

ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑ

*hoc est,*

DE HOMINIS

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stræ ætatis, quos vetta pagina

## PSYCHOLOGISED LIFE AND THOUGHT STYLES

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### *Introduction*

Today, when the old world which arose from the Second World War is disintegrating and we are once again very much aware of the “social question”, i.e. the possibility of our societies breaking up, and of uncertainty and fear, some caring professions, such as medicine, psychology and social work, have come to play an important role in tackling our problems and concerns. A frequent reaction to hostility in the outside world is for people to take refuge inside themselves, i.e. they resort to “psychologisation”. This refers not so much to an independent individual, who feels unique and sure of his individuality, or a person with mental problems who goes to a therapist’s office, as to “a process of establishing in the interior of the subjective self a kind of underground existence, a soul understood as the source and root of all things, an immaterial vital principle which can be explored and analysed [...] to the extent that the individual’s existence is converted into a kind of endless immersion in the depths of the psychological self” (Álvarez-Uría, 2006: 106).

The roots of this process of psychologisation go deep into the characteristic individualism of *homo oeconomicus*, into the person who is a product

of the industrial society. Thus, the development of a psychologised personality appears as the reverse side of a voracious capitalism which turns human beings into goods. In this scenario the search in the depths of the self for a refuge from a hostile world could act as a force to resist the capitalist process of treating people like things. However, this unceasing search also involves abandoning public and social life, i.e. the political space of society as a whole.

Analysing the process of *psychologisation of the self in a society of individuals* thus involves asking ourselves how and why some individuals become detached from their social world. What prompts the creation of this inner space? What social groups does the psychologisation of the self mainly affect and why? And what behaviour, what values and thought styles stem from adopting this lifestyle?<sup>1</sup>

In line with the hypothesis of Norbert Elias (1990/1939) that these processes are not the result of a sudden change in the inner world of the individual, the analysis of these transformations requires us to discriminate between the weight of different institutions and their connection with different processes in the adoption of a lifestyle with differing degrees of psychologisation in contemporary society. To describe some of these interrelationships we considered it useful to analyse, by means of a questionnaire, the *lifestyles* and *thought styles* of students of both sexes studying for degrees in psychology at the Complutense University of Madrid to determine whether the problems of the self<sup>2</sup> influenced their choice of psychology as a career.

When preparing the questionnaire, we attempted to combine Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on *lifestyle* (1998/1979) with those of Mary Douglas on *thought styles* (1998/1996). We consider that the two viewpoints complement and enrich each other, since lifestyles shape thought styles and, in turn, thought styles imply referring to a value system which is manifested in social activity in the form of tastes and consumption, i.e. via judgements concerning values and habits. The close links between the system of social organisation and

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<sup>2</sup> In 2005 a survey was conducted consisting of 83 items to complement field work previously carried out via discussion groups with quantitative analysis. The survey was drawn up and administered to a sample of 412 students of both sexes registered for all five years of the degree course at the Complutense University by the members of the research team: Fernando Alvarez-Uría, Julia Varela and Angel Gordo. Lucila Finkel, lecturer in the Department of Sociology IV, Complutense University, gave assistance and advice on the format of the survey.

the dominant system of categories of thought in a society was established by Émile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1982/1912), but we know little about the correspondence between the socio-professional structure of our societies and the different value systems which coexist with them.

A dimension which is not usually included in questionnaires is the social imaginary of the subjects of the survey, their aspirations, dreams and deep desires, which are to a considerable degree shaped by their working and living conditions, their social position and also by what they expect from their profession. The dreams of psychology students speak not only about their symbolic and cultural capital but also about their material and social circumstances, perhaps more clearly than detailed observations of habits and consumption in mundane day-to-day life.

Pierre Bourdieu (1988/1979) was perhaps one of the first sociologists to refer to strategies of reproduction, practices by which individuals tend, consciously or unconsciously, to preserve or increase their families' assets. These strategies depend on the volume of the three types of capital which constitute a social position: economic capital, cultural capital and social or relational capital.

For her part Mary Douglas (1998/1996) referred to four types of society which constitute a cultural map: firstly there is a hierarchical society which is compartmentalised and competitive; secondly an egalitarian and participative society, thirdly a society of competitive individuals, and fourthly a society of isolated individuals who prefer to avoid oppressive forms of control. Mary Douglas thus established four lifestyles, which she calls *individualist*, *hierarchical*, *egalitarian* [enclavist] and *isolated*. In practice these four ideal types, defined by the two axes of participation-competition and individualism-community spirit coincide substantially with the pattern we have proposed for the psychology students, as we shall see below.

However, any profile or categorisation, like that presented here, is still an *ideal type*, in the sense given to the term by Max Weber (1977/1922), so that the prototype of student that we are going to present does not exist. Even though it is our own invention it does not come from nowhere. It has been constructed based on the responses given by the students themselves when voluntarily completing the questionnaire. We thus present an ideal type which has a basis in reality. There is no doubt that not all students will recognise themselves in the figures portrayed here. We will limit ourselves to pointing out some of the main traits found regarding their social origin, socialisation, cultural and political values, and professional profile. At the end of the article we will focus on those students who are most psychologised.

### *The social origins of psychology students and their families*

The average psychology student is a young woman (84.3% of students are women as opposed 15.7% men) and their families come mostly from working-class backgrounds where a certain amount of mobility has been attained through education. The grandparents of the students came to Madrid from rural areas in search of work at the time of the national development plans. Their fathers work full time, most of them being administrative assistants, clerks or middle grade technical staff, followed by manual jobs such as builders, plumbers, etc. Half the mothers are housewives and the other half work full time, the commonest jobs being administrative assistant in an office or in a government department, followed by jobs in the service sector: cleaning, healthcare, looking after children, etc.

The property of the family includes a car and a parking space, a flat and one family in three continues to own a house in their village. A significant percentage also have a second home in the mountains or by the beach (24%). Because of the rapid increase in property prices before the great financial crisis, this makes them feel well off and they are fairly conservative as a result. In fact, the vast majority of students place themselves in the middle class. This is even more evident when the students are asked about their subjective social class as 60% describe themselves as upper-middle class.

Nearly all of their homes contain dictionaries and encyclopaedias but one family in three does not have a library with a minimum of a hundred books, which shows that the cultural capital of a significant percentage of the students' families is somewhat limited. When asked what social mobility they expect to have, compared with the social position of their families, 54.6% answer that they hope to maintain the same social status as their parents, while 42.7% see the profession of psychologist as a clear path for social advancement, even though they are aware of the difficulties involved in finding work after they graduate.

Their ideal family is a modern, democratic family, in which *decisions are negotiated by all its members*. 46% say that they belong to democratic families and almost one third report that in their family *their mother and father exercise authority on a shared basis*. The traditional family, with its strong patriarchal character, is now clearly in a minority. Nevertheless, among these young people there is a strong desire to become independent and have a property of their own. When asked who they would like to live with if they had sufficient means, only 1% say they would live with their parents. The largest proportion (40.8%) would like to live with a partner, and nearly 30% with their husband or wife and children, which implies a strong desire for independence and professional stability, goals which are not easy to achieve given the saturation of the labour market and the current precarious employment scenario.

Nevertheless, these students are aware that we are witnessing a major transformation of the social world and that new forms of family are emerging, as demonstrated by the new law on homosexual marriage approved during the first legislature of the present socialist government. For these young people the family is still "a haven in a heartless world", as it was defined by the American historian Christopher Lasch (1984/1977; see also Sloan, 1996), and even more so, if possible, after the financial crash. Even so, in 12.4% of their families conflict predominates (7.3%) or families have become just a physical space for living together where each person goes their own way (5.1%). Curiously, broken families are over-represented among male students, who are also more highly psychologised.

### *Culture and social value system*

The activities the students engage in apart from studying include, in descending order of importance, walking round the city, smoking, listening to the radio, listening to modern music, watching TV and video films, reading novels, reading newspapers, dancing, doing sports, going out for a drink and going to the cinema. Relatively few do voluntary work, take drugs (70% report that they have never tried them), listen to classical music, attend concerts or go to the opera, play a musical instrument, buy lottery tickets, read poetry, read non-fiction books, read comics, write poetry, keep a diary, go to the theatre, go to exhibitions, travel abroad or go to church. The students could, therefore, be described as modern and "European", coming mostly from lower middle-class families, with limited cultural backgrounds, but motivated by a strong vocation.

In their choice of novels the boys prefer adventure stories, while the girls like romantic literature. And a significant proportion (63%) says that they like horror stories. The films they prefer are psychological dramas and suspense and those they are least interested in are westerns, followed by war films, especially in the case of the girls. Their favourite music is pop, followed by Latin and rock. What they like least is *bacalao*, zarzuela, opera, flamenco and classical music. Their favourite painter is Dalí, followed by Van Gogh and Goya.

Regarding food, the vast majority prefer Spanish cooking, with Italian in second place. "Grandmother's traditional cooking" is popular but so too are tapas and around 2% reports that they are vegetarian, a similar number to those who choose McDonald's-style fast food.

When questioned about their values, the students are in favour of homosexual marriages (81.8%) and even more in favour of divorce (96.6%) and sexual equality (96.8%). They are against the war and subsequent occupation of Iraq (94.2%), in favour of common-law couples (89.3%) and in favour of free sex (85%), the sharing of household chores between

men and women (98.5%), euthanasia (84.7%), and abortion (76.7%). They are massively against the sale of arms (96.8%), compulsory religious education in secondary schools (73.8%) and the financing of the Church by the State (76%). However, a similar number approve of public financing of NGOs.

A majority, albeit smaller, of students (58.5%) believe in a secular society. They are in favour of regulating immigration (82.5%), and when asked about the rights of citizenship of immigrants, specifically their right to vote, 63.8% are in favour. However, 53.2% are in favour of taking measures against illegal immigration.

Students exhibit a high degree of awareness of problems such as terrorism and are in favour of tough measures to combat it. Although a majority (78.2%) are against the death penalty, a high proportion is in favour of life imprisonment for terrorists (74%).

41.7% are in favour of the European constitution, although a substantial number are indifferent (37.1%). Nearly 70% reject the privatisation of public enterprises and they are firmly in support of a social state as 90.5% defend a guaranteed minimum income for all. However, from their responses there is no clear indication what the sources of financing for this income are to be, as 72.6% are also in favour of reducing taxes. 98.3% are in favour of job-sharing and 56% are against cutting back on social policies.

In their opinion the main problem for young people today is housing, followed by unemployment, precarious work, and drugs. Once again their strong desire for independence is confirmed, linked logically to work and housing. When asked what the main cause of common crime is, the majority answer that it is *the environment in which criminals move*, although the girls are more aware of problems in family circumstances, the permissive legal system, exploitation and poverty. To fight crime, which they perceive as the result of a kind of *differential association* of aggressive gang members, they propose combining policies for prevention with custodial sentences designed to provide effective mechanisms for convicts to re-enter society.

What they value most is family life (52.9%), followed by their profession, as social and professional success together with intellectual development come in second. A majority of students also consider society and social issues important, declaring that they are prepared to *work to achieve a fairer society*. However, a significant percentage of students (around 14%) are very interested in discovering their own inner world and below we shall be looking more closely at this group, which we have described as *psychologised*.

### *Choice of profession and professional socialisation*

Slightly over half the students chose Clinical Psychology, followed at a considerable distance by those who decided to specialise in Social Psychology (11.7%), Occupational

Psychology (10.7%), Educational Psychology (3.2%), and Cognitive Psychology (2.4%). Why did they choose these areas? The clearly dominant response is altruistic: *because it lets me help others to solve their problems* (40.4%). The difference between boys and girls in this matter is significant, almost 12 points. Especially in girls, the reason for making this choice correlates with the function most of them attribute to their future profession: *"serving people"* (59.5%). The large group giving this reason is followed by those who say they chose it because they want to *make a contribution to understanding and improving society* (19.4%). This opinion also ties in with the second function they attribute to the profession of psychologist: *helping to build a more democratic and integrated society* (23%). This social, progressive dimension coexists with another which we may call psychological, individualistic and centred on the self, which is the position of around 15% of the students, expressed in the form of a certain personal psychological unease.

It is indicative that nearly twice as many boys as girls state that they chose the profession because *it enables me to know myself better and achieve personal fulfilment*. It is interesting to note that to solve their problems they turn first to their friends, followed by their families, but only 5% are prepared to go to a psychologist. They attribute success mainly to their hard work, motivation and ability to choose (59.2%) and, much less, to their family and educational background (20.9%). Even fewer believe it stems from social relationships (12.9%). Psychology students consider that the main cause of failure at school is the student's lack of commitment to study, another instance of individual explanations being given more weight than social explanations.

This emphasis on individualism and meritocracy could perhaps be explained by the importance they attribute to their own hard work to get to university and pass exams. Most see their studies as a personal promotion from their social origins, which may involve a change in class from their family and cultural background. They sometimes try to compensate for this by asserting the psychological self.

We have already mentioned that most students choose to specialise in Clinical Psychology. For this reason we included in the questionnaire a series of items designed to determine their concept of health, mental illness, psychotherapy and personality. They consider that personality *is shaped by the social conditions in which the subject lives* and that it is also *the result of interaction with others*. Only a small percentage attributes the development of the personality to *systematic work on oneself* (9.2%). They think that the main factor causing mental illness is childhood trauma and lack of affection, followed by a poor social and emotional environment, with hereditary factors in third place. The therapies in which they have most confidence are psychological therapies, followed by traditional medicine. The future psychologists disapprove of self-treatment and self-medication and interference by unqualified individuals, especially faith healers and medicine men. However, nearly 18% are in favour of natural remedies, homeopathy and oriental therapies.

The future psychologists are predominantly rationalists, but some answers reveal the presence of irrational attitudes which clearly contradict the scientific nature of the profession: 36% claim to believe in contact with the spirit world, 33% believe in telepathy, 24% in fortune telling, 23% in the existence of angels, 22% in reincarnation, 23% in chiromancy, and 18% in witchcraft, possibly recalling the rural origins of their parents, 16% in communication with extra-terrestrial life, 9.7% in the existence of devils, etc. A third of the students try to make this type of magical-mythical belief compatible with the scientific thought which characterises their academic discipline.

Their interest in *occult science* and *pseudo-science* not only reflects a certain liking for the irrational but also responds to a need to encompass paranormal phenomena within psychological codes, thus extending the profession's scope of action.

When trying to deal with something that worries them or a personal problem only 5% of the students would go to a psychologist, although it is significant that the percentage grows as one goes down the social scale, suggesting that students from a more modest social background are the ones who identify most with the profession. The percentage of boys who would go to a psychologist is slightly higher than that of girls, although there are also more boys than girls who try to deal with their problems on their own, this percentage also increasing as one goes down the social scale.

### *Sociability and authority: the social and political world of the students*

Based on a variable for sociability, ranging from individualistic and introverted to sociable and extroverted, combined with a variable for authority, ranging from in favour of established authority to oppose to all forms of authority, we have been able to identify four main groups of students. On the one hand we find two moderate groups who accept the patterns of established culture: the liberal, individualistic and introverted, and the social democrat, sociable and extroverted, both in favour of established authority. On the other hand we have two radical groups which, parodying Mary Douglas (1998/1996), we could say have adopted the negative diagonal: the outsider, individualistic and introverted, opposed to all forms of authority, and the libertarian (we could say communal or social libertarian, to differentiate them from the outsider), who is sociable and extroverted and opposed to all forms of authority.

We use the term *outsider* to refer to the student who lives outside the social scheme and is engrossed in his or her inner world. We can represent the four groups in the following table:

	Established culture	Counter-culture
Individualistic	liberal	Outsider
Communitary	social democrat	social libertarian

The vast majority of psychology students interviewed were sociable and extroverted (63.3%) and in favour of established authority (66.5%) but, while there are more individualists as one goes up the social scale, the number of those who are opposed to all authority decreases as one goes up the social scale.

The questionnaire also asked students to define themselves with respect to the following four lifestyles: *traditional-conservative*, *libertarian-individualist*, *competitive-liberal* and *participative-socialist*. The results were as follows: 10.7% of the students, with the percentage of boys almost double that of girls, defined themselves as *traditional-conservative*, 7.8%, with a higher percentage of boys than girls, as *libertarian-individualist*, 13.6%, with a higher percentage of boys than girls, as *competitive-liberal*, and 67%, with a higher percentage of girls than boys, as *participative-socialist*.

The type of capital these students value most is relational capital, i.e. social relations and those with family and friends. In second place is psychological capital, understood as inner wealth. In third place is cultural capital, understood as knowledge and academic qualifications; while in fourth place is economic capital, i.e. money. Altruism can thus be seen to prevail over egotism, post-materialist values over the materialism of money.

The majority of students interviewed reported that they were *open, in favour of negotiation, participation and consensus*, although a small percentage (around 7%) define themselves as *competitive and liberal* and 14% as *defenders of their personal world*.

From the political point of view the vast majority of psychology students state that they are *democratic and progressive*. Only 3% define themselves as *conservative*. At the other end of the scale 6% define themselves as *revolutionary*.

When asked about forms of government, 55.6% opt for a republic and 39.3% for a constitutional monarchy. 3%, mostly boys, say that they are libertarian. 2.7% say that they belong to the *radical left* and 45.9% of the future psychologists define themselves as belonging to the *moderate left*. 16.7% place themselves in the *centre* and 8.5% consider that they belong to the *moderate right*. Nearly one in four, 25%, claim that they are not interested in politics and define themselves as sceptical, apolitical or anti-political. However, the majority define themselves as democratic and progressive reformist, believing that *a different world is possible*. Democratic socialism, followed at a considerable distance by republicanism, is their main political preference.

They describe our society as predominantly *closed*, although they are aware that it is complex. They consider that we live in a *democratic* society, but one which is relatively *blocked* and *very wasteful, irrational, quite violent* and *uninformed*, a society which is making *slow progress*. The institution they value most highly is the healthcare system, followed by the education system, social security and public transport. Those they value least include the Church, the prison system, the government, parliament and TV. The police and the justice system fare a little better. For these young people the main problems facing the world are social inequality and war, followed by terrorism. Young people who hope to become psychologists define themselves as pacifists, which may explain why they feel a special admiration for Ghandi.

Politics is thus seen as something linked to the world of their parents, the older generation. It would seem that there are few Utopian solutions left and assertion of the individual, reacting to a world which is a problem, at least allows one to keep alive one's belief in the possibility of autonomy for the self.

### *In search of a psychological self*

Who are the students we have defined as outsiders, i.e. those who are most psychologised, and what are they like? Let us look at their distinctive profile in general terms.

Broadly speaking, these students believe in a meritocracy, in personal effort, in commitment to study, which they see as the best way to avoid academic failure. They consider themselves as being primarily responsible if they fail, but in second place they blame teachers whose teaching is boring and not up to date. They are also the group that most often consider *low self-esteem* as a factor in failure. They are thus the group that assign most importance to individual and psychological explanations of academic success and failure.

In fact, two subgroups, clearly differentiated by their different social background, can be detected behind the common and apparently uniform view of psychology as an ideal way to maximise individual ability: on the one hand we have students from lower working-class backgrounds with few professional qualifications; on the other students from the traditional middle classes with limited financial assets and a strong cultural background. The former come mainly from families with a rural background who immigrated to Madrid in the early 1960s and who are now relatively comfortably off. The latter come from the traditional middle class, with many mothers working in teaching.

Their houses often contain libraries of books but rarely dish-washers. They hardly ever have video cameras but often have computers connected to the internet. The distance between parents and children in this group is enormous and they are also those who most

often *don't know* (or don't answer) when asked to give information about their parents. They are the ones who most often think that the family is a social institution in crisis and constitute a majority of the minority who think that *the family should disappear*. In general terms, the group of psychologised students hope to be more successful in economic terms than their parents when they finally become independent.

Their individualism is clearly revealed in that they are the least willing to live with a group of friends. They prefer to live with a partner or, failing this, with their parents, since, despite the difficulties in their relationship, they have succeeded in coexisting with a degree of independence, possible after overcoming serious conflict. Many of their families have pets, perhaps because they help to compensate for shortcomings in affection. The percentage that defines themselves as individualist libertarians is far greater than in the other groups, being three times as high in some cases.

They would like their homes to be decorated in a mix of styles, although this is the group most often choosing an ultra-modern, avant garde style and the group most frequently using the adjective *fantasioso* (fantasising) to define their lifestyle.

We are dealing, then, with students who are creative, who are dreamers, and who often feel alone and misunderstood. They are the group who most often attend talks and choose to live with no fixed residence. This group smokes the least but they consume the most alcohol and soft drugs. The combined effect of alcohol and soft drugs increases their sensation of being different and marginalised. Their independence leads them to work to have some additional income for their expenses. They are the ones who most often attend concerts of music for young people and most often chat on the internet, which is their main means of communication. They rarely read newspapers or watch television but quite often read crime or adventure novels, poetry and books of essays. They hate the romantic novels which are so popular among the communitary libertarians, with whom they share certain major features and whose lifestyles, in line with their anti-authoritarian radicalism, are similar to theirs in many ways.

They are regular readers of comics. They write poems and very often keep diaries in which they reinforce their feeling of being different. They do the least amount of sports and go dancing the least. However, they like the cinema, especially social cinema and horror films. The films they like most are psychological films with a certain ghoulish element. They hate westerns and musicals. On television a programme they particularly like is *Big Brother*, but they dislike sports programmes and football. They often go out drinking and walking round the city, perhaps because this gives them a feeling of freedom. Their favourite type of music is Latin but they also enjoy hip-hop and rap, folk music and rock. They do not like museums. Their favourite painter is Dalí, followed by Van Gogh, artists who were mad or saw themselves as unique.

When they are faced with a choice of photographs, they are the group that most often reject a mother breastfeeding her baby and most often choose a photograph of the palm of

the hand or a potter working with clay. Their ideas are clearly at the opposite extreme to the traditional family represented by their parents, which they see as a failure. Nevertheless, these students do not feel good: they are the group who most often go to the doctor and the psychologist but least often to the dentist. They cannot stand pain or frustration. They are the group who attend church least, 87% never go. Although a small percentage is religious, their religion is mystical, oriental and somewhat pantheistic.

They dislike travelling round Spain and abroad. We could say that their routines are established by moving in very restricted circles. They sometimes help with shopping but never cook or water plants. As there are no dishwashers in their homes, they are the group that most often wash up, but they help least with cleaning the house. They are also the group that most often say they would like to escape to a desert island, like Robinson Crusoe. In their view, culture must leave a wide margin for free personal development, but their choice of a type of cooking is the most traditional: they opt for the safety of *grandmother's cooking*, as opposed to food which is more exotic or culturally distanced and uncertain. They are the group with the most vegetarians.

In politics a considerably higher percentage than the average defines themselves as republican and libertarian. They identify with the most radical left but are the group least interested in politics. They do not see themselves as represented in the present parliamentary spectrum and 30% describe themselves as apolitical. Together with the anarchists, they identify most with the ideas of the anti-globalisation movements and the slogan "Another world is possible". Their favourite political ideology is *democratic socialism*, followed by *libertarian individualism*.

The institutions most highly valued by these students are the healthcare system, followed by the education system and the courts of justice. We have described them as *outsiders* but they could also be described as *engrossed*, as they seem to be enclosed in an inner world of their own. A curious and apparently contradictory detail is that they value the prison system more highly than other groups but value the church and the police least. They are also those most in favour of the death penalty and most opposed to nationalism. They are most in favour of combating illegal immigration and least in favour of banning uncontrolled drinking in public places.

From these indicators we may conclude that they feel uneasy inside a kind of threatened individualism. They are alone and do not feel protected or safe, only having the assertion of their identity. They thus cling to their perception of themselves as different and, although they do not respect authority, they want authority to provide complete protection from the dangers that surround them.

The *outsiders* are the most secular students, the most opposed to the funding of grant-assisted schools and the most sensitive to social inequality and the threat of climate change. The politician they value most is Ghandi, followed by La Pasionaria.<sup>3</sup> They are also the most ardent supporters of homosexual marriage, abortion and divorce, and most strongly in disagreement with the current project for a European Constitution. They defend the right of immigrants to vote and a high percentage (74.5%) disagrees with the financing of the Church by the State. They are also the group most in disagreement with NGOs and more flexible working practices. They are the greatest defenders of secularism, sexual equality and the liberalisation of drugs.

They come from working-class or middle-class families, who share the belief that work is the basic way to structure an identity. They are sensitive to the problems of poverty and social exclusion and defend the protective role of the social state, although they share an interest in natural medicine and homeopathy with those supporting the counter-culture. In line with certain currents in critical psychology, which would move on from the study of the individual to a marked interest in spiritual topics, they believe most in reincarnation, chiromancy and telepathy. They describe themselves as idealistic, ecological pacifists. They are the least inclined to believe in predestination and life after death, but the most willing to accept communication with extraterrestrial life, possibly because they have difficulty communicating with the inhabitants of this planet who surround them.

Young *outsiders* are not prepared to renounce their self or leave their future in the hands of fortune-tellers. In their lives they give priority to developing *the self-control which allows me to discover my inner self*. They are aware that personal success comes from effort, motivation and the ability to choose, but also from *luck*, knowing how to take advantage of opportunities. Perhaps because they are a little lost in their loneliness, they value relational capital above all, followed by psychological and cultural capital. Economic capital is in last place. They defend their personal world, their atheism, their militant agnosticism. They value their friends highly because they have few. And, despite the conflicts in their families, they also value family life. Most of these young people, aged around twenty, have chosen to specialise in Clinical Psychology. They see mental illness as being mainly the result of *adverse social and emotional circumstances* and believe that the psychologist is above all *a professional who helps others*.

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<sup>3</sup> Historical leader of the Spanish Communist Party, who played an important role during the Second Republic and the Civil War.

### *Cultural contradictions: life and thought styles*

If we return to Mary Douglas' classification, the dominant lifestyle among the psychology students we interviewed is *egalitarian* [enclavist], which she defines as "against formality, pomp and artifice, rejecting authoritarian institutions, preferring simplicity, frankness, intimate friendship and spiritual values" (Douglas, 1998/1996: 59). Douglas' thesis is that a type of culture corresponds to each social world, each form of social organisation, so that the different cultures compete with each other in the social space to achieve greater acceptance than the others. However "a person cannot belong to two cultures at the same time for long" (Douglas, 1998/1996: 96).

The students we have called psychologised are referred to by Mary Douglas as isolates and she sees them as culturally close to the dissidents. Merton (1938), on the other hand, calls them retreatists and places them near the rebels.<sup>4</sup> When defining their respective groups that are isolated from the social world, neither Mary Douglas nor Merton seem to have perceived the dimension that gives greater weight to the inner world largely because the members of the group cannot easily become part of the social world. However, their analyses are an important part of the basis for our scheme. We could go even further and explain the process of psychologisation as an inverted form of the process of deviation analysed by Merton. It should be remembered that for Merton deviant conduct arises when, given certain cultural goals, such as economic success, individuals do not have the institutional means to achieve these goals and have recourse to irregular methods, i.e. processes of social deviation. In the case of the psychologised students a similar process takes place but one which is inverse with respect to those who behave in a deviant manner. As their cultural goals differ from the goals of the dominant culture and they do not accept conventional methods for achieving these goals, they are *marginalised*, live *engrossed* within themselves and reduced to their psychological self, a self they interiorise and psychologise, giving it limitless depth, creating an abysmal inner world which denies the outside world and replaces it to a considerable extent. Lacking relational and material support, the students lock themselves into their own symbolic and cultural world. Within this process the psychological codes themselves would reinforce a whole lifestyle and thought style.

Robert K. Merton (1978/1938) was interested in showing that some social structures lead people to adopt conformist or non-conformist behaviour depending on whether there

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<sup>4</sup> The American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1938) is the creator of a brilliant description of five different types of adapting to the established culture, which he refers to as *conformist*, *innovator*, *ritualist*, *retreatist* and *rebel*.

is dissociation or not between the aspirations prescribed by a culture and *the socially structured paths for achieving these aspirations*. In the case of the education of the future psychologists, the analysis of their professional socialisation, following the trends which develop as they go from the first school year to the last, shows one important fact: the students become increasingly pragmatic, i.e. more conservative and more individualistic, more retreatist and psychologised. As they come closer to exercising their profession, they try to adapt to the socially dominant image of the helping professional that intervenes in the framework of a personalised service relationship. The *retreatists* are in society but they do not form part of it (Merton, 1978/1938: 96-97).<sup>5</sup> For her part Mary Douglas observes that the number of *isolates* grows as employment becomes more precarious: "if casualization of labour were to increase and temporary staff came to outnumber permanent employees in the population, a higher proportion of the community would be located in that cultural niche" (Douglas, 1998/1996: 187-188). Mary Douglas includes *beggars and tramps* among the *isolates* but also people in high positions, such as the members of the royal family.

However, as we have already pointed out, neither Mary Douglas nor Robert K. Merton perceived the possible role in this cultural setting of psychologisation as a lifestyle and thought style, as an active affirmation of a way of separating oneself from the world and becoming independent of it. Yet, is this separation from the world, putting social structures and social dynamics between parentheses, not the very condition which ensures the success of professionals in the field of psychology, i.e. freeing the social system and the institutions that maintain them from all responsibility for people's psychological problems and suffering? The *outsiders*, while in a minority, point to the advance of a psychological culture extending through society to take in everything from great disasters to minor disturbances of the self. But they also embody the great contradiction which constrains clinical psychologists: they help those who suffer but absolve society from all responsibility for causing this suffering. How can this contradiction be overcome? In the case of the psychology students, there is the possibility of an alliance of the *outsiders* with the *dissidents* and the *social democrats*, which could bring about a cultural change, beginning with a change in the space where future psychologists socialise, the faculties of psychology. In this sense the role of teaching staff would be fundamental. Progress towards a culture of solidarity would not only help to create a climate which brought together the professional socialisation of the future psychologists and the altruism of the students but would also create better conditions for psychological know-how and science to leave the ivory tower

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<sup>5</sup> Merton includes the following in this category: psychotics, autists, pariahs, outcasts, vagrants, chronic drunkards, and drug addicts.

in which they seem to have taken up residence. The result would also be closer and more thoughtful links between the future psychologists and the real demands of a society made fragile by the forces of financial capitalism and the crisis in employment.

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