



# Eccentric Positionality in Addictions - Moral Aspect of Addictions

Luka Maršić<sup>1</sup>, Daniela Vojnović<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital Center Sestre Milosrdnice, Zagreb, Croatia

## Key words

Addiction medicine; consciousness; attitude; conscience; spirituality

## Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this paper is to review the moral aspect of addictions. With the advancement of technology that brings more and more possibilities to a human being, understanding the principles of one's own mind and the principles of the epoch in which the same mind lives, becomes necessary for a free life. **Materials and Methods:** The materials we included into our work include a noteworthy literature dealing with this challenges. **Results:** In addiction, in which a person has the impression of controlling the substance, enjoying the blissful role of the victor carried on a misbalanced concept of eccentric positionality, until he/she himself/herself becomes the very object he longed for, being a mere object in his own life, so the postmodernist concept of humanity sinks and withers in a bubble of the safety of the supra-cultural mind hooked on the illusion and the power of technique. The concepts of science bring a different view of things, and thus the metaphysical abstract concept of conscience as a divine voice that leads towards the principles that in some epoch arose from the knowledge reached at that time, that is, beliefs, disintegrates. **Conclusion:** The significance of these theses is that they could be applicable in expanding the view on addictions,

which is necessary, taking into account the changes in the mental environment (epoch).

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## Introduction

By nature, a human being is an open system; Helmuth Plessner emphasizes [1]. An open system implies that an organism in all its life manifestations directly includes its environment and makes it a non-independent part of its appropriate life circle [2]. From this perspective, the addict becomes a closed system that continuously and preferentially replicates his need to be in the world with constant cravings towards the molecularity of some addictive substance, ignores the environment and thus determines "new physiological" determinants for his own brain. These influences, per se, do not belong to the spheres of normal physiological self-maintaining categories, but are "upgraded" to the biochemical system of the brain by repetitive and unnecessary actions for brain functioning, and that action falls out of the centre of its brain naturalness, both biochemical and mental one. Centric positionality implies frontality, i.e. opposite positioning to the realistically perceived environment, as well as spontaneity or readiness for action and the ability to adapt to the environment [2]. In addiction, mental system reacts irrationally stimulated by the logical accuracy

of external stimulus reflection and through emotional pleasure becomes a closed system, failing to rationally divide the newly created need and the action itself (consumption of psychoactive substance or a pathological habit) through the spiritual filters of meaning. The “attachment” continues to be replicated through the bodily act of desire, destroying the “old” organs and systems, and building new, pathological ones. An impulse appears and is followed by instinct that places new demands on the position of the brain, as an organ, making it a mere reflex, a stomach that strives for food, closing the possibility of mental (moral) action.

## Discussion

A clearer elucidation of instinct begun in the second half of the 19th century. It was emphasized that an instinct is natural in its existence, but abnormal every time when it is not controlled, when it is not suppressed. By Foucault, the instinct, at the same time natural and abnormal, will play an important role in understanding the fate of instincts in a wide range from an abnormal child to an adult mad man, referring to the sources of that time that developed two concepts in the theory of instinct, where one theory represents the natural and cerebral, physiological origin of instinct, and the other one the cultural, social and moral origin of instinct [3].

The brain, in these conditions, potentiated by external irrational action, by itself, escapes into an animalistic and illogical sequence, blocks the open system of thinking and acting towards realities, and, thus, the problems of the human sphere of existence. Future spectrums of human desires become predictable and already memorized activities, as something that is good and desirable for the whole of life. The symbols from the outside become uniformly read and new rules for actions become created, always leading towards some desired object. The mind is rooted in mere sensations (pleasure-crisis), which do not change, nor move towards the unexpected, nor over a self-organizing mental plan, which would be an important moment for subjectivity to understand the destruction of its own actions. This is how metaphysical and spiritual positions are blocked through the absence of self-awareness itself, and authentic and free possibilities for life are destroyed. Unlike any disease, the disease of addiction inhabits and destroys systems through pleasure. Addictions lie in a mismatch between the understanding of the biological mind and the mind we call nous, which separates the essential from the non-essential. That mind fails under the pressure of pleasure, which comes through various means, and our brain, an organ in the body, sees it as an event and a strong experience. Such an adapted mind, the mind of desire, the

mind of the generality of biochemical processes, which wants to feed itself, its body, breaks the communication with the nous (mind) whose role is to make a decision regarding what is essential for its unity, in order to survive. Since the “biological mind” accepts and understands the concept of survival only through reward, and it is always self-sustaining and symbolically nourishing, it does not automatically recognize the concept of the spirit and its need for any other position than the learned one, which supports the biological - instinctive mind. Therefore, it survives in the addictive substance (alcohol, drugs, or some addictive behaviours) and for the substance. Along the way, many people become addicted, dependent on their own bodily-biochemical reward, which is so natural in itself, but difficult to understand to the person (mind) that does not accept the uncertainty of the new, different, and therefore strives for the repetitive, the usual, the pleasant, the safe, the expected.

Today, the postmodern ‘human of success’ gets into numerous spiritual and mental crises, collapsing both physical and moral directions in his own actions. Through artificially induced desires, internal moral maxims and the external social context of living are destroyed. Desired objects throw the addict in postmodernism (today’s era) out of centrality, i.e. a frontal position against reality, and only mental and moral premises can bring him back to the same, that is, to recovery. Byung Chul-Han invokes Nietzsche and the necessity of renewing the *vita contemplativa* that resists intrusive and intrusive stimuli, emphasizing that the man of today’s era must learn not to react immediately to stimuli, but must master the instincts that restrain and limit us, because a prompt reaction to any support is precisely an illness, a defeat, a symptom of exhaustion [4].

Coping with crises becomes a serious cognitive work, and reality itself constantly directs a person to the emotional concept of recognizing his own needs. The concept of crisis disappears at the end of the 18th century. It collapsed as a concept of medical technique which could help a person get on a new level of functioning, and got translated into concept of disease - as a process of mapping epidemiological phenomena that served to organize public health policies as we know them today. In that era, the goal was to control the population and ensure general control of the spread of diseases. In a later period, with the advancement of technology and pharmacotherapy, crises are resolved (abolished) by creating a long-term process (chronicity) of maintenance of a certain condition that is separated from the individual and connected to the institution, interprets Foucault [3].

Addicts continue to call their bad conditions a crisis. However, addiction is different from a somatic illness because somatic illnesses imply its own natural pain thresh-

old. Addicts tend to call it a crisis because they function from the concept of comfort and the idea that they are not sick, because their illness is pleasant, motivating, and excludes them from reality, which somatic illness isn't. That is why every unpleasant state is unacceptable for the addict. Since they think they are not ill, they don't accept any pain threshold. An addict always claims that he is in crisis when he is in withdrawal disorders, never that he is sick. For him, illness is taking away the very means of pleasure and life without thresholds and boundaries. Foucault also emphasizes that in this way a person wants to avoid the disciplinary system of the medical institution which puts him under control and revokes his freedoms and rights to authenticity, property [3].

The addict neither creates himself nor realizes his creation. That is why he/she is always an enigma, whether it is about understanding the physical organism, or about metaphysical, spiritual, mental spheres of existence, the addict is exposed to uncertainty, and expectedly not prepared for the unexpected. The fact that he/she is not creating himself/herself also means that it is not centric. He is not centric because he/she has self-awareness, he/she also experiences his own experience, and therefore has the power to manipulate by which he/she avoids a centric, frontal approach to reality [2]. It happens to him/her that he/she has replaced the being inside his own body with the being outside the body (the psychoactive substance, or pathological habit). He/she lives afloat, split from the outside and the inside, where both the spirit and the body fail in centricity, viewed from the moral aspect. To get out of it, he/she needs morality, as an independent sphere [5].

The whole concept of giving and receiving in the human concept of understanding desire and desire for an object is organized by a very uncertain and unclear system that we call emotions or affects. A human being is condemned to them, and through them he lives in the spheres of his pleasures and crises. Thus, Chrysippus believed that a person, if he/she wants to be free, should work on rejecting all emotions, he thought that they are value judgments, because rationality and character are the only things that bring good to a personality, considering that all the things towards which one's emotions are directed, are usually indifferent to our conditions. [6] Antipater, the Stoic, believed that a person should do everything to satisfy his/her goals, and if he/she does not succeed, he/she should not be sad. He thinks that these goals are indifferent to the person anyway, and that success itself is not the main goal, but the correct striving to reach the goal [6].

Namely, the stoics distinguished the first movement from the emotions themselves, and that is why today they should have an important place in the understanding of crises, and thus emotions, which is not the case today

in postmodern society. The first movement, simply put, is an impression, which recognizes some harm or benefit, but is far from judgment. The impression is often presented as some trembling, exhilaration, crying. According to the stoics, these states are neither judgments nor emotions. The stoic concept implies that emotions can be worked on through theoretical and practical dynamics because emotions themselves are not impulsive and involuntary actions, but judgments that can be revoked. Through them, we divide the first movement or impression that can lead us in the wrong direction with our voluntary decisions. The stoic Posidonius advocated a different approach from Chrysippus and interpreted that emotion consist only of judgments and that the soul consists only of reason [6].

In order to understand how a person reacts to biochemical changes in our body and whether he/she perceives them as pleasure or discomfort, a person must understand the concept of 'alive outside himself' (environment) and of 'dead inside himself' (pathological object of desire), which becomes so alive in contact with what is reflected in our consciousness. A person must understand what we become as persons in the identity that directs our own perception (conscience), as well as the society in which the entire human integrity of existence resides. In other words, one must understand the epoch that surrounds him/her and adapt to such environment.

One of the most impressive combinations in understanding the concept of the spiritual crisis we call addiction is found in Helmuth Plessner's theory of eccentric positionality [7]. Eccentric positionality is connected to a displaced virtual center of a person, wherefore there is no real balance [2]. In other words, Plessner's basic thesis is arranged in the direction of understanding human and his actions from the position of an eccentric form, i.e. falling out of the biological centre. The basic mechanism of falling out of that biological and natural center is that human so vividly preserves his past, and incorporates it into his being without separating from it, with the fact that through various mechanisms, that past can be corrected, prepared, its meaning can be twist and an put in settings that are far from objective facts or events in the time in which the act itself took place. Such correcting assumptions, and thus in some time wrongly understood and comprehensible constructs of meaning and action that are carried out in a moment, in some present, lead a person to the revision of his life which starts from wrong logical premises, by the way of untruth, creating an illusionistic reality, accepting it as an objective mental environment. Such erasure of the collective memory can only be done by humans.

A plant or an animal does not transfer the constructs of the subjective to the sequence that follows the de-

faultness of being a plant or being an animal. They remain default and within the framework (in the centre) of the environment that adapts them independently of their repetitive awareness of what it means to be an animal. That is why, for example, a dog from Croatia cannot exchange the experience of being a dog with one in Africa and change the understanding of the same. All their actions are premeditated of some kind of pre-thinking and a logical - instinctive combination of behaviour, which is not directed to the discovery of some new knowledge and the free-will- derived development in time, but is driven through deep closed systems they (unconsciously) correct the species, the gender. They, by Daniel C. Dennett, are driven by a concept of an internal, natural, non-thinking state that does not need any internal consultation of a mind with another or similar creature in order to predict some behaviour through thinking concepts, but it possesses and is connected to a large number of perceptual signals and they don't need to know anything more than that [8]. This concept also develops the addict's reflexive need for his/her own means of pleasure, which he/she knows is not good for his/her body and the social context of existence, but does it anyway. He/she takes it as a perceptive act of covering the instinctive desire of the wrong impulse in the brain that covers the crisis or pleasure in the unthinking subject.

A human being is constructed in a way that he constantly strives to an eccentric form of existence. That makes a person an open system, thus exposed and vulnerable, but ready for intuitive and thoughtful conceptualization of the present and the future. Plants and animals remain in the sphere of a natural - closed system. A closed system has the reality of a physical body in which the nucleus of the whole species is established through a series of epochs to which a particular plant or animal belongs. They don't develop any concept of subjective prediction; a plant or an animal is equal to itself through a sequence in time. It is both limited and protected in its immutability and stability, and thus safe and eternally the same in its battle, unless a human being adapts it to himself with his step into some wanted knowledge, that is, destroys it for the higher goals of his own eccentricity. In this act of human eccentricity, over time, a human being emerges from his personal default, reaching conscience as his own environment in which he creates worlds (spheres).

The question of natural conscience is a question of physiology and intuition, because it acts as a natural, biological, universal, general substrate, which is given to a person from unconscious communication or from the species itself, as genetic material, where conscience (nature) receives its information, which it reads completely unconsciously. Biologically, in the case of associative reflex action, there is no conscience about one's action,

while, paradoxically, a human being possesses the concept of conscience and knowledge. Conscience is built continuously, constantly, but it also carries a certain exactness by which it gets confirmed. Moral reflection, questioning one's own good or bad actions (pleasure-crisis), is constantly present in thinking individuals who are guided in their actions by conscience. Self-understanding and limited knowledge does not give nature itself the possibility of achieving that conscience that a human being develops with its specific free, spiritual activity. Helmuth Plessner points out that abstraction, aiming a formation of concepts, starts with the act that he called ideation and which implies final deliberation from the individual experience, or objectification of what is given in reality. Since the animal lacks the sense of the negative in sensory perception, it is also deprived of ideation, and thus the formation of concepts [7].

A human being, as a 'eccentric' being, steps forward with the activity of the mind that leads him to conscience, and later to knowledge. The disintegration of conscience shifts a person to the instinctive and biological level of functioning, when there are no restraints in behaviour controlled by consciousness and knowledge. 'Centricity' is needed by the addict in mental action, where it brings him back to reality, as well as in handling the biological, biochemical happening, by which he resists the biochemically directed desire for a substance or behaviour.

The concept of conscience is formed at the level of awareness of the facts that fill our spirit in everyday ordinary life. They depend on the culture and the spirit of the community to which the person belongs. Moral norms emerge from the continuity, that is, the laws of the specific topos are formed. Conscience is born in the constant dialectical striving for the greater good, a better understanding of oneself and the world. Conscience follows the general and subjective opinion about situations in the spirit of the corresponding era and culture, therefore it is changeable, and a human being is prone to discontinuities or actions that are not in accordance with the known value system. The anchor that binds us within the tradition and culture of our own world provides security and a starting point in the formation of our own identity. In the context of the postmodern era and the super-cultural concept of today, the usual moment of individual identity is lost, drowning in a mass of uniformed non-belonging instances of being, from which there is no basis for the development of one's own cognitive, emotional, social potentials. Christianity is no longer the dominant conceptualization of cognition, but a culture, that is, a super-culture. Super-culturalism supports the pathology, entering through the cracks of a broken identity. It creates constant craving and slavish consciousness through the apparent freedom

of non-thinking, mentally fragile structures that operate from physiology, eternally occupied with the content they consume, that is, with which they feed their spirit.

A person gets biologically and socially corrected and directed towards developing of his/her own individual possibilities through the prism of conscience and through the understanding of the concept of an epoch that unconsciously maps collective identities while destroying subjectivity, creating post-modernist technological super-culturalism. Such mechanisms can create pathological relationships in society, not only in the individual or a family. A person who acts from physiology, i.e. from emotion, does not have the insight that he is doing evil, so his morality cannot protect him. Therefore, it is necessary to correct a person in the formation of conscience, to make it aware of it, so that through conscience it opens the possibility of understanding morality.

## Conclusion

The question of conscience is a deep problem of the tradition of the community that creates certain rules, according to which the inner and outer world of the individual is built. These get collapsed or built up through experience, as certain symbols and bearers of a certain spirit. Knowledge comes through conscience, and in every epoch it came connected with some specific slavery. Slavery to certain ideas that were accepted as truths in a certain era, or as knowledge, shaped the conscience and actions of people belonging to that time. A long Christian tradition and in this context the concept of conscience is a common-sense attitude, which was denied over time, reaching higher levels, until at one point conscience becomes knowledge. The concepts of science bring a different view of things, and thus the metaphysical abstract concept of conscience as a divine voice that leads towards the principles that in some epoch arose from the knowledge reached at that time, that is, beliefs, disintegrates. Knowledge is created in a historical process, through time, and it begins with the Enlightenment. At one point, conscience turned to knowledge - all beliefs that were taken as true during the epoch, and later are negated by scientifically confirmed knowledge [9].

The partition of body and spirit is a concept of human history placed in conscious and unconscious bubbles in the necessity to objectify life in a world that we

did not freely choose. Epochs tear us apart, but also unite us. They unite us through the same physiology of physical life. They separate us in the fact that, no matter in which epoch we exist, we can reach and transfer that world given to us through subjective thinking into images that create worlds for ourselves, building personalities through free - conceptual self-organizing thinking, connected with the metaphysical and physical by personal choice, working for inner freedom through personal peace, meaning, authentic flash of existence. Today, it is getting more and more difficult to achieve this. The concept of absolute freedom has blinded us. We are stumbling through personal lives, carried in a bubble of transience and illusion, in which we have mastered the concepts of truth, opinion and established eternal justice, but in a superficial module, wanting to be gods who control everything, not thinking that those things and humans that we see as objects in our lives are also worlds and stages for themselves independently of our quasi-dominant truths and stages on which we set up performances of our own kind. As with addiction, in which a person has the appearance of controlling the substance, enjoying the blissful role of the victor carried on a misbalanced concept of eccentric positionality, until he himself becomes the very object he longed for, being a mere object in his own life, so the post-modernist concept of humanity sinks and withers in a bubble of the safety of the supra-cultural mind hooked on the illusion and power of technique. In false algorithms of satisfaction, we ourselves become machines, machines of desire and technique, we remain without knowledge and possessions, we become mere swallowers of a marketing trick wrapped in the form of unnecessary and desired objects, turned to the emotion of physiological pleasure, and removed from the logos and expediency of our own prudence in the effort of being in life that was gifted to us.

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## Conflict of interest

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