

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY: "WHEN THE OTHER BECOMES AN ENEMY"

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SUMMARY

Mental health is considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be an essential component of health in general, and defines it as "a state of well-being in which a person can fulfill himself, overcome the tensions of daily life, perform productive work and contribute to the life of one's community". It can be said that "there is no health without mental health".

We also know that mental health is influenced to a large extent by the environmental, economic, etc. context, but also from personal characteristics (genetic patrimony, what has been transmitted to us from parents, one's own experience, etc.). From the complex interplay of these factors, each individual perceives their own state of mental health. Having made these premises, we try, and this is the goal of this work, to verify whether in the post-modern society in which we live, the presuppositions and conditions exist that give the individual the possibility to adapt to the environment that surrounds him and to live, in harmony with himself, reaching a good level of mental health, or on the contrary if in the globalized civilization in which we live, those points of reference that contributed to a good social adaptation and consequently to a good psychic compensation have failed.

Key words: *interpersonal - drive - postmodernity*

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INTRODUCTION

Also according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the global burden of mental disorders continues to grow with a strong impact on health and on the main social, human and economic aspects in all communities. (DSM-5 2014) Worldwide, 300 million people suffer from depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia affect approximately 60 million and 23 million people worldwide respectively, the same goes for the different forms of dementia, autism, developmental disorders and intellectual disabilities. Anxiety disorders, forms of subthreshold depression together with what we call personality disorders, are increasingly a very important problem of social coexistence in the 21st century. Even more worrying is that disabilities in children and adolescents are due to mental illnesses, heavily influencing the development of young people and the possibility of living with that psychic balance necessary to fully integrate into society in a satisfactory and productive way.

GENERAL AND CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The lengthening of life then with the consequent increase in the elderly population, represents the other big problem due to the numerous critical issues that it poses in consideration of the fact, that as we have said on other occasions, the philosophy of postmodern society, modifying the scale of traditional values and their solidity, mainly affirms the values of materiality, of pure functionality and usefulness, for which "the other is appreciated not for what he is but for what he has,

makes, does, making him more vulnerable to depression (Carabetta 2007). The depreciation and devaluation of old age and the consequent exaltation of childhood, adolescence and youth, as the age of consumption and production, record the emergence of new models of life, based on hedonism and narcissism where the traditional consideration for the sober and contemplative measured life of the elderly is marginalized and scarcely considered. In all the geographic regions considered, mental illnesses affect more than 10% of the population. The GBD 2017 (Global Burden of Disease Study), which analyzes the changes that have occurred in the last three decades, highlights that in 1990 mental disorders were the 13th cause of disability (1,523 DALYs per 100,000 people). They are now in sixth place (1,606 DALYs per 100,000 people). Speaking of mental health in the 21st century, we cannot fail to take into consideration the Covid-19 pandemic which has brought about strong changes in the way of living and getting sick in the world. From the Mental Health and COVID-19 Report: Early evidence of the pandemic's impact, it is noted that:

- There was a significant increase in mental health problems in the general population in the first year of the pandemic.
- Although the data are mixed, younger age, female gender, and pre-existing health conditions have often been reported risk factors.
- More research is needed on mental health and COVID-19 among specific at-risk populations and in LMICs (Low to Middle Income Countries).
- Suicide mortality data are mixed and do not clearly indicate a change in rates since the start of the pandemic.

- The data indicated a higher risk of suicidal behavior among young people.
- Exhaustion (in healthcare workers), loneliness, and positive COVID-19 diagnosis have increased risk of suicidal thoughts.
- The risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19 was highest among people with mental health problems.
- Among people living with mental disorders, disease severity and mortality increased with younger age and the severity of the disorder.
- There is no strong evidence that people with mental disorders were more susceptible to COVID-19 infection.
- Outpatient mental health services were often disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, diminishing access to essential care.
- Reports indicated that disruptions were partially mitigated by shifting services to online health care.
- Inadequate infrastructure, pre-existing inequalities and low levels of technological literacy have been reported as barriers to eHealth.

But the most interesting aspect of the pandemic, in our opinion, is the profound change in social relations, which has highlighted all the limits, contradictions and the dangerous drift towards which our civilization is heading without more values, passions, feelings and consideration of the other. Classical psychoanalysis legitimized man's integrity starting from his corporeality, from his sexuality and more particularly from his unconscious instinctuality according to this conception, Freud highlighted the fracture existing between man, in his spontaneous instinctuality, and social rules, and the attempt to mediate between the instinctual tensions of the individual and the cultural demands of the community, attempting through the control of the instincts to arrive at a rational adaptation of social life, otherwise impossible. Freud's psychoanalysis therefore accepted man's need to be recognized in his instinctual and unconscious dimension, but a new psychology, to which we firmly adhere, the Existential Humanistic one, is projected towards another instance: the right of every man to realize oneself and to be happy, and to adapt society to individual needs, promoting a full individual expression (Rogers 1970). We live in a society in which technology and modern communication systems seem to obviate the current difficulty that people experience in solving many problems, on the other hand the same technological systems, such as communicative ones, dematerialize relationships and encounters "face to face." The virtuality of communication in the present time does not invalidate the condition of solitude in which many find themselves and technology amplifies the discomfort of the loss of the intrapersonal relationship, since, as Riesman points out, the means of mass communication are the basis and origins of heterodirect

personality and the lonely crowd (Riesman 1950). With the progressive and increasingly rampant technological evolution; the reality accepted by all has been "expanded" by the creation of a shared digital reality: the new digital reality, the network, is available and increasingly accessible, we can say that all this has led to the collapse of postmodernity in favor of a new era that of hypermodernity, which opens the doors to the hyperreal, a fictitious world where fiction becomes the new reality in which Internet users navigate.

We live in a society of contact phobia and the taboo of death. with superficiality of contacts, relationships that are accepted until mutual convenience expires, (Marcuse 1999). Before postmodernity, writes Bauman in the *Discomfort of postmodernity* (Laterza 2018), "ontological uncertainty" consisted in man's debt towards the divine, and could have eschatology as an answer, the salvation of the soul in spite of the body. Instead, postmodern uncertainty renounces the soul, ignores eschatology and indeed wants to enjoy the body as long as it is vertical on the back. Humanity lives in the era of consumerism without any end, without any possibility of identity and without achieving any inner growth. The history of man teaches us that after every catastrophe, every war and every famine he has managed to start over and improve his living conditions. The times in which we are living present us with dramatic existential problems that highlight the need to reformulate the reference points, the values and the possibility of self-determination, to prevent the fragility of our mind from dissolving into the chaos of nothingness. Classical psychoanalysis, as Kohut (1977) writes, is unable to explain the new psychopathology of modern man or other psychological phenomena that arise outside the clinical situation. He cannot explain how Kohut asserts "the tragic man", compared to "the guilty man". The guilty man lives within the pleasure principle, the tragic man overcomes this principle to account for that new suffering that arises from the increasingly discontinuous, conflictual relationship without accepting the other who becomes an enemy.

CONCLUSIONS

We live in a liquid society as Bauman claims, in which values, passions and human relations are increasingly limited by technology, by hedonism and consumerism. Lacking these cornerstones, the human mind falters and the prerequisites for full mental health fail. It is necessary to move from an individualistic perspective of the psyche in favor of an interpersonal perspective, where the relationship becomes the fundamental space from which the human mind is born and the other does not become the enemy but a sure ally for self-determination.

Acknowledgements: None.

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

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