

## Essay Competition

Psychology: Discuss the sources of mental health issues in the modern world.

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### **The Tiring Metal in Our Modern Mental State**

What kind of current influence sways people from the healthy path? Or do we have to acknowledge that modernism has overcome the idea of a common healthy path? How vague, how ambiguous, how *di-gital* can a discussion about sources of mental health issues become whilst possibly evolving into a part of the problem?

Talking about sources we by right have to suspect more than one single hammer that strokes one monocausal nail of sorrow and anxiety into one's cranium causing the mental health issues. Instead, we rather have to consider masses of small nails being hammered enigmatically into the modern skull, which aggrandises the effort we need to put into locating these essential causes as well as their impact holes; An effort more easily unknown to former generations as our immense knowledge reinforces the complexity of thoughts and perspectives. Nonetheless, let us imagine us as utterly curious archaeologists inspecting the literal, the metaphorical and even the digitalized cross-section of contemporary minds.

Despite the brevity of this text, I am going to discuss five selected terms, so to say nails, that might come closer to the complex, interconnected issue of psychological processes: *Timelessness*, *Individualism*, *Relativity*, *Exhaustion* and *Disappointment*, resulting in the - admittedly pretentious - abbreviation "**tired**".

#### 1. Timelessness, an indigestible concept

At first, let me introduce the idea of *timelessness* which is formerly derived from arts, especially as a claim by modern art. The term seems to strangely arise in the context of modern life as it ambiguously describes something that is made for eternity yet for just one single moment of attention. Therefore, *timelessness* shall be defined as the present-day contradictory impression that one is stressed out and lacks time to do agreeable, edifying activities due to the short-living nexus between work and life, but

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yet feels like there is no meaning and no longevity in what they actually do. This feeling might be subtle and hiding subconsciously behind the rush of daily life, but one can be sure that it puts immense pressure on who aims at using their time meaningfully. Besides, who actually does not appeal to that profile, especially in a world of high standards?

Namely, the amount of work- and stress-related burnout cases has almost tripled over the past 20 years in Germany, which supports the thesis of incomprehensible lack of uplifting time.<sup>1</sup>

But let me go more into detail; In our networked universe, the high-pitched level of interactivity between individuals, teams, even regions and nations entails the smudging and the loss of distinguishability between actions, even ideas, even human roles. That is because everyone and everything lives in very close or further connection with each other. Comes complexity, comes unpredictability and unpredictability demands unfamiliar flexibility from an individual mind, which, hereby, is tossed into the stressful chaos of timelessness. Too often, we are all forced to decide upon what to focus on first and get lost in digital and mental labyrinths – left behind whilst feeling unfulfilled.

## II. Individualism and Reflection

At that point, to feel unfulfilled is accompanied by the strong desire of *individualism* by which I mean the deeply rooted urgency to become unique and remarkable in a timeless world. As a late outcome of the Enlightenment, we may surely say that man has enriched oneself with knowledge through the forceful instrument of reflection. Causing a vicious circle, reflection confuses first, then clarifies, then it pushes you into the abyss. A reflecting mind wants to find its place and obligation not only in society but also in its perception of universe and, necessarily, becomes individualistic.

Pushed by the overwhelming exchange of various information and all sorts of (literal) life models on Instagram etcetera, one can only focus on what to do better, stronger, .... As a result, let me designate one crucial contradiction of today: For one thing being inclined to steadily compare oneself to the ostensible standards in the media and, at the same time, being ironically taught that this comparison should not worry one.

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<sup>1</sup> Burnout statistics  
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Besides, one is constantly forced to define oneself in contrived categories. In an overly conscious world, a life without morbid controlment seems to become impossible for the reflecting mind and simultaneously enrolls complete loss of control as soon as the mental resources for exhausting self-discipline are gradually drained. Otherwise, someone fairly capable of constant self-control project their identity onto an unachievable ideal, which leaves behind a dissatisfied individuum and induces mental distress as well. Diseases such as the fear of loss, self-dissociation due to the intense pressure inevitably evince.

### III. Controlment for what? - Relativity

What physics acknowledged quietly in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is the *relativity* of spatiotemporal perspectives and that reality actually emerges out of probability, but that is not what factually changes our experience of reality, viz. our mindset itself. Instead, relativity has begun to exude through more subtle paths: plurality of opinion, the constant uncertainty and doubtfulness of information (“fake news”). It should be noted that digital devices not only work as communication and organisation medium but draw up parallel realities more independently and more unpredictably. Neither can we rely on these crucially world-forming facts, nor can we build up trust to another person telling us they helped us in times of suffering or struggling due to the uncannily fast-paced, short-lived run of time.

One might contextualize these developments in subject areas completely different from mental health issues, but what I am concerned with is the “philosophy of life” which is propagated these days and whose origins interfere with psychological health, thus indeed call for deeper psychological investigation.

As we can see, to approach a subject, may it be physics, psychology or philosophy, is a vague process by definition as long as we lay claim to telling the truth. Undoubtedly, high-developed societies induce the deconstruction of our consensus reality here, which confronts the individuum not only with extended individualism but with unfounded circumstances as well. Subsequently, pathological psychosis, understood as subconsciously getting out of touch with consensus reality, is hard to notice as the benchmarks fluctuate.

Nevertheless, psychosis will of course dangerously affect one’s condition. After all, even the one who knows fairly much has to opt for one single decision in life, save that this decision has become  
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unequally more difficult and stressful suggesting that any option you choose is anything but the best. The aiding function of psychology comes to its wits' end in this phase and is reverberated to a science only contemplating.

#### IV. First outcome: Exhaustion

As a result of the first three sources, self-dissociation takes place when outer roles do not tally with inner demands. At the same time, in a modern world, the superego - according to Freud's term - is no longer what the outer world requires effectively but of what the individual vaguely imagines that his or her environment might request it.

In fact, one can notice a generally pessimistic view on the future in society pushed by concerns about the climate change, about extensive populism and the impression that rather melancholic moods and outspoken distress become or have become fashionable in an unusual way. At what latter seems to achieve cathartic and thus agreeable effects on society in the first place, we must be worried that if the voices who claim a fairly bleak outlook overlay the constructive and resilient opinions, the general attitude will probably shift to the worse. This mental downshifting puts mutual support and help into an unavailable, exhausted position. For me personally I often contemplate the modern "whatsoever"-opinion whose proponents explicitly deny any meaning of life and feel unassailable due to their upheld nihilism, for which reason they become reckless.

#### V. Final outcome: Disappointment

What emerges here shall be called the disappointing impossibility of truly relying on other people who themselves struggle to succeed in their search for individualism and freedom (in terms of absence of force and responsibility). Hence, any trials to honestly understand one another vanish away not because of lacking motivation for doing so but because of finding oneself unable to do so. Even more I would state that, these days, lacking motivation and inability correlate in a way they almost cannot be differentiated but more than ever indicate hypothetical definitions which the reality does not directly correspond with. The trend of individualistic conformism has been taken to an extreme as the tendency to sort and label things, actions and humans into preoccupied categories has increased in our ultimately interconnected world of conditions and systems.

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On the whole, *disappointment* is a deeply rooted dilemma consisting of the divergence between illusion and disillusionment from which both are damaging for the human condition. Much-trumpeted honesty cannot solve this problem entirely, as it will transform the illusion into much more disappointing disenchantment. Not everyone is strong enough to handle disillusionment and, I suppose, is in vital danger of losing the path to some sort of common sense whilst subconsciously neglecting that the harsh image of reality could be true as well as becoming completely caught up in a toxic role.

To sum it up, the abbreviation I chose for the beginning admittedly has something too handy to it, but “tired” is meant to describe both, the superficial modern numbness and the deeper psychological problem erupting in the paradox of a modern world. Above all, we have to consider that the vagueness, the ambiguity of what our daily life is slithering in lures in a sleeping danger. That is why the words behind “tired” obviously come closer to how a psychological diagnosis is impeded, wherefore its intricacy is part of its own tiring, exhausting, hampering source.

Sources in the order they appear in the text:

1 Burnout statistics:

<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/239872/umfrage/arbeitsunfaehigkeitsfaelle-aufgrund-von-burn-out-erkrankungen/#:~:text=Statistik%20zu%20Burnout-Erkrankungen%20in%20Deutschland%20Ver%C3%B6ffentlicht%20von%20Rainer,sich%20die%20Diagnoseh%C3%A4ufigkeit%20im%20letzten%20Jahrzehnt%20beinahe%20verdreifacht.>