DEVIANCY AS SOCIAL PROBLEM: THE ANSWERS OF PSYCHOLOGY

LA DEVIANZA COME PROBLEMA SOCIALE: LE RISPOSTE DELLA PSICOLOGIA

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Abstract

Scope: Deviant behaviour is the one that breaks those rules most people regard as social. The study describes and analyzes the characteristics of this behavior.

Materials and Methods: Psychology and also the latest Sociological Theories have tried to find the causes of deviance in the complex and difficult relationship with parental figures, with Authority in general, with the Part of society that holds Power etc.

Results and Conclusions: While admitting the possible presence of some kinds of personality disorders in the deviant's psychic structure we cannot avoid focusing on the methodologies used for the integration of citizen above all in those fundamental units in charge of minors' education: Family and School.

Advanced teaching methods which can provide behavioural models and rules are to be strongly encouraged, without forgetting the essential dimension of playing, of research and also of individual personal growth.

Nevertheless we must be aware that 'breaking' the rules with a sense of responsibility and discernment helps a young man to grow informed and responsible, able to renew his behavioural patterns often dated and deficient albeit mainly passively accepted.

Abstract

Scopo: Il comportamento deviante è tale in quanto infrange una serie di norme sociali più o meno consapevolmente riconosciute dai più. Scopo dello studio è descrivere e analizzare le caratteristiche di tale comportamento.

Materiali e Metodi: Si è tentato di individuare le cause della devianza in un rapporto complesso con le figure genitoriali, con l'Autorità generalmente intesa, con i Gruppi sociali che detengono il Potere ecc. valutando teorie a partire dalla psicoanalisi fino alla più recente sociologia.

Risultati e Conclusioni: Pur ammettendo la possibile presenza di un certo tipo di disturbi di personalità nella struttura psichica del deviante, non si può non puntare l'attenzione sulle metodiche che le varie società utilizzano per l'integrazione dei cittadini, soprattutto nelle agenzie fondamentali preposte all'educazione del minore: famiglia e scuola. Metodi didattici all'avanguardia, che senz' altro forniscano al discente griglie comportamentali e regole di condotta, che però al tempo stesso non dimentichino la dimensione fondamentale del gioco, dello svago e della ricerca personale, sono da incentivare fortemente. Con la consapevolezza che, nel bambino e nell'adolescente, "trasgredire" determinate regole con coscienza critica e capacità di discernimento, aiuta a formare un cittadino consapevole, responsabile e rivolto all'innovazione di paradigmi comportamentali spesso datati e inadeguati, anche se comunemente accettati con passività dai più.

Background

Deviant behavior is what occurs when an individual, or a group of individuals, differs in his words or attitudes from an alleged behavioral norm in a given society or in a given context shared by most.

The so-called deviant does not accept, or simply has not internalized the rules of a given context and violates the requirements, in a more or less conscious way: delinquency or crime, mental illness, drug abuse or alcohol , some sexual behaviors etc.. are considered forms of deviance that characterize the individual as "different" compared to a commonly accepted standard in the given context, and make it the target of social disapproval, condemnation and often punitive or disparaging retaliation. The society gives its specific rules to the individual from his early childhood, and his whole life is a "training to society".

The first rules are internalized in the "mother-child" and even more "parent-child" relationship. The so-called "primary socialization" takes place in the early years of a child's life, when his mother teaches, for example, how to use a knife and a fork to eat, and then comes "the secondary socialization", which occurs when he enters school and starts to learn those skills which are necessary to play a social role.

The different forms of socialization take place according to a mechanism of "punishment and reward". Not always the deviance can be considered in an objective way: often a given behavior is deviant in one country and not in another, or in a given historical period rather than in another. It may happen at times, that because the Society, (or the various societies), always sets the rules in defense of its structure, the deviant, breaking those rules, might turn into the variant "X", that   is the bearer of new paradigms meant to become the new standard that later, when the deviant act is absorbed.

It is also true, however, that, if many evaluations may be perceived differently in space and time, different social norms, and their infringement, are judged in the same way in most contexts: for example this is the case of the prohibition of incest, infanticide, the killing of the parents etc. Even the means of mass communication can be a vehicle of normativity and socializing.

An example is the Theory of the Spiral of Silence, formulated by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1): according to this theory individuals conform, in social conversations, to the models and to the information that media formulate and propose them.

The one who does not want or can not conform to these models, rather than appear alien and disagree with the ways and topics of the conversation, he prefers to be silent. So the spiral of silence is the integration mechanism that forces to be silent those who dissent from the messages and the lifestyle offered by the media.

A Historical Perspective

The Social Control is an integral part of every society: every society generates forms of conformity, regimentation, and mechanisms of surveillance and persuasion as a result of technical of sanction and punishment of any social differences. The Psychoanalysis postulates the presence in the individual of a Super-Ego that dictates the rules of behavior, which is the result of "introjection" of social rules, the first bearers are the parental figures, usually of the father. So the individual   introjects   the social norms given to him by his parents, merges them into the Super-Ego (2) and they become his own rules.

These rules of the Super-Ego fight against the essence of his pulses, the Es, that is, against the force of the primary instincts, which tends to immediate satisfaction of any pulse. From the fight between the Es and the Super-Ego, and their request, is formed, according to the basic principles of psychoanalysis, the Ego, which in the healthy individual is able to conform to the Principle of Reality, that is to the deferment and the waiting for the satisfying primal urges.

According to psychoanalysis the sick or immature individual, on the contrary, fails to balance these two opposing forces, he is inexorably influenced by the Pleasure Principle, and here comes his tendency to break the commonly accepted norms and to "diverge" from a social predetermined order. The individual without rules, isolated, prey of his deepest impulses, is the victim of what in sociology is called Anomia (from Latin A-nomos: the absence of laws/rules).

Studies on Anomia are fundamental to the sociological sciences. The individual alienated, excluded from the connective tissue of society and from the aggregation with his own kind, is object of many theories. For instance of the incidence of suicide cases is supposed to refer to the characteristics of the social environment (3). According to Talcott Parsons text "The Social System" (4), a large part of North American sociology (the so-called Chicago School) studied the problem of

deviance, connecting and relating it to the uncontrolled development of the western metropolis, followed by social disorganization, urban sprawl etc. The emergence and growth, the loss of value of some ethical and social rules, and the impaired influence of some primary groups, made come out and growa vast layer of poor or indigent population who lack awareness and ethical behavior (5).

The presence of a working-class poorly or not educated agglomerated in unhygienic and overcrowded dormitory centers, caused the spread of illness and social problems and the emergence of gangs of young and marginalized border-line thugs with no prospect of employment and thus integration. The Chicago School addressed these problems from a theoretical point of view and postulated the presence of cultural "relativism" at the base of the deviance, according to which different social and ethnic groups establish their relationship with the State and the dominant ethnic groups on the basis of a complex code that refers, for each one, to their original culture. Therefore the farthest centers of power and decision making are perceived as more widespread is the tendency to commit a crime.

The Chicago School also focused on acts of deviance made by upper-class, the so-called white-collar deviance, especially with regard to financial crimes, fraud banking and stock market speculation (6).

According to Robert Merton (7) the main sources of tension and frustration for the young people, both poor and high class, are the difficulties to achieve a higher status of life, or to maintain what is given to them by their parents. In addition, the way the alleged deviant behavior is sanctioned, at the group level and not officially, is related to other forms of negative behavior and open to criticism, bound to the dynamics of bullying also known as "the dynamics of the Scapegoat" (8). According to the Labelling Theory the dominant social groups define individuals as integrated or not; they give the license of outsider according to their goals aimed at maintaining and defending the status-quo. The definitions of norm or deviance become concepts through which the groups in power manage their supremacy.

According to the Labelling theory an individual starts his deviant career with an act, a gesture, a behavior, sometimes accidental, that suffers the social disapproval.

Then, in case the subject persists in his behavior, there will be the isolation, reprobation and the consequent degradation in terms of reputation and perceived role. Later the deviant behavior is "fixed" and the individual becomes a permanent outsider. In this case the dominant groups can easily set in this area all the subjects or dissident groups not in accordance with their thought. From here starts that branch of sociology interested in analyzing the operating mechanisms of Power, which suggested interesting and fruitful points of view, and often led to an uncritical acceptance and to tolerance of the point of view of the deviant, that is just as misleading and justificatory.

Erving Goffman (9) analyzes the relationship between social role and identity: when the role that you have taken, or you were forced to take in a given associative context, is too divergent from your own identity, or from the self- perceived one or from the one perceived by others. This discrepancy causes discomfort, tightness and it is the beginning of incubation of a form more or less of blatant transgression. Other authors have emphasized the changing relationship Repression-Permissiveness, and tilted in favor of the latter, which is actually a false permissiveness which imposes a materialistic and neurotically hedonistic culture (10). From these analyses come all those theories that inscribe the figure of the deviant in a dialectic view towards the systems of dominant power.

In this case the deviation is only one of the forms through which the "divergent thinking" or the one nonaligned with what is believed the global thinking, is stigmatized. Firstly in "Discipline and Punish", then in the "microphysics of power" Michel Foucault identifies the power as a kind of lattice points each of which brings its influence on the others in swirling motion: some social and labor categories are then marginalized more than others, but there is no person who is completely excluded from the network of the dissemination and distribution of power. Any one undergoes the power of someone and exerts his own on someone else, so by nature is no more justified class in applying the mechanisms of deviance than others (11, 12). However, there are classes that hold more power in absolute than others, and that generally influence the perception of the common opinions. The Left wing critics and the thought, for example, of Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm emphasize the approval process that all subjects with a personal and dissonant vision undergo. The ruling classes, through the megaphones of the media and networks of social control, try and often succeed in quelling any dissent and disagreement, even through the systems of mandatory detention and behavioral re-education (10, 13). The movements called "Anti-psychiatry" originate from here (14).

Classification

Through the analysis of personality disorders we can get an overview of the psychological disorders, that, underlining certain stable features of the human being, are more or less marked variations from an alleged recognized behavioral Norma:

The DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) collects into three groups the different personality disorders;

-Group A includes personality disorders characterized by bizarre, strange or eccentric behavior:

• Paranoid Disorder: the sufferer tends to interpret the behavior of others as malicious, behaving suspiciously;

• Schizoid disorder: the sufferer is not interested in having contacts with others, preferring a lifestyle secluded and detached lifestyle. He also suffers from distortions of the rational thought;

• Schizotypal disorder: people diagnosed with this disorder are eccentric in behavior and dress, with little contact with the reality, they give a lot of importance to magical, supernatural or paranormal insights.

-Group B includes disorders characterized by amplified and unpredictable emotionalism and instability of loving relationships:

• Border-line disorder: this disorder is characterized by impulsivity, emotional and relational instability and the idea of the self oscillating between extreme and conflicting positions;

• Histrionic disorder: the sufferer tends to look for morbid and pathological attention from the others, to put into place seductive and manipulative behaviors and express emotions theatrically and excessively;

 • Narcissistic Disorder: the sufferer requires immoderate admiration of others, he puts himself above everything and suffers from lack of satisfaction to this impulse. The subject develops sadistic and destructive behaviors to himself and to others;

• Anti -social disorder: the sufferer does not feel the need to respect the laws, tends to violate the rights of others, does not feel guilty for the damage done;

-Group C includes disorders characterized by strong anxiety and often unjustified fear:

• Avoidant disorder: The patient tends to avoid social situations for fear of being judged or observed. He shows shyness and strong feeling of inadequacy and inferiority;

• Dependent disorder: the sufferer feels a strong need to be cared for, protected and defended. He delegates his responsibilities and he is highly unreliable;

• Obsessive-compulsive disorder: he has a strong tendency to perfectionism and precision. He shows a strong concern for order and control over things and people. He tends to perform obsessively his duties and suffers when things are not under his complete control.

Assuming that these disorders are nothing more than an accentuation of the personality traits commonly found in the average of the subjects among the general population, it is certainly true that, when described personality disorders they generate a more or less marked pathology in the subject, who is defined them as "deviant individual."

The Deviance as a rejection of conformism

It can therefore be argued that deviance represents, in a generic sense, a rejection of the Authority: be it parental, social, educational, etc. It is obvious that the formation of the personality comes through the rejection of a well established rule. The best minds have not always bent to a consolidated knowledge but, with their behavior and attitudes they have forced the limits and the frame of the customs of their time. The philosopher and psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (15, 16) suggests that, the genesis and the consolidation of fascist style movements in different countries around the world, comes from the formation, since the atomistic level of the psyche of each individual, the so-called "characterial armor": an emotional shield that the subject builds to defend himself from the anxiety due to the clash between internal drives and environmental answers.

This may occur when to take over an excessive regimentation of the psychological mechanisms arises, and causing a contraction of the free flow of the drive energies, at bodily and mental level. The deviance can then be configured through multiple models of interpretation, and it is clear that it is a topic susceptible to misinterpretation and poorly scientific and credible categorizations.

It is known that in the U.S.A. and in other Western countries the so-called Attention Deficit (ADD-Attention Deficit Disorder) is often diagnosed, and sometimes simply lively, curious, definitely hyperactive children with at the same time outstanding qualities of creativity etc are given drugs. The writer Pier Paolo Pasolini (17) in the collection of newspaper articles " Lutheran Letters " wrote a brief treatise on Pedagogy, which is made up of the "Letters to Gennariello". In these writings, published posthumously on the "Corriere della Sera" and then in the volume form, the author suggests a conversation between himself and a young "guaglione Napoletano". Pasolini pretends to talk to him directly and he describes the physical and moral features of the young: cheerful and irreverent Neapolitan young man, of impertinent behaviors (a "rogue guy") but not devoid of intelligence and goodness of heart.

Pasolini writes: "… the fact that you are Neapolitan exclude that, despite being middle-class, you cannot also be inwardly cute. Naples is still the last plebeian metropolis, the last big village (…), this general and historical condition levels the social classes physically and intellectually.

The vitality is always a source of affection and spontaneity. In Naples both poor and the bourgeois guys are full of vitality. "Naples therefore remained, according to the Pasolini (who was later forced to retract this statement), miraculously intact for centuries, one of the last outposts not attacked by the modernistic and petty-bourgeois influences that, disfigure anthropologically and hopelessly other Italian cities and their inhabitants.

Pasolini showed to his young imaginary interlocutor what in Italy was of the years of lead, the prevailing conformism and the ideology of the widespread consumerism. And to this imaginary, cute, vital boy, not so obnoxious as most of his peers, the author devotes some of the most very illuminating words of his thought. In all of his works, the novels "Ragazzi di vita" and "Vita violenta", and then in the movies and in Articoli corsari, up to the book- testament "Oil", Pasolini addresses at "deviant" boys, who live different values compared to those that the non-ethics of consumerism and the false responses of respectability suggest. His gaze lingers on their lack of malice, on their wild unconventionality and he tries to show them a way which could prevent them from being incorporated in a corrupt and pervasive system. The theme of the deviance in Pasolini becomes complex and free from trivial and peaceful answers, in search of a freedom that should be true, complete and not framed in standardization and conformism much more harmful and immoral than the behavior of these guys, he considers, a form of "transgression" spontaneous, vitalistic and basically harmless.

Pasolini's thought expresses a radical condemnation of the agencies in charge of education in Italy is conveyed and responsible for training the child towards adult life: in another famous article provocatively and paradoxically, but not insensibly, he proposes the abolition of compulsory schooling and television how they were in Italy in the sixties and seventies, is bearers of conformist and regressive values. Nowadays for sure Family and School are in serious delay when compared to the evolving lifestyles of the alleged modernity. While the society wildly changes, as well as the corporate and multinationals world, is antithetical to provincial and plastered visions through which the model of teaching and learning is set up in our country.

Proposals

It can be concluded that the network of social norms and control is indispensable tools for an association life but it often contains and labels the behavior of the individuals who bring in themselves innovation and originality.

Under the hegemony of a conservative and conformist culture those who are carriers of new original and modern ideas and thoughts are likely to be stigmatized. In most cases the deviant has a psychic structure with the personality disorders. The social norms and the sanctioning of deviance are therefore tools and inevitable methods in any kind of society that wants to be working effectively.

But it is impossible not detect the innovative strength of certain behaviors and ways of acting and thinking, and focus the attention on the inadequacy of the educational methods and of the integration that are based, at present, on the key agencies responsible of the education of the child: family and school. In the work "Homo Ludens" (18), the Dutch philosopher Johan Huizinga focuses his attention on the game as a complex cultural system: "(…) it does not mean that the game changes or turns into culture, but rather that the culture in its original phases, has the character of a game; it is represented in forms and moods typical of playing: in this "duality-unity" of culture and game, the game is the primary thing, objective, perceptible, and concretely determined; while the culture is but the classification applied by our historical judgment to the situation. "Gregory Bateson, however, locates the essence of the game in its being metalanguage: given that games are something that is not what it seems", a 'recreational activity is a really a

recreational activity when each player can say: "This is a game", ie there must be an awareness that the action is fictitious and it "meta-communicate " its pretence. This is a type of perception of ambivalence and contingent character about the individual role similar to the one expressed by Goffman (9). The meta-communication, therefore, according to Bateson serves to reveal the nature "as if" of the nature of the game, and his creation of a fantasy world in which fictitious actions simulate real actions.

The game is therefore a key element of exploration of the world for the children and teenagers. In the game you simulate different rules and alternatives to those that presuppose the real world. In the game you learn how to break established rules, to "ridicule" the reality and subject it to subversion, reversal and contradiction.

In many games, fictitious identities are embodied (role-playing games), and the rules of the reality of the game and of the perceived reality are broken and disassembled, under a greater awareness of the action and of a more clear and conscious understanding of the mechanisms of interaction with others. Advanced teaching methods, which provide the learner with the grids of behavior and rules of conduct, but at the same time do not forget the fundamental dimension of the game, of recreation and personal research , are to be strongly encouraged.

Together with the knowledge that, in children and adolescents, the "transgressing" of certain rules with critical awareness and insight, helps form a conscious citizen, responsible and focused on the innovation of behavioral paradigms often outdated and inadequate, although commonly passively accepted by the majority (19).

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