

Title: Who Defines What is Normal or Abnormal in Society?

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Michel Foucault explains mental illness is defined by a ‘socializing’ rather than a ‘medical’ view in which the various disciplines set forth by power groups define what is normal in society for the advancement of one group and/or the subjugation of the other group. According to the history of the treatment of depression, often called melancholia, from the Renaissance to the present day, the way in which an individual perceives oneself is determined by the way his or her society governs, disciplines, and educates them (Foucault 1988). In modern psychiatry, the patient is disciplined according to an objective definition of what is both normal and abnormal by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). As a result of socializing depression as a disorder with an objective cause and an objective fix through psychotropic medication, the patient learns to perceive his or herself objectively as well (Khoury). Under the pressure of universal treatment in both asylums in the 18th century and medication today, patients begin to govern themselves by constantly monitoring their own behaviors and thoughts in relation to their diagnosis (Scull). In order to combat this unhealthy self-monitoring behavior, this research supports the solution proposed by Dinesh Bhugra and Simon Baron-Cohen that modern psychiatry needs to “renegotiate its contract with society” by reestablishing the importance of social experience in psychiatric practices such as companionship, activities, and community involvement which has been undermined by the objective universality of medication.

Works Cited

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