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Mental Health

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How did mental health begin as a progressive postwar idea in psychiatry only to become a tool for normalization and control?

In the 1980s, a supposedly "scientific" neuropsychiatry paved the way for an administrative discourse: it would now concern itself with classifying, managing, and evaluating. To do so, the notion of mental health became an essential operator, for according to an official report, poor mental health costs the European Union 3-4% of its gross domestic product due to lowered productivity." Pressure from the pharmaceutical industry, the dominant role of neurosciences in research, the systemic devaluation of psychoanalysis—all this made "mental health for all" a new norm, a neoliberal tool for managing populations. "Comprehensive well-being," happiness under control—these are the objectives implied by the falsely reassuring term "mental health."

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