulting criminal activities that occurred in many societies. Their victims were, among others, the mentally ill.

The motto of this book is the fragment of Mickiewicz’s Ode to Youth. It tells a lot about the author himself and the position from which he discusses the work of Eugeniusz Minkowski. He refers several times to the works and views of Antoni Kępiński, who he had the opportunity to meet while participating in the activities of the Polish-French Psychiatric Association (similar as the author of the preface– Jean-Yves Cozic, a long-time board member and president of this society).

Jean-Claude Grulier published a very important book. In a short presentation, it is not possible to outline, even in summary, a huge amount of important information contained in this publication. The necessity of better understanding of Eugeniusz Minkowski’ views, considering their significance for psychopathology and philosophy, requires translation and publication in Polish.

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