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Ratification of the Body. Eating Disorders as a Symptom of Socio-cultural and Economic Problems

Summary

The capitalist industry, which produces mass media images of weight and promotes the cult of the body and thinness, has contributed to the oppression of weight stigma. The body is not only turned into a marketable commodity, but through the body it is used to conform to social expectations, and the goal of having the 'ideal body' often leads to risky health behaviours, which paradoxically has blurred the boundary between healthy living and pathology. Internalising a thin ideal leads to body dissatisfaction and dietary behaviour, which contribute to the risk of developing eating disorders, suggesting that eating disorders are a symptom of socio-cultural-economic problems. Eating disorders are a complex and often difficult-to-treat mental illness, and despite advances in treatment, various

data show that the incidence of eating disorders is increasing, with mortality rates being by far the highest of all mental health disorders. The aim of this paper is to show how the contemporary capitalist economy creates a cultural paradox whereby, in the process of generating income and profit, public health is simultaneously "taken care of" and, at the same time, made worse by the creation of representations and messages of the 'thin body' and the formation of a "cult of the body". All of this makes it possible to broaden the explanation of the causes of eating disorders beyond psychological and genetic explanations to include a socio-cultural-economic perspective, highlighting the influence and control of panopticonism, the media, diet capitalism, and the biopolitics that underlie them.

Keywords: eating disorders, body cult, weight stigma, socio-cultural-economic perspective, mass media, diet capitalism, capitalist industry.