

Book Review

Enfoques de Psicopatología. Análisis y comprensión del sufrimiento de la persona, 2 vols. [Approaches to Psychopathology: Analysis and Understanding of Human Suffering, 2 vols.]

Eduardo Fonseca-Pedrero & Susana Al-Halabí (Coords.)
Editorial Pirámide (2026)

If the *Encyclopédie* aspired to compile human knowledge under the impetus of Diderot, d'Alembert and the French encyclopedists, it was not out of a desire to accumulate, but rather out of the conviction that knowledge should be organized, discussed, and brought into relation. That Enlightenment undertaking did not aim to assemble entries in a neutral manner, but rather to offer an intellectual architecture capable of ordering a complex world under a new perspective. Something similar can be said of *Enfoques de Psicopatología I y II* [Approaches to Psychopathology I and II]: a sort of contemporary encyclopedia of psychological suffering in North Atlantic society. Its two volumes offer a broad overview that is academically rigorous, clinically operational, and epistemologically attuned to its own time.

Psychopathology has for decades been dominated by the biomedical model, accompanied by a proliferation of diagnostic classifications that—while useful on occasion—have tended to reify categories and fragment our understanding of the human experience. The manual's preface clearly situates this historical crossroads: centuries of organicism, a disciplinary “triple hijacking,” and the need for a new framework capable of integrating perspectives without falling into reductionism. It is not a matter of denying the biological dimension of suffering—the organism as a condition of possibility—but of preventing it from monopolizing its intelligibility.

The first volume lays out the foundations underpinning this integrative ambition. The chapter “Psychopathology: Past, Present, and Future” raises relevant questions that traverse the field, such as the ubiquity of reductionist models and psychological reification, the incommensurability of each proposal, and the question of their possible integration. “Developmental Psychopathology” highlights the historical and evolutionary nature of psychological distress, with an emphasis on the new challenges in the digital age: the “epidemic” of child and adolescent mental health issues and the dialectic between empathy and narcissism in the construction of individualistic identities. A work of this scope necessarily includes chapters such as “Psychopathology and Psychological Processes” and “Psychopathology, Psychotherapy, and Case Formulation,” where the functional mechanisms that cut across various clinical presentations are examined and the importance of functional

analysis and case formulation in explaining and understanding the issues of human suffering is highlighted—in contrast to mere diagnostic labeling.

This is complemented by a section unparalleled in the Spanish-language literature and of unquestionable interest to professionals and students: “The Major Schools of Psychopathology,” which presents, within their respective contexts and with room for reflection, the principal theoretical frameworks: biomedical, behavioral, cognitive, constructivist, systemic-family, humanistic-experiential, phenomenological-existential, psychodynamic, and contextual. This compendium—both indispensable and long overdue prior to this publication—offers a comparative and comprehensive overview that allows readers to appreciate how each tradition illuminates certain dimensions of the psychopathological phenomenon while obscuring others. Each approach presents its foundations, clinical implications, and limitations, as well as—innovatively—its dialogue with other traditions. The reader will find neither dogma nor diagnostic labels, but rather distinct cartographies that describe the psychological and psychopathological field with excellence and rigor, authored by highly prestigious academics and leading professionals.

The second volume expands this map into more recent conceptual territories and into areas bordering other disciplines. In “Philosophy, Culture, and Psychopathology: Converging on the Person and Their Circumstances,” the cultural roots from which psychopathological phenomena are woven are brought to the table, seeking a common grammar that can explain the different ways of experiencing, expressing, and responding to suffering across different eras. Moreover, it aims its dialectical scythe at extravagant conceptions to clear away the “wild” psychopathologies that have grown in the substrate of mainstream psychology and self-help.

The chapter “Culture and the Narrative of the Self in Psychopathology and Psychotherapy” reminds us that human distress cannot be understood apart from the symbolic and historical frameworks that shape subjective experience. The individual constructs their experiences according to a coherent narrative, perhaps their only shield when cast into the world. Ultimately, it is essential to remember that it is the person who suffers due to their circumstances and not because of dysfunctions

in their parts. In “Psychopathology and the Visual Arts: Collapses of the Self in Modernism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and Realism,” the dialogue with art history reveals the extent to which crises of the modern subject have also been expressed in visual language, revealing common material substrates that go beyond the individual.

As a complement to the major classical schools, the section “New Psychological Approaches to Psychopathology” introduces contemporary models that build upon those traditions to varying degrees—such as complex systems, HiTOP, RDoC, the transdiagnostic model, and the Power Threat Meaning Framework. It also includes “Toward a Unified Psychotherapy: Integration, Convergence, and Contemporary Challenges,” aimed at articulating diverse clinical traditions without diluting their foundations. These proposals are not presented as definitive substitutes, but rather as new cartographies—or updates to the classical ones—that seek to address the limitations of traditional diagnostic systems. Finally, the delightful chapter “Strategy or Dysfunction, That Is the Question” returns to this fundamental debate and poses the decisive question: whether psychopathological phenomena should be understood as failures of psychological systems or as forms of adaptation to particular contexts.

Despite the depth and scope of the topics covered, the reader will find an accessible text in which expository clarity does not come at the expense of analytical depth—a hallmark of its brilliant editors. The manual’s didactic structure—with sections on first-person perspectives, clinical application, summaries of key points, and cultural extensions—facilitates understanding and makes it a

tool for critically thinking about psychopathology. Rather than merely following the diagnostic trends of the moment, the work offers conceptual frameworks that allow us to question them, situate them historically, and better understand the experience of psychological suffering.

An editorial undertaking of this magnitude is not the result of chance. It requires intellectual leadership capable of bringing together diverse voices, articulating perspectives, and maintaining conceptual coherence throughout a necessarily pluralistic project. In this regard, the coordination efforts of the extraordinary duo formed by Professors Al-Halabí and Fonseca-Pedrero deserve special mention. Their work goes beyond simply gathering contributions; it constructs a conceptual architecture that allows the various chapters to engage in dialogue with one another, enabling the collection as a whole to take the form of an indispensable, orderly, and critical map of the field of contemporary psychopathology.

Like the illustrated encyclopedia that served as the initial metaphor, *Enfoques de Psicopatología I y II* does not close the debate; it organizes it. It lays out the differences among models, highlights their internal tensions, and shows possible points of contact. Resisting the temptation to reduce psychopathology to a closed taxonomy, it proposes a pluralistic understanding that remains connected to empirical evidence without losing sight of the complexity of human experience.

Víctor Martínez-Loredo
Universidad de Oviedo
E-mail: loredo@uniovi.es