



Antropología Cristiana y Ciencias de la Salud Mental

**Montserrat Lafuente Gil, Mar Álvarez Segura y
Martín F. Echavarría
(Editores)**

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PREFACE

RAFAEL RODRÍGUEZ-PONGA
Rector at Universitat Abat Oliba CEU
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This book brings together various written works that link Christian anthropology and the mental health sciences, and is the result of the intellectual interest the subject inspires, as perceived and channelled by the Faculty of Psychology at Universitat Abat Oliba CEU (UAO CEU).

It centres on aspects of profound relevance to our society: tackling the most profoundly human of problems, informed by the dialogue between the sciences and the humanities, between scientific rigour and humanistic sensitivity, between the health sciences and the Christian vision of life; and, in a broad sense, between reason and faith. In short, it is dedicated to the study of people, of the human being in its many facets, because people's health requires careful attention be paid to their physical, mental and spiritual dimensions.

This well-conceived, well-constructed collective publication comes after years of hard work, and its approach is interdisciplinary, international and ecumenical.

I would first of all like to emphasise that this is a fruitful work that is born from an **interdisciplinary** perspective, relying as it does on cooperation across several disciplines. It is not a mere juxtaposition of differing points of view, but rather readers will see that there has been close cooperation between the various scientific disciplines in the common hope of finding solutions to the most intimate human problems.

As such, this book's chapters are the work of professionals from a variety of fields, such as psychology, medicine (particularly psychiatry), philosophy, pedagogy, anthropology and theology.

Part of the value this work offers can be found in the highly relevant contributions from UAO CEU postgraduate students, revealing themselves to be a promising generation of professionals and committed researchers.

Secondly, this has been an **international** process, involving scholars from different countries and continents, of different origins and languages.

This is a highly significant aspect that bears highlighting: the relationship between mental health studies and Christian anthropology is not a need that has been detected solely in Barcelona or in Spain, but rather it is a concern shared across very different geographical and cultural areas. This subject matter is actually a necessity of our time.

It is therefore pleasing to see chapters in this volume penned by professionals from the United States, Peru, Argentina, South Africa, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Japan and, of course, Spain.

In this process of international collaboration, I would like to thank the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy, chaired by Professor Werner May, for their guidance and support. Several of their members have taken part in this publication.

Thirdly, we are also pleased that both this book, and all activities leading up to it, have taken on board the Christian perspective with an open, **ecumenical**, multi-confessional vision. Christians of different confessions have been able to come together to collaborate: Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans and Orthodox. As such, this collaboration will also serve to foster intellectual dialogue between Christian churches, in an ecumenical spirit.

Its interdisciplinary nature, internationalist approach and ecumenical vision are the three most defining qualities of this book.

In addition, as a result of the work carried out, the UAO CEU organised a conference in September 2019 exploring these issues, with participation from some 150 people. It was the first conference dedicated to this specific field of study. It proved to be a pioneering event in Spain, and helped connect various initiatives happening at our university.

This set of activities (the book, the research and the conferences) are conceived as open fora for academic debate, in which individuals freely express their proposals, drawing from their perspective, their discipline, their national origin, their religious denomination and their experience. Obviously, the positions taken by participants do not reflect the opinion of this university, nor of CEU, nor was this our intention at any time. The role of the university is to encourage the free debate of ideas.

UAO is part of the CEU institution, the largest educational group in Spain. Originally called Centro de Estudios Universitarios [Centre for University Studies], it was founded in 1933 by Ángel Herrera Oria, a man who pursued wide-reaching activity in several professional sectors, always informed by his

profound Christian spirituality. A lawyer, journalist and civil servant, he was ordained a priest at the age of 54, and was later appointed bishop and cardinal in the Catholic Church. Previously, he had served as the first president of the Catholic Association of Propagandists (ACdP).

Herrera Oria wrote that in universities, “isolation must be avoided: they must be in contact with society and, especially, with different social groups”¹. And this is why we are pleased our activity has involved people from a diverse range of academic, social and scientific bodies.

On the other hand, readers will allow me to make a brief note in my capacity as a Doctor of Philology. I believe that our use of language is intimately related to the issues dealt with here. Moreover, many mental health situations are reflected through language. In any case, it is clear that one of the main tools for every therapist is the word, which they must look after and cultivate. Language, health and spiritual life are more closely related than they might at first seem. In his book, *Somos lo que hablamos* [We are what we speak], Spanish psychiatrist Luis Rojas Marcos, who works in New York, tells us:

A wide variety of spiritual practices, including religious prayers, have been shown to be powerful ways to maintain a positive attitude and successfully overcome the tensions and setbacks that plague us in our everyday lives².

I would like to end by offering my most heartfelt congratulations to the team at the UAO CEU Faculty of Psychology for their work: the dean, Martín Echavarría; the director of studies of our Degree in Psychology, Laura Amado; and the director of the Official Master’s Degree in General Health Psychology, Montserrat Giner.

Of course, my most sincere congratulations also go to Montserrat Lafuente, for her hard work in coordinating this book. I would like to extend my gratitude to Mar Álvarez, who has contributed so much to promoting the relationship between Christian anthropology and mental health; and to the team comprising Joan d’Ávila Juanola, Martiño Rodríguez, Fernando de los Bueis, Joaquín García-Alandete, and Javier Fiz Pérez.

I reiterate my congratulations to the Faculty of Psychology, in the hope that this work will bear fruit in the form of new studies, publications, meetings and conferences.

¹ *Obras completas*, edition prepared by José Luis Gutiérrez García, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2006, vol. VII, p. 517.

² Luis Rojas Marcos, *Somos lo que hablamos: El poder terapéutico de hablar y hablamos*, Barcelona, Grijalbo, 2018, p. 100