

ON THE STATE OF NORMALITY OF THE ROMANIAN PSYCHIATRY – SEPTEMBER 2008

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This year, 18 years will have passed since, immediately after the revolution, on March 1990, the Romanian Psychiatric Association (APR) came into being. As its first elected president, I was looking back on the 29 years, starting with 1961, I had spent within our country's psychiatric system with all its normalities and abnormalities. Before 1990, psychiatry was functioning, scientifically speaking, just as the other medical specialties, within the Union of the Medical Sciences Association (USSM), close by and together with neurology and, later on, with child psychiatry. There were plenty of scientific reunions, at both local and national level, with some centres preferring a certain theme. Thus, in Bucharest, every year in June, there was a meeting on psychopathology, which we attended regularly. In the 70's, in Sibiu, there were several meetings on psychotherapy. In Timisoara, in the 70's and 80's, there were meetings on social psychiatry. In Oradea, there were some attempts at anthropological psychiatry. Iasi also had constant reunions, some of them of an anniversary nature. As I remember, the problem with these scientific meetings was that, although many papers were submitted, with the same group of authors submitting sometimes 5 to 10 papers (changing only the name of the first author), many of these papers were not presented. Or, at the beginning, a short summary of all these papers was read. On the other hand, the administrative system of the USSM made it mandatory to organize "regular" zonal scientific meetings, so that specialists could at least come together and try to present a paper.

After 1990, there were some changes that took place in Romanian psychiatry and some of them are for the better. Efforts have been made towards legislation and currently there is a Mental Health Law that also has implementation norms. Then, Nongovernmental Organisations of patients and their families were allowed and stimulated and, for some time, they played an effective role. Finally, private psychiatric practice was made possible under various forms; however, the dominant form was that of private psychiatric offices. Then, just like in the rest of the world, the pharmaceutical companies have become active and sponsor our various actions in psychiatry. In the new social climate that progressed towards democracy, there has been a sharp increase in the access to information and the possibilities to travel abroad (in the past, personally I was able, with a lot of effort, to take part in just one psychi-

atric event in Vienna, 22 years after graduating from medical school). These changes pave the way for us to continue to bring Romanian psychiatry closer to normality.

The road to normality is slow and has many turns. In the beginning of the 1990's, initially there was some confusion about the statutes of the APR and its representative. The USA model, where belonging to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) is defining the career of any psychiatrist, proved difficult to implement in Romania. Even now, many specialists are still wondering about the use and significance of becoming an APR member. So, there is still place for more normality.

Normality is usually associated with the natural, with the unravelling of the people's spontaneous existence, with "what is". Meaning, in Kant's terms, with the "ist-sein", what really is. However, the same term defining normality encompasses the perspective of the "soll-sein", what should be.

Romanian psychiatrists and psychiatry are slowly entering normality, unless they are already there, meaning they live the natural of certain things that happen and therefore appear as normal, without anyone to state precisely and efficiently something else. For example, the fact that, although in the last 4-5 years more scientific events took place, the time allotted to original papers and personal research is under that given to drug companies-sponsored symposia. The increasing presence and frequency with which Romanian psychiatrists, especially some of them, are taking part in the many and various scientific national events has more and more a scientific nature, rather than a touristic one. It is natural and normal that increasingly more money are being invested in psychiatry, just as it is normal that their source and the person responsible to direct their spending are known. Besides the rehabilitation of existing facilities, one still expects the normality of having psychiatric objectives for the next 5-10 years, knowing the steps we have taken already. For example, in setting up facilities that are designed especially for psychiatry that would be an addition to the last constructions that were built for this purpose, meaning the Socola and Obregia hospitals. And developing functional programs based on specialized professionals; meaning psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, vocational therapists competent in the field of forensic, community, addiction services, emergency services, psychoses, liai-

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son psychiatry and so on. If we continue to invest in walls and not in people, the normality that we'll be living in will look accordingly.

The normality that we stepped in and are living in refers to the training of the young generation as well. As expected, the number of residents who enter the field of psychiatry has grown every year. There is still to be expected the normality of their training, of their participation in rational programs to ensure professionalism, of their competencies, of the adequate and targeted payment for those who train them properly and competitively. Normally, there are plenty of destinations to spend the money given to psychiatry.

There is one more normality that would be desirable to occur, that in which we all care there are not

enough patients' NGO's, that they are not active enough, that civil society is not involved enough, that other sectors of the state that deal with social welfare and quality of life do not collaborate enough with psychiatry.

Romanian psychiatry steps into normality as evidenced by the fact that each year the standard of national congresses and conferences becomes clearer and firmer as compared to other psychiatric scientific events, by the fact that the Romanian Psychiatric Journal becomes ever more prestigious. In some places, certain fields are explored with continuous scientific interest and many doctorate theses reach excellent standards. There remains that their results would be published abroad.

Therefore, more and more, we step into normality.