

When Society Becomes Ill: Toward a Psychosocial Understanding of Social Disorder

عندما يضطرب المجتمع: قراءة نفسية واجتماعية لمفهوم "الاضطراب الاجتماعي"

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Abstract:

This article rethinks the notion of disorder by shifting the lens from the individual to society itself. Drawing on psychoanalysis, systems theory, social identity theory, and cognitive theory, it argues that social dysfunction arises when collective values, norms, and symbolic systems lose coherence. Distorted beliefs, moral ambiguity, and fragmented identities reflect not only personal struggles but a deeper imbalance within the social fabric. Using Algerian society as a reflective context, the paper explores how culture, religion, and collective narratives can both stabilize and destabilize identity. It highlights how concepts such as love, success, freedom, and morality become distorted under conditions of rapid change, leading to alienation and instability. Rather than treating disorder as individual pathology, the article proposes an integrative psychosocial framework for understanding social disorder as a collective condition that requires rethinking normality, strengthening critical reflection, and fostering cultural resilience.

Keywords: Social Disorder, Psychoanalysis, Systems Theory, Values, Beliefs.

ملخص:

يقدم هذا المقال مفهوما حديثا وقراءة جديدة لمصطلح "الاضطراب الاجتماعي" الذي يمكن أن يكون المنشأ الحقيقي للاضطراب الفردي، إذ يركز على الفرد في سياقه الجمعي بدل الاقتصار على النهج الفردي التقليدي. وتتجلى مظاهر هذا الاضطراب في صور متعددة مثل الانحراف القيمي والعقائدي، تآكل المعايير، غياب المعنى المشترك. اعتمادا على نظريات التحليل النفسي والفلسفي، نظرية النظم، نظرية الهوية الاجتماعية، والمقاربات المعرفية، سلطنا الضوء على أثر التحولات السريعة في تشويه رموز أساسية كالحرية والحب والنجاح والأخلاق بما ينعكس على الهوية الاجتماعية والأصالة الثقافية. وباعتبار المجتمع الجزائري نموذجا، يبرز المقال كيف يمكن للثقافة والدين والمعاني المشتركة أن تكون في آن واحد عوامل حماية أو خطر. وبدلاً من النظر إلى الاضطراب بوصفه خللاً فردياً، يقترح المقال إطاراً تكاملياً يقرأ الاضطراب الاجتماعي كظاهرة جماعية تتطلب إعادة تعريف مفهوم السواء واللاسواء، وتعزيز التفكير النقدي، وبناء قدرة جماعية على الصمود الثقافي والارتقاء بالصحة النفسية الاجتماعية. كلمات مفتاحية: الاضطراب الاجتماعي، التحليل النفسي، نظرية النظم، القيم، المعتقدات.

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1. Introduction

The search for truth often begins with doubt. It pushes us to question the very beliefs we were taught never to challenge. To understand the human being, we must first dive into the hidden structure of their beliefs—those ideas that grow quietly, harden with time, and become unconscious certainties. These beliefs are not born in a vacuum; they emerge from the intricate interaction between the self and its environment. The human psyche is so sensitive that it can be shaped by everything—and sometimes by nothing at all.

How, then, can we trust our perception of reality? Objectively evaluating the world becomes harder with time. Our minds, prone to bias and distortion, are not always the reliable guides we assume them to be. They can lead us forward—or pull us into collapse. Language, the very tool we use to make sense of life, is itself imperfect. Words fall short. Concepts become confused. Sometimes, the more we try to define something, the more we obscure it.

Social concepts—freedom, happiness, morality, health, illness—are often repeated without reflection. We use them daily without truly knowing what they mean. They shape our behavior, yet resist consensus. What does “health” mean? What is “disorder”? Such questions remain open, even for the last human who might one day walk this earth.

This paper begins from that space of uncertainty. It is not an attempt to solve everything, but rather to open the possibility of looking differently. In psychology, the concept of “disorder” is used to diagnose the individual. The DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) and other diagnostic frameworks define psychological disorders based on criteria that assume society is the norm. But what if the norm itself is the problem? What if society—as a network of values, symbols, and norms—becomes a source of dysfunction?

The modern world, marked by instability and accelerating change, only deepens this ambiguity. Bauman (2000) speaks of a “liquid modernity” where nothing solid holds, and Giddens (1991) describes a self constantly being reinvented in response to fragmented realities. In such a world, the collective is not a fixed reference point—it is a moving one. And yet we measure individual stability against it.

This reflection invites us to reverse the direction of analysis. Instead of focusing solely on how individuals deviate from society, we must also ask: how might society deviate from health and balance? Philosophers like Plato believed that a city, like a soul, can be sick when its internal structure loses harmony (Plato, 2000). Nietzsche (1887) went further, arguing that what we call “morality” might in fact be the result of inherited dysfunction.

Here, we propose a new way of thinking about social disorder—one that draws from psychoanalysis (Freud, 1949), systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1968; Smith-Acuña, 2010), and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg, 2016). Through this lens, we ask: can a society’s dominant beliefs, its sacred values, and its shared meanings become distorted to the point of generating illness within the individuals who inhabit it?

Using Algerian society as a reflective space—not as a case to be judged, but as a reality to be understood—we explore how culture, identity, and collective thought can give rise to a unique form of disorder. This is not a study of individuals in isolation, but of the invisible threads that bind them to a structure that may itself be disoriented.

2. Definition of Social Disorder

The concept of social disorder, as used in this paper, may initially appear to overlap with several related constructs in psychology and sociology. One of these is **anti-social behaviour**, a commonly used term to describe actions that violate social norms or disrupt public order. Although it is not a clinical diagnosis, it often refers to patterns of behavior ranging from mild misconduct to criminal aggression (Millie, 2008). Carr et al. (2004) define it as any behavior likely to cause harassment, harm, or distress to people outside the individual's immediate family, such as theft, bullying, or conduct disorders.

Another nearby term is social disorganization, a concept rooted in criminology and sociology. It refers to the failure of a social system to maintain shared values and cohesive relationships among its members (Kawachi et al., 1999). Communities suffering from weak bonds and poor regulation often experience higher rates of crime and instability. Similarly, social anxiety disorder, though clinical in nature, reflects a psychological fear of negative evaluation or embarrassment in social interactions (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

However, the kind of social disorder we explore here is distinct.

It is not reducible to the individual nor strictly measurable by clinical criteria. It is a broader dysfunction that operates at the collective level, sometimes in the form of excess the rise of abnormal or intrusive behaviors, beliefs, or attitudes that disrupt the cultural or moral system across time. At other times, it manifests as absence the gradual loss or weakening of positive social values once protected by historical and cultural norms.

Social disorder gains strength through numbers. It is sustained by repetition and collective reinforcement. It can appear as beliefs, rituals, choices, or even personal convictions that deeply shape people's lifestyles and decisions. It is, in short, a dysfunction that emerges when a large number of individuals within the same society embody the same deviation—consciously or not.

In psychoanalysis, Freud (1994) introduced the concept of the psychic apparatus composed of the id, ego, and superego. Each component plays a role in balancing instinct, reality, and moral restraint. By analogy, we can speak of a social apparatus a symbolic and institutional system that regulates the behaviors, values, and moral expectations of individuals through cultural codes and social roles.

Sociologists and philosophers often refer to this system as the social structure. According to Porpora (1989), it refers either to the abstract organization of social categories or to more tangible, smaller-scale social arrangements. Parsons (1961) argued that social systems are structured through institutional patterns of normative culture, where each social role is defined by rules of behavior and moral expectation.

When this apparatus or structure becomes unbalanced, the symptoms may not appear in the form of crisis or chaos. They may hide behind what appears to be cultural tradition or collective agreement. That is what makes social disorder so complex—and so urgently in need of deeper questioning.

3. Theoretical Frameworks Explaining Social Disorder

Understanding social disorder requires the integration of several theories:

3.1 Psychoanalysis: From the Individual Psyche to the Social Psyche

Freud's theory of the psychic apparatus (Freud, 1949), structured into the id, ego, and superego, has traditionally been used to explain the dynamics of internal conflict within individuals. But what happens when this structure is applied to society?

A collective analogy can be drawn:

- The social id manifests in society's raw impulses: violence, consumption, domination.
- The social ego operates as a mediator between these impulses and external socio-political or economic constraints.
- The social superego is embedded in cultural, religious, and moral values—those symbolic regulators that restrain behavior and maintain coherence.

When the balance collapses—when the social ego weakens or the collective superego disintegrates—societies begin to mirror the pathology of the unbalanced psyche. We witness eruptions of collective rage, the erosion of moral frameworks, and compulsive repetitions of harmful behaviors, often without recognizing their roots.

In ancient philosophy, Plato (2000) suggested that the city is a magnified version of the soul, made up of producers (desire), warriors (spirit), and rulers (reason). Justice emerges when each part fulfills its function in harmony. Today, perhaps disorder emerges when that harmony is broken—not only within individuals, but within the social body itself.

3.2 Systems Theory: Circular Causality and the Fragile Equilibrium

Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) introduced systems theory to explain how living organisms function through open, self-regulating networks. These principles later extended into sociology and psychology, particularly through family systems theory (Smith-Acuña, 2010; Kerr & Bowen, as cited in Priest, 2021).

Systems theory proposes that elements within a system—be it a family, a city, or a nation—do not operate in isolation. They co-create meaning, influence each other through feedback loops, and form dynamic relational patterns.

One of the key ideas here is circular causality: rather than linear “A causes B,” we encounter mutual reinforcement, such as:

“I treat you like a child, so you act like one. The more you act like a child, the more I reinforce the treatment.”

This recursive loop mirrors what happens in families, and by extension, societies. When such loops are not interrupted or restructured, they crystallize into cultural norms—many of which may be dysfunctional.

According to Bowen theory, human systems function across three subsystems: the emotional, the affective, and the intellectual (Priest, 2021). The degree to which individuals can differentiate themselves from these collective emotional forces determines their capacity for healthy relationships.

3.3 Social Identity Theory: When Belonging Distorts Behavior

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) explains how group affiliations shape

our perception of self and others. Through three key processes—social categorization, social identification, and social comparison—we learn to define who we are in opposition to who we are not (Hogg, 2016; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019).

From this view, social disorder results not only from systemic breakdowns, but from identity ruptures—when people no longer know who they are in relation to others, or when their sense of self becomes inseparable from collective fear and division.

Self-Categorization Theory, which builds on this model, further explains how individuals adopt behaviors aligned with their group, even when those behaviors contradict personal beliefs. It's not just that people follow the group—it's that the group inhabits them.

3.4. Cognitive Theory: The Architecture of Thought and Its Collapse

Cognitive theory brings attention back to the internal world. According to Aaron Beck (1967) and later Burns (1980), psychological disorders stem from cognitive distortions—repeated patterns of faulty thinking such as overgeneralization, dichotomous thinking, and catastrophizing (Yurica & DiTomasso, 2005).

When such distorted thought patterns move from the individual to the collective—when societies begin to think in black-and-white terms, to catastrophize the future, or to ignore positive evidence—what emerges is not just psychological distress, but cultural pathology.

3.5 Toward a Unified Perspective

By synthesizing these theories, we arrive at a deeper understanding of social disorder—not as a product of temporary conflict, but as a sign of structural and symbolic collapse:

- Psychoanalysis reveals the eruption of collective unconscious drives.
- Systems theory shows the fragility of internal feedback and regulation.
- Social identity theory explains the emotional pull of belonging and exclusion.
- Cognitive theory exposes how distortions in thought become distortions in culture.

4. The Role of Culture and Religion in Shaping Social Identity

Human beings are not divided between culture and religion, mind and body, or thought and emotion—they are one whole, a living system that organizes itself in layers. To understand how identity is formed and how it becomes a fragile center in times of disorder, we must first explore the invisible forces shaping it: culture and religion. These forces are not external decorations on the self, but rather the soil in which the self grows.

4.1 Culture: A Subtle Architect of Identity

Culture has long been defined as the totality of acquired behaviors, values, and symbols that individuals learn as members of society. Edward Tylor (1871) described it as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a person as a member of society." Harris (1993) echoes this, viewing culture as "a socially acquired pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving."

But culture is more than definition—it is a structure that speaks through us, often without our awareness. It classifies what is acceptable and unacceptable, defines what we should aspire to or fear, and gives shape to how we perceive the world and ourselves within

it. It is not imposed from above, but internalized slowly, drop by drop, through repetition, ritual, and daily life.

Cultural systems, however, are not immune to rupture. When norms begin to contradict each other, or when historical traditions clash with modern transformations, individuals may find themselves torn between inherited identity and emerging change. Such tension can lead to alienation, identity confusion, or even open rebellion against the very culture that raised them.

4.2 Religion: Meaning, Belonging, and Sacred Order

Religion, in its essence, is a system of meaning. Riesebrodt (2010) defines it as “a set of cultural practices and rituals centered around belief in supernatural forces governing life.” These supernatural forces—whether personified as God, destiny, karma, or ancestors—are often invisible, yet carry weight in guiding how people interpret suffering, death, purpose, and justice.

Religion, like culture, shapes behavior and identity—but it adds a sacred dimension. It offers not just social rules but cosmic stories, divine consequences, and moral obligations tied to eternal reward or punishment. In many societies, religious affiliation becomes indistinguishable from cultural belonging (Abdulla, 2018). Prayers, clothing, rituals, and moral expectations are not seen as optional choices but as unquestioned norms that define who “belongs.”

However, religion too evolves, fragments, and is reinterpreted. Within the same religion, many internal currents may exist, with competing interpretations and practices. What is sacred for one group may be rejected by another. Often, the version that becomes dominant is not the most authentic, but the one most widely accepted, most historically entrenched, or most powerfully enforced.

4.3 Where Culture Meets Religion: Harmony or Tension?

In many societies, the boundaries between culture and religion are so deeply entangled that it becomes difficult to separate the two. As Abdulla (2018) notes, cultural practices may become religiously sacralized, while religious beliefs can be reduced to mere social customs. This fusion can create a powerful force of collective identity—but also a potential site of confusion and conflict.

At times, this intertwining strengthens social cohesion, unifying individuals under shared rituals and values. At other times, it becomes a source of rigidity and exclusion, where deviation from tradition is treated as heresy or betrayal. Cultural expectations may pressure individuals to conform to group rituals even if they feel internally alienated from them, leading to performative identity—where people act out belonging without truly believing.

Such inner dissonance—between the personal self and the collective identity—can quietly contribute to social disorder. The individual is torn between loyalty to the group and authenticity to the self. The group, in turn, resists difference, fearing that diversity will unravel unity.

5. Key Concepts in Understanding Social Disorder

To understand social disorder as a deeply human and societal phenomenon, we must explore a set of foundational concepts that—though sometimes left unnamed—govern much of our inner experiences and social conduct. These concepts—emotions, values, principles, morality, attitudes, customs, traditions, norms, superstitions, and beliefs—are not merely intellectual constructs; they represent layers of implicit knowledge that shape our behaviors, decisions, and even our collective identity. They operate silently, often beneath our awareness, yet profoundly influence how we relate to the world around us.

5.1 Emotions

Emotions are not just fleeting experiences; they are signals, messengers of the self. They help us recognize what matters to us, where we are internally, and how we connect to others. A person who can name their feelings, express them clearly, and act upon them wisely is likely to navigate life with greater emotional maturity and social flexibility. However, people often confuse similar emotional states—using “sadness” to mean shame, or “anger” to cover fear—resulting in poor self-regulation and conflict escalation. Emotion is often mistakenly treated as synonymous with affect, feeling, or sensation. Yet each term has its own scope: emotion is a temporary inner state; affect is the peak of that state; feelings are broader and often value-laden; and sensations relate to input from the five senses. According to Ekman (1992), six core emotions—fear, anger, sadness, joy, disgust, and surprise—form the basis of our emotional landscape. Petrides (2010) emphasizes that emotional intelligence—the ability to identify, understand, and manage emotions—is a skill that can be developed. When emotional literacy is low, especially at the collective level, repressed or misunderstood feelings may erupt into impulsive behaviors and social disruption.

5.2 Values

Values are meanings we assign to what is important in life. They are not absolute truths, but evolving personal or cultural standards that guide behavior—loyalty, honesty, justice, love. They are not fixed in stone but shaped by experiences and the social context in which they emerge (Schwartz, 1992). What makes a value “positive” or “negative” often depends on how it aligns with a specific cultural moment.

As Harris (1993) argues, values are acquired social patterns that influence our tendencies to act. When values across generations or groups begin to diverge sharply, the social consensus weakens, and society becomes more vulnerable to disintegration and disorder.

5.3 Principles

Principles are often seen as more universal than values—moral laws rather than personal preferences. Covey (1989) defined them as fundamental truths that serve as guidelines for behavior—such as fairness, integrity, respect, or responsibility. Yet, critical reflection reveals that even principles are not entirely immune to contextual variation. What one person calls a “principle” may be dismissed by another as simply “their opinion.”

Indeed, we often say “it’s a matter of principle,” but what we really mean is that it aligns with our personal moral compass. A principle, then, becomes a personal commitment—an internal contract with oneself—rather than a universal law. While values guide how we feel

about others' behavior, principles often shape how we regulate our own.

5.4 Morality

Morality represents the standards by which we judge right and wrong. Plato (2000) argued that virtue lies between two extremes—courage lies between cowardice and recklessness, generosity between stinginess and waste. Morality is not just imposed from outside; it is absorbed from family, religion, history, and culture.

Yet what is morally accepted in one society may be reprehensible in another. For instance, drinking alcohol is permissible and even celebrated in some societies, but morally condemned in others. Hence, morality cannot be assumed to be universal, and when moral structures weaken or become excessively relativized, social disorder finds fertile ground.

5.5 Attitudes

Attitudes are our psychological leanings—how we evaluate things as good or bad, favorable or unfavorable. They are constructed from three interacting components: cognition (what we believe), emotion (how we feel), and behavior (how we act). As Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) defined it, an attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in a particular way to a given object.

For example, if I believe smoking is harmful (cognitive), feel disgusted by its smell (emotional), and refuse to smoke (behavioral), this triad forms my attitude. When negative or distorted attitudes dominate within a group, particularly those involving identity or security, they pave the way for collective dysfunction and extremist behaviors.

5.6 Customs and Traditions

Customs and traditions are behavioral patterns passed down through generations. Customs (customs) are typically short-term and localized, while traditions (traditions) carry deeper historical and symbolic weight. Customs may define how we greet or dress, whereas traditions are often linked to religious or national ceremonies.

While both express belonging, traditions evoke collective pride and continuity. In rapidly changing societies, the clash between modern values and traditional practices may create identity crises that disrupt social harmony and increase generational tensions.

5.7 Norms

Norms are the invisible threads that hold society together. They are unwritten rules that guide what is acceptable, expected, or taboo. As Thomas (1907) noted, norms constitute the primary mechanism of social control. When these norms are fragmented or become inconsistent across different social groups, the coherence of social behavior weakens—leading to confusion, alienation, and social fragmentation.

5.8 Superstitions

Superstitions are belief systems rooted in myth, folklore, or unverified stories, used to explain phenomena that defy rational or scientific understanding. While they may provide emotional comfort or cultural continuity, they also risk fostering irrational fear, fatalism, or ritualized violence. In communities where superstition dominates over critical thinking, the capacity to respond logically to crises diminishes, often exacerbating social instability (Thomas, 1907).

5.9 Beliefs

Beliefs are the mental states through which we accept something as true—even without direct evidence. They are complex mental constructions influenced by values, emotions, traditions, and even superstitions. As Connors & Halligan (2015) and Van Leeuwen & Lombrozo (2023) highlight, beliefs go beyond perception: we often believe things we cannot see or prove, such as the existence of God, the meaning of fate, or the moral nature of suffering.

Beliefs structure how individuals and communities make sense of the world. When beliefs become destabilized—due to rapid cultural change, political upheaval, or loss of meaning—this instability often manifests as widespread confusion, division, and social unrest.

6. Foundations for Establishing Criteria of Social Disorder

The very notion of disorder—particularly in its psychological and social dimensions—is among the most complex and debated in modern thought. While it may be relatively straightforward to define a physical illness through biological signs, disorder—especially when collective—resists simplification. It does not always appear as a visible fracture but often as an invisible dissonance: an unfamiliar state, a disquieting experience, or a distortion in the natural flow of individual or societal functioning.

6.1 Criteria of Normality and Abnormality: A General Framework

In clinical psychology, the diagnostic process typically follows a framework rooted in distinguishing between “normal” and “abnormal” behaviors. This evaluation is usually based on three key criteria:

- Duration of the symptoms
- Severity of their impact on functioning
- Frequency of their recurrence

These dimensions are central to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), which provides structured criteria for evaluating whether an individual’s psychological condition deviates functionally and socially from expected norms (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Under this model, a behavior is considered disordered when it persists over time, reaches a level of intensity that affects daily life, and repeats in a way that impairs social or occupational adaptation.

Importantly, this model starts from the group as the reference point, using the average behavior of the majority as a normative baseline to judge the individual.

6.2 From the Individual to Society: Reversing the Evaluation Logic

But when we shift the lens to social disorder, this logic must be reversed. Here, it is not the individual being compared to the group, but society itself that must be assessed based on its outcomes—its cultural, emotional, and behavioral impacts on individuals.

In other words, just as a person may be diagnosed with a disorder based on persistent dysfunction, a society too can be evaluated based on signs of imbalance, injustice, or loss of cohesion. However, this shift demands a rethinking of the very idea that the majority is

always right, or that collective behavior is inherently healthy.

6.3 The Philosophical Problem of Collective Reference

This reversal invites a deeper philosophical inquiry: Can the collective—public opinion, majority behavior, or what is most visible—serve as a valid reference for defining health, truth, or order?

Philosophers have long warned against the appeal to the majority fallacy, reminding us that what is common is not always correct (Van Leeuwen & Lombrozo, 2023). The prevalence of a belief or practice does not guarantee its healthiness or truth. If we assume that a whole society cannot be disordered, then we deny the possibility of collective dysfunction. But if we accept that a society is a collection of individuals, each vulnerable to disorientation, then it follows that entire communities—like individuals—can fall into disorder.

6.4 Conditions for Evaluating Society

Who gets to evaluate the health of a society? Can just anyone judge the collective? Here, we must differentiate between opinion and evaluation. While everyone has opinions—often shaped by emotions or ideology—true evaluation demands logic, evidence, and distance from bias. Therefore, the task of diagnosing social disorder should be undertaken by individuals who meet specific criteria:

- Cultural embeddedness: belonging to the society in question, with intimate knowledge of its values, language, and subtleties.
- Historical awareness: understanding the background and evolution of the culture across generations.
- Analytical objectivity: the ability to move beyond emotional or moralistic judgments, applying critical thinking and logical analysis.
- Comparative insight: a capacity to contrast dominant norms (often unconscious) with emerging alternative views (often proposed by minorities), which may be early indicators of deeper structural dysfunction.

History teaches us that major transformations often begin with marginalized ideas—those proposed by philosophers, artists, scientists, and reformers whose thinking clashed with dominant norms but eventually reshaped them.

Based on the above, we propose the following framework for identifying social disorder. The model relies on five core indicators:

Table 1. Reference Model for Defining Social Disorder Criteria

Criterion	Description
Structural Equilibrium	The society’s ability to maintain internal cohesion and fulfill its social functions.
Value Stability	The degree to which core values remain stable and clearly shared among members.
Efficiency of Regulatory Mechanisms	The effectiveness of norms, laws, and institutions in organizing social behavior.
Identity Flexibility	The society’s capacity to adapt to change without experiencing identity collapse.
Achievement of Social Well-being	The extent to which individuals experience dignity, justice, and opportunity.

Table 1 portrays a deeper truth: when a society loses balance across these dimensions all at once and for a sustained time, this does not merely reflect scattered personal struggles. It reveals a collective ailment.

7. Examples of Certain Forms of Social Disorder

In this section, we will present several applied examples that reflect these forms of dysfunction, based on field insights and socio-psychological interpretations:

7.1 Distortion of the Concepts of Need and Desire

Needs are essential for human survival—water, food, shelter. Necessities go beyond survival, improving one's quality of life, such as security or access to health care. Desires, on the other hand, are optional luxuries—new phones, vacations, or fashionable clothes.

In disoriented societies, these distinctions collapse. Desires begin to masquerade as needs, leading to compulsive consumption, chronic dissatisfaction, and psychological confusion. The individual becomes trapped in a cycle of wanting, without knowing why. When society collectively shifts toward consumerist logic, the social fabric begins to erode, replaced by competition, entitlement, and spiritual emptiness.

7.2 Distortion of the Concept of Love

Love, in its essence, is a fundamental emotional energy—a deeply human need that encompasses affection for God, oneself, family, and nature. Yet many societies reduce it to a narrow romantic ideal, often conditional upon material success or superficial attraction. This limited view fosters emotional instability, fragile relationships, and widespread disappointment. When people treat love as unconditional devotion, without awareness, boundaries, or emotional literacy, it becomes a source of suffering rather than growth. A mature understanding of love recognizes it as learnable, fluid, and deeply connected to self-respect and reciprocity. It is not merely a feeling, but a responsibility toward the dignity of oneself and others.

7.3 Distortion of the Concepts of Happiness and Success

In societies undergoing cultural disorder, happiness is often mistaken for temporary euphoria—pleasure from external stimuli. Real happiness, however, is not about perfect circumstances, but about internal balance and the ability to find joy in simplicity (Seligman, 2011).

Likewise, success is reduced to measurable external achievements—money, fame, marriage—while ignoring existential fulfillment, ethical integrity, or personal alignment. People confuse social approval with self-worth and mistake material abundance for purpose. This distortion leads to chronic emptiness, where individuals strive endlessly yet feel unsatisfied. True success and happiness demand a shift inward, a deeper reflection on meaning, perseverance, and appreciation of life's complexity beyond idealized narratives.

7.4 Distortion of the Concepts of Good and Evil

Morality loses clarity when relativism reigns. What is “good” becomes whatever benefits the self or group in power; what is “evil” becomes whatever disrupts that advantage.

Ethical standards become subjective, inconsistent, and prone to manipulation. This

moral ambiguity enables systemic corruption, injustice, and mutual suspicion within society. Philosophically, good and evil are not fixed polarities but are experienced through human trials and contrasts. As Plato and later Stoics suggest, virtue often lies in navigating the space between two extremes—a dynamic process, not a static rule (Plato, 2000).

7.5 Distortion of the Concept of Women's Freedom

In some cultures, women's freedom is falsely equated with mimicry of foreign lifestyles—consumerism, hyper-independence, or superficial aesthetics—rather than authentic empowerment rooted in self-awareness, education, and contribution.

This imitation causes internal conflict in women, who are expected to be everything at once: the perfect wife, mother, and professional. They are torn between societal expectations and personal desires, between tradition and modernity.

Freedom is not about rejecting femininity or roles but reclaiming the right to define one's path. When distorted, it becomes another mask women wear—rather than a truth they live.

7.6 Distortion of Religious Values

Religious values, when misunderstood or misapplied, often become tools for psychological suppression rather than spiritual enlightenment:

- Fate and destiny are used to justify passivity, discouraging personal responsibility and initiative.
- Sacrifice is over-romanticized, leading to exploitation of kind-hearted individuals who are taught to neglect their boundaries in the name of goodness.
- Reward and punishment are framed in fear-based terms, overshadowing the spiritual beauty of divine love and mercy (Abu-Raiya et Pargament, 2015).
- Culture and religion are confused, resulting in the sacralization of customs and social codes rather than divine principles.

As Thomas (1907) noted, when superstition replaces reasoning, religion becomes an identity marker rather than a transformative journey.

7.7 Misinterpretation of Psychological and Spiritual Phenomena

In many communities, psychological issues—such as panic attacks, trauma, or depression—are still interpreted through a mystical lens: witchcraft, the evil eye, or spiritual possession.

This confusion between the spiritual and the psychological prevents effective care. Instead of seeking scientific intervention or therapy, individuals turn to herbalists or spiritual healers, delaying proper treatment.

Such distortions reflect deeper societal resistance to mental health awareness. True healing requires integration: honoring cultural beliefs while embracing evidence-based practices and emotional literacy (Connors & Halligan, 2015).

8. Conclusion

Social disorder is not merely an individual deviation from what is considered “normal.” It is a mirror that reflects deeper fractures within the very structure of society. It is not the strange behavior of one person that we should fear, but the silent normalization of dysfunction across the collective. A society may wake up one day to discover that its own reference points were flawed, its values distorted, and its identity shaken—all without anyone noticing when the cracks began.

We often think that the majority is the measure of health, that what is popular must be right. But perhaps it is the quiet voice of the few—the philosopher, the critic, the reflective mind—that sees clearly what others ignore. Social disorder does not scream; it seeps. It creeps in through distorted concepts of love, of freedom, of morality, of success. And suddenly, we find ourselves exhausted—chasing happiness in things, seeking meaning in appearances, and confusing identity with roles imposed by a restless world.

Understanding social disorder requires looking beyond the self to the structure itself, recognizing that true healing may begin not with the individual, but with society daring to reflect, re-evaluate, and restore its balance.

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