



Antropología Cristiana y Ciencias de la Salud Mental

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

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Este libro ha sido sometido a evaluación por parte de nuestro Consejo Editorial
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Madrid, 2021

Editorial DYKINSON, S.L. Meléndez Valdés, 61 - 28015 Madrid
Teléfono (+34) 91 544 28 46 - (+34) 91 544 28 69

e-mail: info@dykinson.com
<http://www.dykinson.es>
<http://www.dykinson.com>

ISBN: 978-84-1377-378-0
Depósito Legal: M-5353-2021

ISBN electrónico: 978-84-1377-448-0

Imagen de cubierta:

Techo del Aula Magna de la Universitat Abat Oliba CEU – Barcelona
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ÍNDICE

PRÓLOGO.....	13
<i>Rafael Rodríguez-Ponga</i>	
PRÒLEG	17
<i>Rafael Rodríguez-Ponga</i>	
PREFACE.....	21
<i>Rafael Rodríguez-Ponga</i>	
INTRODUCCIÓN	25
<i>Mar Álvarez Segura</i>	
INTRODUCTION	29
<i>Mar Álvarez Segura</i>	

ANTROPOLOGÍA CRISTIANA Y CIENCIAS DE LA SALUD MENTAL

A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PREMISES OF A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN META-MODEL OF THE PERSON.....	35
<i>Paul C. Vitz</i>	
UN RESUMEN DE LAS PREMISAS TEOLÓGICAS, FILOSÓFICAS Y PSICOLÓGICAS DE UN METAMODELO CRISTIANO CATÓLICO DE LA PERSONA	45
<i>Paul C. Vitz</i>	
¿QUÉ APORTA LA ANTROPOLOGÍA CRISTIANA A LAS CIENCIAS DE LA SALUD MENTAL?.....	55
<i>Juan José Pérez-Soba Diez del Corral</i>	
UNA APORTACIÓN A LAS CIENCIAS DE LA SALUD MENTAL: LA SICOÉTICA DE FERNANDO RIELO.....	65
<i>Juana Sánchez-Gey Venegas</i>	

ACEDIA Y PERSONALIDAD	73
<i>Martín F. Echavarría</i>	

ACEDIA AND PERSONALITY	87
<i>Martín F. Echavarría</i>	

ESPIRITUALIDAD, VIRTUD Y PSICOTERAPIA

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION	103
<i>Nicolene L. Joubert (PhD)</i>	

CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY - A CHALLENGE TO ME!	121
<i>Werner May</i>	

BROKERS AND HEALERS: THE ROLE OF AFRICAN/BLACK CHURCHES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN THE WEST	133
<i>Daniëlle Phillips-Koning</i>	

SPECIFIC CHRISTIAN ASPECTS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY	149
<i>Anna Ostaszewska</i>	

ANTROPOLOGÍA Y SOFROLOGÍA	161
<i>Inés Espallargas Vargas</i>	

ACTIVIDAD SEXUAL Y SALUD MENTAL DE LOS ADOLESCENTES: EL PAPEL DE LA RELIGIOSIDAD	177
<i>María Calatrava, Alfonso Osorio, Cristina López-del Burgo, Martiño Rodríguez-González, Carlos Beltramo, Jokin de Irala</i>	

LA VIRTUD DE LA <i>STUDIOSITAS</i> COMO FACTOR DE PREVENCIÓN DE LA ANSIEDAD ANTE EXÁMENES	191
<i>Sara García de Fernando García e Inmaculada García Font</i>	

FUNCIÓN DEL AGRADECIMIENTO EN EL TRATAMIENTO DE LAS ADICCIONES. FUNDAMENTOS DE LA INTERVENCIÓN DESDE LA ANTROPOLOGÍA CRISTIANA	205
<i>María D. Barroso-López y Lizeth Alonso-Matías</i>	

CRITERIOS DE SALUD PSICOLÓGICA SEGÚN ALBERT ELLIS Y LAS ENSEÑANZAS DE LA TRADICIÓN CRISTIANA SOBRE LAS VIRTUDES HUMANAS	221
<i>Ximena Llerena Espezuía</i>	

PERSPECTIVA CRÍTICA DE LA RESILIENCIA: UN ANÁLISIS A PARTIR DE LA VIRTUD DE LA FORTALEZA	237
<i>Gabriela P. García-Zavala y Denisse F. Herrera-Olarte</i>	

IDEALISTIC OR REALISTIC SYSTEMS OF PERSONAL VALUES?	249
<i>Krzysztof A. Wojcieszek</i>	

FILOSOFÍA DE LA PSICOLOGÍA

NATURALEZA CAÍDA, EGOCENTRISMO Y METANOIA: PATOLOGÍA Y PSICOTERAPIA DEL CARÁCTER NEURÓTICO SEGÚN RUDOLF ALLERS	257
<i>Joaquín García-Alandete</i>	

PSICOLOGÍA Y ESPIRITUALIDAD: ¿ACEPTAR O SUPERAR LA CONDICIÓN HUMANA?.....	269
<i>Joan D. A. Juanola</i>	

VIRTUDES INFUSAS Y NORMALIDAD PSÍQUICA SEGÚN SANTO TOMÁS DE AQUINO.....	283
<i>Pablo Patricio Lego</i>	

ENBODIED DUALISM & CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY	293
<i>William L. Hathaway</i>	

LA MISIÓN DEL PSICÓLOGO CATÓLICO SEGÚN MAGDA ARNOLD	305
<i>Ruth María de Jesús Gómez</i>	

IDOBATAKAIGI: LA DIMENSIÓN RELACIONAL DE LA PERSONA DE LA ÉPOCA EDO EN JAPÓN.....	317
<i>Marisa Beatriz Tsuchida Fernández</i>	

IDOBATAKAIGI: THE RELATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE PERSON OF THE EDO ERA IN JAPAN	327
<i>Marisa Beatriz Tsuchida Fernández</i>	

AFECTIVIDAD Y FAMILIA

MADUREZ AFECTIVA, RECONOCIMIENTO DEL VÍNCULO Y ALTERIDAD.....	339
<i>Monika Grygiel y María José Chávez</i>	

TEORÍA DEL APEGO, PATERNIDAD Y TRASCENDENCIA	345
<i>Julia Benlloch Ponce</i>	
MADUREZ AFECTIVA Y MATRIMONIO: REFLEXIÓN INTERDISCIPLINAR Y GUÍA DE INTERVENCIÓN	355
<i>Juan José Pérez-Soba Díez del Corral</i>	
NAPROTECNOLOGÍA: EL EFECTO SANADOR DEL AMOR CONYUGAL	365
<i>Mireia Andrés</i>	
EL PROCESO DEL PERDÓN EN LA RELACIÓN DE PAREJA DESDE UNA APROXIMACIÓN AL DINAMISMO DEL DON	377
<i>Agata Kasprzak y Clara Molinero Caparrós</i>	
UNA EXPERIENCIA PASTORAL DE ACOMPAÑAMIENTO INTEGRAL DE LA PERSONA HERIDA DESDE LA ANTROPOLOGÍA CRISTIANA.....	389
<i>Óscar García Mulet, Marisa Vendrell Sahuquillo, Narciso Verdejo Callado, Isabel Lacruz Silvestre y Federico Mulet Valle</i>	
ESTILOS EDUCATIVOS PARENTALES. FORJANDO TEJEDORES DE RELACIONES	401
<i>Paloma Alonso-Stuyck</i>	
PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL STYLES. FORGING RELATIONSHIP WEAVERS	419
<i>Paloma Alonso-Stuyck</i>	
CONSECUENCIAS DE LAS HERIDAS AFECTIVAS EN LA SALUD MENTAL	439
<i>José M. Alejos, Saray Bonete y María Lacalle</i>	
INTEGRACIÓN PSICO-ESPIRITUAL EN LA VIDA CONSAGRADA: ITINERARIO DE DISCERNIMIENTO Y ACOMPAÑAMIENTO	
EL ENGAÑO ESPIRITUAL COMO DIFICULTAD PARA LA CONSISTENCIA VOCACIONAL: UNA EXPLICACIÓN ANTROPOLÓGICA	451
<i>Luis María García Domínguez, S.J.</i>	
DEL MISTERIO AL MISTERIO: EVANGELIZAR LA SENSIBILIDAD PARA APRENDER A DISCERNIR	473
<i>Amedeo Cencini</i>	

INTEGRACIÓN PSICOESPIRITUAL DE LA VOCACIÓN: LA AUTENTICIDAD	485
<i>Montserrat Lafuente Gil</i>	

APORTES DE ESTUDIANTES DE POSTGRADO

NEUROSIS Y SANTIDAD A PARTIR DE LA OBRA DE RUDOLF ALLERS ...	503
<i>Oriol Correa Nuño</i>	
APROXIMACIÓN PSICOESPIRITUAL DEL MIEDO	515
<i>Gloria Morelló Torrellas</i>	
UNA VISIÓN RELACIONAL DE LA PERSONA BASADA EN LA ANTROPOLOGÍA CRISTIANA: CONEXIONES Y APORTACIONES A LA PSICOLOGÍA ACTUAL.....	523
<i>Sara Prats García</i>	
ANÁLISIS PSICOESPIRITUAL DE LA VIVENCIA DEL PERDÓN EN VIKTOR FRANKL	529
<i>Sheila Gallego Martín</i>	
EL AMOR COMO RESPUESTA A LA GENERACIÓN Y - MILLENNIAL	537
<i>Cecilia Akemi Ponce Sakuray</i>	
ANHELO DE SENTIDO EN LA JUVENTUD ACTUAL: CAUSAS Y EFECTOS ANTROPOLOGÍCOS	553
<i>Miriam Buxó Hernando</i>	
LA INTELIGENCIA ESPIRITUAL EN EL PACIENTE Y EL TERAPEUTA COMO FACTOR DE BUEN PRONÓSTICO EN PROCESOS PSICÓTICOS Y DEL ESPECTRO DE LA ESQUIZOFRENIA	563
<i>Ana Revuelto Calleja</i>	

INTRODUCTION

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From the nineteenth century to the present day, psychology and philosophy have grown further apart. As a consequence, the mental health sciences began exclusively to use research methods and procedures typical of the experimental sciences. They moved away from an open reflection on philosophy, which led to considering problems that cannot be measured as irrelevant. This rupture between the two disciplines and the rejection of the transcendental nature of this relationship has led to the idea that the vast majority of mental disorders are a mere product of environmental forces, or the result of biological or social conditions. Consequently, there has developed an excessive simplification of mental problems and disorders.

The polarization has been even greater in the effort to foster dialogue on mental health with properly Christian anthropology. Frequently the attempt at integration has been undermined by those who, in the name of one or the other, seek to exclude rather than integrate. Those of us who have experienced this rupture as mental health professionals know how to recognize the confusion that is experienced when one is immersed in a universe where any transcendent reference is reduced to the minimum expression, not only due to the absence of faith, but also due to the reductionist models with which you work. It starts from premises that are so far removed from the truth of the human being that they leave professionals confused and unable to understand what is truly happening inside the person.

The vast majority of psychotherapeutic models provide partial responses to mental illness and ignore a substantial wealth by denying the origin and end of the human being, and, above all, by denying the presence of God in us as the most constitutive and empowering force.

Despite this prevalent reductionist trend, over the past 30 years an increasingly fruitful debate has reopened, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, between the mental health sciences and anthropology-related issues that

point directly to the nature of person. A number of professional associations of mental health and philosophy have been created, international conferences are held, and magazines have appeared.

Unfortunately, despite this trend, specific dialogue in international forums between the mental health sciences and Christian anthropology has been poorly represented. However, this reality has been taken more as a challenge than as a defeat. With the conviction of making the limit of each discipline a paradigm rather than an end, and without ceasing to value the specificity of the disciplines, various initiatives have been undertaken in Europe that have coincided at the appropriate time to make possible different national meetings and seminars that converge in an international congress, and in this book.

We should note the work carried out in the Department of Psychology of the Abat Oliba CEU University in this field. Since 2010, various workshops have been organized around the formation of character by virtue. In 2015, with the help of Notre Dame University and the John Templeton Foundation, the Department of Psychology [who is she?] launched an investigation into the influence of mystical experience on the development of personality according to Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross.

In addition, the university has offered training to the most inquisitive students, and since 2014 a group of research and reflection students called *Psyche* has been formalized. Throughout their university studies they analyze and explore the challenges of psychology in today's society under a Christian anthropology umbrella.

The European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy has continued to organize different meetings at the European level for almost 30 years with the aim of developing a psychology based on the Christian faith, and promoting dialogue and friendship among its network of professionals.

Finally, the contribution of the Fernando Rielo Chair at the Pontifical University of Salamanca should be recognized for promoting research in psychoethics, a science that encompasses the relationship of two fields, psychology and ethics, based on Christian anthropology.

These initiatives reveal the need for Christian mental health professionals to reevaluate our discipline under a dynamic and confrontational relationship with Christ. Only this relationship is capable of illuminating our minds and preventing us from falling into fragmented reasoning and being hijacked by a scientific-materialist mentality or by disembodied piety.

Pope Pius XII, at the V International Congress of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology on April 13, 1953, reminded the participants:

“Medicine teaches how to look at the human body as a high-precision mechanism, whose elements overlap each other and are linked together; the place and characteristics of these elements depend on the whole, since they only serve for their existence and their functions. But this conception is much better applied to the soul, whose delicate gears are assembled with much more care.”

This book is an attempt to decipher, from the mental health sciences and Christian anthropology, these delicate gears of the human soul that allow us to know with greater depth and precision the various disorders that manifest themselves on a psychological level.

If we do not promote this dialogue, we impoverish the discourse, and we lose the language needed to name more precisely the states or situations in which the patients find themselves. Just as being sad is not the same as suffering depression, the sorrow of ontological guilt is not the same as the anxiety of neurotic guilt, and the aridity that appears in certain spiritual processes is not the same as the emptiness of lack of commitment.

Developing a fruitful and long-lasting interdisciplinary experience requires an initial and powerful catalyst to provide sufficient momentum, capable of promoting creativity and guaranteeing growth and subsequent dissemination. With this catalytic intention we have undertaken the writing of this book. We know that multiple and fruitful contributions have emerged from this open dialogue across Europe from different initiatives. And we did not want to stop sharing, as we are aware that reading and dissemination will guarantee the momentum needed to continue this beautiful endeavor.