

Medicamentization, transhumanist discourses, and their demands under capitalism: A literature review

Medicamentização, discursos transhumanos e suas demandas no capitalismo: Uma revisão de literatura

Medicamentización, discursos transhumanos y sus demandas en el capitalismo: Una revisión de la literatura

Médicalisation, discours transhumanistes et leurs revendications dans le capitalisme : Une revue de la littérature

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Roberto Henrique Amorim de Medeiros  

Holds a degree in Psychology from Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS, 1996), a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (2000), and a PhD in Education from Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (2011). He has experience in psychoanalytic clinical practice, including patient care and supervision; in health care delivery and management within Primary Health Care at the Community Health Service of Conceição Hospital Group (2003-2013); and in the training of health professionals through the Integrated Health Residency/ GHC, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul (2004-2013).

Vladimir Frediani Jardim  

Undergraduate student in Psychology at Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) since the first semester of 2016. He currently works as a therapist and intern in the Clinical Processes emphasis area at the Psychological Services Clinic of UFRGS and is an undergraduate research fellow in the project "The Passion for the Automaton, Posthumanism, and Psychoanalysis: Readings on Clinical Practice and the Social Bond."

Abstract

This article seeks to examine the process of medicamentization in mental health through exploratory and descriptive research aimed at addressing the relationship between medicamentization and contemporary transhumanism, purportedly shaped by capitalist discourse. The study was developed through a narrative literature review on the transhumanist paradigm, contemporary capitalist ideals, and psychopharmacology. The growing role of psychopharmacology as the primary treatment in mental health appears to suggest a relationship with transhumanist discourse in the context of the demands of capitalist society. This connection enabled analyses of psychotropic drugs as technological tools for achieving the ideal of the machine-like transhuman. Furthermore, the critical analytical examination of the articles included in the review identified the concept of wish-fulfilling medicine as an illustrative example. Accordingly, this practice is presented and discussed as one that links the notion of the transhuman individual with clinical practices that offer to fulfill desires for the "enhancement" of bodies, according to a supposedly idealized desire embedded in culture.

Keywords: medicamentization, transhumanism, capitalist discourse.

Resumo

Este artigo busca interrogar o processo de medicamentização em saúde mental a partir de uma pesquisa de caráter exploratório e descritivo, que almejou responder a uma pergunta acerca da relação da medicamentização com o transhumanismo produzido na contemporaneidade, supostamente por parte do discurso capitalista. O estudo foi construído a partir de uma revisão narrativa da literatura sobre o paradigma transhumano, os ideais capitalistas contemporâneos e a psicofarmacologia. Observa-se que o crescimento do papel da psicofarmacologia como tratamento principal em saúde mental sugere uma relação com o discurso transhumanista no contexto das

demandas da sociedade capitalista. Essa aproximação permitiu tecer análises sobre os psicofármacos como ferramentas tecnológicas para alcançar o ideal transhumano maquínico. Além disso, o trabalho crítico analítico com os artigos incluídos no método indicou, como exemplar, o conceito de medicina realizadora de desejos (wish-fulfilling medicine). Portanto, apresenta-se e discute-se essa prática que costura a noção de indivíduo transhumano com as práticas clínicas que ofertam a satisfação de anseios de “aperfeiçoamento” de corpos, segundo um suposto desejo idealizado na cultura.

Palavras-chave: medicamentação, transhumanismo, discurso capitalista.

Resumen

Este artículo busca interrogar el proceso de medicamentación en salud mental a partir de una investigación de carácter exploratorio y descriptivo, que tuvo como objetivo responder a una pregunta acerca de la relación entre la medicamentación y el transhumanismo producido en la contemporaneidad, supuestamente por efecto del discurso capitalista. El estudio fue construido a partir de una revisión narrativa de la literatura sobre el paradigma transhumano, los ideales capitalistas contemporáneos y la psicofarmacología. Se observa que el crecimiento del papel de la psicofarmacología como tratamiento principal en salud mental sugiere una relación con el discurso transhumanista en el contexto de las demandas de la sociedad capitalista. Esta aproximación permitió elaborar análisis sobre los psicofármacos como herramientas tecnológicas para alcanzar el ideal transhumano maquínico. Además, el trabajo crítico-analítico con los artículos incluídos en el método indicó, como ejemplo, el concepto de medicina realizadora de deseos (wish-fulfilling medicine). Por lo tanto, se presenta y discute esta práctica que articula la noción de individuo transhumano con las prácticas clínicas que ofrecen la satisfacción de anhelos de “perfeccionamiento” de los cuerpos, según un supuesto deseo idealizado en la cultura.

Palabras clave: medicamentación, transhumanismo, discurso capitalista.

Résumé

Cet article vise à interroger le processus de médicalisation en santé mentale à partir d'une recherche exploratoire et descriptive, qui a cherché à répondre à une question portant sur la relation entre la médicalisation et le transhumanisme produit à l'époque contemporaine, supposément sous l'effet du discours capitaliste. L'étude a été construite à partir d'une revue narrative de la littérature sur le paradigme transhumaniste, les idéaux capitalistes contemporains et la psychopharmacologie. On observe que l'essor du rôle de la psychopharmacologie comme traitement principal en santé mentale suggère une relation avec le discours transhumaniste dans le contexte des demandes de la société capitaliste. Cette approche a permis d'élaborer des analyses des psychopharmaceutiques en tant qu'outils technologiques permettant d'atteindre l'idéal transhumain machinique. De plus, le travail d'analyse critique des articles inclus dans la méthode a mis en évidence, à titre d'exemple, le concept de médecine réalisant les souhaits (wish-fulfilling medicine). Par conséquent, on présente et discute cette pratique qui articule la notion d'individu transhumain avec les pratiques cliniques qui offrent la satisfaction des aspirations d'« amélioration » des corps, selon un supposé désir idéalisé dans la culture.

Mots-clés : médicalisation, transhumanisme, discours capitaliste.

This article seeks to explore medicamentation in mental health care. The marked use of psychopharmacological resources in psychiatric practice appears to underscore the need for research across different disciplines to improve our understanding of the role of this practice and the reasons why it has become increasingly hegemonic in contemporary culture. In this study, the structure of this historical period is understood as being shaped by late capitalism, which has developed through the political and economic practices of neoliberalism. Faced with the demands of this Other, composed of signifiers that reflect a discourse centered on production, the market, and the laws of supply and demand, it can be inferred that the emergence of psychopharmacology accompanied a subjective shift in global culture. This culture is grounded in ideals expressed through discourses of entrepreneurship, competition, meritocracy, and the need for superhuman effort, made explicit in phrases such as “work while they sleep,” among other slogans produced as effects of the language of a society whose mode of reproduction requires the accelerated and uninterrupted creation of surplus value through the greatest possible exploitation of labor.

Considering this cultural and social ideal, which corresponds to the production of an individual without flaws – someone who does not suffer, does not succumb to distress, does not give in (is resilient), and would not even need to sleep or satisfy the needs of body and spirit – we were led to explore possible connections with the idea of the machine. This idea is embodied in the figure of the automaton, whose programming compels it to perform repetitive functions and

incessantly obey the command of a master (Medeiros et al., 2015). When extended to the human domain, this technological perspective evokes discussions concerning the critique and pragmatics involved in processes through which the human is transformed into the posthuman. Posthumanist studies encompass a critical dimension, whereas speculation concerning the emergence of another species intertwined with technology belongs to the field of transhumanist studies and theorization.

Within this context, transhumanism can be understood as arising from cultural transformations driven by the widespread use of technology, both in the means of production – which, in turn, determine and reshape labor relations – and in modifications to the body itself. Cultural transformations thus acquire utilitarian and aesthetic dimensions, producing new ways, or rejecting previous ways, of conceptualizing what it means to be human. Accordingly, theoretical paradigms of discussion have begun to conceptualize beings intertwined with technology, potentially resulting in the production of posthuman beings, in this case through biotechnological enhancements.

These ramifications of rationalist, modern, and Western thought have entailed a rupture with naturalist and humanist philosophies. Since the beginning of this century, these philosophies have increasingly come to occupy a conservative position, laden with obsolete imaginaries and bound to notions of humanity characterized by rigid assumptions about what does or does not constitute a human being (Galliano, 2019).

Conversely, could the technological paradigm, characterized as unnatural and potentially resulting in a separation between the being and the very concept of the human, generate forms of existence that dispense with emotions, limitations, or even death itself, thereby creating beings increasingly similar to machines?

In addressing the debate between so-called transhumanists and bioconservatives, Galliano (2019) seeks to delineate the paradigmatic composition of this field of technoscientific debate. The former seek transformations of human nature, and “if one had to define the ultimate transhumanist program, it would be immortality” (Galliano, 2019, p. 88). The latter, who are critical of such transformations and their social consequences, acknowledge a human essence and argue that complete mastery over nature could ultimately lead to the possible extinction of life.

Transhumanism, which emerged as a movement in the 1980s, derives from philosophical traditions associated with libertarianism. Thus, “transhumanism, with its confidence in reason and human self-determination, is a paradoxical heir to the Western humanist tradition” (Galliano, 2019, p. 84).¹ This current of thought moves toward individualizing notions in which the object of consideration and intervention is an individual dissociated from society and the surrounding environment, conceived as a self-contained and self-owning entity. This individual resembles the capitalist entrepreneur, elevated to the status of the ideal individual within the neoliberal political landscape (Safatle, 2021).

This perspective, centered on eliminating human limitations, disregards certain historical materialist positions that understand subjects as products of their times, whose own limitations and lacks expose those of the Other. Since Freud, suffering has indicated and shed some light on civilized forms of oppression accompanied by the silencing of subjectivity.

Freud’s findings regarding the unconscious and the discontents of civilization must be taken into consideration, as must Lacan’s theorization of discursive operations, in which subject positions and the circulation of cultural signifiers determine social bonds and modes of jouissance. The privileged signifiers within the spirit of a particular era delineate certain configurations of ideals to which each person responds subjectively. It is indisputable that this condition is situated within contemporary capitalism.

Thus, under contemporary capitalism, technological tools emerge as means of achieving these transhuman ideals of beings without lack who are perpetually capable of producing. In this context, a caveat is necessary to emphasize the plurality inherent in the use and incorporation of technologies, as noted by Galliano (2019), who discusses their various strands and opposing positions. The author criticizes bioconservatives who seek to oppose any transformation of human nature, ranging from mortality to homosexuality. At the same time, Galliano highlights the potential for this issue to be approached as a political agenda, shifting the focus away from bodily and cognitive transformations and enhancements and toward the social sphere.

Among these forms of technological incorporation are those that expand possibilities for ways of existing and forms of subjectivity. Transgender experience is one such example, given that new hormonal medications and surgical procedures mediate individuals’ possibilities of becoming who they wish to be rather than being rendered abject within a cisnormative culture (Favero, 2019). Other forms of technology use include those adopted by people diagnosed with multiple disabilities, for whom bionic and synthetic limbs, medications, and increasingly precise surgical procedures represent some of the possibilities enabled by technological advances.

Contemporary discontent and capitalist discourse

Against this background, a question arises regarding the possible implications of using new technologies in mental health, specifically psychotropic drugs, which are increasingly employed as an intervention in psychiatric offices and clinical practice. This process is referred to by the concept of medicamentization. The question is whether the expansion

¹ For the purposes of this article, all direct quotations from the original sources have been translated into English.

of routine psychopharmacological use is related to an opposing logic, namely, the erasure of the subject in favor of the emergence of an automaton-like individual, presumed to lack characteristics that might interfere with their capacity to function as a tireless producer of surplus value in capitalist society.

Ways of covering over discontent with ideals of well-being are presented on a daily basis. In a world organized around the constant production of surplus value, rather than products essential to life and to individuals' desires – whether those of the capitalist or those of the worker who sells their labor power as a commodity – *jouissance* and psychological suffering that bring production to a standstill demand a rapid solution. This urgency seeks to reintegrate the individual into social relations mediated by the commodity form: “Anxiety, distress, or difficulties, once understood as part of the complexity and uniqueness of human beings, come to be regarded as diagnosable diseases or disorders and are consequently ‘medicamentized’ with the aim of providing a cure” (Bezerra et al., 2014, p. 62).

Rosa and Winograd (2011) reflect on the normative logic that develops around standards of well-being. The imperative that circumscribes accepted techniques ranges from symptom resolution and the generation of feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment to the erasure of suffering through offerings available in the clinical marketplace. Thus, whether through behavioral training, cognitive rationalization, or psychotropic drugs, the techniques and bodies of knowledge that are most readily accepted are those aligned with the operating principles of capitalist society. Numerous disorder labels classify forms of distress in technical manuals that support a purported clinical model of cure. Moreover, only a limited range of behaviors and symptom manifestations is needed to establish a diagnosis that provides the subject with a meaning for their suffering. Against this backdrop, medication emerges as the response, framed from a rapid and utilitarian perspective.

During a clinical session, a problem can be named and pharmacological evidence for its resolution can be identified; thereafter, however, the only requirement may become the patient's occasional return for dose maintenance and monitoring of adverse effects. This resembles maintaining the gears of a mechanical system.

Driven by ideals of production and consumption, efficiency, speed, and performance, even though the resulting psychological suffering may place work itself at risk should the individual succumb to it, the choice to live up to ideals produced within capitalist society appears to be the fastest and most productive one, mirroring the social dynamics of market logic.

The aim is not to invalidate the therapeutic role of medication, as the efficacy of psychotropic drugs has been extensively demonstrated. Rather, from this perspective, the intention is to critically interrogate the assimilation of this tool as the central axis of care and its relationship with capitalist discourse.

In 1930, Freud observed that the subject's entry into civilization is the source of displeasure resulting from the expenditure of psychic energy, arising from the repression required of the drives constitutive of the organic being, which are invariably directed toward satisfaction (Freud, 1930/2010). Within society, these satisfactions would need to be acceptable for social coexistence. Thus, through the constant repression of primitive impulses, the subject relinquishes an ideal of happiness and complete satisfaction in order to maintain relationships and alliances within the social environment (Badin & Martinho, 2018).

The well-known impossible professions [governing, educating, and psychoanalyzing (Freud, 1937/2018)] are considered impossible because they can never fully achieve their objectives, precisely because they perform the function of placing limits on the subject's impulses toward unrestricted satisfaction of desire. It is noteworthy that the task of curing was mentioned in relation to the effects of psychoanalysis, and it may be fruitful to apply the same verb to other hegemonic proposals for cure. Can medication truly cure the causes of discontent? Does it enable individuals to confront the dilemmas of the social bond that make us ill?

Critical of what ultimately makes the individual ill, Lacan (1969–1970/2016) revisits Freud's studies and adds a fourth profession to those considered impossible: causing desire. Our desire is the desire of the Other, Lacan states. He also reminds us that the manifestation of the unconscious is a wordless cry signaling that something is amiss in the relationship between the desire of the Other and that of the subject. Yet this does not reveal itself directly in reality; it must be interpreted, and this is the analyst's act.

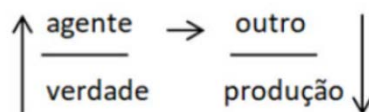
Faced with the inexorable discontent implied by the impossible professions, Lacan theorizes distinct types of social bonds among subjects throughout history. The four discourses constitute a way of approaching and delineating what occurs in the unconscious of the speaking being, who differs from the machine through emotions and from the animal through the abstraction of these impulses and their possible sublimations. The speaking being communicates, signifies, and produces traces of what they apprehend and repress. The symbolic field that constitutes their subjectivity and its relations with the imaginary and the real are sustained by a linguistic structure of signifiers and signifieds that systematizes different forms of social exchange; in other words, the unconscious also operates within the materiality of social bonds.

The discourses delineate these operations of the impossible tasks. The task of governing is linked to the notion of the Master's Discourse; educating, to University Discourse; analyzing, to the Analyst's Discourse; and causing desire, to the Hysteric's Discourse. The structure of the discourses thus encompasses concepts related to their functions in society, while what distinguishes them is the position assumed by the signifiers (S1 and S2), object *a*, and the barred subject as discursive operators. Discursive functions are systematically organized, as shown in Figure 1. There is the place of truth, which sustains the position of the agent of discourse. The agent addresses an other, their imaginary counterpart, whose

function leads to production; that is, in the Master's Discourse, an other operates in the production of something, sustained by what remains unseen: the truth of the discourse (Badin & Martinho, 2018).

Figure 1

Positions in the structure of discourse.

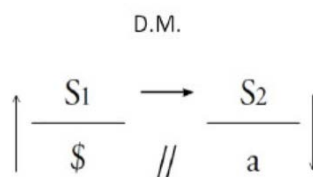


Source: Adapted from Lacan, 1969–1970/2016.

O interesse deste estudo se direciona para a estruturação do Discurso do Mestre, ilustrado na figura 2, em razão de o Discurso Capitalista derivar dele. Nessa operação discursiva, a função de agente é ocupada pelo S1 (significante-mestre), que também está na posição de referência para o sujeito, e endereça ao S2 (demais significantes encadeados e que carregam um saber) um “comando” para a produção de um objeto de valor, precioso, de mais-de-gozar, o objeto *a*. Sob o S1, no lugar da verdade que o embasa e que não pode aparecer, está o \$, o sujeito barrado, castrado, que carrega um saber compartilhado com S2 (Badin & Martinho, 2018).

Figura 2

Master's discourse.

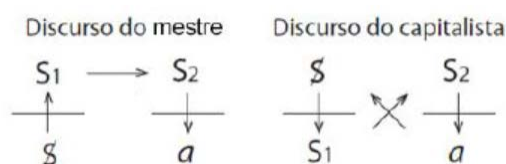


Source: Adapted from Lacan, 1969–1970/2016.

Lacan (1972) introduces a torsion into the Master's Discourse to represent the Capitalist Discourse, as shown in Figure 3. In doing so, he identifies a feature that distinguishes this discourse from the others: it does not produce a social bond, because the positions and directions of S1, S2, *a*, and \$ are arranged in an uninterrupted flow, as Lacan indicates through the position and direction of the vectors. Impotence and impossibility are inherent to the social bonds of civilization, as has traditionally been argued. The continuous flows that structure capitalist society, in which social relations are mediated by the commodity form and depend on increasingly complex, uninterrupted, and rapid cycles of valorization of value, clearly show that the master of the discourse (capital) establishes no direct social relationship with subjects. Unlike the master within the social bond of slavery, capital does not need to recognize, whip, feed, or even command its other into forced labor. It forms no bond.

Figure 3

Capitalist discourse.



Fonte: Adaptado de Lacan, 1969-1970/2016.

In psychoanalytic practice, what should govern is the unconscious. It is by presupposing a divided subject that the barred subject emerges in the place of truth. However, there is also a form of governing outside psychoanalysis, one that

operates in society through institutions that perpetuate social relations and their production of signifiers, the collection of which, according to Lacan, is called the Other. Could this be regarded as a possible form of government insofar as it does not constitute a social bond among subjects of castration, whom civilization has allowed us to call human? Would a form of government that seemingly makes castration disappear and obscures impossibility, because all commodities are freely available on the market, not be a possible form of government?

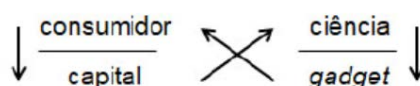
Tomsic (2015) proposes the unsettling notion of a capitalist unconscious. This is not an unconscious that, as the owner of the means of psychic production, enriches itself through the exploitation of the ego's labor. Rather, the structuring of the unconscious, like a language, entails a loss of *jouissance*, just as labor under capitalism requires that workers be denied enjoyment of what they produce. Homologously, the subject of the unconscious does not enjoy the signifier that represents them. This raises the question: have more than a hundred years of experience under typically capitalist social relations produced in human beings a modification of psychic dynamics in capitalism's own image and likeness?

In this sense, one undeniable fact is that the capitalist "Master's Discourse" generates in individuals the need to assign value to themselves and to seek recognition as individuals who do not act to form and sustain bonds with an other in order to navigate discontent, but rather act upon themselves in order to remain productive. In any case, this provides a useful representation of the mechanism sustaining the mode of production under capitalism. Each individual's constant pursuit of self-exceeding is highly consonant with capitalism's structural need to exceed previous levels of profit at the end of each economic cycle of capital.

For such profit to be generated, the supply of commodities requires a corresponding demand. Thus, from unconscious desire to subjective demands, nothing remains merely a quality of the human condition; instead, these become quantifiable attributes of the consumer. A commodity that possesses social value and some utility must also acquire exchange value. In Capitalist Discourse, the commodity comes to occupy the place of object *a*, which is now accessible to \$. This representation reflects the notion that conditions of satisfaction and happiness, in the face of the displeasure of civilized existence, can be achieved through the commodity form and through the product of social labor. Thus, exchange value is assigned both to the product of capitalist discourse and to the demand required to absorb the surplus supply of production that must be brought to market (Lustoza, 2009). The gadgets produced by science in the service of capital exemplify this role, as shown in Figure 4. Here, \$ is the consumer to whom the production of surplus-*jouissance*, object *a*, is addressed. Once assumed to be sources of satisfaction for the consumer-subject, commodities mediate and sustain the circular flow of Capitalist Discourse in full operation (Badin & Martinho, 2018).

Figure 4

Gadgets as object a.



Source: Adapted from Badin and Martinho (2018).

The discursive function of gadgets is important for understanding how a product with restricted and specific use value, as well as social value because it was produced within a society organized according to the capitalist mode of production and under the commodity form, comes to be consumed in a different way, beyond its utility itself. In many cases, pharmaceutical consumption does not respond to a need to cure a particular condition, but rather to the expansion of previous human limits, aesthetic motivations, among other purposes.

Method

A narrative literature review was conducted as an exploratory investigation aimed at constructing a field of qualitative analysis that articulates selected aspects of the posthuman, psychotropic drugs, and capitalist discourse through psychoanalytic concepts. The guiding question (Gerhardt & Silveira, 2009) introduced the challenge of understanding the possible relationship between the culture of medicamentization and a transhumanist ideal produced in contemporary society by capitalist discourse.

The inclusion criteria comprised scientific articles published in journals in Portuguese, Spanish, or English, as well as studies addressing the three domains of the research question, with at least two of them being correlated. Duplicate articles, articles unavailable in full text, and literature review articles were excluded.

The search was conducted in July 2022, and the databases were selected based on their breadth and the relevance of their indexed data. The CAPES Journals Portal, SciELO, the Virtual Health Library Regional Portal, and JSTOR were selected.

The search terms transhumanismo/transhumanism were chosen to characterize the state of the art in this field; psicofarmacologia/psychopharmacology was used as a term corresponding to medicamentization; and capitalismo/capitalism was also included. In this case, the Spanish terms are equivalent to those in Portuguese. Transhumanism was treated as the central term as a means of exploring this field of study concerning contemporary ideals of the subject. Accordingly, searches paired this term with the Boolean operator AND and the other index terms: transhumanism AND psychopharmacology; transhumanism AND capitalism; as well as their corresponding terms in Portuguese. The results were subsequently filtered by publication year and article type.

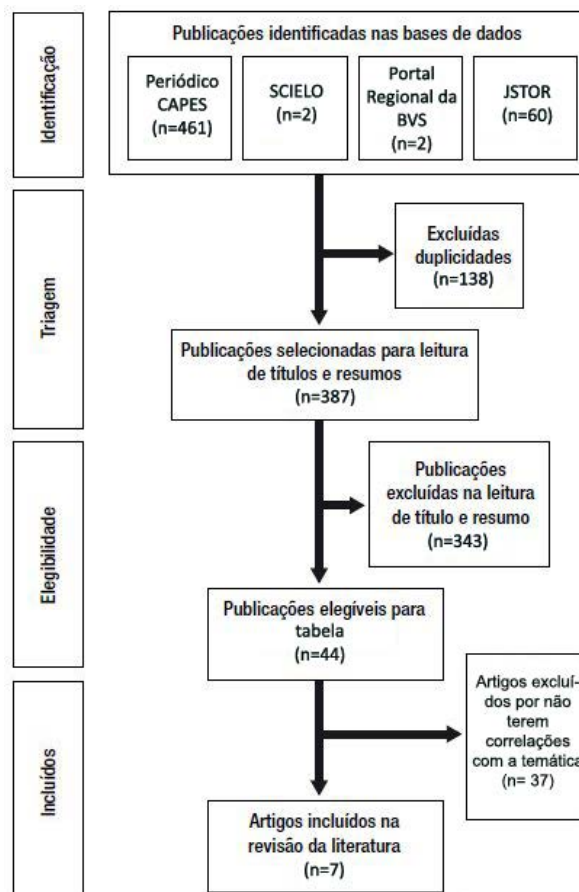
After the articles were retrieved, the search results were exported to Rayyan QCRI, an online systematic review application developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute (Ouzzani et al., 2016), which enabled the removal of duplicate publications. Titles, abstracts, keywords, and, in some studies, definitions of concepts used throughout the text were then cataloged. Duplicate articles, studies that did not address the guiding question, articles for which the full text could not be accessed, studies that were not relevant to this research, and texts published in other languages were excluded.

An initial mapping was performed using the articles considered relevant, followed by content categorization aimed at answering the following questions: What is being produced? Where is it being produced? And with what is it being produced? Additional data, such as publication year, authors, languages, and countries, were also categorized. This stage made it possible to delineate the state of the art of the academic debate.

Articles were then included to support reflections on the research question. At this stage, only studies closely related to the guiding question and the subject of this research were included, namely those corresponding to the fields of psychopharmacology and transhumanism and, when applicable, those discussing the mode of social reproduction. The selected articles were systematically reviewed and summarized, after which the findings were subcategorized. Once the database had been organized, a critical and qualitative discussion of the publications was conducted, together with an examination of their relationship to the research topic. This process made it possible to deepen the guiding question within the academic and scientific literature, establish correlations among the theories and reflections addressed, and advance the discussion developed in this study. The workflow is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Fluxogram



A total of 525 articles were identified in the aforementioned databases using the selected index terms and their combinations. Publications ranged from 1995, the earliest identified, to 2022, the year in which the search was conducted. Of these, 138 were excluded during the first screening. The titles and abstracts of the remaining 387 articles were read, and 343 were excluded because they were opinion pieces, debates, editorials, or review articles; because the full text could not be retrieved; because they were published in another language; or because they did not correlate the topics addressed in the search.

Thus, 44 articles were considered eligible to delineate the state of the art in the scientific literature by correlating capitalism and psychopharmacology with transhumanism as the central axis.

The publication years of the eligible articles ranged from 2002, the earliest included article, to 2022, the year of the present study. Regarding the selected languages, 3 articles were published in Portuguese, 13 in Spanish, and 28 in English, representing 19 different countries. The most frequent countries were England (7), Spain (5), and Brazil, Canada, and the United States (4 each).

Of the 44 articles, 7 were included in the qualitative discussion stage because of their close relationship with the subject of this research. Following systematic review of the articles and the development of categories, topics emerged that stimulated the search for arguments to support the debate and critical construction aligned with the investigative interests of the study.

Wish fulfillment and clinical practice

As described above, the research procedure led to the selection of 7 articles for discussion and analysis of the findings. These articles enabled the development of four analytical axes based on the following categories: (a) effects of psychotropic drugs, which highlighted the current use of psychotropic drugs for cognitive enhancement (e.g., improving focus, attention, retention, or stimulating/regulating sleep) rather than their conventional use to reduce clinical symptoms; (b) transhuman ideals and cognitive enhancement, which made it possible to connect the pursuit of cognitive enhancement with the paradigm of idealizing the posthuman subject; and (c) capitalism and medicamentation, which enabled reflection on the influence of Capitalist Discourse, operating through neoliberal logic, on the subjective construction of a pursuit of an automaton-like ideal that sustains circulation within the production-consumption logic. Along these lines of analysis, the emergence of a concept within health care, specifically medicine, may be understood as a possible material synthesis: wish-fulfilling medicine. Hence, the present article focuses on analyzing this concept/practice as a critical result of the literature review.

Because of the wealth of elements contributing to the problem of the medicamentation of society under capitalist discourse, Buyx's (2008) concept of wish-fulfilling medicine is discussed. This concept is particularly relevant to the present study because it constitutes a genuine product of contemporary culture: the idea of medicine oriented toward consumption rather than clinical necessity.

The concept emerges as a useful framework for conceptualizing medical practices oriented toward fulfilling desires that arise within clinics and health care institutions. Buyx (2008) presents debates from the ethical and philosophical fields of medicine concerning the boundaries between medical practice guided by therapeutic treatment and practices intended to meet other types of demands, such as aesthetic ones. This group includes surgical procedures for placing implants in the body to alter a particular appearance, anti-aging treatments, assisted suicide or euthanasia, and, finally, cosmetic psychopharmacology, which is of particular interest to this study because of its implications for mental health. Associating the term cosmetic with psychotropic drugs relates to an imaginary aesthetic dimension, that is, to an ideal to be achieved. The cosmetic dimension encompasses a "desire for better focus and performance at work/school; desire for better social skills and self-confidence; desire for less need for sleep and greater performance at work" (Buyx, 2008, p. 134).

The term wish-fulfilling medicine encompasses a new type of clinical case in which the demand for medical intervention does not require pathognomonic symptoms.

A caveat lies in the difficulty of identifying the fine line between aesthetic enjoyment and the fact that procedures centered on the client's wishes may be decisive for quality of life by allowing greater proximity to an ideal characteristic of a given cultural moment. There is no precise boundary defining what constitutes health when the concept is approached from a non-medicalized perspective: whitening already healthy teeth or undergoing implant surgery are examples.

Dubljević and Ryan (2015) address this issue in their research on cognitive enhancement and psychotropic drugs. The emergence of enhancement technologies has prompted debate about the boundaries between what requires therapy and what constitutes the enhancement or amplification of human capacities in response to cultural demands, such as increasing productivity at work or in education.

One characteristic of wish-fulfilling medicine is the proposition that the person seeking the service guides the procedure adopted, indicating a market-based client-provider relationship structured around supply and demand. This raises questions about how health services can rather easily conform to the ideology of the liberal professional. Standards of bodies associated with images of beauty can be observed, as can personalities placed at superior levels of behavioral performance because of the self-confidence presumed to structure their actions, and workers elevated to the status of unstoppable machines.

The latter are valued for their entrepreneurial capacity, grounded in a supposedly self-confident individuality that enables them to overcome obstacles to which others would succumb.

It is not only the role assigned to everyone in capitalist society that requires the capacity to increase the value of commodities through labor. The ideological culture of capital itself, which exploits the insignificance of the individual (understood as the absence of a sign capable of fully representing this being within the social bond) also bestows its own definitions: “Brazilians never give up.”

Psychotropic drugs themselves may fit within this system of signs and production of demands for the constant enhancement of personal value through the expansion of bodily capacities. This concerns the extent to which psychotropic drugs are used as enhancement tools beyond their routine use for symptom elimination. Such uses in academic environments and workplaces intensify the process of medicamentization among individuals and throughout society.

For at least half a century, psychiatric prescription of psychotropic drugs has constituted a central axis of mental health care, often to the detriment of listening-based approaches or other longer-term therapeutic processes. What is new is the expansion of the horizon of pharmacological use within a context in which medication holds a privileged position as a clinical practice supported by extensive standardized scientific evidence produced through statistical studies involving large populations, extending beyond what is strictly clinical. Here, the clinical dimension is understood as the worker’s perception that their body is no longer sufficient for the tasks imposed on it by late capitalist society.

As emphasized previously, a medication is part of the process of generating surplus value through its production and circulation in commodity form, dependent on the logics of supply, demand, buying, and selling. This perspective makes it possible to consider medication beyond its therapeutic value, as one moment in the metamorphosis of capital, while also accounting for the labor power that produced it, the money that purchased it, the science that validated it as useful, and the extensive demand expressed through consumption that makes renewed production possible, as occurs with all gadgets. Thus, medication, as a form assumed by capital in its commodity phase, raises questions about the role of medicamentization in health care for the continually expanding pharmaceutical industry. It also raises the question of how far an almost complete fetishization of psychotropic drugs may extend when they are treated as commodities capable of enhancing a body undergoing technological transformation.

As a cultural product of contemporary capitalist society, wish-fulfilling medicine also assumes the form of a gadget within the realm of service production, a form of unproductive labor. At the same time, it constitutes an element of the pharmaceutical production chain, which itself makes use of and depends on cultural constructions that reinforce the need for adaptation without critically discussing the society being built.

The need to articulate posthuman discourses, particularly their transhumanist strand, with the cycles of capital production and the commodity form therefore becomes evident in attempts to decipher the intensification of new pharmacological uses, especially in the field of mental health. Considering this context made it possible to identify a new meaning for the classic concept of person-centered care. Rather than having the patient’s narrative of their experience of suffering structure the core of the clinical case in dialogue with medical knowledge, this stage is eliminated because the case arrives already predefined by the client’s request for change.

Medical knowledge, in turn, is excluded from the diagnostic construction and returns only at the moment when the client’s desire is carried out; within the logic of service provision, the client is always right. Wish-fulfilling medicine is a product of medical practice, although it is supported by an imaginary governed by the logic of unproductive service capital. The acts performed within this type of clinical practice are not necessarily aimed at producing health.

Private offices and public clinics receive what they have always received: requests to return to a state of happiness that was lost in some context or condition that removed it from the daily life of the suffering subject. Outside the various health care settings, responses aimed at soothing this demand can be found in figures such as a family member, an educator, a political leader, a priest or pastor, and, in the platformized society of the internet, even an influencer or one of the so-called “destiny trainers,” popularly known as coaches. It becomes apparent how concepts central to clinical medicine can also be readily distorted in favor of adaptation to an increasingly competitive market, as occurs when principles of person-centered medicine are invoked to justify wish-fulfilling medicine.

The notion of happiness, however, must be contextualized within the spirit of the historical period in which it is analyzed. According to the studies reviewed, the happiness lost in everyday life primarily concerns the effort to meet a demand for constant work that always appears insufficient in light of the productivity requirements of capitalist society. According to the prevailing discourse, the system could not tolerate people interrupting work for a period during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to comply with social isolation measures, even though such measures could reduce deaths and help interrupt viral transmission. In this sense, the 6×1 work schedule continues to be defended as vital to the system.

The available evidence appears to support the critical claim that transhumanist discourses have less to do with an inexorable human destiny to overcome biological limits than with an inadvertent or deliberate position adopted by a social class that depends on exploiting labor beyond the capacities of a body that, unfortunately, must stop to eat and sleep and also becomes ill from time to time. Likewise, wish-fulfilling medicine may play a similar role as a new product whose advertising

and packaging promise individual happiness while ultimately serving other social objectives. The medicamentization of society is one of its effects.

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Correspondence address:

Roberto Henrique Amorim de Medeiros
E-mail: robertoamorim80@hotmail.com

Vladimir Frediani Jardim
E-mail: vladimir_fj@hotmail.com



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