

The Social Pathologies of Contemporary Civilization

7th International Conference



October 19th & 20th, 2017
Goethe-University, Frankfurt, Germany.

"As the subjects live less, death grows more precipitous, more terrifying." Instrumental reason not only reifies subjects, Adorno says, the futility of subjective life also prevents their finding meaning and coherence in it. The ultra-individualism and desymbolisation of contemporary society might represent the 'death' of society and the emergence of post-human forms of life. 'Life' and 'death', in that case, are not complementary aspects of a meaningful whole, but antithetic, as expressed in Klimt's 'Death and Life', an image from the fin de siècle with ominous undertones today. What are the consequences of a fundamental reification and alienation in our present age? What social and individual pathologies are related to this? Can resonance and harmony still be found?

Speakers:

Jose Brunner, (Tel Aviv); Thomas Fuchs, (Heidelberg); Eva Illouz, (Jerusalem); Tanya M. Luhrmann, (Stanford); Hartmut Rosa, (Jena).

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Social Suffering in an Era of Resilience

The seventh international conference on The Social Pathologies of Contemporary Civilization once again explores the nature of contemporary malaises, diseases, illnesses and syndromes in their relation to cultural pathologies of the social body. Usually these conditions –depression, anxiety, suicide & self-harm, disorders of consumption, stress-related illness, to name just a few- are interpreted clinically in terms of individualized symptoms and framed in demographic and epidemiological profiles. They are represented and responded to discretely, as though for the most part unrelated to each other; each having their own professional discourses of etiology, diagnostics, therapeutics, as well as their task forces developing health strategy and policy recommendations and interventions. However, these diseases also have a social and cultural profile, one that transcends the particularity of their symptomology and their discrete etiologies. These pathologies are diseases related to disorders of the collective *esprit de corps* of contemporary society.

Multi-disciplinary in approach the conference addresses questions of how these conditions are manifest at the level of individual bodies and minds, as well as how the 'bodies politic' are related to the hegemony of reductive biomedical and psychologistic perspectives. Rejecting such a reductive diagnosis of contemporary problems of health and well-being, the central research thesis guiding the conference is that contemporary epidemics are to be analysed in the light of individual and collective experiences of profound and drastic social changes and cultural shifts.

More specifically – but not exclusively - this conference will focus on the social dynamics of suffering. In times where society is neglected & disparaged and individual psychological resilience is advocated & promoted as substitute and panacea we want to focus on understanding how social and cultural conditions moderate the experience of suffering -whether collective suffering as a result of war, natural catastrophes or economic crises, or individual suffering, insofar as it has primarily societal causes.

- Is the focus on resilience adequate to the moral-political questions raised by Europe's so called migration & refugee crisis? Could the concept of resonance offer a better understanding of suffering?
- Due to the transformation of work and the psychosocial costs associated with these changes, as well as the increasing tendencies towards social exclusion and social inequality (including inequities linked to gender), social suffering has become a characteristic & general experience of industrialized nations as well. The notion of social suffering highlights the fact that the suffering in question is caused by structural conditions and remains embedded in them.
- Psychologization of suffering. Is the notion of "social pathologies" as well as the ongoing question of the diagnostic potential of the social sciences already part of a neglect of society itself and playing into the hands of psychology? What is the role of therapy culture in this development?
- Common to all contributions to the field of social pathologies is both the interpretation of social suffering as an increasing effect of neoliberal capitalist socialization and its determination as a theoretical reference point for social critique. Whilst attending to the particular ways in which individuals struggle to make 'the problem of suffering' productive for thought and action, it also works to understand how, through to the level of collective experience, this contributes to wider dynamics of social change. Is, again, the concept of resonance an adequate starting point?

The conference invites papers offering analyses, discussions and perspectives of the overall theme (and related themes) from faculty, students and researchers in fields of psychiatry, philosophy, sociology, social theory, psychology, anthropology etc.

Abstracts please, by Friday, December 23rd, to socialpathologies2017@gmx.de

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