



## CULTURE AND MENTAL HEALTH

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During the development of this essay we are going to analyze the characteristic elements of modern culture and the ways the illness or mental pathology appears in the humans immersed in the culture, and the way that psychology responds to the emergence of this pathologies in a period dominated by capitalism. It intends to make an articulation of concepts such as mental health, mental pathologies, subjectivity and culture.

It will begin by taking Freud's concept of culture, and the necessary influence that the economic relations establish in humans; then will show the characteristic elements of modern culture, the definition of mental pathology and organic pathology and psychology's position towards pathology and the emergence of this.

“The human culture shows the observer two aspects. On one side, it includes all the knowledge and the capacity that the men have acquired for governing nature forces and pulling up goods to satisfy their necessities; on the other side, it includes all the necessary rules for regulating the reciprocal link between people, and in particular the distribution of affordable goods”<sup>1</sup>. In consequence, the links between humans and their subjectivity are influenced by the elements that appear in the culture that are adjusted to each epoch and determined by the economic and social order.

The current social organization is influenced by market<sup>ii</sup> that appears as a model<sup>iii</sup> and, from there, a condition that impulses the subjectivity organization around this elements that determine the new ways of social relationships emerges. In other words, the people have generated and been victimized by the capitalist system and that way “the technological and bureaucratic thoughts invade the deeper corners of the human mind and the preservation of a psychic state has become impossible”<sup>iv</sup>

From the above, “the necessary influence that economic relationships exert in human’s intellectual postures, ethics and artistic view has been proven”<sup>v</sup> and taking into account that in our days the general meaning of men is that it only has an instrumental and economical rationality<sup>vi</sup>. Other ways of mental pathologies that respond to the influence of modern culture as the anguish reflected in social phobias, the lack of desire, manifested in anorexia and depression, the compulsion and pathologies of the social bond like current wars appear.

Similarly, an alleged eagerness to find welfare and mental health appear in humans, because material things don’t get to fill this void. We find an anguished, depressed, sad, ill population, in constant search for happiness, a superficial happiness found in richness, in beauty treatments, in plastic surgery, in religion, in the consumption of psychoactive substances, in technology, ingesting of tranquilizers and every kind of therapy.

In the same way, “it can not be accepted that the economic grounds are the only that influence the human conduct in society. Psychological factors, due that we are talking about human relationships, can not be neglected either”<sup>vii</sup> and for this reason it is expected that the psychology gives a different answer to them.

Regarding this topic, important aspects from Michael Foucault “*Enfermedad mental y personalidad*” are retaken because it complies to tell apart the mental pathology and the organic pathology, referring the first to the psyche and the last to the body.

Psychology has tried to deal with mental pathologies from models and techniques from natural and organic sciences and as long as it gives the same sense to the concepts of illness, symptom and etiology in mental pathology and organic pathology leaving behind the subjectivity, which should be the core of the analysis, the effort in applying these concepts oriented from somatic medicine will be vain because “the roots to mental pathology should be looked after in a reflective exercise on the man itself”<sup>viii</sup>.

Nowadays, “sick people are the center of social efforts to cure by convincing” It is from those social exercises that different treatments are performed. Psychology should be careful in changing its scientific nature into a technical nature and not recognizing the men subjectivity, it should also step out from the list of superficial treatments and those discourses that enslave people and make them blind and deaf. It is important not to forget that the man exists in an ethical autonomy , It means, it has the capacity to recognize what is going wrong, to recognize that the bad feeling and anguish of its days reflect that huge void that remains unsatisfied by culture and the kinds of relationships it establishes.

The invitation is then not to pretend to silent that void, the psyche is manifested through the mental pathology and through illnesses, even organic. Subjectivity appears in every pathology and every symptom. Man’s subjectivity has developed from the culture responding to the demands of every moment. However, there is a capacity to think and analyse in man that allows it to critically reflect and accompanies it. This reflection should be taken from the psychology as well so it can permit to stop and not to absorb every element from culture.

Finally, it is noticeable how culture brings different forms of social bonding and elements that influence the subjectivity of men. Every time, according to the cultural changes, new forms of mental pathologies and new tries looking for mental health appear. As well as the man, the disciplines are immersed in the time and they try to advance too; however, the psychology should be careful with that scientific and technological advance and deal with the subjectivity and the effects that those changes provoke in the man’s psyche, stepping out and getting away from it.

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<sup>i</sup> FREUD, Sigmund. El malestar en la cultura. (1927-1931). Amorrortu editores. P. 6.

<sup>ii</sup> Al convertir cualquier bien en mercancía, en algo comprable, el mercado trivializa el valor de los bienes culturales y espirituales. Aparecen unos valores cuantificables.

<sup>iii</sup> CAMPS. Victoria. Paradojas del individualismo. Critica Barcelona 1999. P. 24

<sup>iv</sup> IBID. P. 18

<sup>v</sup> FREUD, Sigmund. Nuevas conferencias de introducción al psicoanálisis y otras obras. (1932-1936). Amorrortu editores. P. 165

<sup>vi</sup> CAMPS. Victoria. Paradojas del individualismo. Critica Barcelona 1999. P. 25

<sup>vii</sup> FREUD, Sigmund. Nuevas conferencias de introducción al psicoanálisis y otras obras. (1932-1936). Amorrortu editores. P. 165

<sup>viii</sup> FOCAULT, Michael. Enfermedad mental y personalidad. España, 1991.